

How to Create Effective Brand Guidelines



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Introduction

Introduction

Every company needs a consistent brand. Branding defines what your organization is, what it does, and even how profitable it is.

Presenting your brand in a cohesive way is critical because it allows customers and prospects to recognize it instantly — and [simply recognizing a brand is a big factor](#) in whether someone will choose to become a customer.

Strong, cohesive brands build trust with your customers and prospects based on past experiences. As business is increasingly conducted via digital channels, being able to create rapid connections has never been so important.

But brand consistency doesn't just happen. It's an outcome of good brand management — which is the process that enables an organization to extend the brand and its elements consistently across all channels to deliver the brand promise.

At Outfit we empower organizations to build strong, consistent brands through great brand management every day.

The first step to protecting your brand, ensuring brand consistency, and safeguarding your brand's impact in the market, is to establish a clear brand style guide that not only explains how your brand should be presented in all situations, but how it should not appear.

Together, Outfit and HubSpot have joined forces to create the definitive Brand Style Guide Kit to help you develop a stronger, more consistent, and more recognizable brand.

7 YouTube Video Description Templates

So what is a brand style guide?

A brand style guide — sometimes referred to as a brand ‘bible’ brand standard or brand guidelines — sets out all the rules and standards that govern how your brand should be represented, including the logo, brand colors, typography, language, photography, and more.

These should link back to the brand purpose, which enables staff, partners, customers, and the market in general to understand your brand, what you’re trying to achieve, and why it should be represented in a certain way.

An effective brand style guide:

- Enables staff to represent the brand consistently
- Tells partners and other external stakeholders how to treat your brand
- Saves your organization time
- Strengthens brand cohesion and builds brand recognition
- Protects your company’s most important assets
- Enables you to update your brand efficiently and effectively

In the following pages, we’ll outline what it takes to create an effective brand style guide, and provide all the examples, inspiration, and tools you’ll need to create your own.

We’ve also included two completely customizable brand style guide templates with this offer. We suggest following along with this guide as you work with your team to build your brand’s style guide from these templates.

Chapter 1

Establish Your Brand



Telling the story of your brand, what it stands for, and how it has evolved is an important part of defining your brand and its values, and building trust with your community. Your brand story, will provide context for, and give meaning to, the visual elements you go on to develop to represent your brand, creating a cohesive brand image.

What to include in your brand story

When defining your brand story, consider including the following elements:

- Name
- Origins
- Purpose
- Promise
- Values
- Personality



Clearly defining elements such as how your brand got started, the reason it exists, where the name came from, and your brand's values and personality will provide guardrails to help you formulate a clear visual identity.

However you choose to present your brand's story, it is the foundation of your brand experience, and will inform the rest of your style guide.

What's in a brand name?

Whether your brand is named after the company founder, references the vision of the brand, or is somewhat more random, explaining the origin of the brand name provides valuable context for customers.

Cadbury takes its name from John Cadbury, who founded the company in Birmingham, UK, in 1824, believing chocolate could be a force for good in the world.

After first calling it Cadabra (a reference to magic) and Relentless.com, Jeff Bezos picked the name [Amazon](#) out of the dictionary, wanting a name that started with 'a' and liking the fact that the Amazon is not only the world's largest river, it 'blows all the other rivers away'. Electronics brand [BenQ](#) was derived from its core values: Bringing Enjoyment 'N' Quality to Life.



However your brand was named, be clear about how it should be written: for example, [Mailchimp](#) explains the subtle changes to its name as the company's focus has broadened.

And if there's a chance your brand name could be mispronounced, take the opportunity to eliminate confusion: Ice cream brand [Häagen-Dazs](#) explains all in a catchy video about the brand's history.

Define your brand purpose

Brand purpose is your brand's reason for being beyond making money. It should connect with customers on an emotional level and helps customers choose brands that align with their beliefs.

[Google's](#) mission is clear: "Our mission is to organize the world's information and make it universally accessible and useful."

[Facebook's](#) corporate mission is to "Give people the power to build community and bring the world closer together".

[Ikea's](#) mission is to "create a better everyday life for the many people".

Make a brand promise

A brand promise is the value or experience your customers can expect to receive when they interact with your company.

[Atlassian's](#) brand promise focuses on the benefits its software provides to teams: Our tools and practices will help teams work better together in an agile, open, and scalable way.

[Lego](#) offers four brand promises:

1. Play promise: Joy of building; Pride of creation
2. Partner promise: Mutual value creation
3. Planet promise: Positive impact
4. People promise: Succeed together

[Outfit's](#) brand promise focuses on the simple product truth: "We automate onbrand production at scale." Global bank HSBC takes an aspirational approach, launching the "Together we thrive" brand promise part-way through the COVID pandemic to emphasize the bank's commitment to co-creating prosperity within the communities it serves.



Successful brands need to be true to their DNA and their original values and heritage, but also to be fresh for what audiences and customers need today.

Leanne Cutts
CMO, HSBC Bank



Harness your brand personality

An attractive, funny or even provocative personality can be a huge asset for a brand. Describing the key character traits your brand embodies instantly makes it easier for designers, writers, and other creative contributors to ensure that the message they're communicating on any channel remains on-brand and dials up the appropriate personality trait.

[Atlassian](#) spells it out in detail in their brand style guide, describing its straighttalking brand personality by outlining 3 key personality traits:

- **Bold:** “We take a stand. Not everyone will agree with everything we say – and that’s ok. We state our position and back it up. We are clear and direct, acknowledge the hard truths... but are not cocky.”
- **Optimistic:** “We are upbeat, resourceful, and friendly. We motivate and demonstrate a can-do attitude to show our customers what good things are possible. We know that innovating and getting things done is messy, we acknowledge that, and then focus on the solutions together.”
- **Practical with a wink:** “We lend a helping hand. Tips, tricks, and how-tos are gold. We provide the right information at the right time. Having ‘just enough’ is better than all the things. We don’t take ourselves too seriously... We are free to be funny, but we don’t force it. It’s more about being ‘human’ than being ‘humorous’.”

