## Video 1: What is a brand, and why is it important?

Hi there! I'm Abi, and I'm the Content Manager here at HubSpot Academy. Take a moment to think about what makes you YOU. Is it your personality? Your values, morals, and beliefs? The way you treat others? How about your opinions?

Chances are, you're answering "yes" to all these questions. And you're correct. A lot of factors comprise your identity. You communicate this identity in a variety of ways: the words you choose to speak, the activities you choose to participate in, and the way you choose to present yourself.
Now consider this: Each PERSON may have their own identity, but each COMPANY should have its own identity, too. Another word for identity in relation to a company is brand.

In a business context, a brand is the identity of a company that people recognize based on an emotional and psychological connection as well as factual information.

And a company brand is important to business success. By presenting your company in a consistent, authentic manner, you'll build credibility and win your audience's trust.

One way that companies interact with the public is through content. This can be articles, emails, videos, speeches, podcasts, and more. 68% of B2B marketers claim they've built credibility with their audience through content marketing.

Don't be fooled, though. Consistency doesn't mean creating identical content or having identical interactions every time. You have to create content for your personas across all aspects of the buyer's journey. So your content will vary.

Think of consistency in the context of authenticity. When you're being consistent with who you are and what you believe in, you're being authentic.

Take a step back for a moment and consider how you as an individual might have variety in your behavior and attitude. Do you talk to your manager the exact same way you talk to your friends? Would you behave the same way at a business conference as you would on a family vacation?

Probably not.

It's natural to have slight variations in how you act and present yourself depending on your audience. You can act differently depending on who you're interacting with, but you don't change WHO you are—your personality, your morals, your values. HOW you act can change, but WHO you are remains untouched.

So keep this in mind: When presenting your company, stay true to its character, and don't contradict what it stands for. In other words, represent your company consistently in every piece of content you create and in every interaction you have.

In fact, when a company's brand is presented consistently, revenue increases by 23%. On top of that, 80% of people say authenticity of content is the most influential factor when they're deciding to follow a brand.
Think about it this way:

If you worked with someone who had a very inconsistent identity, one who changed their values, morals, beliefs, and personality every day, would you trust them? Probably not. The same goes for companies. A company's public presence—the content it creates being a major part of that presence—needs to be consistent with its brand.

And why would you want to be someone else? Why would you want your company to be something else? A consistent, authentic brand builds trust and increases revenue. With content that consistently aligns with your brand, you can help your company grow and build trust with your customers and potential customers.

## Video 2: How do style, voice, and tone support your company's brand?

Your company's brand is something to care about—it builds trust with your customers and prospects, and it increases your revenue. Let's talk about how you can create content using your company's unique style, voice, and tone.

Consider this: You're a loyal customer of a company called WriteSpot. You're subscribed to WriteSpot's email list. You read WriteSpot's blog. You feel comfortable investing money into WriteSpot's product. You trust them. Everything you read looks and sounds authentically like WriteSpot.

Now imagine if one day, a marketing email lands in your inbox from WriteSpot that just doesn't sound right. WriteSpot is conversational, but this email is formal. WriteSpot is friendly, but this email sounds distant. WriteSpot is helpful, but this email doesn't make sense—it's loaded with jargon and acronyms. How would this make you feel?

You'd probably lose some trust and respect for WriteSpot. You've spent so much time connecting with this company through the content its people shared, and now you feel like all those people are total strangers.

This is an example of how harmful it is to create content that doesn't consistently align with your company's brand. Without brand consistency, your company won't be seen as authentic or trustworthy.

And this is proven in the numbers, too. 59% of people say that authenticity of content is the number one way to create a following for a company's brand.

Also, 83% of people agree that their trust in a company's brand would be negatively affected if they found out the company's content wasn't actually written by the company. Now, this doesn't mean you should avoid ghost writers, guest contributors, or content collaborators. Just be sure you're not compromising your company's brand when external people get involved in content. Using editorial resources like a style guide and having an editor review all content for consistency are great ways to bring in new voices without sacrificing your company's brand.

Okay, so brand alignment is a big deal. But you might be wondering, "How do I create content that aligns with my company's brand?"

