

## **Groupon Editorial Manual**

### Strategies to Achieve Groupon Voice

1. Absurd images. Sweeping, dramatic nonsense. The absurd narrator.

Humankind has been playing with fire for years; now we can harness the bronzing essence of the fiery sun in a gentle mist, proving once and for all our dominance over the weak, inanimate solar system.

2. Hypothetical worlds / outcomes

Without goals, no one would unicycle the Appalachian Trail or train a flock of carrier pidgins to deliver meat pies to unsuspecting haberdashers.

3. Fake proverbs, adages

4. Mixed metaphors

The bagel, like the circle from which it takes its shape, is a metaphor for life; it literally never ends. Today's Groupon celebrates that sacred, delicious symbol: for \$3...

If your eyes are the windows to your soul, your hair is the tunnel to your mind. Keep your mind-matter from escaping with today's hair-taming Groupon. For \$35...

5. Fake history

When Columbus first landed at Lexington and Concord, he proudly rang the liberty bell to mark the successful discovery of India. Rectify his mistake and actually discover India with today's Groupon to...

When strongmen of the past wanted to show their superhuman brawn, they coddled kettlebells or other, potentially stronger strongmen.

6. Negative comparisons: "...unlike when..."

Today's Groupon is perfect for people who love a good massage, but hate how, unlike pie, they can't take any of it home with them.

7. Highly technical language (medical, scientific, etc.)

8. Sci-fi references

9. Illogical comparisons and lists:

Detoxification is more than drinking herbs, wearing cucumbers, and painting Russian nesting dolls.

10. Use the appropriate narrative point of view.

### Narrative Point of View

Write as the omniscient narrator (3rd person). While using the 2nd person is sometimes unavoidable, the preferred voice you should aim for is the 3rd person, omniscient narrator. Selling points, information, and humor are all usually stronger in this voice. When introducing something nonsensical (fake history, mixed metaphors), don't wink at the reader to let them in on the joke. Don't call it out with quotes, parenthesis, or any other narrative device. Speak your ignorance with total authority. Assert it as fact. This is how you can surprise the reader. If you call out your joke, even in a subtle way, it spoils the surprise. Think of yourself as an objective, confident, albeit totally unqualified and frequently blatantly ignorant voice speaking at a panel you shouldn't have been invited to.

Don't use the first person. The only fringe exception is if we want to call out something very extraordinary about a deal...where if we didn't call special attention to it it could create undesirable customer reactions. Any instance where you feel the first person might be called for, please check in with Aaron first.

Example (from a Chipotle deal with only a 7-day expiration and untraditional discount structure): We realize this is a short expiration window and that a half-off coupon is not a traditional Groupon offer, but since it involves Chipotle burritos, we figured it was just too good of a deal to pass up.

Minimize the use of the 2nd person. Sometimes using the 2nd person is easily avoidable, and sometimes it's highly useful (ex: the deal sentence). If you write a sentence in the 2nd person, and then discover that you could just as easily remove the "you's" and "your's" without using the passive voice and it still reads naturally, do that. When you do use the 2nd person, make sure to spread it out. Consecutive sentences specifically addressing the reader generally feel grating.

The 2nd person is often very useful for clearly describing what the customer's experience will be like, especially for complicated deals. (EX: After your studio portraits are developed, you'll have the option to mix and match your different poses and choose between 6 different print options.). It's when the 2nd person is used in a more creative context and with a voice that assumes too much familiarity with the reader that it can sound like traditional marketing copy. Don't assume familiarity with the reader. Example of Groupon Voice violation from a golf deal:

Go ahead. Be a Tiger. -- Even if this were funnier than it is, you haven't earned that level of intimacy with the reader, and they're likely to not respond to it. You are not the reader's pal.

One way to help minimize overusing the 2nd person is to think about using the business and it's staff as the subjects of your sentences, as opposed to the customer. Example:

Customer as subject: You'll begin your treatment with an assessment of your posture.

Practitioner as subject, still using "you": Dr. Ronald begins your treatment by assessing your posture.

Practitioner as subject, avoiding "you": Dr. Ronald begins treating each patient by assessing their posture.

Depending on the context, any of these may be preferable, but since you should be striving to minimize the 2nd person and use "you" only when it really helps clarify the customer experience, using subjects other than the customer should help create you do that proactively instead of during editing. Varying your subjects also makes it more likely you'll end up with varied sentence structures, and with uses of the 2nd person appropriately distanced from each other.

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Humor Taboos

This list is always growing, so check it regularly. Don't be discouraged if we put something you wrote in here (there are lots things we wrote that made this list when we later realized they weren't funny).

Disclaimer: There may be hilarious ways to violate each of these rules. However, these are great rules of thumbs (how do you pluralize that?), so we encourage you to master writing within these helpful guidelines first, and then when you become a Groupon Voice Level 7 Sage (you'll know when you get there by the cloak you'll be wearing) you can violate all the conventional wisdom you've learned and murder your father provided the act is just.

Explaining or calling out the joke (putting it in quotations, parenthesis, adding language that draws attention to the joke, etc.). Let the reader figure out that it's a joke.

Antagonizing the reader (e.g. "Get fit, fatty!" "Take a shower hippy!", "Eat a burger hipster!"). The problem isn't that it's offensive - it's that it isn't funny.

Humor that depends on poking fun at archetypes (granola-lovers, etc.)

Random for the sake of random, and packing in too much random at once. Let your idea be surprising and strange, but not convoluted.

EXAMPLE: When you eat this burger, angels with onion ring halos appear and perform breakdancing routines on a maple-syrup covered twister board.

Overly negative, brutal humor. For example, a quick, playful reference to the apocalypse can be used to great effect, but a long, extended apocalyptic scenario that is funny because of how endlessly depressing and relentless it is, though potentially funny, is likely to create easily avoidable problems for us with vendors & customers.

Overuse of hyphens: "Rocky's serves up the perfect end-of-the-party-temporarily-putting-off-tomorrow's-inevitable-hangover kind of taco. You know the kind."

Mullets, Snuggies, midgets, ligers (over-used, unfunny humor crutches).

Unicycles, mimes

Zombies, Pirates, Ninjas, Pandas, Unicorns, Bears, Sharks, at least not in the hipster context that usually conjoins these things

Steer clear of jokes that could offend religious people. Even if it seems harmless and playful, there are some religious people who will freak out. It's not worth the headache.

Example of great teeth whitening joke that got us lots of angry letters & just wasn't worth it: "whiten by an average of eight shades, equivalent to being punched by God twice."

Roman mythology is an innocuous substitute: "whiten by an average of eight shades, equivalent to being punched by Zeus twice."

Using ALL CAPS is taboo in the details section, and should be minimized in the humor section as well. More often than not, CAPS in the humor section appear unnecessary.

Find another device for emphasis, such as bold or italic formatting, or a narrative device.

Definitely never use all caps in the intro part of the humor section...occasionally there

may be appropriate uses of all CAPS within a dialogue, found fictional text, etc. These show an added emphasis to an external voice, and may be acceptable. Don't use CAPS for adding emphasis to Groupon's voice. Here's an example:

UNNECESSARY CAPS: Trolleys, however, soon dipped in popularity, in no part due to a conspiracy among car manufacturers using shell companies to replace trolleys with their own buses in violation of federal antitrust laws. THAT DIDN'T HAPPEN.