[Figma](#) describes its brand personality through four “guidepost words”, but includes an explanation of what they mean:

- **Curious:** Clever, playful, imaginative. This is your friend with the far-out ideas. They always want to be learning more and considering the things that might not be obvious.
- **Vibrant:** Dynamic, confident, alive. Figma loves nerding out on certain topics and is proud of it.
- **Honest:** Inclusive, empathetic, approachable. We’re never afraid to admit that we don’t know everything, but together we can figure it out.
- **Bold:** Powerful, unexpected, non-conforming. We don’t live in the shoulds. We do what is right and true to us.

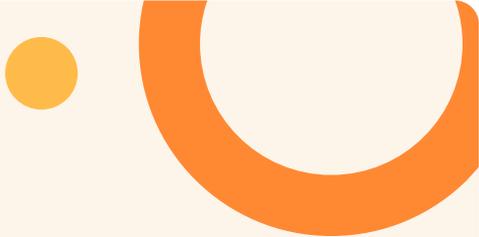
“Before we designed anything, we started with a lot of research to nail down our strategy. It helped to think of Figma the brand as a living entity to better bring it to life. If Figma were a person, how does it walk and talk, and breathe and live? It might wear different clothes every day, but it still has a distinct style.”

Tori Hinn
Creative Director, Figma

Present your brand values

We all act according to our values, and companies should as well, so it's important to take the time to define your brand values so they can easily be understood by your employees, customers, partners, and the market.

Atlassian's 5 brand values reflect the directness of its brand personality:

1. Open company, no bulls#!t
 2. Build with heart and balance
 3. Don't #@!% the customer
 4. Play, as a team
 5. Be the change you seek
- 

Google's published brand philosophy takes the form of '10 things we know to be true.' It's revised from time to time to ensure it's always relevant, and includes an updated version of its historical 'don't be evil' motto:

1. Focus on the user and all else will follow
 2. It's best to do one thing really, really well
 3. Fast is better than slow
 4. Democracy on the web works
 5. You don't need to be at your desk to need an answer
 6. You can make money without doing evil
 7. There's always more information out there
 8. The need for information crosses all borders
 9. You can be serious without a suit
 10. Great just isn't good enough
- 

Chapter 2

Build the Visual Foundation



Before choosing or updating your core brand elements, have a look at what your competitors are doing to make sure your brand stands out and accurately reflects your desired brand image.

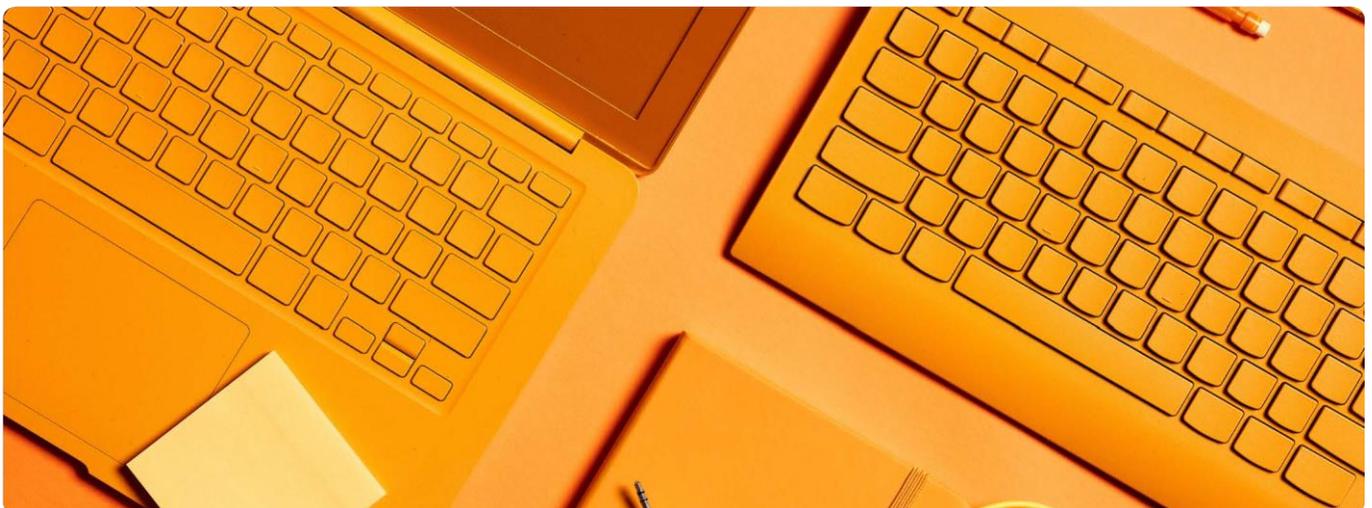
Strong brands have clearly identifiable colors, logos, and typefaces that make their visual identity easily recognizable, as well as clear rules for how these should — and shouldn't — be applied.

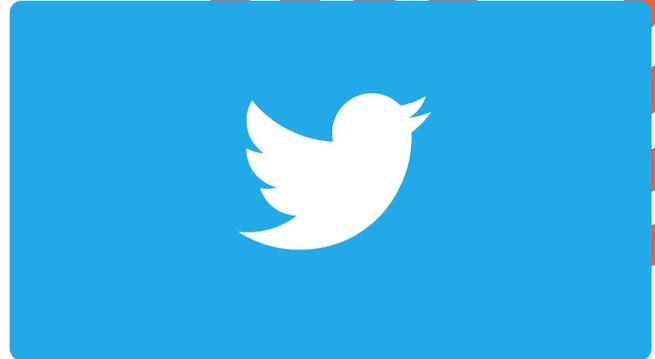
Love your logo

Logos are visual shortcuts for identifying a brand. They may be made up of symbols, shapes and stylized text or a combination of all three, and through the visual choices made, should evoke a company's brand story. For some brands, the logo is so wellknown it can be used independently of the brand name.

Primary logo

Provide your logo in a variety of sizes and file formats for download and show how it works in a variety of situations — the less you leave to chance, the better for your brand. You'll need different formats for print and digital, and also for designers, developers, and external partners, as well as internal users.





[Netflix's](#) logo evokes the arc of a vintage CinemaScope and features the brand wordmark in the signature Netflix red against a black background. Its brand guidelines also make clear how to use the logo against colored backgrounds, and the limited occasions on which it may appear in white.

