

The Ping! voice



A 'tone of voice' is the way in which we write and speak; what we say (including the type of language we use) and how we say it. Consistency is everything. The more consistent we are, the more likely it is that people will engage, understand and warm to us.

The tone of voice has to fit with the tone of what you're talking about. It's no good saying what a fun and exciting project Ping! is for example if, Ping!'s tone of voice is dull and boring.. We need a strong verbal identity for Ping!, reflective of its values, aims and objectives and, as it's a project delivered by a range of different partners, it needs to be a voice that we all understand and know how to use.

Ping is street table tennis festival; it's unusual and surprising, it's free and available for everyone, it's fun, it engages people with one another...and therefore its voice has to reflect all of this;

Ping!'s voice is:

- Fun but not childish
- Informal but not inept
- Cool but not alienating
- Clever but not confusing
- Humorous but not offensive
- Familiar but not clichéd
- Informative and engaging
- Inclusive; appealing to all

Golden Rules!

- If you wouldn't say it, don't write it!
- Avoid long sentences – you should be able to say it without running out of breath so, make every word count
- If the reader needs to re-read it, you need to re-write it!

The Ping! Message

Whether you're writing a post for Facebook, a news event for the website or a press release, the message is the same and the Ping! voice needs to be consistent. Ping!'s aim is to bring table tennis to the streets, for free and for everyone, it's fun and it brings the community together and its objective is for ping pong to continue to be available and to engage the community long after the festival is over. So whatever you're writing keep this in mind.

How to construct sentences

- **Use short sentences to create punch and make a point**

With short sentences, your audience gets the whole message in one go; easy to understand means easy to remember and equals a more powerful communication. A sensible sentence length would be between 8 and 16 words long, any more than 32 words is hard to digest. The same applies to paragraphs – vary them but keep them short, around 4 or 5 sentences maximum. A long opening paragraph can be a real turn-off. Make every word necessary, if the sentence still makes sense and has the same impact without the word – then leave it out!

- **Put yourself in the readers' position**

Think what will interest them; use a friendly, direct style, more like speech than formal writing. For example; if you are writing a post for about a forthcoming Ping! event; what might inspire you come down if you were the reader?

Nip down to Smithy Row for the Ping! launch today! Check out the ping pong action with exhibition matches, robots firing balls all over the place and loads of fun games for everyone. It's absolutely free so don't miss out!

- **Use exclamations and ask questions**

Exclamations grab attention, trigger emotions and emphasise feeling. Ask rhetorical and open questions to engage people, get their interest and encourage them to like us. Questions and exclamations are great for opening or closing a paragraph.

Check these guys playing ping pong with frying pans! What's the weirdest and most inventive bat you can come up with?

- **Never use the passive (the 'then') where you can use the active (the 'now'):**

don't say for example; *'what a weekend was had at Ping! Bristol! Such fun everyone had when we met friends and played ping pong'*

it's much better as *'What a weekend at Ping! Bristol! Such fun meeting friends and playing ping pong!'*

- **Include call to actions**

A call to action is a phrase that compels your reader to take action, you need to be persuasive without being overly bossy; *'check this out!'*, *'get down to Campbell Park for ping pong in the sun!'*, *'send us your Ping! pics!'*

Using the Ping! Language

- Use words that reflect the Ping! tone of voice; expressive, animated, energetic and humorous verbs and adjectives help to deliver the Ping! message

Words like: *super, wow, fun, check out, awesome, exciting, action-packed, fantastic, innovative, great, terrific, impressive, mega, for everyone*

- Ping! is street table tennis, and while it's fun, surprising and imaginative, we want to avoid a perception of it being offbeat or eccentric.

This would turn many people off... therefore don't use words like : *wacky, zany, whacko, bonkers, insane, demented*

- Try not to use jargon or technical words when everyday equivalents are available, remember your audience, they may not be familiar with table tennis terminology
- Don't exaggerate and use too many superlatives - we want our readers to trust us, if we gush we lose authenticity
- Talk in terms of 'we' and 'us' – Ping! is inclusive
- Never use a long word where a short one will do
- Use humour – be cheesy and cheeky, but keep it clean!
- Puns and word play can be effective, the word Ping! can be used to great effect;

Some-Ping! is happening in your city!; get your Ping! on, any-Ping!; cham-Ping!; chom-Ping!; Gas-Ping!, grip-Ping!, looPing!, WhooPing!, showstop-Ping!, whopPing!

The Ping! Voice Websites and Pages

Your Ping! City micro-site is your opportunity to tell your local community what the Ping! project is all about; what's happening, when and where. It should be specific to your city, informative and engaging, but as the most formal of the platforms, it should be without colloquialisms or slang; spelling and grammar must be spot on!

