

# Grant's

*tone of voice*

A writer's guide

# What's it about?

Our tone of voice is one way in which we project our unique personality. It's our recognisable brand accent.

For Grant's that doesn't mean sounding Scottish, it means creating a verbal flavour that is as subtly unique and distinctive as our whisky.

Our tone of voice has the power to influence and connect all channels and communications, whether written or spoken. And when combined with a unifying visual language whether colour, texture or image, this becomes very effective indeed.

It is important therefore that we are all projecting a clearly defined tone of voice which differentiates Grant's from other whiskies. To make this tone of voice distinct, familiar and reassuring we need to project it consistently. That's why we've prepared these guidelines which we hope everyone who writes or speaks for Grant's will read and consider, whether they are opening a small laptop or a big conference, writing a story or sending a Tweet.

# What's in this guide?

*The secret to  
good guidelines  
lies in the name.*

In the following pages you'll find a bit about what the Grant's tone of voice sounds like, some of the things we'd expect you to do when applying it, a bit about what you might want to consider from time to time and a few example pieces of writing to show these suggestions in action.

They should simply be a guide for writers, not a creative straightjacket. We want them to be handy tips rather than handcuffs, but we hope you'll agree that the more consistency we can achieve in our collective copy the better.

# Tone of voice

We are not the only ones to have a *tone of voice*. Some brands are clearer than others, but some do it very well and very consistently.

**Virgin**

Cheeky challenger

**Google**

Simple searcher

**Innocent**

Naive and natural

**BMW**

Assertive, dominant

**Jack Daniels**

Laid back local

Our competitors all have a personality that is articulated through their *tone of voice* with varying degrees of consistency. For example:

**Johnnie Walker's**

is more ambitious and fast-paced

**Chivas Regal's**

is more ostentatious and showy

**Ballantines'**

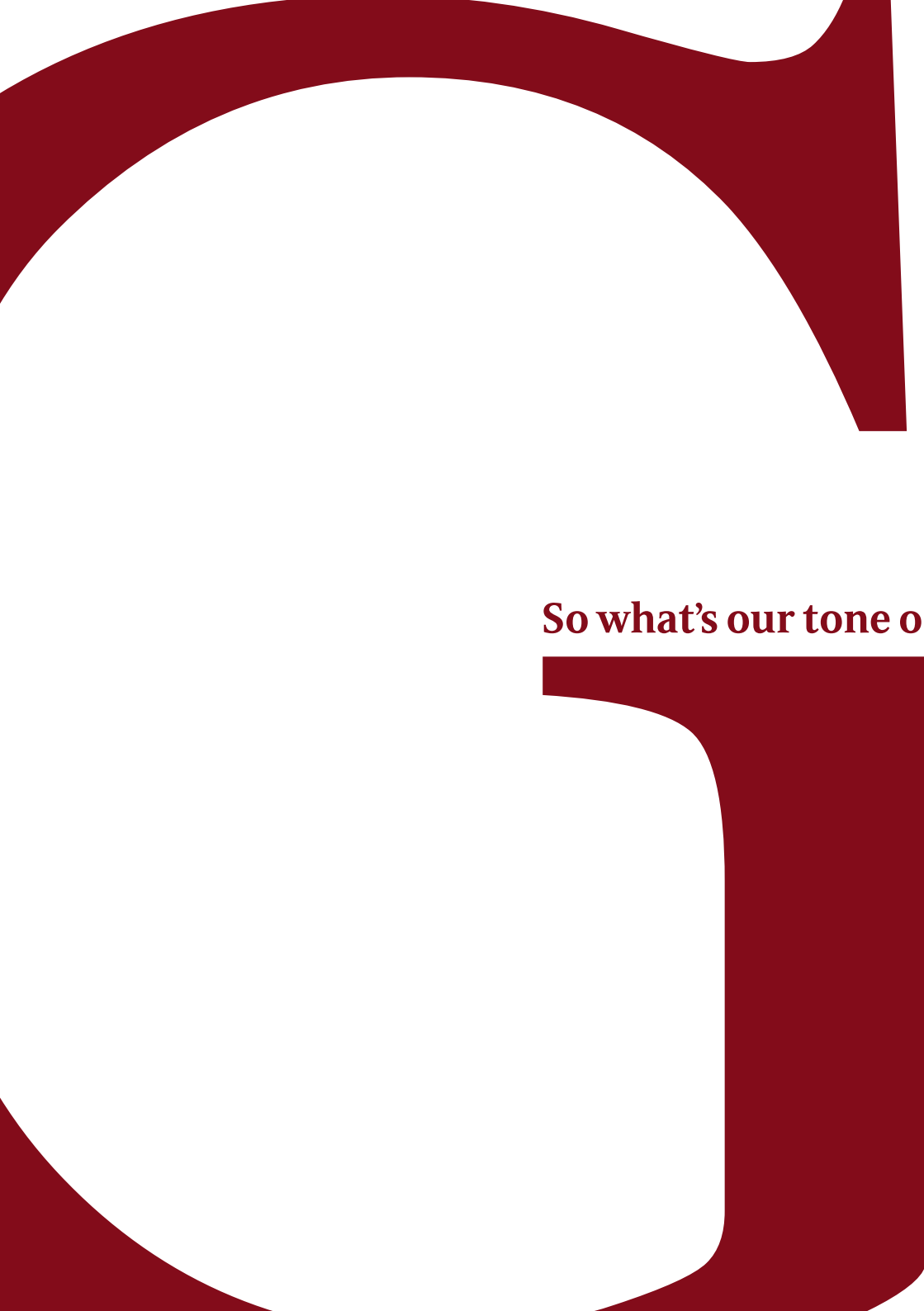
is more individual and self-centred

**J & B's**

is more superficial and sociable

**Dewars'**

is more opinionated and expert



Grant's is a family business.  
And like a family, it shares a  
way of speaking, has its own  
vocabulary and its own private  
stories and anecdotes.

## So what's our tone of voice?

Walk around the distilleries and speak with the stillmen, the coopers, the coppersmiths or even our Chairman, Peter Gordon and you'll be able to detect the same warm, engaging manner in each of them. There's nothing corporate or contrived about their conversational style and they will always find time for those who want to talk.

This sense of warm informality and unhurried pace should come across in our writing, in particular when viewed against some of our main competitors. We should speak as one extended, welcoming family, remaining true to who we are.

## Our tone of voice *attributes*

This tone of voice can be brought to life using attributes specific to us, creating a distinct tonal personality for Grant's:

**We are**  
**Warm**  
**Engaging**  
**Genuine**  
**Self-Assured**  
**Grounded**  
**Approachable**

*We are a masculine brand, so imagine these attributes are descriptors of Peter Gordon, our Chairman, or one of our expert male craftsmen.*

### **WARM AND ENGAGING**

*What we mean:*

inclusive, friendly, welcoming, supportive, down to earth.

### **GENUINE AND SELF-ASSURED**

*What we mean:*

confident in who we are, uncontrived,

### **GROUNDING AND APPROACHABLE**

*What we mean:*

still just whisky makers, enjoy conversation and connecting

### **NOT WITHOUT HUMOUR**

We are not a funny brand. However, we still have the everyday sense of humour we've always had and we like to share it with others.

**We aren't**  
**Dour**  
**Aloof**  
**Manufactured**  
**Insecure**  
**Pretentious**  
**Detached**

*What we don't mean:*

Unprofessional, over-familiar

*What we don't mean:*

arrogant, self-important

*What we don't mean:*

uninspiring, lacking drive and ambition

If a person were warm, engaging and genuine, how would they sound? For example:

## We don't say

Grant's is proud to announce an award for blending excellence

Regarding Grant's whisky

A decision was made

Upon arrival

Prior to commencing bottling

In excess of six months in oak barrels

1 million cases per annum

## We do say

We are proud to have been given an award for excellence

About our whisky

We made a decision

When you arrive

Before we start bottling

More than six months in oak barrels

One million cases a year

## Tone of voice by *media*

As with a conversation, wherever possible we should try write in the *first person* ('I', 'we', 'us' etc) because it is more *personal*. Of course we can't do that in every case (e.g. a press release) where using *the third person* would be more appropriate.

It's pretty self-explanatory, but the following gives an idea of when we should use either option:

### First person singular ('I')

True Tales Stories

Family films

Ludo's blog

Local ambassador  
personal blogs

### First person plural ('We')

True Tales Stories

POS

Advertising

Brand launches

Relationship marketing

Brand book

Website

Social media

Film

Brand ambassador materials

Internal communications



# DIFFERENT MEDIA

## Different *writing styles*

We communicate in many different ways and in many different communications, so our writing style needs to be flexible enough to change depending on the type of media, whether you're writing a *blog*, *Facebook update*, *mentoring event*, *website* or *piece of print*. Here are a couple of examples of how the same piece of communication can be expressed in different media:

### WEBSITE & PRINT

FIRST PERSON PLURAL, DESCRIPTIVE, APPROACHABLE, GENUINE

**Writing tips:** Write like you're part of a bigger family, using we, our, us etc. Stick to the facts but don't be boring – tell them a fascinating story with a beginning, middle and end. Hook them in from the start.

**Our first Grant's sales office in 1903 was a dark, dank church crypt in Glasgow that was filled with large earthenware whisky jars, called 'pigs'.**

### FACEBOOK

FIRST PERSON SINGULAR, CHATTIER, MORE EMOTIONAL, MORE QUESTIONING

**Writing tips:** Write as if you were writing to one person, not many (it makes it more personal). Keep your updates short and descriptive, so readers don't have to scroll down. Be emotional – tell your audience how it makes you feel. Ask questions – after all, you want to start a dialogue. Be personal – add names of people and places.