ALTERNATIVE: Trolleys, however, soon dipped in popularity, in no part due to a conspiracy among car manufacturers using shell companies to replace trolleys with their own buses in violation of federal antitrust laws, which definitely never happened.

REFERENCES: Be careful with the way you use references. If a reference is supposed to be funny in and of itself, it falls flat. If you're not just name dropping them, however, it is possible to use references in funny ways, if you place them in an unlikely, humorous context of your own creation.

Too dependent on reference: Feel as privileged as Bertie Wooster with the staff as your personal valet.

Edit w/out reference: Feel as privileged as an onion ring in a box of french fries, as the staff personally pick up and drop off your dry cleaning.

Edit that maintains reference: With the staff as your personal valet, you'll finally know the privileged sensation Bertie Wooster felt when Jeeves would fluff his coattails and hand feed him peppermint-coated diamonds.

Range of References: If you use a reference to be hip (namedropping an indie band), or nostalgic (over indulging in childhood 80's pop-culture like Alf, skip-n-step, Nintendo, Big League Chew, etc.), it's likely to fall flat. References that are generally more successful are historical figures and other ubiquitous icons.

In general, don't set out to use references. Use them minimally, and only when they come to you naturally in the perfect context.

Example of something that's too dependent on the reference for the humor:

Give your skin an upgrade without going through one of those expensive Face Off-style face exchange procedures.

The idea above has something going for it. In fact, it doesn't even need the the reference. Here's an edit of that line that juxtaposes the concept with another unlikely element to make it especially weird, and especially Groupon voice:

Contrary to a few children's magazines, expensive face-trading procedures rarely result in beautiful skin or personality.

Additionally, check out the category-specific humor taboos.

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Traditional marketing cliches and crutches to avoid

Positing our deal as the obvious solution to the reader's imaginary problems:

EX: Do you have this problem? Well today's deal is the solution!

EX: Whether you're hosting an Oscar viewing party or a football tailgate, Camille's can provide sustenance to fit everyone's taste.

Worst/Best. Thing. Ever. (unsubstantiated superlatives)

Don't presume to know anything about the reader. Example of Groupon Voice violation from a chiropractor deal. Even if the idea is funny, positioning it this way will turn the reader off. These two examples illustrate good ideas that were presented as assumptions about the reader, and then edited to speak in broader terms and fit within Groupon voice:

BEFORE: Your back is peeved about all those prank quarters glued to the sidewalk you bent over to pick up this year.

AFTER: The typical American back suffers 2-3 fractures a year from attempting to pick up quarters prank-glued to the sidewalk.

BEFORE: After you startle awake with your face encrusted to a bowl of vegan cookie dough, you usually take your sleep-eating guilt for a late night lap around the Wal-Mart.

AFTER: After being startled awake by the cold bowl of cookie dough encrusted to their faces, most mortals take their sleep-eating guilt for a late-night lap around the Wal-Mart.

Repetitive use of the imperative. The reader doesn't want to be told what to do, so don't fall into the trap of "try the burger..then try the desert...finish it off with a glass of wine." Instead, just describe those things without insisting that the reader do anything in particular. If they like how you describe the burger, they'll figure out on their own that the burger can be enjoyed by drinking it.

Avoid vague, slogany language. Instead of regurgitating common phrases, employ more specific and unlikely imagery.

BAD: Next comes the sanitizer, which kicks bacteria and other micro-troublemakers to the curb.

COMMENT: Micro-troublemakers is nicely worded, but "kick to the curb" is empty imagery.

ACCEPTABLE: Next comes the sanitizer, which evicts bacteria, other micro-troublemakers, and their furniture from your home, leaving them on the streets playing micro-craps.

Avoid using exclamation points.

Words that are so abstract they don't mean anything...

Adjectives: unique, great, perfect, interesting

Verbs: optimize, enhance, utilize, maximize, all the -ize's

Corporatespeak (proactive, efficient, productive, innovative, ideation, etc.)

Read about narrative point of view.

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Details Section Taboos

Avoid running jokes (one creative idea that is repeatedly elaborated upon throughout the write-up). If a running joke fails, it leaves the editor with nothing to work off of. Running jokes are generally less effective than a series of unrelated, entertaining, absurd asides. With each elaboration upon the existing humor framework, the reader is less and less likely to be surprised. Instead, allow your copy to react on the fly to the selling points as they unfold—take the piece on a varied journey, like experiencing Epcot Center on a segway.

Exception: sometimes, repetition of the same thing can be surprising. For an auto-detailing deal, talking about they'll remove peanut butter stains on the dashboard, and then later mentioning that they'll remove peanut butter stains from the carpeting, has the potential to surprise the reader the 2nd time it's referenced.

Employing an emphatic, poetic voice that gives too much importance/weight to the experience of the featured deal:

EXAMPLE: We all remember our first jobs, our first cars, the first time we collectively kissed Becky Hendershot by the arts and crafts pavilion at camp in summer 1997 and her hair smelled of jam and honeysuckle in the simmering August heat. As we grow older, that rush of newness grows ever more precious, eventually dissolving with a twinkle. Today's Groupon re-sparks that ember with a deal at...

COMMENT: While there are some good ideas here, it's too over the top and makes our recommendation seem inflated and unbelievable. Use your poetic license to make strange, unlikely comparisons. Vivid imagery is encouraged, but should not be used to blatantly exaggerate the experience of the deal.

Be wary of local humor references specific to your market. If you don't know the city, you'll probably sound like an asshole. Even if you do know the city, local humor references should follow the same guidelines as the humor taboos explains—meaning you can't depend on any reference alone to generate all the comedic value of a joke—the reference must be paired/juxtaposed with something unlikely. Never simply restate a joke or a common stereotype associated with a city. Comedy is about surprise, and it's not surprising to say "wicked" in a Boston write-ups. Everyone in Chicago has heard plenty of "da Bears" jokes...there's no reason to subject our readers to that yet again. If you happen to know a city you're writing for, don't just show off your local knowledge...incorporate it into awesome, Groupon-quality jokes, or don't use it at all. Here's an excellent example of local reference humor that manages to be very funny because of the surprising combination of two stereotypes:

Whether you've lived here all your life, or you left South Florida for a colder climate and more blues saxophones packed with meat, a better grasp of Chicago's rich history will enhance the way you experience the city.

Of course, local references as selling points are great! You should learn your cities well enough to know the qualities of certain neighborhoods in order to position them as selling points.

And of course, remember to avoid the marketing clichés

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### Offensive Taboos

It's unlikely our writers would intentionally violate any of the obviously offensive, racist, misogynist humor taboos listed at the bottom of this page. However, it's easy to write a joke that you intend to be funny in an innocent, harmless way, which may be read entirely differently by someone with a different background and demographic than the writer. Being accused of racist or misogynist copy isn't just not fun, it's potentially an enormous threat to our brand. We take bold risks with our humor, and so we need to be very careful to look at our creative content as objectively as we can to protect ourselves against damaging accusations. Our Voice Editors are primarily responsible to be the final filter of potentially offensive copy, but everyone on the team should keep an eye out for this as well.