[Twitter's](#) logo includes approved color treatments and other instructions, such as not to make the bird chirp, talk, or fly.

[Red Hat's](#) logo comprises a symbol and a word mark. It contains an updated reference to the red cap one of the founders, Marc Ewing, used to wear, which symbolizes helpfulness and goodwill. The [brand style guide](#) specifies several ways in which the elements may appear, as well as preferred treatments against colored backgrounds.

Secondary marks and symbols

Your brand should look consistent in every situation, from the tiniest favicon to the biggest poster or billboard. Your secondary logo, mark, or symbol can be used in places where your normal brand won't fit — such as the open tabs on your internet browser.

Secondary logos should evoke the main brand, repeating some of the shapes, colors, or elements. In some cases, you may have a symbol that can be used on its own, or a separate logo to identify your corporate brand identity.

Netflix's 'N' symbol is derived from the first letter of its wordmark and comes with its own usage recommendations.

Mailchimp features Freddie, whose winking face embodies the cheeky Mailchimp personality. He appears in the logo with the Mailchimp wordmark and in other places, such as the favicon.

HubSpot's brand guidelines outline when its distinctive 'sprocket' mark should be used on its own — "where the HubSpot brand has already been established, either through use of the full logo, in copy, or by voiceover".

Leaving nothing to chance, it outlines other acceptable instances in which it may want the sprocket to act as a subtle symbol of the HubSpot brand, such as on "T-Shirts, other merchandise, or environmental graphics like a wall mural" where the graphics should take precedence.

Facebook features the thumb icon, which is intended to represent liking something on Facebook, and comes with some clear dos and don'ts.

Facebook's brand style guide also specifies when and how the corporate entity should be treated, compared with the social networking platform.

Size and spacing

When you've worked so hard to create a logo that perfectly represents your organization or brand it's important it has space to breathe, or the impact of all that effort will be wasted.

Spotify specifies a minimum size and uses half the height of the icon to calculate the space around the logo.

Twitter specifies exclusion zones and minimum logo size.

Outfit uses the lowercase 'o' in its logo to measure the clearance zone.

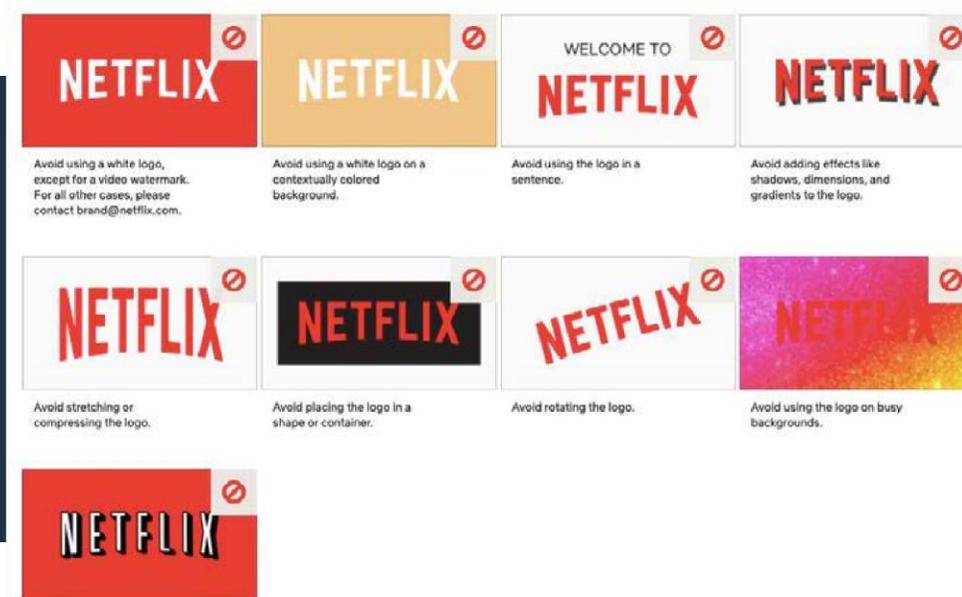
Facebook uses the height and width of its logo to calculate the exclusion zone:

That's why your logo should include specifications for minimum size, and how much space to include around the logo symbol or wordmark: the 'exclusion zone'.

Correct logo usage

Your brand style guide must be clear about how your logo should, and shouldn't, be used. This is to ensure your brand presents a cohesive, easily recognizable image in the market in every foreseeable situation in which it may be used.

Netflix has thought of every contingency when it comes to how its brand should not be used. It's a good



idea, as the video streaming company has done in its final example below, to list recent outdated logos to avoid.

[Spotify](#) and [Twitter](#) make their logo usage guidelines clear by thinking of every possibility.

Be color-wise

There are few things more crucial to rapid recognition of a brand than color — which is why it's so important for people who use your brand to get your official colors and usage right.

This includes your official brand colors, your extended color palette, and the colors against which your brand can be used. Reproduce the color, along with the RGB, HEX, CMYK, and PMS codes, and be clear about your primary, secondary, accent, and background colors.

Primary brand colors

Color should be used judiciously to evoke the emotion or experience with which your brand wants to be associated.

[Snapchat's](#) style guide specifies its official colors, along with their relative importance and how each should be used.

[Starbucks](#) features a range of greens for every occasion and outlines exactly importance. how

[Peloton](#) understands color can appear differently in print and on screen, and provides examples of offers slightly different color palettes 'Spotify green.' for each.

[Spotify](#) also provides examples of what not to do with

Extended color palette

Most brands find they need more than two or three colors to create on-brand marketing materials for the range of channels and occasions in which their brand appears. An extended color palette featuring a range of approved colors provides additional flexibility while continuing to safeguard brand consistency.

[Starbucks](#) complements its primary green and neutral colors with a different, extended color palette for each season.

its signature blue with a range of other colors.

[LinkedIn](#) updated its color palette to help make the brand warmer, complementing

[Slack's](#) brand style guides include a comprehensive range of primary and secondary colors, as well as typeface colors, and instructions for how to apply them.