There are numerous factors to consider—what colors you use, what graphics you include, and more—but we're going to focus on writing specifically. Before writing content for your company, you need to have a strong understanding of your company's style, voice, and tone.

Let's define these terms.

Style is the way you use grammar, punctuation, and syntax. It's influenced by how your words work together and what effect your writing has on the audience.

Think about the details here: how you define certain terms, how you position your ideas, and what formatting you stick to in your written content.

Voice is the personality that's reflected in your writing. The words you choose, how you communicate information, and how you make a reader feel are all tied to voice. Each person has their own unique personality, and the same goes for companies. In every piece of content you write, you should be writing in a way that conveys your company's personality.

And now onto tone: Tone is the approach you take that's appropriate for the context of your content. Tone encompasses the audience emotions that need to be accounted for and the resulting approach you must take.

Here's a pro tip to prevent yourself from mixing up these terms: Think about style, voice, and tone in terms of what stays the same and what changes.

Let's look at a couple sentences from a hypothetical HubSpot User Blog post, for example. This first sentence could be part of a blog post that covers a new product update:

"Welcome! There's a lot for you to be excited about. Let's walk through this update."

This second sentence could be part of a blog post that walks you through how to do something new with the HubSpot software:

"Before getting started with this process, log in to your HubSpot account and click "Contacts" and then "Lists." Now let's build a list.

Notice the difference? Both have the same style and voice. Their formatting, grammar, and syntax align with HubSpot's style, and they're both conversational, human, and approachable. In other words, they both have that familiar HubSpot quality to them. But the first one has a more casual tone, while the second one has a more instructional tone.

You should always sound like your company, so style and voice stay more or less the same. Tone, on the other hand, can change. It's a response to the emotions your audience feels when they encounter your content.
Style, voice, and tone should be your top priorities when writing for your company. Every piece of writing you publish is a reflection of your company. So keep it consistent with your company's style, voice, and tone to achieve that coveted authenticity.

## Video 3: Exploring the writing style for HubSpot Academy

Here on HubSpot Academy, we aim to educate and inspire people so that we, together, transform the way the world does business.

We deliver this education through content. And at the core of our content is writing.

But not just any kind of writing. Our writing is aligned with HubSpot Academy's brand. And HubSpot Academy is a brand within a brand—in other words, it's a subset of HubSpot's brand. So HubSpot Academy's style is a subset of HubSpot's style.

Before jumping into how we use style here on HubSpot Academy, let's be sure we understand what style means. Style is the way you use grammar, punctuation, and syntax. It's influenced by how your words work together and what effect your writing has on the audience.

Each company will have its own style, and it's important that your writing aligns with it so that you're presenting your company's brand authentically.

Here at HubSpot, style is all in the details. We have a HubSpot Written Style Guide as a single source of truth for all content we create as a company. It governs the writing style for any kind of HubSpot content—from blog posts, to UX copy, to tool names, and everything in between.

The HubSpot Academy Editorial Style Guide is an extension of the HubSpot Written Style Guide. It governs the writing style for HubSpot Academy content specifically. It covers how to apply HubSpot's style to HubSpot Academy writing. It also contains a number of education-specific style tips and considerations.

Want to explore more? Check it out in the additional resources section below.

When writing content for HubSpot Academy—whether it be video scripts, blog posts, slide deck copy, and more—it's especially important that you use the HubSpot Academy Editorial Style Guide as a reference. Inconsistencies in style — whether it be capitalization, terminology, spelling, or grammar — can negatively impact people's trust in HubSpot Academy.

Let's go over some general best practices that the HubSpot Academy Editorial Style Guide covers:

These are some things you SHOULD do in your writing:
Use the active voice. This way, you're drawing attention to the subject of the sentence and communicating your main point quickly. Instead of writing, "An account was opened by the customer," go with "The customer opened an account."

When needed, end a sentence with a preposition. This enhances clarity and cuts down on unnecessary words. Instead of writing, "They're the person for which you're editing," go with "They're the person you're editing for."
Use exclamation marks sparingly. Don't use an exclamation mark to generate excitement, but instead use one if your audience is actually experiencing something exciting. And try to use them after just a few words — not to

end a sentence. Instead of writing, "Congratulations on creating your first report in HubSpot!," go with "Congratulations! You created your first report in HubSpot."

