



OUR TONE-OF-VOICE
IS A BALANCED MIX OF
PROFESSIONALISM, INCLUSIVITY,
INNOVATION, COMMUNITY
ORIENTATION, ACCESSIBILITY
AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATION.

TONE-OF-VOICE

INTRODUCTION

This is an evergreen tone-of-voice document and style guide to:

- **Help CICES employees and external parties representing CICES (e.g. regional and committee chairs) communicate in a clear and consistent style**
- **Explain how we express ourselves as an organisation**

GOOD TO KNOW

Any suggestions for things to include, amend or remove should be sent to Matt Haigh, via mhaigh@cices.org

USING TONE-OF-VOICE

It should be referred to when creating content for our digital platforms (website, Knowledge Hub, social media), bulk emailing our members or other official 'group' communication, or writing text for print, media releases, video or other media.

For internal or informal communication (email, SMS, WhatsApp etc) between staff or with certain members that have an established familiar relationship, use sensible personal judgement while remaining respectful and inclusive.

If in any doubt about written communications over an issue not covered here, please refer to both the [Guardian style guide](#) and the [Plain English Campaign](#).

If uncertain about acceptable communication with colleagues or members, please refer to the CICES staff handbook.

This is a 'live' document, which will be revised and added to continually and should be used in conjunction with our current brand guidelines, which can be found on the CICES website.

WHAT DOES 'TONE-OF-VOICE' MEAN?

Whenever we create content, we consider the context and what our audience might find relevant and motivating.

For example, an official letter to an individual member should read more formally than a response to a social media post, so think about your audience and what might be an appropriate form of communication.

Our 'voice' is versatile and can be adapted to suit the context as required but should always be distinctly identifiable as ours.

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

For web copy, spell out an acronym or abbreviation the first time it is used in a piece and include the acronym/abbreviation in brackets immediately after – see example below.

United Nations (UN)

For any subsequent uses in the same piece, the acronym/abbreviation alone will suffice.

For abbreviations/acronyms referring to commonly used terms that have become words in their own right, e.g. laser, radar, just the word itself is fine.

For abbreviations/acronyms referring to commonly used and widely understood industry terms, e.g. PAS128, NEC4 – these are sufficient but be mindful of your audience and accessible/inclusive language, as well as the context of the piece, e.g. a blog post entitled 'An introduction to NEC4 contracts' should include an early initial definition and spelling out, for obvious reasons.

For pluralisation of abbreviations, don't use apostrophes – so write AGMs, DVDs, not AGM's or DVD's.

ACTIVE VOICE

Use the active voice and avoid the passive voice where possible.

In the active voice, the subject of the sentence does the action – see example below.

The chicken crossed the road.
NOT

The road was crossed by the chicken.

BOLD AND ITALICS

Bold or italic text can be used to add emphasis but for consistency, only one of these formats should be used for this purpose in a piece, not both.

BULLETED LISTS

Bullet point lists can be used to draw the eye and break up blocks of text if the list items are in no particular order – but should be used sparingly.

CAPITALISATION

Minimise the use of capitals aside from the first word in a sentence, a proper noun or an abbreviation/acronym.

Examples include:

- Welcome to the party.
- London
- CICES

Company and organisation names are capped up but job titles aren't unless they are an abbreviation or part of someone's name/term of address, e.g. CEO, MD, Mr President, Captain Smith.

CICES is capped up but when referring to the organisation itself, the word 'institution' is not (e.g. the institution, your institution) - unless it is part of the full name: Chartered Institution of Civil Engineering Surveyors.

For designatory letters, these are capped up apart from the n, s, t of Institution, e.g. MCIInstCES, FCInstCES etc.

CORE CONTENT PRINCIPLES

These underpin our content and the way we work to produce new output. Keep them in mind when planning, creating, publishing and updating content.

1 / WITH PURPOSE

If we don't have a clear and articulate aim for content, we don't produce any.

With no strategic aim, tied to our organisational goals, we risk irrelevance and wasted effort.

Ask yourself:

- Who is this content for?
- What do we want them to do once they have read/heard/watched it?
- How will that help us?

2 / USER INTERFACE (UI) AND USER EXPERIENCE (UX)

Understanding our users and their behaviours, intentions and challenges helps us create better content that doesn't alienate any of our members/users or fail in its delivery.

Use language and frames of reference that make it clear who we are communicating with and how we want to be understood.

Be mindful of disabilities, visible or hidden – and if uncertain, refer to the [.gov.uk guidelines](#) for inclusive communication as well as their interpretation of the [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines \(WCAG\)](#).

Consider the reader, particularly if they are outside of our membership and question how useful or interesting they will find it.

