

Writing Killer Product Descriptions that Convince and Convert

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If you've been reading our ebooks as you [set up your ecommerce store](#), you've got a batch of [strong product photographs](#) that are ready to go live. You've also [done your keyword research](#); and you've chosen the best-performing search terms to insert into your product title, category pages, URLs, title tags, meta descriptions, and elsewhere.

But here's the thing: No matter *how* visually compelling your product images are, if you don't have the words to support what your images are promising, you're not going to draw prospects any further into the sales funnel. Strong product images will pique your visitors' *interest*; but your copy has to work *with* them to clarify the promise they seem to be extending to your visitors. There are questions that images can't answer—at least not explicitly. The product is beautiful; but is it right for *them*? Now it's time to fill in the gaps with your words.

What's more, your on-page optimization efforts aren't finished: As we mentioned in the previous section, your product descriptions give you yet another opportunity for keyword use. This is precious space; we want to ensure you don't waste it.

We should begin by saying that the term "product description" is a bit of a misnomer. A product description needs to do *more than* "describe" the product at hand: It needs to qualify its value and communicate why the product is worth purchasing. It needs to sell your product to *real people* by educating them on the product's benefits, its [USP](#), the pain points it solves, and why it's the best possible solution for *your* target market. Perhaps it's helpful to think of the product description as the virtual analog to a salesperson. The comprehensive "sales pitch" your descriptions make are like those helpful, personable floor staff... except they're *on, 24/7*.

These will take time, we know: *Good* product descriptions aren't exactly easy to write, and a lot hinges on them. After all, you're dealing with a crucial element in the conversion funnel—answering the final questions or objections that'll move prospects to click that "Add to Cart" CTA. But if you can commit to writing even a handful of descriptions a day, you'll eventually see the benefits of your efforts: more conversions, fewer cart abandons, lower return rates, fewer inquiries called in to your customer service, increased customer trust... and, of course, good SEO rankings. In other words, killer product descriptions will pay you back manyfold.

So how do you write effective product descriptions that sell? You came to the right place.

Know Your Target Audience

It's nearly impossible to talk about "general best practices" for product descriptions, because "the best" product descriptions take *your* [customer persona](#) into account. No number of copywriting tips will be useful if you don't know whom you're writing *to*, or *for*.

Of course, if you've been following along with us, you've learned the language your target audience uses to describe their interests, values, pain points, and desired solutions. You've discovered the benefits they're on the lookout for. (You've *also* discovered the objections they'll have to your offering!) You've uncovered the features that are *most* important to them, and the ones you should lead with. You know whether they appreciate humor, or whether a playful tone would turn them away. You *also* know *how much* information your prospects need in a description. (For example, if you're selling to professionals, you probably don't have to describe *why* your product is important. Instead, you'll forefront specs.)

In short, once you're clear on who'll be *buying* your product, everything else will fall into place. Our recommendation is to speak aloud as you write your product descriptions, as though your persona just walked into your brick-and-mortar store. (Address prospects *directly* in your copy, using the word "you.") If you think of the product description as a conversation, you'll do more than ensure your target market feels spoken to. You'll make your company sound human.

Know Your Tone

This best practice follows from the first: You'll discover your tone when you know whom you're speaking to. (It might help to consider how your prospects speak *to each other* when recommending your product: What slang or lingo does that demographic use?)

And yet, while each of your products might have a slightly different target market, there's a single common denominator... and that's *you*. Don't forget that you have a *company* persona; and it's your brand. Whether it's witty, playful, sincere, earnest, nostalgic, enthusiastic, or [insert your adjective here], your company has a voice. Make sure you sound "like you" *consistently* across your descriptions. Here's an example from [ThinkGeek](#):

The lesson here isn't that "playful copy *sells*"; it's that playful copy sells to *this* target market.

Describe Features... But *Underscore* Benefits

As an ecommerce merchant, you're naturally eager to share the features of your products.

(Features are the factual statements you can make about your product—the details that often go under "specs.") And indeed, you *should* list features on your product page—if not directly in your product description.

But remember that your target market probably isn't interested in the technical specs of your product—or at least, that isn't what matters *most* to them. What they're motivated by is *benefits*: how your product either *reduces a pain point* or *introduces a pleasure* into their lives. We're talking real solutions and tangible life enhancements. What can prospects *achieve* with your product? How will your offering make them healthier, happier, more at ease, more productive, etc.? In other words: What's in it for *them*?