Color ratios

Whatever your brand colors, it pays to stipulate the ratio in which those colors should be used. The University at Buffalo makes it very clear it wants to see its heritage blue dominating at 50%, followed by white (40%), light or dark gray (5%) and just a splash of one of its secondary colors.



Accessibility

Consider optimizing your brand choices to make your brand as accessible as possible. This may include nominating high color contrast ratios for text and interactive elements, considering mobile audiences, avoiding problematic color combinations such as red and green, and by not using color as the only differentiator, for example, when it comes to denoting text links.

It may also include using plain language, providing important information in text rather than images to make it accessible to screen readers, and captioning videos.

Here's how [Spotify](#) optimized its signature green for accessibility and legibility.

[Atlassian](#) offers comprehensive notes on how to ensure accessibility as part of its brand style guide.

Tackle typography

At its best, typography can distinguish your brand from the crowd, conveying your brand personality in an instant, attracting and holding your audience's attention, building recognition, establishing a sense of occasion, structuring information, and promoting understanding.

The typefaces you choose to represent your brand should be easy to read and flexible enough to cover all the times and places you need to say something.

Choosing a primary font

Consider choosing a range of primary fonts to suit different uses, platforms, and occasions. Nominate the different sizes and weights you'd like to see used to represent your brand.

While custom fonts can be very distinctive, don't forget to consider how your font choice impacts your online presence. Some channels, web servers, and marketing automation tools will override your custom font with a web standard font such as Helvetica or Arial. It's worth defining your digital fonts to ensure internet assets don't go rogue.

[Burger King](#) went retro for its first redesign in 20 years through its agency Jones Knowles Ritchie, harking back to the '60s with a big, juicy, custom font, Flame, used in Bold, Regular, and Sans variations.



“The idea with developing this typeface Flame was that it led us back to creative principles of ‘mouth watering’ and having the irreverence evoke natural organic shapes of food. It looks a little bit squishy and delicious, so you can almost taste the typeface.”

Lisa Smith

Executive Creative Director, Jones Knowles Ritchie

[Snapchat](#) sticks with just one font, Graphik, but showcases its preferred weights.

Secondary fonts

Secondary fonts should provide you with all the flexibility you need to communicate your brand in different channels, reflecting the different tones your brand may need to strike.

[Starbucks](#) uses three fonts: Sodo Sans (body copy), Lander (accent font), and Pike (functional headlines). Its brand website enables you to play around with its preferred sizes and weights.

Type scales

Type scales show how your fonts work together to communicate in a harmonious way and can be applied broadly to create a uniformity across a range of brand materials — for example, by increasing or decreasing fonts at the same ratio.

[Outfit's](#) primary fonts are GT Walsheim Bold, to be used for headlines, with Poppins Bold the open-source alternative. IBM Plex Sans is to be used for body copy, and IBM Plex Mono for captions and labels. The brand style guide explains how they work together.

Web fonts

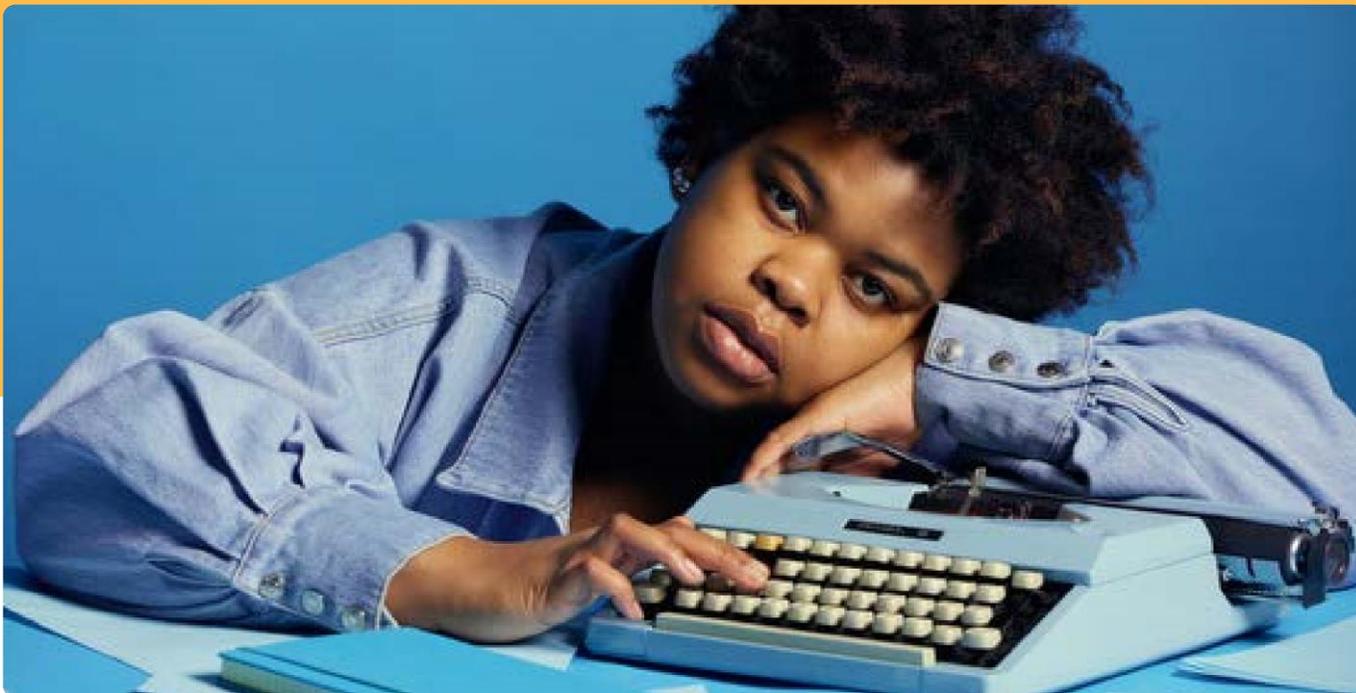
Some fonts work well in print but don't look great on screen, and vice-versa. If your brand exists mostly online, make sure you select fonts that are optimized for digital.

Similarly, if you're planning on translating your website into different languages, make sure your font comes in all the alphabets and with all the features you require.

