



**B2B CONTENT  
EXCELLENCE  
SERIES.**



**the  
marketing  
pod**

# **THE POD GUIDE TO WRITING COPY FOR DIGITAL ADS.**



# GETTING YOUR SHORT FORM IN GOOD FORM\_

**Any experienced content writer will tell you that creating short form content can often be just as challenging as crafting a 5000 word masterpiece.**

No, it won't always require a deep dive into background research or the same amount of effort spent devising the perfect structure, but nor is it a five minute task. When it comes to writing copy for digital ads, there is usually an awful lot to say and very few words or characters to say it with. This is particularly true in the B2B world, where the need for accurate technical details and a tendency towards industry jargon can make it harder to distil brand messages or product benefits into short paragraphs and punchy one-liners.

This is your concise best practice guide to writing copy for digital ads. Its aim is to help you confidently craft the kind of copy that will not only pass the Google test, but will also ignite the interest of your target audience - and all within the tiniest and tightest word limits you're ever likely to come across.

**So, if you're writing Google Search or Display ads for the first time, or want to know how to create more impactful ads on LinkedIn and Twitter, this guide is for you.**

## CONTENTS\_

- Getting your short form in good form
- Before you begin
- Know your limits
- Attention grabbing headlines
- Version testing



# BEFORE YOU BEGIN

While the focus of this guide is copy, it's important to recognise that unless you're talking about text-only Google Search ads, the best performing digital ads will usually call upon three different skill sets: copywriting, design and digital wizardry.

So, are your design skills up to scratch? Most attention grabbing ads will incorporate an image or illustration, and even if they don't, much can rest upon the right typeface and layout. With a copywriter and designer working closely together, it's much easier to bring small amounts of words to life, and to expand on or reiterate the meaning of your words with visual cues. Here at Pod, we're lucky enough to have a whole range of marketing specialists at our disposal, including some pretty amazing designers, and we often find that once 'designed up', ad copy can be tweaked or reduced, to let the image do more of the work.

With so little time available to capture the interest of your online audience (who are often multitasking and always easily distracted), that old adage 'a picture speaks a thousand words' has never been more true.

## Write, design, optimise

Next, you'll need to check you have the right digital optimisation skills at your disposal. We'll talk a little more about testing different versions of copy below but it's worth saying upfront that no matter how well you think you know your audience, their engagement with your digital ads will often surprise you. The ability to closely monitor and adapt your digital campaigns is indispensable. If you don't have the time or resources to do so, it's worth investing in expert support in this area; you'll be sure to see a real difference if you do.

And so... on to the words.

# KNOW YOUR LIMITS

We copywriters love nothing better than a good brief - and one of the most essential details you need when creating digital ad copy is a word limit. Never start work without it. In this section we'll take a look at the word and character limits for the main types of digital ad, before moving on to how you can maximise your impact within those limits.

## Google ads

When you're writing ads for Google, there are two main types to consider: search ads and display ads. Search ads are copy-only ads that display on Google's results page, above and below standard search results. When used properly, they will get a prime position at the top of the page, with the only difference between a search ad and a standard search result being that the word 'ad' is shown.

## A key tip on keywords

Your audience will notice your headline first so it is important to include keywords that they might have searched for. Include more of them in your description - and don't forget a call to action here too!

At first glance, it may not look like much work goes into the ad listings you see on a Google search results page. But consider that a copywriter has very tight character limits to work within, and that they will often have written upwards of 20 different versions of the advert that reaches you, and it quickly becomes obvious that these things take time to get right.

Your character limits look like this:

- **Headline** - 30 characters x3
- **Description lines** - 90 characters x 2
- **Path** - 15 characters x2

Or, in practice:

## The Marketing Pod | B2B marketing agency | strategic, creative campaigns

From brand strategy and planning to content and design, we have just the expert you need.

Call on us for digital marketing, ABM, PR, content, video, and social media management.