Here's an example of a humor section that is clearly not intended to be racist, but you can see how one of the jokes intended to be playfully random (in bold) could invoke the image of black face and upset some readers. Here, black was simply changed to blue, and crisis was averted.

With today's deal, you can finally upgrade to professionally made "people" cosmetics, but that's no reason to give up your hobby of crafting homemade make-up. What are some of the ingredients you'll need to make cosmetics at home?

Play-Doh (black)

Baby sea turtles (alive and well)

Smokin' hot friend of opposite gender who totally "gets" you

Chalk dust (wet)

Food coloring-infused butter

Artificial mucous

Mirror with mustache painted on it  
A high-stakes audition with "La Poubelle! The Parents-Only Circus!"  
Non-toxic poison  
Category Specific Taboos

Massages - don't say anything that can even remotely be regarded as sexual. Even saying "ooze" will set people off. Not worth the risk. It's less "offensive" than it is simply a sensitive topic to massage people. Likely to result in vendor edit requests.

Oh, and obviously don't do any of this stuff:

Misogynistic terms  
Ethnic slurs  
Homophobic comments  
Anything that pokes fun at any vulnerable group: homeless people, people with diseases, disabled people, etc.  
Swear words. Even if it's in the business's actual service/product names (EX: Hell's Spicier-Than-Shit Nachos...you will see stuff like this) you can't use it because it can activate spam filters.

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Groupon Thesaurus (in progress)

Health and Beauty

hands = wrist-mitts, finger-docks, arm paddles, cheek slappers, open-faced knuckle sandwiches, Michigan silhouettes (only use in Midwest), turkey tracers/stencils, clapping utensils (good for events), knuckle wagons, 5-pronged pals, knuckle steaks, shake traps, high-five dispensers, nail farms, finger farms  
nails = finger shingles, DNA collectors, calcium-rich clipper tips, finger helmets, toe shells, finger canopies, finger awnings, plastic flesh, tiddly winks flippers  
hair = noodle nest  
teeth = mouth bones  
tanning...  
tanned = mauved, sun licked  
tan/tanning = tonal transformation, 3rd place Olympic finished skin, freckle harvest, gives your skin a tropical punch, Apollo's gift, UV crayon, Vitamin D cloak, photosynthesis, Miami tuxedo, beyond the pale, getting basted, Caspar's wish (Caspiration), thermal dermal, faux-sun (fun), season stretcher, summer skin, sunsbite, visual pheromone, high school reunion mask, burn guard

spray tan = melanin marinade, butter scotch topping, pneumatic pigment blaster, non-molten bronze dip, muscle vinaigrette, sprayta keratin, mapping mist, sweat coat, that'll do pigment (?), pigment paintball

massage =

staff =

body = soul sack, soul vehicle, bone box, organ jar, fleshoskeleton, thetan vessel, spine vase, flesh house, brain marionette, life-size action figure, sillhouette generator, shadowcaster, temple, head pedestal, federation of limbs, Jim Torso & the 4 Limbs, goodbody, soul totem, skeleton space suit, skin tent, coffin filler, animate manniquienne  
Food and Drink

wine = Type A grape bloods

meat =

steak = cuts, protein patties,

vegetarian = herbivores and herbivoyuers

menu =

restaurant =

establishment =

appetizer =

food =

## Medical

chiropractor = backologist

## Cliches

tickle your fancy = tickle your fancy and your soft underbelly

off the beaten track = off the beaten horse

## Miscellaneous

global warming = warming globe syndrome

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## Narrative Point of View

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One way to help minimize overusing the 2nd person is to think about using the business and it's staff as the subjects of your sentences, as opposed to the customer. Example:

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Practitioner as subject, still using "you": Dr. Ronald begins your treatment by assessing your posture.

Practitioner as subject, avoiding "you": Dr. Ronald begins treating each patient by assessing their posture.

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Details Section

Write-up Objective #1: Describe the business or experience in specific detail. Readers should get a concrete sense of the business and what sets it apart in its field. Readers should also understand the exact nature and value of the deal in the first paragraph. By the end of the write-up, a prospective customer should have all his/her questions about the business and the Groupon answered.

Write-up Objective #2: Entertain. Our discounts get people to buy, our write-ups get people to keep reading & coming back day after day. Good, funny writing helps us capture the kind of brand evangelists who will email the deal to their friends.

Answer these questions as early as possible:

Why do I want this?

How can I learn more about the product/service?

Where can I find reviews?

How/where do I redeem the Groupon? (always link the redemption address to a Google map)

Every Details Writer should feel confident that they've covered everything in the Details & Reviews Checklist before sending their draft to the next stage.

Selling Points - Go through the selling points checklist to make sure you've considered all the potential angles for describing this deal. Consider the selling points listed in "highlights" in Salesforce (see below), but don't stop there. Research info from the business's website, web & media reviews, & extract the selling points from there. Also, ask yourself why you'd buy this. If you wouldn't, ask someone else why they might. Distill what is unique about the experience, and find a way to creatively express that with some personality. Here are some write-ups that really go the extra mile to describe the experience of a deal in a thoughtful way:

Chronicles of the Cursed - Chicago  
Traditional Equitation School - Los Angeles  
Salon Capelli - D.C.

Creative Selling Points: Selling points are the likely benefits/uses of the featured product/service. Creative selling point are unlikely benefits/uses of the featured product/service. Why skydive in a wind tunnel? To blast the dust out of your keyboard.

Balance of creative content to selling points:

A Groupon write-up must appeal to two types of readers: the no-frills reader who wants to quickly capture the value of the deal and make a decision, and the reader who needs some amount of engaging content to continue reading.

We should never stray for too long from selling points and informative details that help the reader understand the deal. Humorous tangents should never last longer than one sentence, and our most powerful creative asides are usually less than one sentence long—they're clever turns of phrase peppered around the selling points.

How much humor should I include?:

The best write-ups surprise the reader with well-timed, spaced out humor. If it's spaced out, you don't expect it as much and it surprises you. Don't attempt to insert jokes into every sentence. Don't be ashamed to let informative sentences stand alone and provide value to the reader simply by being informative and well written.

It's a common mistake for new Groupon writers to feel pressure to insert humor into nearly every sentence, but when that happens the jokes feel tacked on, each subsequent joke loses impact even if they're good, and the write-up becomes exhausting to read.

Shoot for at least 1 humorous injection every paragraph (could be as short as 1 word, or as long as 1 sentence).

Avoid repetition. Don't get into a rhythm where every sentence ends with a similarly structured humorous phrase. Vary the syntactical ways within a write-up in which humor appears.

Keep your jokes spread out. Every 2-4 sentences is a good rule of thumb for new writers. Experienced writers can feel free to experiment with humor in consecutive sentences, but will need to keep it varied in length and structure. Short, subtle jokes poking out from a mostly informative piece are likely to have more comedic impact.

80/20: While this varies from write-up to write-up, and while you shouldn't be counting words and doing long division, a good rule of thumb is to shoot for 80% informative content and 20% creative content.