It's also worth defining a fallback font to be used if your specified font is not available. The range of system fonts that come standard with most devices has improved, but you can also choose from a wide range of web fonts.

[IBM](#) uses only its custom IBM Plex font, which was designed for digital, and its amazing style guide specifies exactly how it should be used.





[Spotify](#) uses its custom font, Spotify Circular, but requests others use the default sans-serif font for the platform they're working on. It offers Spotify Circular for license and specifies a range of web fonts as well as readily available fallback fonts to be used, in its preferred order.

Typography principles

Give some guidance around how your typefaces should be presented: for example, leading and spacing, whether you center or justify copy, and font color.

[Sainsbury's](#) likes a ragged edge and the judicious use of its brand orange. It also provides examples of what not to do with its typeface.



Chapter 3

Refine Your Brand Architecture



If your organization includes a number of brands, it's important to organize and present them in a logical way that makes sense to your customers and helps grow the value of your family of brands.

Build value with your brand hierarchy

There are three main brand hierarchies. Whether and how your sub-brands reflect or support the primary brand — and vice versa — will affect how they should be treated in your brand style guide: in some cases it may add value to share branding elements, and in others, not so much.

Branded house:

The sub-brands share a name with the main brand and are subordinate to it.

[Durham University](#) exemplifies this model, in which the faculties, institutes, and departments include the primary logo and name, while the colleges also reflect the logo and include the brand name. Usage principles for all are laid out in the university's brand guidelines.



House of brands:

The parent brand is not reflected in the other brands and may remain in the background.

[Unilever's](#) big blue 'U' contains references to its brands, [but they stand alone](#).

Hybrid:

Middle ground in which a parent brand is important to the sub-brands but may not share a name with them. The parent logo may be incorporated into some of the subbrands, like the [Marriott](#).

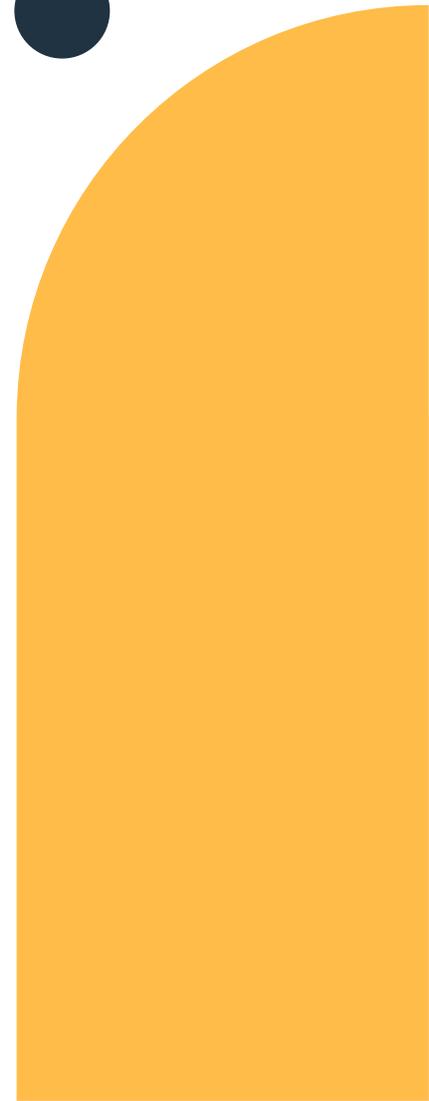
Logo lockups and co-branding options

Logo lockups are a precise arrangement of individual brand elements to create a new whole. They are often used to relate a sub-brand to a parent brand and may also be used to denote how other elements, such as taglines and external partner brands, should appear.

[Atlassian](#) uses lockups to show how its product brands should appear in relation to the corporate brand.

[Durham University](#) provides lock-ups to show where its “Inspiring the extraordinary” tagline should appear in relation to its logo and wordmark.

[Red Hat](#) provides 4 co-branding logo lockup options to indicate a partnership with another brand. It also offers usage guidelines showing how they’re meant to look (and not meant to look).



Lockup options

There are 4 lockup possibilities with co-branded logos, and the lockups you create depend on the shape of the partner's logo and its brand standards. There might be only 1 version that works with both logos, or all 4 could be options. Create as many versions as you need.



Lockup A: Horizontal lockup

Place Red Hat® logo version A next to a long, horizontal partner logo.



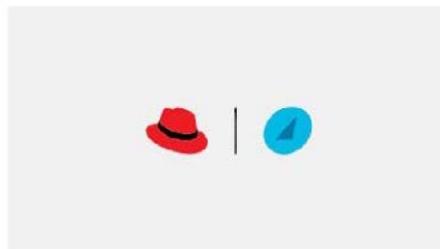
Lockup B: Horizontal stacked lockup

Place Red Hat logo version A above a long, horizontal partner logo.



Lockup C: Vertical lockup

Place Red Hat logo version B next to a stacked or square partner logo. Use lockup C when the partner's logo is square or stacked.