## Google display ads

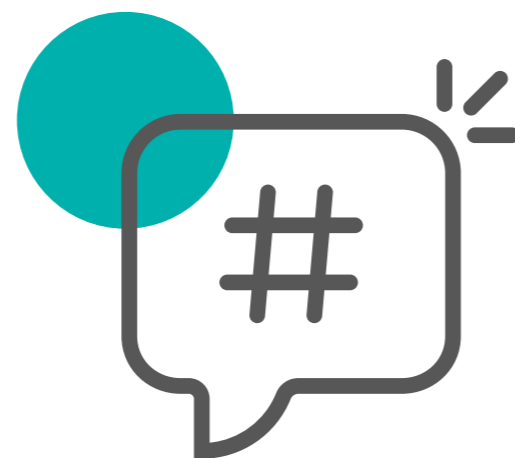
When writing Google display ads, word limits don't exist in the same way. The only hard and fast rule is to keep it 'short and snappy'. So much of the success of a display ad will depend on the way it is promoted, whether it's uploaded or responsive, how good your retargeting is... all things that are good to understand but beyond the scope of this guide\*. The copywriter's job is simply to try to make a powerful statement in as few words as possible and make sure people understand what they're looking at (and hopefully clicking on). Be clear, be concise, and never use a long word when a short one will do. Remember, your designer will be creating versions of the ad to fit lots of different specifications, including tall and thin - a 14 letter word is always going to present a problem.

## Social media ads

When it comes to social media, there are two key ways to promote your messages: paid ads and sponsored posts. A sponsored post is page content that you can choose to sponsor to gain wider reach. So, if you post new content and it starts to gain traction you can quickly and easily boost its performance by putting ad spend behind it. A paid ad looks very similar to your sponsored content but won't appear on your own profile page. It allows you to create content and promote your business without cluttering your regular content feed.

**Business to business organisations will primarily use LinkedIn and Twitter, although other social platforms can provide opportunity under the right circumstances. The following pages give a fast guide to the word limits for these two main platforms - but you can find the character limits for Facebook and Instagram, along with some useful hints and tips for all platforms on our digital cheat sheets.**

Get in touch if you'd like to receive our cheat sheets.



\* Our digital team works closely with clients to maximise the success of their digital display ads. If you'd like their help with your next campaign, why not get in touch for a chat?





# LINKEDIN ESSENTIALS

## 1. Copy

LinkedIn posts can be up to **700 characters** long on company page posts, and **1,300 characters** for statuses on individual accounts. However LinkedIn will cut off your post with a "see more" button after **140 characters** - so put the important stuff first.

## 2. Types of posts

- **Text-based posts** – The LinkedIn algorithm appreciates long-form posts because it keeps readers on the website a lot longer. If it suits the brand you're posting from, emojis are a great way to brighten up a post, but only use them if you're sure they're appropriate for your audience. Some people will be put off by them.
- **Image posts** – Visuals perform 3x better than text posts. Uploading business and work-related images alongside captivating copy will be sure to increase engagement with your posts.
- **Video posts** – Videos are 5x more likely to get engagement (likes, comments and shares).

## 3. Links

Many posts have links in them and these links can be shown in numerous ways. The link could possibly pull up an image

(which is commonly used when posting articles). Or it could be a part of the copy, in which case it can either be displayed as it is or, if the link needs tracking, it can become a bitly link. This allows you to track how many clicks the link has had.

## 4. Images

If an image is being added onto a post, it needs to be the correct size. The LinkedIn post image size: **1200 x 1200** (desktop) **1200 x 628** (mobile).

## 5. Videos

- LinkedIn video size: **256 x 144** (minimum) to **4096 x 2304** (maximum).
- Maximum LinkedIn video length: **10 minutes**.
- Minimum video length: **3 seconds**.
- LinkedIn supports these video formats: AVI, MP4, MKV, FLV, MPEG-4, MPEG-1, ASF, WebM, QuickTime, WMV2, WMV3, VP8, VP9, and H264/AVC.
- Video file size: **5GB max**.
- Video captions: optional but recommended to increase engagements.
- Video sound: optional.
- LinkedIn videos can either be vertical or horizontal. Vertical videos will automatically get cropped into a square on the newsfeed.



# TWITTER ESSENTIALS

## 1. Copy for post

Twitter posts can be up to **280 characters**, but don't feel that you have to max out the character count. Posts generally receive better engagement with a word count between **71- 100 characters**.

## 2. Links

If the post has a link, find out where it is going to and if it will be tracked or not. If tracked it will need a bitly link - this will enable you to track how many people have clicked on the link through to the landing page.

## 3. Types of Posts

- **Questions** - Twitter is a great platform to be conversational - try asking questions via polls and tweets to maximise your engagement. It is also a great way to get feedback on business products and developments.
- **Visuals** - As with most platforms, users engage better with visuals, whether these are images, videos or GIFs - all are a great way to capture a users' attention on the platform. Twitter's internal data shows that there are over 2 billion video views per day making this one of the best ways to get across your business message. Make sure to add in company logos and keep it short for better engagement and leads.