Examples of balance:

Here's a great example of a well-balance write-up (jokes underlined in red to help illustrate the balance). There are comfortable spans of well-written but humorless copy that really gets to the heart of the deal, and the humorous injections are distributed in a way that makes them each more unexpected, giving them substantially more impact. The humor never gets in the way of quickly letting the reader know exactly what they'll get. The humor injections are varied in style, substance, and syntax, and therefor do not feel to predictable or exhausting.

Here's an example of a write-up that was unacceptably overwrought with humorous injections (humor is in red font to help illustrate the balance). The non-stop humor gives no relief and becomes grating. The final paragraph is devoid of any meaningful information about the business whatsoever. While there are some good jokes in here, they all lose comedic impact because there's nothing but jokes, so the reader comes to expect them. The write-up is very light on details, giving the editor no confidence that the writer has done enough research, and requiring them to research the deal from scratch to see if anything else can be added back in (something they should not have to do). At best, to a reader who loves our humor, they'll laugh less when reading this than they would a normal write-up. At worst, for a reader who mostly just wants the details, this write-up will be very irritating to read. Here is the final edit. The balance is more appropriate, and they've added in a duration of the lessons, a key detail that should have been included in the first draft. See how a humor line here like "adults, kids, and their teenage hybrids" could never have been written in advance of assembling the details & reacting to them, but functions very naturally in this write-up.

Structuring Your Write-up:

Step 1: Research & assembling key (unorganized) points in Word (screenshot of step 1)  
Do not start your write-up by thinking of lots of hilarious jokes about the subject matter.

This approach inevitably leads to longer, full-sentence jokes, and a balance that is too heavy on the humor.

Start instead with thorough research. A good write-up is the product of thorough research. In most cases, more than half your time will be spent compiling research. Do the following research steps before beginning to write any actual original content:

Read all the relevant content on the company website.

Check the reviews trends.

Read any notable press reviews of the business.

Copy the key selling points from the Salesforce record that you should include.

If you still don't have enough, actually go read some of the positive reviews.

As you do your research, start compiling them in your word template. Copy & paste, or simply paraphrase the points you wish to cover. It's easier to have them all in front of you & then strip away anything unnecessary than it is to try to remember them all once you

actually start writing. Feel free to liberally copy & paste content directly from the company site & even from reviews. Of course, you're going to have to shape all those details into your own words, but sometimes copying & pasting content directly is the easiest way to ensure you remember all the interesting facts you discover during your research.

Step 2: Make an outline. (screenshot of step 2)

When you've got a compiled list of selling points you've paraphrased & blurbs of copy you've pasted from the site, start to organize them into a loose outline in the order of priority you think they should appear. You don't have to have a high-school style numbered outline or anything fancy, just give your write-up the beginnings of some form to allow you once you begin writing to focus your energies on excellent wordsmithing.

Taking this step may seem unnecessary, and sometimes, for very intuitive write-ups (restaurants, spas, etc.) it may be. But taking the time to really evaluate which selling points deserve the most attention is a critical step. A write-up that prioritizes the wrong selling points can affect the performance of a deal negatively, while a write-up that quickly expresses the key points can make all the difference for a deal's performance.

Step 3: Writing a compelling details section without jokes. (screenshot of step 3)

Once you have a loose outline, transform your points & copied blurbs into well-written, compelling content.

If you're writing a side deal, don't inject humor throughout. Simply compose a listing-style write-up that contains all the necessary details in a compelling, concise piece.

If you're writing a feature deal, after you have a listing-style entry composed, add humor as a final polish.

There are obvious jokes, and then there is creative description (see example). Don't hesitate to add the creative flare that glues the selling points together during this 3rd stage...or wait til when you add in the jokes during the 4th step, or both—whatever comes more naturally.

Step 4: Add the humor. (screenshot of step 4)

Allow the humor to emanate organically from the details. Think of the details as a fertilizer for your jokes. Or as the sun. Or milk, or steroids. Whatever makes you grow. Your humor should be more reactive and spontaneous than proactive and rehearsed.

Be on the lookout as you formulate your selling point arguments for possible strange tangents & humorous add ons...the unlikely turn of phrase that ties a write-up together is more likely to come to you unexpectedly as you react to an unusual detail about a spa's interior decor than it is if you're setting out to brainstorm all the jokes you can think about mani-pedis before beginning a composition.

Only the lead should be an entirely humorous sentence. Almost all other injections of humor should be woven into and around selling points and factual information about the business. Shoot for humorous injections that are a simple, single phrase, or even a single word. If you happen to write a full sentence that's humorous towards the end and you're confident it's awesome, you can still use it, but you should be highly conscious of the creative to informative balance and use restraint—only doing this when you're confident it truly works.

Evolving your process:

Until writers master nailing all the details, they should follow this exact sequence rigidly as an exercise to learn what a solid presentation of the details looks like. Write in this order for your first 5 write-ups before experimenting with other workflows.

Once you've mastered the presentation & appropriate prioritization of details, you'll probably want to experiment with a more organic workflow.

While it's never encouraged to write jokes before beginning research, you'll probably be more effective if you're keeping an eye out for potential jokes throughout the process of researching the business, organizing the selling points, and writing the content that's focused on selling points & factual details.

As jokes occur to you, feel free to interrupt your research to make a note of the humorous tangent idea, and come back to it later when you have the material to weave your joke into the rest of the content.

Following a process like this, you may discover at the end of assembling the selling points, that you already have enough humorous content to achieve the 80/20 balance. If you don't, then the last piece of the write-up is to add humorous content until you've achieved that balance.

Intros are often the biggest stumbling block. They're the one place you can't really be reacting to factual details & creating humor with unlikely departures from traditional selling points...rather, you have create the moment of surprise yourself. Read on for more tips on intro composition...

Introductions:

The first graph should begin with a short creative lead. Always keep your lead under 35 words, and ideally under 25 words. Immediately after the lead, you must clearly explain the value of the deal (what you get and price points). The introduction may have an additional selling point or a creative segue after that, or it may move directly into the 2nd graph where the most important selling points are developed.

The creative lead is sometimes a stumbling block. Feel free to use recycled leads...there's no reason not to refeature our best content. That said, leads are some of the funnest lines to write, so lean on recycling only when you're creatively drawing blanks. Set a 5 minute rule for yourself. If you can't write a good lead in 5 minutes, either recycle an old lead or leave it starting with "Today's deal" but add a TK note with your best idea for a lead you had in those 5 minutes. If you give something for the Voice Editor to go off of, it makes following up on lead composition much easier.

Guidelines for writing great ledes: TKTKTK

Good & bad ledes...do's & don'ts TKTKTK TKTKTK TKTKTK

Don't use a vendor's copy: Whether a vendor sends us copy or they have good copy on the site, never use it verbatim. It has to be written in our voice or it will look like an ad instead of an endorsement. Even for purely informative content (ingredient in an entree), you cannot just copy and paste—paraphrase, reword, do something different. It's ok to take inspiration from a vendor's site copy for things like class descriptions, tour itineraries, massage descriptions, basically in describing what you get. When you describe the business more generally you should have a comfortable distance from any copy created by the vendor. Sales reps are trained to prepare their vendors & set expectations so they know we won't be using their copy, so you should never receive a request to incorporate exact language.