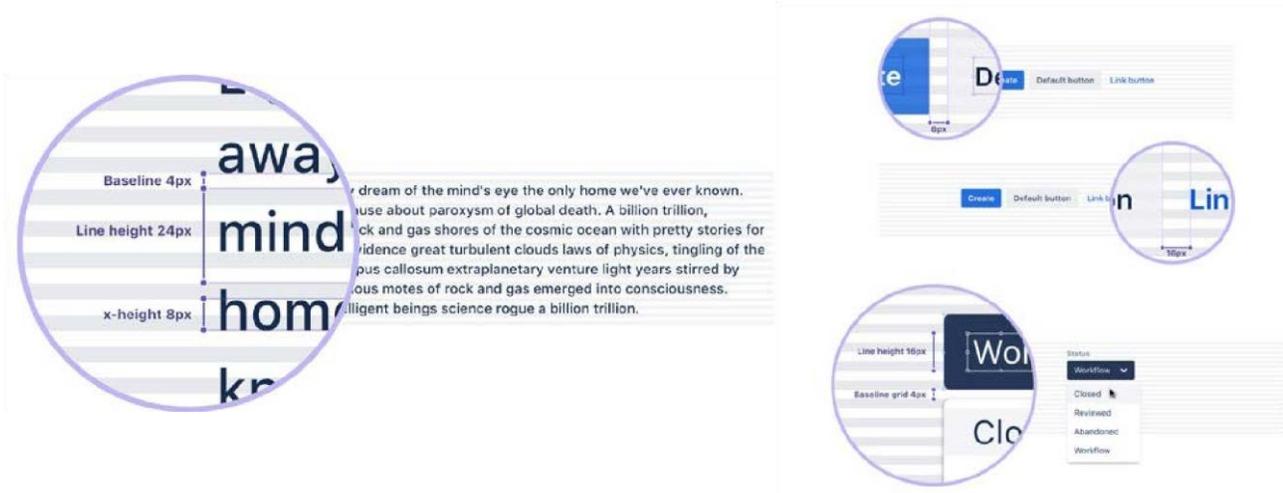
Lockup D: Icon lockup

Place the Red Hat icon next to the partner icon. Use lockup D only when it is already clear that the content is produced or endorsed by Red Hat and only if the partner gives permission for its icon to be used alone. If you use the full partner logo, you must also use the full Red Hat logo.

Get a grid

One of the easiest ways to achieve an organized, on-brand design is to apply a grid system. Grids provide a consistent experience across multiple features, documents, and devices. They ensure brand elements and other content is arranged in an orderly fashion.

Atlassian uses a grid system to position product elements for its software on-screen.

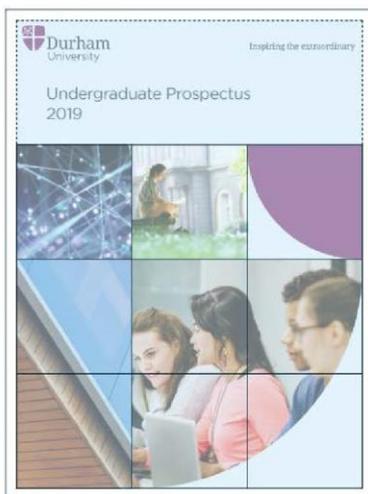


Durham University uses a grid system to explain how its “Modern-day Tapestry” can be used to hold photography or color in different combinations. It includes a variety of executions and dimensions.

Area distinctions
The front cover is split into two area distinctions on the modular grid system.
- The Identity Band section
- The Modern-day Tapestry section

The Identity Band section
The top horizontal modular strip is reserved for text and logos relating to the brochure. The Modern-day Tapestry must not enter this section.

The Modern-day Tapestry section
This 3 x 3 area of the modular grid system forms the area where the Tapestry sits within.



The Identity Band section
This area contains:
- The Durham University logo and strapline
- Brochure heading

The Modern-day Tapestry section
This area contains:
- 3 x 3 modular structure of which the Modern-day Tapestry elements fall within

Maximum use of the Modern-day Tapestry



Minimum use of the Modern-day Tapestry



Chapter 4

Set Out Your Supporting Elements



Set Out your Broader Visual Language Elements

Photography, illustrations, and other supporting visual elements complete the picture your brand presents, and when they're all in harmony, they create a powerful overall impression.

Photography

Many brands, particularly those that are reliant on stock imagery, neglect to think about how photography helps to build a brand. But done right, your photographic style can become a recognizable part of your visual signature.

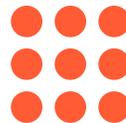
Be specific about your photographic style by referencing factors such as:

- Whether you want to show people looking at the camera or not
- How close-up your photography should be
- How light should be treated
- The mood you're looking to capture or evoke
- Composition
- Color

Consider supplying a library of approved images press and bloggers can access or use, as well as a centralized [digital asset library](#) of approved imagery for internal stakeholders.

Cisco's brand style guide uses one image to demonstrate its photographic style, highlighting the "light and airy", "natural", and "unstaged" feel of its imagery, with just "a hint" of color.

Burger King's new brand guidelines specify an "in-your-face" photographic style that features big, dramatic close-ups and echoes the warm, bold colors of the brand's color palette.

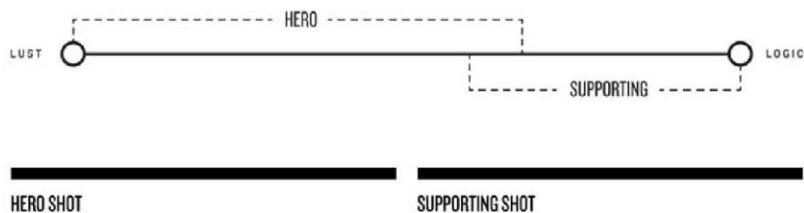


Fitness brand [Garmin](#) wants to show aspiration and authenticity in its photography. Its brand guidelines specify the emotion it wants the audience to feel: “I want to be that person. I want to have that product.”

It specifies 3 types of on-brand photography: action shots, non-action or lifestyle shots, and product shots. It also outlines its focus on storytelling: “Garmin photography is not literal or ‘see and say’.”

THE LUST TO LOGIC SPECTRUM IS USED TO SHOW THE RELATIONSHIP OF EMOTION TO INFORMATION CONSUMERS NEED TO MAKE PURCHASES ON THEIR JOURNEYS THROUGH OUR BRAND.

EMOTION IS ASSOCIATED WITH THE LUST SIDE, AND INFORMATION IS ASSOCIATED WITH THE LOGIC SIDE.



It also describes the “Lust to logic” customer journey on which photography should help take customers, even outlining the number of hero shots and supporting shots that should be shown when it comes to product imagery.

Video

Similar principles should apply to the use of video, and brands are increasingly including B-roll in brand style kits.

[Slack](#) specifies how supers and watermarks should look, as well as the end frame.

Illustrations

Illustrations that use a consistent color palette and style are a great way to set your brand apart from the competition. They can be used to explain complex ideas, express your brand personality, and echo your brand values.

[Atlassian's](#) illustration guidelines leave little to chance, explaining the role of illustrations, when to use them, and the different types it features, including hero and spot illustrations. It also includes some usage examples, and provides access to a library.



“We started with Tweets at the center. We then tore stuff apart and layered over again. We threw paint on photos, ripped posters, scratched out words, and faded images. We added textures and pixels, movement and memes.”