- **Clear CTAs** - This applies to all platforms, but Twitter engagement is typically higher when there is a clear call-to-action in the post.

## 4. Images

Twitter post image size: **1024 x 512**.

## 5. Videos

Twitter videos can be horizontal or vertical.

- Video file size: **512MB**
- Minimum video length: **no minimum**
- Maximum video length: **140 seconds**
- Maximum frame rate: **40fps and 1:1 pixel ratio**
- Video captions: Available
- Video sound: Available
- Format: MP4
- Recommended size: **1280 x 1024** pixels (Horizontal) **1200 x 1900** pixels (Vertical).
- Minimum size: **32 x 32 pixels**
- Maximum size: **1920 x 1200 pixels**
- Twitter video size: **720 x 720** (square), **1280 x 720** (landscape), **720 x 1280** (portrait).

# ATTENTION GRABBING HEADLINES

## You had me at 'hello'

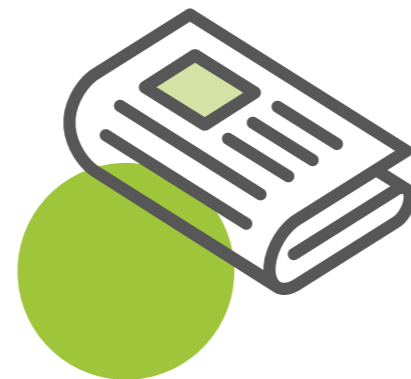
**We've already had a little look at headlines, but let's consider them in a bit more detail. After all, they're really not an easy thing to get right.**

Writing headlines for digital ads means trying to come up with a killer customer value proposition that fits neatly within a teeny, tiny character limit. So our top tip? Work backwards. The likelihood is that you already have a carefully honed landing page full of brilliant messaging. Using that copy to write your ad headlines will not only hopefully save you some time, it will also save you from throwing away money on ad spend, by making sure that the people who click through are less likely to bounce away. Echoing the phrases and messaging lets them know that they've come to the right place - what they were promised in the ad is what they will find on your website.

Keywords will always be a crucial consideration in a digital ad headline, but try not to pack in the keywords at the expense of making your message compelling. Take a step back to consider what your customer needs and pain points are - and begin to address that with your headline. How will you solve their problem? For example, if your product or service will help time-poor professionals streamline a core activity, get that in the headline.

## Customers love nothing better than congruence

The closer the match between the message in your ad and the message on your landing page, the happier they are likely to be - and Google will like it too.



## A TOP TIP

Focus on the **benefits to the customer** rather than the features of your product, no matter how proud you are of technical spec or capabilities - your audience will usually be far more interested in how it makes *their* life easier.



## Can you tell a (micro) story?

Even the shortest form content is most powerful when it tells a story. Of course, this is easier when you can accompany your words with an image - so perhaps it's a tip for display and social ads rather than search ads. Before you start writing, think about the longer brand story that you are telling on your website, in your blogs, through your thought leadership...

then see if you can distill it, to capture the essence of that story in your ad copy. This works best when building brand awareness rather than advertising specific products or services, but can hopefully provide some inspiration for anyone with digital ad writing block.

# VERSIONS AND TESTING

Testing performance is a crucial part of optimising any digital advertising campaign. For a copywriter, this could mean creating upwards of 20 different versions of the same ad. It's an exercise in patience - but an essential one. To help you get started, try to think of a few different ways of approaching your subject matter which always keep the customer benefit in sight. For example:

- **Ask a question** - 'Wasting time on excel spreadsheets? We know a better way.'
- **Address your audience** - 'If you're spending long hours in excel, we might have something you'll like.'
- **Solve a problem** - 'Our software can process data from any source, in any format'
- **Be challenging** - 'We know our software will save you more time than the competition. Let us show you how.'