Salesforce Highlights: Anything in the highlights field in Salesforce needs to be considered for inclusion. We ask all reps to prepare their vendors for our crazy write-ups, and part of getting that buy-in from them is that we get them to participate by suggesting to us the most compelling things about their business. If a rep goes through this process, it helps us not have to deal with annoying vendor edit requests, saving us time and protecting the integrity of our copy. The same vendor who might be freaked out by our jokes, if he sees we included a detail about his business that he recommended, is more likely to be satisfied with his Groupon experience, want to do another deal, and not request any edits.

That said...we never compromise our content. We're writing for our customers, not for our vendors. While we should attempt to honor that effort by considering their recommended selling points for inclusion, it is your job to reject suggested selling points in Salesforce if...

- they violate our voice
- they are asking not for points/details but for specific language they've crafted
- they cannot be verified
- they are misleading
- they are not compelling
- they sound like traditional marketing copy

Informative Links: link to class descriptions, menus (and specific menus, drink menu, etc.), pages with detailed info/descriptions of a service (haircuts page vs waxing page), rates, schedules, anything that aids a customer in making a decision. Make sure your anchor text is clear...don't get too nifty and link a "rates" page to anchor text like "penny-pinching" or something broadly descriptive of the landing page but where the meaning isn't clear until you arrive on the page. The reader should know exactly where it's going to take them from the anchor text. Wait until after the first graph to include informational links (except for the company website).

Clarity: Answer every question a customer will have. If you don't, they'll ask it 100,000 times to customer service, and customer service will be here til midnight. How you

arrived at your retail value, everything that's included, any unusual redemption instructions...call these out in simple terms early on in the write-up.

Length: 175-300 words across 3-4 short paragraphs. The average is around ~250 words, and try to keep it under that if you can. Less is more. You can go longer if it's a special deal (big name like Art Institute or a unique deal like whale watching), a very complicated deal that requires additional explaining, or if you've got so many solid selling points and you can't bring yourself to cut any of them...but only if you feel it's absolutely necessary.

Every deal is different. - Some you can cover all the selling points in 2 short paragraphs. Some you have to go the extra mile because they are special, experiential, one-of-a-kind deals. If you're writing up a fairly straightforward restaurant deal, cover the basics in a compelling way but don't go overboard...save the really hard/creative sells for very special deals. We lose legitimacy if we pitch every single deal like it's the most awesome thing ever.

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## Details Checklist

This checklist is meant to help you make sure you've looked for all the basic details that, when available and compelling, are essential to include in the write-up. Though helpful, this list will never be enough. You must be creative and intuitive. Follow your heart. In your heart lies the answer to the question "why would someone buy this?" Ask it to yourself. There are reasons that will not be found in this checklist. Answer the question in language that relates to someone. Avoid our taboos. No schmoozy marketing copy. Clear, concise. Rich, concrete description sells with integrity. Superlatives and overly generous adjectives will not only fail to sell—they'll kill our integrity. Booyah!

## All Write-ups

business name spelled correctly everywhere

1st mention of business is linked

awards/accolades

is the service friendly/warm/welcoming?

are the staff talented in any special way (special training, etc.)

is location convenient/happening/etc.?

is the businesses origin story or founder compelling enough to mention?

all the relevant links that help explain what the customers options are have been linked to and the anchor text is very clear as to what you'll find when you click on the link is there anything unique or compelling about the building's atmosphere, architecture, music that plays there, etc.?

Decor: Nine times out of ten, this involves describing the color of the walls, style of the furniture, or anything else you can glean from the available web photos, but it has to be done because at least one time out of ten, the Washington Post has three paragraphs about how close the restaurant's decor is to an actual Paris left bank eatery.

if relevant, how can this Groupon be pitched as a social experience (go w/ friends, family, lovers, etc.) in a sincere, unsalesy way

Is this a big special deal that should be acknowledged as such & given a special call to action (back by popular demand for the Cubs, or Dinkel's—an old, Chicago establishment that needed to be really pushed as such)—should coordinate with humor writer in these cases

Is it a difficult drive to get there (suburban deals)? Say something about that & why it's still worth it. Maybe pitch other activities you can do during your trip.

every selling point that is compelling enough to mention from the business's "about" or "bio" page is included

Hours - only call these out if there's something unusual, and do it in the last graph.

every selling point that is compelling enough to mention from the salesforce record is included

avoid using exclamation points

Explaining the Groupon's value: If the deal is \$80 towards any product in a store, or \$25 at a restaurant, you need to give the customer a sense of price points to let them know what their Groupon is really worth.

For something like a clothing store, please list the values of a few different kinds of items. Examples:

Purses range from \$30 to \$100. Dog purses start at \$150.

As you describe specific items, quote their value. The new line of headbands from the Atlanta Hawks catalog (\$8 value) is hot, hot, hot.

If you can, creating different combinations you can use your Groupon value toward is ideal: a. Use your \$80 value towards a dog purse (\$15), grill (\$40), and grill polisher (\$25). b. Or if you're feeling fancy, combine three Groupons and snag the old-fashioned vest & bow tie package by Kibblesmith (\$240 value).

For restaurants, especially call out prices if the food is very cheap or very expensive. But even when it's not, it's worth mentioning price points. It could be something as simple as this: "Entrees range from \$10 to \$15." That's enough to let the reader know what they're getting.

Checklists Unique to Each Category

Health/Beauty

atmosphere

decor

types of products used  
duration of individual featured services  
retail value of individual featured services  
benefits of service—how will it make someone look/feel (and don't say "great")  
Food/Drink

Link to menu (if multiple menus, drink lists etc., link to the most multiple menus)  
decor  
Experience of chef/staff  
Nearby attractions you could hit after dinner?  
Activities/Classes

How this will better your life (usefulness of the skill)  
Usually these are exciting deals—for the right deals (skydiving, tattoos, indian cooking class), you can really push the "try something new & exciting" idea, but it has to be written by a person, creatively, & has to link to the Groupon voice when this happens  
Retail/Product

As much description as possible: components, ingredients, utility, etc.  
We'll develop this checklist more as we do more deals in this category, we've done very few so far  
Reviews Checklist

All Write-ups

checked for media reviews (quoted & linked to source)  
checked for and included user reviews (quoted & linked to source) > \* Yelp quotes are under 200 characters and each link to the individual quote  
multiple user review sites is preferable (up to 3).  
Checklists Unique to Each Category

please add unique review notes to these categories if you find them (categorical review sites, for example)

Health/Beauty

Food/Drink

Activities/Classes

Retail/Product

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## Highlights

Highlights are the bulleted selling points to the right of the fine print on the site. They can be very effective at quickly conveying the key reasons to buy the deal to the customer who wants to make a quick decision, but they must be well-crafted.