Okay, that's what you SHOULD do. Now let's go over a few things you should NOT do.

Don't use unnecessary prepositions. To get your message across in the most efficient and clearest manner, don't throw in extra words that aren't needed. Instead of writing, "You can type OUT this paper," go with "You can type this paper."
Don't use "there are" sentences. This way, your words flow better, helping a learner comprehend your message without having to dissect lengthy sentences. Instead of writing, "There are five sections in my essay," go with "My essay has five sections."
Don't make assumptions. Avoid using words like "simply," "just," or "obviously." You don't want to imply that what you're teaching is easy — that may not be the case for your audience. Instead of "Simply log in to your HubSpot account," go with "Log in to your HubSpot account."

Now that you know a few things to keep in mind, you're on your way to writing HubSpot Academy content that's aligned with HubSpot Academy's style.


## Video 4: Exploring the writing voice for HubSpot Academy

Have you ever read something that felt like an actual person is sitting there talking to you? You can picture them in your mind and get an idea of what they like and dislike, how they behave, the decisions they make, and how they relate to others. It's as if you know their personality.

Writing is a great way to let your personality shine. This is your voice.

Voice is the personality that's reflected in your writing. The words you choose, how you communicate information, and how you make a reader feel are all tied to voice.

If you're writing content for your company, pay special attention to these details so that you're delivering a voice that's consistent with your company's brand. That's what we do here at HubSpot Academy.

HubSpot Academy is a branch of HubSpot. We focus on education and inspiration for our learners. Therefore, the HubSpot Academy voice is an extension of the HubSpot voice.

The HubSpot voice is clear, humble, human, and kind. The HubSpot Academy voice branches off each of these characteristics. It's helpful, knowledgeable, empathetic, and friendly. Think of these voice elements in pairs:

- Clear and helpful
- Humble and knowledgeable
- Human and empathetic
- And kind and friendly

Let's start with clear and helpful. Comprehension is your top priority. Why bother creating educational content if a learner can't understand it? Use clear, direct language in your writing, and avoid jargon or buzzwords that aren't easily understood by all audiences. Stick to short words, sentences, and paragraphs.

And you want to be helpful with this clear language. Ask yourself: Am I sufficiently explaining this thought or idea? Am I giving a learner all the information and resources they need?

To help you answer these questions in your writing, here are some tips for establishing a clear, helpful voice:

Don't use a lot of acronyms. Your learners will include people from all walks of life, and not all acronyms will make sense to everyone. On top of that, they're not easily translated, either. If you have to use acronyms, be sure to define them.

Avoid jargon. You want to make sure all learners feel included and welcome, so use words that are common among the majority of people—not just a few people with specific business or technical expertise.

Deliver your main point fast. The learner shouldn't have to focus on dissecting sentences to find hidden meaning. So instead of writing, "Utilize HubSpot's blogging tool to convey information regarding the industry in which you work," opt for "Use your HubSpot blogging tool to share your industry's best practices."

Now let's move on to humble and knowledgeable.

In your HubSpot Academy writing, never put the focus on yourself. It's all about your learner. Remove yourself from your writing, and focus entirely on your audience. In other words, be humble. So instead of writing, "We're thrilled to announce that HubSpot's tools have been redesigned," opt for "Your HubSpot tools have a new look."

When writing for HubSpot Academy, you want to be a humble and knowledgeable educator. You hold a wealth of knowledge, and your main goal is to share that knowledge with others so that they can grow and develop.

So use language that empowers the learner. For example, instead of writing, "The workflows tool enables you to automate your activities," opt for "You can automate your activities using the workflows tool."

Next, let's cover human and empathetic.

In your writing, sound like an approachable and friendly human, not a machine. Take something that's new and intimidating to others—like software—and make it sound familiar and human.

So create content that sounds like you're talking to your learner. Use contractions, and don't be afraid to weave in some stories and examples to illustrate your points.

And when you're educating others, empathize with them. Remember that they're taking a step out of their comfort zone and learning something new. Make the learning outcome obvious, and deliver it in a human, approachable manner.

On top of that, be positive. Don't frame something like, "You have to learn this or else you'll fail at your marketing job." Instead, write "With this new knowledge, you'll find success with your marketing campaigns."