The line between features and benefits can be easy to cross. One strategy for approaching this is to sit down and list every *feature* of your product. Gather all the basic information you can: materials, production process, physical details. Then on the *other* side of the page, note how that item directly translates into a customer benefit. (A removable and washable inner liner is a *feature*; convenience is a *benefit*. Reduced pollen count is a *feature*; fewer symptoms of asthma is a *benefit*. Small size is a *feature*; portability is a *benefit*. And so on.) Here's a product description from [The Yankee Candle Company](#):

Note how Yankee Candle offers features and benefits simultaneously here. Thick-cut glass is a *feature*; giftability is a *benefit*. A lid that becomes a pedestal is a *feature*; decorating options are a *benefit*. The double wick is a *feature*; increased fragrance is a *benefit*. Take a tip from Yankee Candle; consider the customer experience with every product detail you mention.

Tell a Story

This need not be elaborate: The "story" may be about how your customer finds a solution to their pain point in your product. The point is to remember that [emotions have a huge impact on buyer behavior](#). Indeed, we make purchasing decisions based more on the primal parts of our brain than on any logic. And storytelling stimulates those areas. Maybe you remember [the "Significant Objects" project](#), an anthropological experiment in which cheap knicknaks were given backstories that prompted consumers to ascribe sentimental value to the objects. Some of those objects sold on eBay for *over 6,000%* of their buying price.

The moral of the story? Emotionally-charged narratives grow products' perceived value.

For *you*, maybe this means telling the story of how the product first came to be: Who produced the first prototype, how, and to meet what need? What was the inspiration behind that first iteration of

the product? What has the journey been since? What obstacles have its creators had to overcome; what tests has it endured; what features have been added over time in response to customer feedback? Treat your product like a character in a movie. If the prospect begins to imagine it as a companion or a "hero," they're more likely to forget that the relationship is transactional. Here's an example from [Method](#):

Method's "product story" is about its collaborative relationship with the greater community. Of course, these will be mini, product-specific stories; you'll save your "founding story" for your [About Us page](#).

Appeal to Prospects' Imaginations

If you're telling a story, you may have already begun to do this. Other ways of appealing to imagination include "setting the scene": conjuring up images in prospects' minds of what their lives would look like with your product, so they can envision not only *owning* it, but also buying into a lifestyle. (Want a creative writing exercise? Begin with the word "imagine" and, in five sentences, paint a picture of your prospect's ideal life with your product at the center of it.)

You might also dig deep into your adjective tool belt and describe your product in such a way that prospects could envision it even if you *didn't* have those terrific photos on your page. Research has shown that when people hold a product in their hands, "[perceived ownership](#)" (and thus *desire* to own the item) increases. Of course, *you* don't have the luxury of putting your product in prospects' hands. But you *can* appeal to their imaginations through language.

Answer the "5 Ws" (and H)

This is a long way of saying: *Don't leave anything out*. If you answer these questions *fully*, you'll have the most comprehensive product description possible:

- *Who* is the product for? You'll have already described your [customer persona](#) in detail; this is your answer to that question.
- *What* are the product's specs (materials, ingredients, dimensions), functions, features, and benefits? *What* color, size, model, etc. options does it come in? *What* is the production process? *What* is the care information?
- *When* would a consumer use the product? For what occasion, to serve what need? Is it a daily, occasional, or seasonal use? What's more, *when* should customers expect the item to arrive? Include [shipping details](#) on every product page!

- *Where* would a customer use the product? Indoor or outdoor? In what weather conditions? Or—if it's a beauty product, for example—can they *only* use the product on their hair, or can they use it on their skin as well? (Depending on the complexity of your product, this might be where you describe *how* it works.)
- *Why* would a consumer choose your product over your competitors'? Or: Why would *this* consumer choose *this* product over any other in your product line?

Here's another way to think of it: If you gave your description to a stranger who knew nothing about your product, would they still have questions about your offering after reading it? If so, the description isn't pulling its full weight yet. Remember that [20% of purchase failures are a result of either incomplete or unclear product information](#). So this best practice may not be a one-time exercise. As you field questions about your product over time, you'll include the answers to those commonly-asked questions in your product descriptions as well.

Preempt Doubts and Objections

Anywhere there might be a transaction, there'll be a level of friction. Minimize this friction as much as possible. Think prospects might be concerned about what happens if your product wasn't ultimately what they were hoping for? Mention your 30-day [refund policy](#) in your product description. Think prospects might not trust that your product actually *works*? Link to your [testimonials page](#)—or better, include a testimonial or two directly on your product page. For every reason you can imagine why a prospect would entertain doubts, have a counter-measure in place.