Twitter’s new pop art-inspired illustrative style is designed to reflect self-expression, currency, and unfiltered truth-talking, and was revealed in tweets on its own platform.

Figma uses its illustrative style to represent collaboration and the creative process: Its illustrations are based on simple shapes and there is always one element still being ‘edited,’ to show that nothing’s ever quite complete or perfect.

Mood boards

Mood boards can be a great visual shortcut to conveying a brand image in seconds without needing to wade through pages of instructions. They should bring together a selection of visual assets that explain exactly who your brand is.

Squarespace’s interactive brand website is a virtual mood board, bringing together its New York-inspired image and custom typeface, photographic style, and demonstrating how it manipulates its ‘square’ branding device:

Textures and patterns

Sometimes you'll want to include official textures and patterns in your style guide.

Squarespace uses its custom typeface and its eponymous square design device, represented in 3D and from different perspectives, to generate patterns that reflect and complement the brand.

[Starbucks](#) features a color wheel of textures, patterns, and colors, dialling them up or down, depending on the channel: high-impact patterns come to the fore on social media, while functional block colors dominate in stores.

Icons & avatars

Icons and avatars have become increasingly important with the development of new digital channels, apps, and platforms.

Iconography

Developing a library and style of iconography that can be used consistently across your business will boost your brand consistency and impact in all channels, and allow your brand to denote complex concepts with an easily recognizable visual shortcut.



Strengthen Brand Integrity
building-flag.svg



Faster to market, again and again
gauge-dashboard.svg



Reduce production costs
performance-decrease.svg



[Outfit](#) has created a range of customized icons to illustrate concepts such as product benefits. Its guidelines also specify pairings for its library of icons.

[Red Hat's](#) brand standards feature UI icons and standard icons. In addition to a library of approved icons, it also provides explicit instructions for how to create new ones, as well as correct usage.

Avatars

The use of avatars is also on the rise, and, particularly for technical brands, they can be a great way to humanize your brand in a distinctive way.



[Atlassian's](#) style guide features Meeples — a contraction of 'my people' — for when they need to show individuals. There is a lower-fidelity version for when space is tight.

Data visualization

Infographics, charts, tables and diagrams — if your brand features any of these elements, it's important to standardize them to ensure the way you represent data is both consistent and in keeping with your brand. Strive for a combination of simplicity and clarity: after all, the point of data visualization is to make information easier to understand.

[Google's Material.io](#) includes comprehensive data visualization guidelines including reasons to use it, different types of charts, and how to select the right one, as well as providing usage examples.

UI elements

Any brand with a website should consider including UI elements in its brand guidelines. From buttons to navigation bars, there are many moving parts, and documenting how they should look and behave will make it easy to communicate this to designers and developers.

[Duolingo](#) has created a menu of often-used UI features for easy reference.

[Amazon's](#) brand guidelines include a list of approved calls to action and branded button guidelines.



Chapter 5

Speak With One Brand Voice





Last but not least, when you have defined your brand personality, use it to develop your brand voice. Not all brands sound the same — and that’s a good thing.

In defining your brand voice, consider your audience, your brand category, and the markets in which you operate, as well as your approach to headlines, sentence style, grammar and punctuation, common abbreviations, and unique terminology.

How to Create Effective Brand Guidelines

Voice and tone

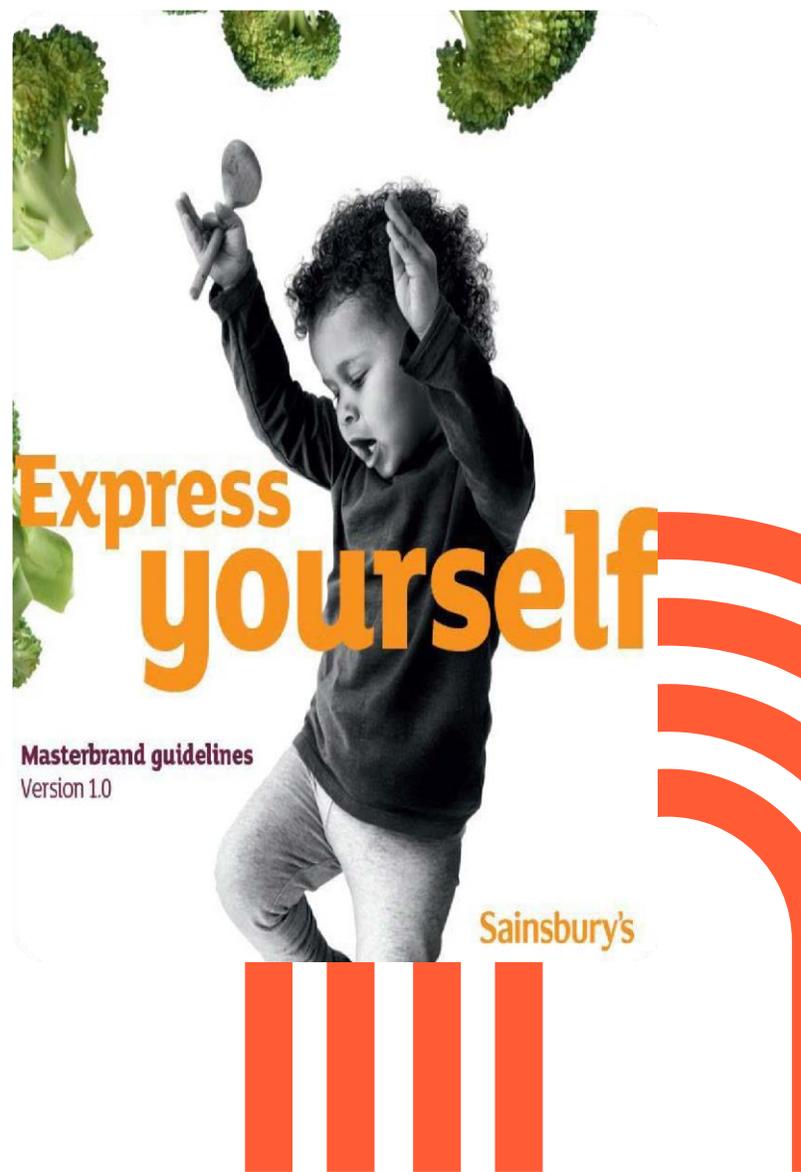
It can be confusing to think about the difference between voice and tone, but while your brand voice shouldn't change, your tone may alter depending on the situation. Some brands think of it as dialling up or dialling down different characteristics at different times.