1. Highlights should be listed according to priority of selling points. Focus on listing the most compelling details. This will usually mirror the priority you give selling points in your body copy. Typical highlights for each category include:

### Food/Drink

- The food
- The wine list
- Specialty cocktails
- The ambience

### Health/Beauty

- Range of services
- Unique, specialty services
- Experience of stylists
- Cleanliness
- Décor/ambience

### Retail/Products

- Range and/or quality of goods (brand names, etc.)
- Helpfulness of staff
- Location

### Events

- Mention awards (Pulitzers, Tonys, etc.)
- Seating level
- Choice of performances

### Classes/Fitness

- Experienced instructors
- Convenient class schedule
- Range of exercise types
- No enrollment fees
- Gym amenities

### Any Category

- Perfect activity for upcoming holiday, event, date, etc.

IMPORTANT: If the business has earned a "Best Of" award from Citysearch or a publication, that should be the first highlight and should be linked directly to the award source.

MORE IMPORTANT: All seafood restaurants that serve mussels should have one highlight that reads "Fabulous Mussels".

2. If the business itself does not have enough things worth highlighting, play up any unique terms of the deal (i.e. "Good for five locations," "No buy limit," etc.)

3. Highlight copy should be clear and concise while still being descriptive.

"Authentic Chinese Cuisine"

"Comfort food with a twist"

"Creative brunch fare"

"Certified personal trainers"

"Tony-winning musical"

"Men and women's haircuts"

"Unusual date option"

NOTE: "Good for two locations" is preferred over just saying "Two locations"

4. To maintain brevity, a good trick is to start with an engaging imperative verb. For example, instead of "Five services covered in this Groupon," rewrite as "Choose from 5 services."

5. Do NOT list vague, generic selling points that could be used for any business in that industry (i.e. "relax and relieve stress" for massages). Highlights should be aspects either unique to the business or to the deal.

6. Do NOT feel obligated to make four highlights. If the business has only three things worth mentioning, list only those three. Likewise, if you have two good highlights that run long and can't be trimmed down, leave it at two.

7. Do NOT simply cut and paste the highlights in Salesforce. They might be a good start, but they are not always the best selling points. If the vendor strongly suggests specific highlights, and they meet all our other criteria, then yes, include them, and certainly develop them in the copy, but it's on you to use this space wisely, with the most compelling details you can find, regardless of what's in Salesforce.

8. Make sure your highlight is worded in a way that matters to the reader. Many businesses are fond of boasting about how they've been around for XX years, but unless you frame that as a compelling selling point (i.e. revising "Been in business for 57 years" into "Historic Manhattan eatery"), it won't matter to readers. Now 100+ years, maybe that something.

9. If a feature of the product/service is not compelling enough, reframe it as a benefit. Remember, a feature is what something is. A benefit is what it does. Features are preferred because they are rich, concrete details, but they only work if they manage to obviously convey the benefit just by describing the feature. If the benefit is not obvious from the description of the feature, then opt for that. Here is a good example of how to rethink features as benefits.

10. Concrete details are stronger than vague ideas like "makes a great gift." Occasionally it can be a good idea to remind people that it might make a good gift for a seasonal holiday, but don't be too pushy. They'll be reading "makes a great Valentine's gift" on every ad they see for weeks leading up to Valentine's Day, so this has the potential to be more marketing noise. In this instance, a small injection of humor helps to effectively get them thinking about it as a Valentine's gift without being pushy or cliched. Example: "Good Valentines or VE Day Gifts"

11. All the same criteria laid out in the rest of our style guide applies here—maintain the same level of transparency and avoid traditional marketing slogany copy.

12. Avoid broad, unsubstantiated claims like "once-in-a-lifetime opportunity"

### 13. Length

Keep sales highlights as concise as possible.

You get 4 lines maximum on the site, which can occur across anywhere between 2-4 bullets.

2 bullets if they each have 2 lines.

4 bullets if they each use only 1 line.

A line should never exceed 28 characters and should ideally be under 25.

Please be conscious of this especially in the details, voice editing, and copy editing stages.

The trickiest thing about highlights is that they can very easily be too long. Look at what happens with the highlights below (Figure Screenshot A1) where in 3 of the 4 bullet points there is a broken line with just 1 extra word (otherwise known as a "widow"). One helpful way to avoid exceeding 25 characters is to look at the plus "+" signs above & below the Highlights section in the write-up template. Each line of pluses is 25 characters. See the screenshot at the bottom of this document for a nice little illustration of what the hell I am speaking about right now (Figure Screenshot A2)

FIGURE SCREENSHOT A1

FIGURE SCREENSHOT A2

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## Humor Section

### Length:

generally shoot for 1-3 short paragraphs  
a short introduction with a simple bulleted list is completely acceptable  
75-200 words, shoot for around 150 on average

Groupon humor is strange, surprising, nonsensical, absurd.

It's not offensive or mean-spirited.

Read more about Groupon Voice.

Here are some exemplary humor sections:

### bulleted lists

short form - 4-5 bullets, 1 line each  
Memories Worth Preserving With a Tattoo  
Children's Books To Help You Sleep Like a Baby  
Charities You Can Feel Good About  
Assume the Position  
The Five Difference between Football and Baseball  
long form - 3 bullets, 2-3 lines each  
Thy Silver Tongue  
The Borges Cafe  
Trapcakes  
point / counterpoint

good idea vs bad idea // before & after  
New Shirt, No Shirt  
Day Spa: Nights

What a Difference a Cup Makes  
do's & don'ts  
Sharing vs. Scaring  
The Do's and Don'ts of Teaching Kids How to Ride a Bike  
fake history

encyclopedia entries, biographies  
Origin of Zeno's Paradox  
The Sport of Dukes  
Napoleon: French and a Centaur  
timelines  
Innovations in Basketball  
Hawks vs. Wizards  
Our Laser Nation  
How To's

Numbered Steps, Tips and Recipes  
DIY For Lazy People  
Spice Girl  
Interactive Imaginations  
Enjoy Your Massage More  
dramatic prose / 1st chapter of imaginary novel

The Roguish Rapier  
Tough as Nails  
Streets of Barcelona: The Duel  
unreliable narrator

explanation of a subject by someone not informed  
Mythish  
What is Natural Selection?  
FAQs

Common Questions About Buying a Dog  
Who Ya Gonna Call? (Not Us)  
Indoor Kids  
puzzles / riddles / brain teasers

joke puzzles (no solutions)  
Pretzel Logic (LINK TK)  
Step Into The BrainTrap!  
real puzzles  
Love's Lightsabers Lost  
Fields of Cthulhu  
Prixes of Our Lives  
quotes

phrases and icebreakers  
Guide to Art-Museum Banter  
How to Talk Like a Symphony Buff  
Impersonal Trainers  
Confirm Your Pour  
fake reviews  
ex: Wall & Ceiling reviews (Ben entry, can't find link)  
Social Climbers  
America's Angriest Mime  
Multiple Choice

Do You Need a Wax  
Your Crime Potential  
Episode Guides

Duncan Hunter, The Change gamer  
Face/Off: The Animated Adventures  
World's Most Deadliest Crab-Grab  
Satchel Rand, Lovelorn Movie Adventurer  
Transcripts  
Reno Raines: Renegade Acupuncturist  
The Continuing Adventures of Manny & Peddy  
The Amazing Food-Doug  
The First Haircut  
Verse

Poetry  
A Sonnet to Beer and Bacon  
Poetry of the Body  
Previously on Catch 23  
Song Lyrics  
Abs & Booty Lyrics  
The Origins of City Girl (City Girl Cafe, Boston LINK?)  
Oaths  
Macho Man  
Images, Charts, Graphs

Propose with Groupon's Help  
Jeans vs Genes  
You Said a Mindful  
Found historical documents

Before Bicycles Were Accepted  
Grolph  
A Word From Our Spa-nsers

Palindromes, anagrams, and other language play

The Pilates Code

Portmaneau-Mania!