Your voice is : Informative and engaging		
Write like this:	Not like this:	Why?
<p><i>Ping!</i>, the innovative ping pong festival is back in the streets of Milton Keynes this summer! Tables are popping up in the train station, the Hub and Campbell Park. It's free for everyone to enjoy, so grab a bat, and have yourself some super fun by playing a little ping pong! Check out www.ping!england.co.uk to find your nearest table.</p>	<p>Ping! the project to encourage the public to take up recreational table tennis is being held again this year in Milton Keynes commencing in June. The tables will be located in many public locations such as shopping centres and parks. To participate the player simply needs to obtain a free bat and ball (available from the side of the tables or a designated bat holder) and play.</p>	<p>Text should be 'to-the-point', clear and compelling, without confusion and over-complication.</p> <p>It should include links to additional information, which can be included on other pages, or maybe found on the national website if generic.</p>

The Ping! Voice Social Media Platforms

Facebook, Twitter and other social media platforms are brilliant ways to encourage the audiences' participation/interaction with you, us and each other, to socialise with other Ping! cities as well as other table tennis organisations, and to grow people's interests in joining in with Ping!

Facebook

Facebook is the largest social media platform; use it to post news of upcoming events, past events, photos, quirky stories and to share items that aren't directly ping pong related. A fan page is a powerful tool for connecting and interacting with participants and potential participants and for sharing information.

The suggested tone for posting or replying to posts on your Ping! Facebook fan page is less formal than the web page, but without abbreviations and acronyms. Your posts need to appeal to every genre, sporty/non-sporty/male and female/ young and old.

Your voice is : Warm and friendly but a bit cheeky		
Write like this:	Not like this:	Why?
The sun shined, the ice creams were melting, and Ping! launched in an sensational way yesterday at the Piazza. Lots of fun was had by all and some great ping pong played!	Yesterday saw the launch of Plymouth's Ping! festival at the Piazza. There were plenty of willing participants and the day was a huge success.	Informal but easy reading, compels reader to find out more. Invokes an interest.

Twitter

Twitter is the most informal medium, a colloquial tone can be used but it still needs to be encouraging and welcoming. Write a Tweet like you're having a conversation with a good friend.

This is also your chance to show off your own brand of humour and razor wit. People use Twitter as a form of entertainment, so try to keep them entertained!

Funny, helpful, newsworthy or inspiring content encourages people to re-tweet. The most retweeted content tends to contain links, pictures, videos or quotes. Paste a link of any length into the Tweet box and it will automatically be shortened to fit the 140 character limit.

The best way to engage your followers is to ask questions. Then show people you're listening by responding.

Your voice is : Fun, playful and entertaining		
Write like this:	Not like this:	Why?
Get down to #plymouth_piazza and check out the #freepingpong action this weekend! #Ping2015 #Pingfestival @ping_plymouth	Ping! will be taking place at the Plymouth Piazza this coming weekend.	Informal, welcoming, uses hash tags to gain followers and engage with people

Press Releases

Ping! is a very press friendly project. The Ping! voice should be maintained in your press releases but, as with the website, avoid slang and keep it grammatically accurate and your spelling correct. Don't use any made up Ping! type words. Your press release is much more likely to be published if it can be printed ad verbatim, the journalist doesn't want to have to rewrite.

Your press release has to stand out and give the journalist all the facts. Start with a good heading. Keep it simple and make an impact. If the journalist is hooked by the headline, they will go on to read the all-important first paragraph. Make sure that your press release answers the five key questions that every good news story must cover: Who? What? Where? When? Why?

Don't waffle, a good press release is fewer than 500 words. Structure is important - the information must flow in a logical way. Use bullet points, short paragraphs and quotes.

A generic press release template will be added to the Ping! Your City Resource Pack. You can adapt this to include your own highlights and events, or as a guide to write your own.

Other marketing collateral

Billboards, posters and banners

Assume your audience will not have much time to study your billboard, poster or banner so keep your headings bold and powerful and your sub-text extremely brief and bulleted. Your copy needs to be fast paced and punchy – to stop the passer by in their tracks and leave them wanting to know more.

Make sure it's very clear exactly how they can find out more - direct them to your PING! city micro-site and give a contact phone number.

Leaflets and flyers

Whether you use the templates supplied in the Ping! Your City Resource Pack or design your own, make sure the Ping! voice is consistent on flyers and leaflets.

If you're designing your own, then follow the Ping! branding guidelines and don't be afraid of white space! Include attention grabbing headlines, call to actions and all the pertinent information, what? Why? When? and Where?!

For printed promotional literature, QR codes are a great way to direct people to your Ping! city website; Facebook page or Twitter account. QR codes are barcodes which can be scanned with smart phones to take the user directly to a webpage. You can generate your own for free on line, by just copying your URL into the generator. Visit <http://www.qrstuff.com/>