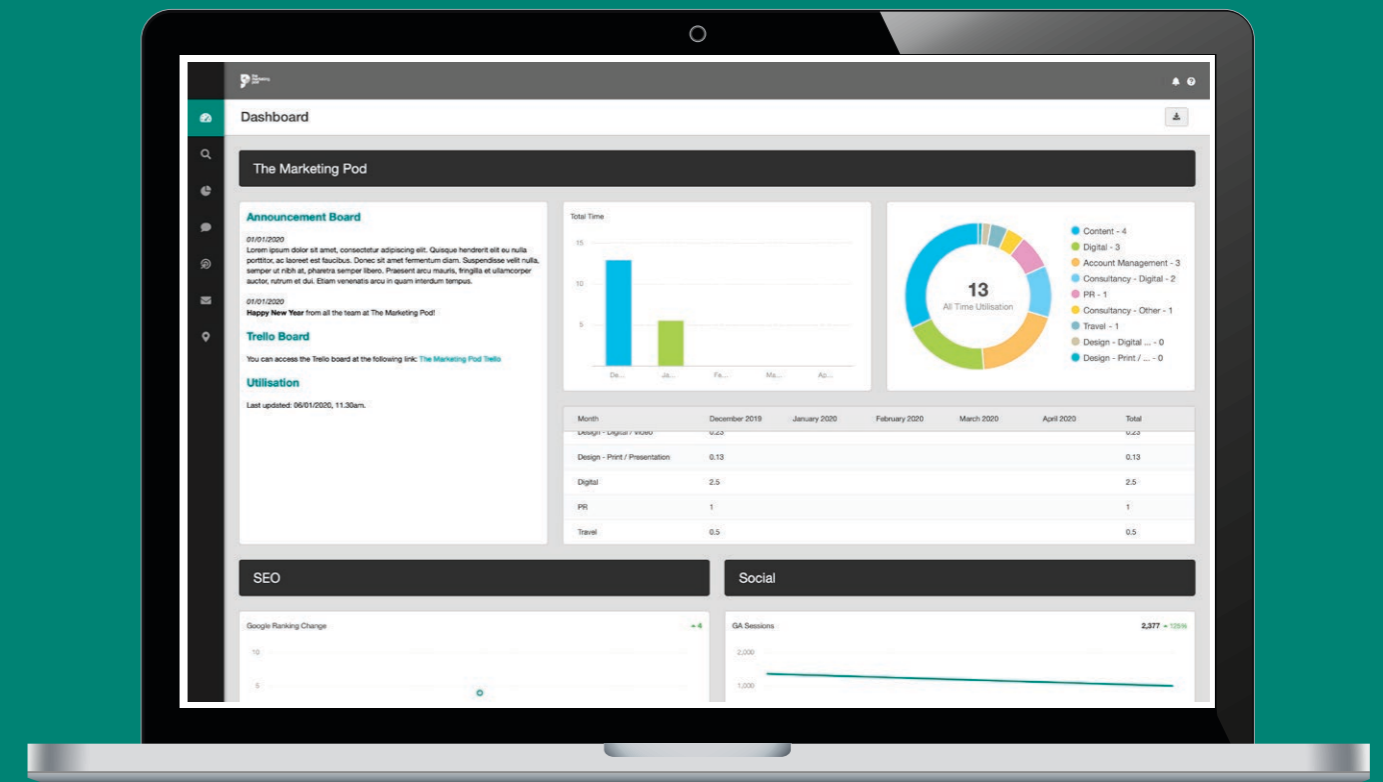
## Top tip

If you're writing numerous versions of a Google search ad, it can help to start with the descriptions (your highest word count) and then go back to distil the message and write the headlines for each.

Your variations don't need to be dramatic. Sometimes a different adjective or a slightly more/less formal tone (within tone of voice guidelines) can make all the difference. The trick is to give your digital wizards enough variations to play with, enabling them to find out what resonates best with your audience and which versions generate the best results for your business.

Once you have your digital ad versions ready, with an appropriate array of different images where required, you're ready to start promoting, testing and measuring. Each platform you use will have an analytics tool and while they vary in user-friendliness, they can be extremely useful. However, if you're trying to compare performance across several different platforms - or make comparisons to offline marketing campaigns - measuring and optimising can become quite an unwieldy task. In these circumstances, a customisable analytics dashboard becomes an invaluable tool, and every digital marketers best friend.

The Marketing Pod gives all clients who use our digital services access to their own bespoke dashboard. It's a fast, user-friendly tool that helps you stay completely informed on the performance of all of your online (and off-line) marketing activity.



## Not getting the performance you need from your digital marketing?

If you know digital marketing makes sense for your business but need help planning, writing, designing or managing your next campaign, we're here to help.

**Why not get in touch today?**

**hello@themarketingpod.co.uk**



the  
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