Groupon's Customizable Missed-Connection Ad Generator

Biff! Pow! Maroosh!

SushiDude.com

Correspondences

Letters From Bootcamp

Postcard From Radio City

Reveal strange info about our staff & internal operations

Vintners

Groupon Staff Biopics (Blockbuster)

Totally dry actual reference material

1,000 Words

Jokes

Insensitive Millionaire Jokes

Working on Your Funnybone

The Right Jokes for the Right Disease

If-Than

Too many X (find example)

Eat out or Dine In? (Roommates, snakes)

Friends or More? Date

When to accept a hand massage (asili)

Draw more stuff

blueprints, diagrams, concrete poems

restaurant placemats

mazes

diagrams

face origami drawings

Videos

Only do these if they can be recycled, not deal-specific

Puppet cast

Office interviews

Sketches

Dramatic readings

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## How is Groupon Transparent?

We never run deals with "gotchas." No "minimum bill" requirements or other surprises—we simply won't feature a business if that's what the business requests.

The reasonable restrictions that our generous merchants ask for (like, make sure to tip your servers, can't combine with other offers, etc.) are prominently displayed in the fine print restrictions at the top of the site—just below the buy button. In fact, it's not really "fine" print at all.

If there's anything remotely uncommon, like "not valid Tuesdays," we'll and call it out prominently in the write-up.

We have a team of fact checkers, researchers, writers, and editors scrutinizing every single deal to make sure that

- a) the business has a good track record
- b) the deal and business are represented completely transparently

Every fact must be verified

Never write unsubstantiated, opinionated selling points (such as superlatives like "Best Waffles In the Chicago")...just present the verifiable, objective facts in a fun, engaging, way and let the readers decide for themselves if it sounds like something they want

Retail Value: If we can't verify that a business won an award, we can't print it. Say we feature a year-long gym membership for \$150, and the gym tells us it's worth \$300, but we discover that most new customers can walk in and sign up for with new customer discount at just \$200. We'll always say it's worth \$200 because that's what the average customer would normally pay. It doesn't matter to us that the perceived value and savings percentage goes down when we do this. All that matters to us is giving our customers the straight story.

Reviews: Specific reviews that we select to be featured must meet this criteria:

Must be relevant to deal

Must be representative of overall reviews trends

Selection from an individual quote must be representative of larger quote from which it is taken

If a business has bad reviews, we probably won't run it...unless we think there's a reason our customers will want the deal anyway. In this case, we can run the deal, but we must call out the negative reviews.

We have an open discussion board for every deal—no other deal site does this.

Discussion boards let people ask questions, as well as criticize us (in front of the whole world!) if they think we're being misleading, offensive, etc. Even though discussion boards tend to not be representative of the average person, and often attract only the most negative voices, we willingly make ourselves vulnerable to that in the name of complete and total transparency. And hey...we want a way to respond to any questions/criticisms a customer may have, because more often than not they just didn't read the write-up!

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Factcheck Checklist - for public use

Price Point and percentage (normal value and discounted price)

Against Salesforce and vendor website  
In header, subheader, e-mail, and all copy

If no prices on vendor site, get rate card from sales rep or call the business to verify

Check site to make sure there are no ongoing sales or discounts that would diminish the value of the Groupon. If there are, check with rep to see if the sale will be over by the date the Groupon runs.

For events, check the prices of all of the dates listed.

If there is more than one possible value, make sure the full range is clearly stated in the write-up. In the e-mail subject, list the value as "Up to [highest percentage value] Off"

Entree prices, spa prices, etc.

Vendor name (exact spelling)

Against vendor website  
In header, subheader, e-mail, and all copy

Address (numerical and neighborhood, if stated)

Against Salesforce and vendor website  
Sales points/offer details

Check against Salesforce

Check against vendor website

Reviews

Rating is correct

Reviews/reviewers exist

Reviewers' usernames are spelled correctly

Check that review page is for the correct location

Links

Go to the right place, e.g. reviews

Awards and Press

Verified on publication website or by PDF of announcement/story

A mention in the article or a feature

Any other facts we assert in the write-up

History of vendor, experience of staff, décor

Event date, details, etc.

Check that any major downsides that a customer might feel surprised by are clearly called out. Example: The deal is only valid at one location of a chain with many locations.

Check that the write-up doesn't highlight any services not offered through the deal, which could potentially be misleading. Example: The write-up mentions happy hour specials, but the Groupon is not valid with any other offers.

Language

Is this a gift certificate, a voucher, or a "\$20 for \$45 worth of..." (for example)

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Copy Editing Style Guide

Default to CMS, unless listed here.

Prepositions

Words

Food Terms

Hedders

Numerals

Names

Reviews

Punctuation

Regions

Values

Exhibits

## Prepositions

For businesses:

50% off at

\$\_ Groupon to, e.g. \$50 Groupon to Opera. Note for services, it should read \$50 Groupon for fine cuisine at Opera.

## Words

3-D

a.k.a.

aesthetician, not esthetician

all right

ambience, not ambiance

Angus (beef, burger, etc.)

anyone vs. anybody: Per Garner's Modern American Usage, these terms are interchangeable; however, anyone is used much more frequently in print and online.

baba gannouj

belly dance

blond, in all cases, despite gender (as dictated by Gardner's Modern American Usage)

boot camp

café, unless part of the merchant name

cancellation, canceled

chili (both the pepper and the food)

Chiropractors: If you feel you need to refer to a Chiropractor as a Doctor (if the vendor refers to him/herself as Doctor Spiney on their website, for example), you can only do so if you can confirm they have received Doctorate of Chiropractic, in which case you should say "Doctor of Chiropractic" on first reference. After that, "Dr." ok in following references.