3 / QUALITY, NOT QUANTITY

Keep a narrow focus on creating well researched and edited content that is closely tied to a stated outcome or organisational goal.

Spending the time and effort to deliver content that is more effective, rather than trying to spread your efforts too thinly is a more productive use of your resources and will achieve better results for your audience.

It also results in content that is easier to assess, revise and remove, if and when necessary.

4 / KEEP COLLABORATION LEAN AND APPROPRIATE

While you may not always be the only person working on a piece of content or communication, retain efficiency by not involving too many people unnecessarily.

Design by committee can lead to lower standards and lessen impact, so involve only those team members required and only for their specific expertise at the relevant time.

By the same token, if you are a senior colleague, restrict your involvement and input unless justified – opinions are helpful, interference is not.

Respect the expertise and experience of colleagues and communicate effectively internally, to ensure the best division of labour and reduce the risk of duplication.

5 / SEEK INNOVATION FOR IMPROVEMENT

Test and learn from results where possible – simply doing the same thing you've always done can only result in diminishing returns ultimately.

But make sure agreed processes are in place to measure and assess your outcomes and adjust your outputs accordingly.

Don't make unnecessary changes for the sake of it, particularly in a jarring or inconsistent manner, always adhere to agreed best practice and justify your intent.

Share any results, learnings and suggested improvements as a result, for transparency across your teams and to drive a culture of growth.

6 / BE HUMAN

While you are representing CICES as a whole, you should still be transparent about the fact that a real person has created content, particularly when admitting fallibility or acknowledging mistakes.

You have been empowered to communicate on behalf of CICES because of your ability as a person, not despite it, so don't hide behind inaccessible or impersonal communication unnecessarily.

Remain professional and maintain standards, you aren't talking to friends informally – but you can be conversational and approachable as a communicator if the media and situation are appropriate, e.g. responding to a comment on a social media post.

TONE-OF-VOICE

DESCRIBING CICES

When talking about CICES with an external party, e.g. in a media release, assume the reader is not familiar.

Use the Chartered Institution of Civil Engineering Surveyors (CICES) to introduce, then CICES subsequently, unless writing a quote, where you should aim for conversational, plain English.

Within prose, you can say the institution (lower case using the Plain English Campaign guidelines).

When communicating directly with members, e.g. social media or targeted emails, you can write your institution.

We don't refer to CICES as a business or company – it is a singular entity, a professional body or membership organisation.

As a guide, the website homepage states that CICES is: The leading international professional body for specialists in geospatial engineering and commercial management in infrastructure.

The motto – Omnia metimur quae videmus – translates as 'We measure all that we see' and is a metaphorical, not literal, credo describing the attention-to-detail and precision CICES members apply and aspire to.

Our stated 'Golden Threads' underpin the organisation's ongoing efforts and are as follows:

- Sustainability
- Digitalisation
- EDI (Equity, diversity and inclusion)

CICES BRAND GUIDELINES

INCLUSION

Write for everyone – meaning all types of reader within a reasonable frame of expectation, not children or people with zero interest in your content.

Assume some people will skim read and use headings and subheadings as prompts to explore further, while others will scrutinise every word.

Use inclusive language – for help, use the WCAG guidelines linked to previously.

LINKS

Use internal links to strengthen and add logic to our own website and external links to provide context or further relevant information.

The link text should describe what the user is being directed to, not just say something like ‘click here’, for accessibility and search engine crawlability

NUMBERS

Use words from one to nine and then numerals from 10 upwards. Always use words at the start of a sentence.

TONE-OF-VOICE

PUNCTUATION AND GRAMMAR

It is fine to start a sentence with And or But.

Try not to use Oxford commas, where the conjunction does the job of making a sentence clause or list item discrete.

Use the word and – rather than the ampersand symbol, unless the phrase refers to a commonly recognised pairing, e.g. fish & chips.

SOCIAL MEDIA

When writing for social media platforms, consider the context and what your intended audience may find relevant.

A younger audience engaging with short form video content on TikTok will expect a different experience to experienced professionals commenting on a LinkedIn post.

SPELLING

Use British English rather than American, so –ise rather than –ize at the end of relevant verbs.

For any uncertainties, refer to the Guardian Style Guide linked previously.

URLS AND WEBSITE ADDRESSES

In prose and design, include URLs in their simplest form, for brevity and cleanliness, e.g. cices.org, google.co.uk and so on.

The inclusion of www. is as redundant as writing the preceding https:// – any commonly used browser will automatically parse and include these elements.



Chartered Institution of Civil Engineering Surveyors
Dominion House
Sibson Road
Sale
Cheshire
M33 7PP
United Kingdom

+44 (0) 161 972 3100
cices.org

Registered in the United Kingdom • Operating worldwide