Also, be realistic and accurate—don't try to fool people by overpromising something that they'll achieve with your education. So avoid language like, "You'll be the CTO of your company at the end of this training" and instead opt for "After learning these technical skills, you'll be able to use your software."

And finally, let's cover what kind and friendly entails.

View the learner as smart, talented, and worthy. Don't assume they're struggling or have ill intent. Instead, assume they want to expand their scope of knowledge, challenge themselves, and do right by others.

So instead of writing, "Stop sending spammy emails, and start writing compelling copy," opt for, "Send engaging emails by learning copy writing skills."

Also, remember that you're writing for a diverse and global audience. Use inclusive language so that everyone feels comfortable and welcome.

Avoid idioms or expressions that don't make sense when they're translated (like "easy as pie").

Avoid using comparisons that only people from a specific region would understand (like comparing a task to making a sandwich).

Also, make your examples relevant to as many people as possible. That means avoiding pop culture references that only make sense in some areas of the world (like references to your favorite television show or actor).

There are also some things to consider when it comes to creating content that will be translated. Keep the following in mind:

Write content with an eye towards the context it appears in. So if you're saying something like, "Let's jump in," don't use a photo of a swimmer jumping into a pool. This will most likely be translated into something like, "Let's get started," so the swimming pool photo wouldn't make much sense.

Stick with images that don't have words on them. Think of the workload involved for translators. Swapping out images and videos with copy on them increases workload considerably.

Alright, so you might be wondering: "With all these guidelines to consider, how do I balance HubSpot's voice and HubSpot Academy's voice with my own voice?"

In all our content, HubSpot's and HubSpot Academy's brand voices must come first — they serve as the framework for our content. But you don't need to omit your personal voice. Instead, you need to be aware of how you can weave it into the HubSpot voice and the HubSpot Academy voice. Finding this balance comes with practice.

In your HubSpot Academy content, think of the HubSpot voice as the top level, the HubSpot Academy voice as the second level, and your voice as the third level. This way, you're authentically HubSpot, authentically HubSpot Academy, and authentically you.

## Video 4: Exploring the writing tone for HubSpot Academy

Picture this: You need to use a new software at work. You find the software difficult to use, and you're working late to figure it out. Needless to say, you're frustrated. You then get an email from the software company about yet another bug in the system, and it reads,

"Oops!!! There's a little glitch in the software. Our bad. Hopefully everything else in your day is perfect!"

Would that email make you feel any better about your situation? No. My guess is that you'd feel even more frustrated. That's the power of tone.

In writing, tone is the approach you take that's appropriate for the context of your content. Tone encompasses the audience emotions that need to be accounted for and the resulting approach you must take.

Keep this in mind: As a writer, don't think of yourself as setting the tone. That's what your audience does. Beth Dunn, our Product Editor-in-Chief here at HubSpot, says that you should think to yourself, "I need to understand what the audience needs at this point in time so that I can frame things in the proper tone for their needs."

So how do you determine tone when writing for HubSpot Academy?

Well, there's not a clear-cut answer to this one because tone depends on context. Tone varies depending on the news being delivered. When writing for HubSpot Academy, your tone will most likely vary between casual, direct, professional, and instructional.

So this means you need to know when and how to adjust your tone appropriately when writing. Start by asking yourself these questions:
- What's the purpose of this content?
- Who am I writing to, how do they feel, and what do they want to understand?
- Therefore, what tone should I use?

Always look at things from the learner's point of view. Are they feeling accomplished? Mirror that in your writing with a casual congratulations. You could write,

"Congratulations! You created your first contact. May there be many more."

Now let's say you're writing a video script to teach learners about a certain HubSpot tool. It's safe to assume they're a little nervous and not sure if they have what it takes to use it effectively. Keep the excitement out of this one, and make your writing direct and professional. Reassure them that you're right by their side. Try writing something along the lines of,

"You may not know where to start. I'm here to teach you."

At HubSpot Academy, the learner comes first. So if you're ever unsure of what tone to go with, think to yourself, "What does the learner need?" With this learner-first mindset, you'll get your tone just right every time.

So now that you know how to determine your tone, you can combine it with the writing style and voice for HubSpot Academy. The end result? A consistent, authentic learning experience.