couture—don't use this unless you're actually talking about couture, which you're probably not; use design or something equivalent instead

coworker

décor

dietitian, not dietician

dodgeball

donut

drive-thru

DJ

email

entree, not entrée

flat-screen TVs

flutist, not flautist

go-kart

gray, not grey

health care (noun), health-care (compound adjective)

homemade  
hour-long (but prefer one-hour, i.e. "one-hour massage")  
house-made  
Internet  
kids' (when talking about "kids' classes")  
Kobe beef  
makeup (noun)  
mani-pedi  
masseur/masseuse: Avoid; these terms may have unsavory connotations. Instead, "massage therapist" or "licensed massage therapist."  
mask, not masque (when referring to beauty treatment)  
mouthwatering  
papier-mâché  
pick-up (noun), pick up (verb)  
Pilates (capitalized)  
Q&A  
R & B  
racecar  
rock 'n' roll  
rollycoaster, not rollercoaster  
shareable  
showtime is preferred, not show time (when referring to start times of plays, etc.)  
skincare  
spicy up, not spice up (verb)  
standout as a noun, stand-out as an adjective  
stand-up  
surefire, not sure-fire  
Tex-Mex  
theater, unless it's theatre in the vendor name  
thumbs-up (noun)  
transferable, not transferrable  
T-shirt  
tzatziki sauce  
U.S. not US is Groupon style (when an adjective, periods dropped when incorporated into abbreviations such as USPS, etc.; United States as noun)  
website, web  
WiFi  
workout (noun), work out (verb)  
x-ray  
yearlong  
yo' mama  
yoga: capitalize yoga styles, except when it's generic adjectives such as "hot yoga", "power yoga", etc. (see here and here for more info)  
zip code  
zip line

Always spell out the number of tickets the Groupon will get the customer, whether singular or plural:

> ACCEPTABLE SINGULAR TICKET DESCRIPTIONS: \$50 for One Ticket // \$50 for a Ticket // \$50 Ticket (least preferable, only if you're desperate for space)

> ACCEPTABLE PLURAL TICKET DESCRIPTIONS: \$150 for Two Tickets.

> Never say "\$50 tickets" when referring to a single ticket.

Food Terms

barbecue

Bellini

Bloody Mary (capitalized)

blue cheese

buttercream

cheeses: Groupon style is to not capitalize the names of cheeses, e.g. parmesan, swiss, gruyere, etc.

cheesesteak

crème brûlée

crêpe

danish (as a pastry)

éclairs

entree, not entrée

falafel

fillet, but filet mignon

french fries

french toast

Funyuns

jalapeño

kaiser roll

kebab

mac 'n' cheese

mahi-mahi

naan

omelette

pad thai

paninis (pl.)

pierogies (pl.)

po' boy

portobello

Reuben

rib eye, rib-eye sandwich

whiskey, not whisky

wines: capitalize when the wine is from a region. Here's a working list of wines from regions:

Bordeaux

Chenin blanc

Chianti

Gewurztraminer  
Riesling  
Shiraz

General capitalization rule for foods: Do not capitalize countries/people for food unless it is a style of food; i.e., eggs benedict, turkish coffee, cobb salad, english muffin; but Chicago(-style) pizza, New York(-style) pizza.

Hedders

Make hedders as short as possible, e.g. '\$20 for a Massage at Spa' is '\$20 Massage at Spa'. When a modifier precedes a noun, add "for a", e.g. '\$99 for a One-Night Stay at the Omni' or '\$20 for an Indulgent Facial'.

See "Dolla Dolla Bill Amounts Y'all" subhedder for more info.

Numerals

Spell out single-digit numbers.

If a unit of measurement (not quantity) always use numerals, e.g. inches, feet, age.

Names

Nights: longer than three words, place in quotations; shorter, don't. e.g. "Find the Living Statues Wednesdays" and Hard Tequila Thursdays.

Entrees: not capitalize, unless it is a proper noun.

Drinks: do not capitalize, unless it is a proper noun, e.g. Tom Collins or Bloody Mary versus gin and tonic.

Capitalize The in a company name if it's part of the company name

Publications: The is never italicized in the publication name, e.g.

DO: the Chicago Tribune

DON'T: The Chicago Tribune

In block quote attributions, remove "the" entirely

DO: "Me likey!" – Chicago Tribune

DON'T: "Me likey!" – the Chicago Tribune

Magazine is only italicized and capitalized if it's an official part of the title, e.g. If publication name is Time, write Time magazine (magazine here is a descriptor); if publication name is New York Times Magazine, write New York Times Magazine.

In block quote attributions, you should remove magazine altogether if it's not in the title, include it if it is, e.g.

"I loved it!" – Time

"Me loves!" – New York Times Magazine

Websites: not italicized.

Video games: italicized.

Boat names: italicized.

Awards: do not put in quotations, e.g. Best Alternative Workout, Best Actress for a Movie

Business names: factchecker check how to spell business names. punctuation in a business name is included if it's how it's spelled in copy (not on the logo). "The" is included and capitalized if part of the business name.

## Reviews

If reviews are only from one place, do not list the site again in the attribution, simply list the name after the en dash and link to the review

Publication names: See above, in publications in the "names" category.

Blog names are not italicized, e.g. Groublogpon, not Groublogpon.

Common Sites:

City Pages

Citysearch

CityVoter

DailyCandy

Frommer's

Gayot

IgoUgo

Insider Pages

Judy's Book

Kudzu

Metromix

OpenTable

TripAdvisor

Urbanspoon

Yahoo! Local and Yahoo! Travel

Yellow Pages

Yelp

Zagat

## Dolla Dolla Bill Amounts Y'all

The rules determining how to use dollar amounts are different depending on if you're writing a title or in the body of a write-up.

Titles: Using a dollar amount as an adjective in the title of a deal is preferred for concision.

DON'T: \$30 for a Massage a Four Hands Spa (\$60 Value)

DO: \$30 Massage at Four Hands Spa (\$60 Value)

Body: Dollar amounts should not be used as adjectives in body of a write-up, as it may confuse the reader:

DON'T: Today's deal gets you a \$30 massage at Four Hands Spa, a \$60 value

DO: For \$30, today's deal gets you a massage at Four Hands Spa, a \$60 value.

## Foreign Words

All foreign words need to be double-checked. Go to <http://www.google.com/landing/searchtips/#dictionary>, type in the word, and see if it's used correctly in the copy.

## Punctuation

Use the serial comma

Colons and semi-colons: while it's correct to punctuate paragraph lists with colons and semi-colons, Groupon style is to break up long paragraph lists using periods (if you don't bullet the list).

For example:

But consider what the pair can accomplish when working side by side: Ken Griffey Sr. helped Ken Griffey Jr. become one of baseball's greatest sluggers by rewarding him with a 12-egg smoothie for every three thousand practice swings he took; Carrot Top performed ventriloquist gigs using his son as a puppet; and Antonio and Mario Cerra joined culinary forces to create an Italian restaurant that serves mouthwatering dishes.

should be:

But consider what the pair can accomplish when working side by side. Ken Griffey Sr. helped Ken Griffey Jr. become one of baseball's greatest sluggers by rewarding him with a 12-egg smoothie for every three thousand practice swings he took. Carrot Top performed ventriloquist gigs using his son as a puppet. And Antonio and Mario Cerra joined culinary forces to create an Italian restaurant that serves mouthwatering dishes.

## Regions

South Side, not Southside

## Values

up to a XX value

insert values of items after the full item description, e.g. "House specialties include the burger, a half-pound patty piled high with onions, tomatoes, pickles, lettuce, and your choice of cheese (\$7); the lasagna, stacked with homemade marinara sauce, Italian sausage, roasted red peppers, and mounds of mozzarella (\$10)..."

## Exhibits

Italicize, not in quotes, e.g. *\_Ansel Adams: 100 Photographs of the Sky and Mountains\_*, not "Ansel Adams: 100 Photographs of the Sky and Mountains"

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