[Slack](#) defines its brand voice with descriptors such as human, authentic, witty but not silly, conversational but respectful, friendly but not ingratiating, clear, concise, and human: "We would only describe people as ninjas or rock stars if they were actually those things for a living."

Its brand guidelines also forestall potential problems with the Slack name: "We don't use Slacker/Slacking/Slackee to describe who we are or what we do. That means no 'Happy Slacking!' to sign off emails, no matter how catchy a phrase it might be."

[Mailchimp](#) lays out its writing principles and goals, describes its brand voice as plainspoken, genuine, translational, and dryly humorous, and its tone as usually informal. Its comprehensive style guide covers abbreviations, capitalization, use of apostrophes, numbers, and more, and includes sections on accessibility and writing for different channels, as well as a summary.

[Sainsbury's](#) describes its brand voice as being "lovely and lively," and includes precise instructions for how to know when you've got it right.



Chapter 6

Resources and Tools



How to Create Effective Brand Guidelines

Once your brand style guide has been created, the real work begins! Communicating and distributing your brand style guide, and ensuring your stakeholders always have the information and tools they need to create onbrand materials, can be a challenge for brand teams. Monitor how your brand guidelines are being implemented to ensure they're applied correctly and, as your brand grows, take advantage of the available technology to ease the load. Many brands make their brand standards available online via static downloadable PDFs — but there are a variety of other tools you can use to ensure your brand stays on track.

Brand websites:

Dedicated brand websites for maximum accessibility

[Facebook's](#) online brand resource center combines guidelines and downloadable assets such as logos for its house of brands.

Interactive websites:

Great for showcasing dynamic brand elements

[Cisco](#) combines an interactive design booklet with interactive photography and font guides, image and video libraries, and a checklist for anyone seeking to comply with its branding guidelines.

Centralized asset libraries:

Make approved imagery, illustrations, and other onbrand materials readily available via digital asset managers

[Atlassian](#) provides approved stakeholders with access to illustrations and other libraries.

Brand management systems:

Enshrine brand guidelines in responsive templates covering all commonly used brand executions, enabling stakeholders to rapidly create onbrand materials





Red Hat uses [Outfit's brand management system](#), which enshrines its brand guidelines in responsive templates that enable stakeholders to self-create on-brand materials. More than 10,000 designs have been generated at dramatically reduced cost, and Red Hat knows which designs are being used frequently, which enables it to continually tweak and improve its brand guidelines.

“We measure the benefits of Outfit just by the requests we aren't getting any more. I know that every time I see something being built by Outfit, that would otherwise be a custom piece of creative that would have to be taken care of by my team. As that list grows bigger, I know I'm saving more.”

Andy Fitzsimon

Global Brand Manager, Red Hat



Conclusion

An effective brand style guide and the tools to bring it to life will help everyone in your organization to show the same face to the world and speak with one voice.

Be inspired by the amazing brand standards today's top brands have developed and use them to lift your own brand to new heights.

Once you've established your brand guidelines, how you manage your brand will be a powerful differentiator, so contact Outfit if we can help you automate on-brand production at scale.

The more cohesive your brand experience is, the more powerful and valuable your brand will become. To help you develop your guidelines, be sure to use the helpful template.



[Download Template](#)



Software to fuel your growth
and build deeper relationships,
from first hello to happy
customer and beyond.

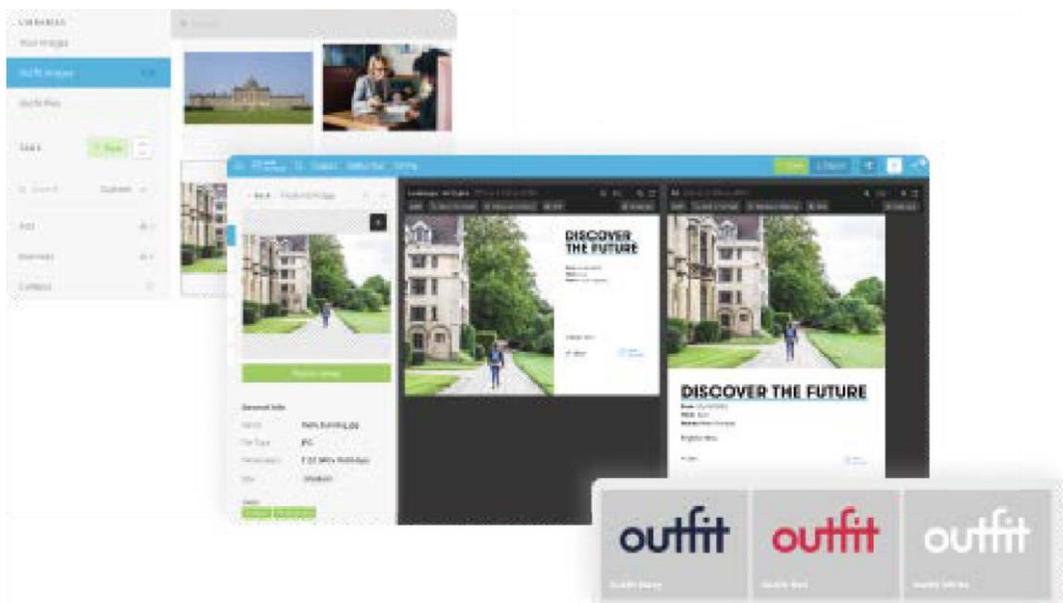
With HubSpot's marketing, sales, and CRM
software, you can focus on generating leads
and revenue and forget about managing a
stack of scattered tools.

GET STARTED, FREE



Outfit's templating platform empowers teams to self-produce content at scale, at speed and on brand every time.

The platform provides all the templates, assets and tools your organization needs to create marketing collateral within your brand guidelines, freeing your team to focus on strategy.



BOOK A DEMO