Use Power Words

You're a consumer; you know what works for you... and you certainly know what *doesn't* work! First, ditch both the hyperbole ("revolutionary") and the oft-used descriptors that don't mean anything to *anyone* anymore ("high-quality"). Of course, if your product *is* revolutionary, justify that claim by offering proof that it is! If it's not, that's okay. There are still plenty of power words you can use to sell your product for exactly what it is.

[Jon Morrow has a list of "power words"](#) worth investigating. Or consider your prospects' senses and start there. Here are a few examples from [B. Witching Bath Co.](#):

"Succulent," "simmering," "hints of cut grass," "earthy bouquet of balsam, pine and evergreens." This is language that wakes up the senses. Of course, these "power words" may come more easily for products such as wines and soaps. But no matter *what* you sell, there are a set of (honest!) power words you can use that'll set your descriptions apart from your competitors'.

Make it Scannable

21st-century humans aren't readers; we're scanners. We don't want to wade through blocks of information to get to the stuff that's pertinent to *us*. Your product descriptions need to account for this fact. "Readability" means breaking your copy up with tags (subheadings): a section for specs, a section for product benefits, a section for nutrition information, a section for customer reviews, a section for user-generated content, a section for [FAQs](#). This allows visitors to jump to precisely the details they want, rather than sifting through content that's irrelevant to them. It means breaking up the copy in each of those sections with bullet points. It means using bigger fonts for more important information. It means including white space between sections. In short, it means a terrifically clean-looking page.

While you're at it, give visitors the most important details in each section *first*. Here are two great examples from [Cheribundi](#) and [Oransi](#). Note that Oransi's product is much more complex and requires more sub-sections. (We haven't even shown all of them!):

Remove Buyer's Guilt

In a way, this is an extension of the best practice of "preempting doubts and objections." We've given it a separate category because eliminating buyer's guilt *before a prospect even makes the purchase* is a more subtle art. It may be useful to think of all the reasons you've justified purchases in the past. Then experiment with these strategies (assuming, of course, they're relevant to your product):

- reminding prospects what a bargain they're about to get
- complimenting them—on finding such a great deal, on having such great taste, on the aspirations they have that your product will support, and so on. Here's how [ModCloth](#) does it:
- reminding them how *essential*—or even game-changing—your product is to their _____ (health, well-being, security, social status, etc.)
- letting them know this is a time-sensitive offer
- emphasizing that the product will save them money (or time) in the long run

- giving the sense that your product is exclusive
- helping prospects visualize all they'll be able to achieve with your product
- using present verb tenses to help prospects imagine they already *own* your product, and their needs are already being met by it
- selling not only the *product*, but an accompanying *lifestyle*

Keep a Consistent Structure across Product Descriptions

Ultimately, you'll offer as much information as is appropriate for *your* product and *your* target market. (A t-shirt will require less information than, say, a vacuum cleaner will.) A typical format includes one or two paragraphs that set up the problem and introduce your product as a solution; a few sections of bullet points to highlight specs, benefits, and whatever else you feel is necessary; a final note on the product; and a [call to action](#). Maybe you'll decide to begin each product description by complimenting your target market (differently for each product!). Maybe you'll slip a joke into each description. The point is to have a template of sorts that you can return to—again and again, with each new product—for the sake of consistency.

Consistency in your descriptions will strengthen and cement your brand image. It'll speed up your writing process. It'll also help your prospects: If you give comparable information about each product, presented in a similar format, consumers will find it easier to compare and pinpoint the one that fits their needs.

Know When to Show... and When to Tell

Remember, your product descriptions are just one (crucial!) element of your product pages. They'll work with product videos, [social media](#) integrations, customer reviews, and other user-generated content for a sweeping "sell" of your product. There are some things you simply won't be able to "describe"... and that's okay.

For the stuff you *can* describe, you'll get on the [A/B testing](#) train once your product pages are up. You'll discover what amount of copy visitors want, how far down the product page they scroll, what "product stories" convert best, and more.

That said, *don't* write a first draft of a product description and slap it up on your product page with the intention of A/B testing afterwards. Have everyone you can think of take a look at it first. Then ask them what they think your product's benefits are. Ask them what kind of person they think the description was written for. (This is your customer persona, but you don't have to call it that for the sake of this exercise). Ask them why they'd chose *your* product over a competitor's.

If your readers can't answer these questions, go back to the drawing board. Or [find yourself a professional copywriter](#) who can strike a balance between benefit-driven copy for your customer persona and SEO best practices.

In the next section, we extend our examination of product copy a bit further to include psychology. You'll learn [how to leverage psychology in your product copy](#) to influence prospect behavior.