**Going through the Grant's archives this morning with Paul Kendall, our archivist, we came across a photo of our first ever sales office in Glasgow. In 1903 we used to store all our whisky in the crypt of a church. Even I've never drunk whisky in a church. So it got me thinking, what's the strangest place you've drunk whisky?**

### TRUE TALES & MENTORING

FIRST PERSON SINGULAR, SPOKEN, PAINTING WORD PICTURES, ENGAGING A LIVE AUDIENCE

**Writing tips:** Use shorter, sharp sentences. Verbally, try to paint a picture in your audience's mind – add details to add flesh to your story, use first person singular to make it seem more personal, tell them how you feel.

**Let me set the scene. Imagine the crypt of a church: constantly dark – no windows – a dank confined stone room with a ceiling just too low to stand up properly. This glamorous location was our very first Grant's sales office in Glasgow in 1903.**

### BLOG

FIRST PERSON SINGULAR, CHATTIER, MORE PERSONAL, MORE EMOTIONAL, NATURAL

**Writing tips:** With blogs, people are buying into 'you' the person, so be yourself and make it personal. Keep your updates short and descriptive.

**I was rifling through the Grant's archives the other day when I came across a couple of photos of our first ever sales office in Glasgow. I wouldn't have believed it if our archivist hadn't insisted it was true, but amazingly in 1903 we used to store all our whisky in the crypt of a church in the Gorbals area of Glasgow. Holy spirit indeed.**

# DIFFERENT BLENDS

## Different *writing styles*

As well as writing in different media, we will also have to write for all the different expressions of Grant's Blended Scotch Whisky, from *Grant's Family Reserve* to the super premium *Grant's 25 Year Old*.

By subtly changing our tone of voice, we can differentiate each variant to appeal to the right audience, whether an every day drinker or connoisseur, and the right price bracket. Here are a few tips that will subtly change our tone of voice:

### GRANT'S FAMILY RESERVE

FIRST PERSON SINGULAR, CONVERSATIONAL, DOWN TO EARTH AND INFORMAL

**Writing tips:** Family Reserve is our most popular and well-known blend, so it's really important to begin a conversation in all communications – it's our chance to connect to our audience and establish a verbal relationship. Be conversational – write as if you are speaking to someone you're close to. Be upbeat, positive and proud, and use shorter sentences to sound more informal. Think about headlines that will hook the casual drinker in.

### GRANT'S ALE CASK

FIRST PERSON SINGULAR, CONVERSATIONAL, DOWN TO EARTH AND INFORMAL

**Writing tips:** Cask Editions are similar in written style to Family Reserve, but they give us the opportunity to dial up and focus on our whisky innovation: in this case, we are the only blend to use ale casks for finishing. Constantly emphasise the flavour benefits of finishing. Name specific people, like our Malt Master Brian Kinsman, to emphasise his skill and make our complex whisky process more approachable and give it more personality.

### GRANT'S SHERRY CASK

FIRST PERSON SINGULAR, CONVERSATIONAL, DOWN TO EARTH AND INFORMAL

**Writing tips:** Cask Editions are similar in written style to Family Reserve, but they give us the opportunity to dial up and focus on our whisky innovation: in this case, we were first whisky company to use sherry casks for finishing. Constantly emphasise the flavour benefits of finishing. Name specific people, like our Master Blender Brian Kinsman, to emphasise his skill and make our complex whisky process more approachable and give it more personality.

### GRANT'S 12 YEAR OLD

FIRST PERSON SINGULAR, WARM, ENGAGING, A LITTLE MORE FORMAL AND FACTUAL

**Writing tips:** Grant's 12 Year Old is a premium blend, so we need to adopt a subtly different tone. You should still be conversational, but in a more formal way, as though you were speaking to a business partner. With premium blends in general, you should concentrate on craftsmanship and focus on the attention to detail needed to create a whisky of this age. Be specific about how long our whisky is aged and finished, for instance, using rich and genuine facts.

### GRANT'S 18 YEAR OLD

FIRST PERSON SINGULAR, WARM, ENGAGING, A LITTLE MORE FORMAL AND FACTUAL

**Writing tips:** Grant's 18 Year Old is a deluxe blend, so we need to adopt a more formal tone, as though you were speaking to a business partner. Like we do for Grant's 12 Year Old, we should concentrate on craftsmanship and focus on the attention to detail needed to create a whisky of this age. Be specific about how long our whisky is aged and finished, for instance, using rich and genuine facts.

### GRANT'S 25 YEAR OLD

FIRST PERSON SINGULAR, SELF-ASSURED, PRECIOUS, MORE FORMAL

**Writing tips:** Copy for this super premium whisky needs to get across the exquisite quality of this blend and the superlative attention to detail of our craftsmen. Use more ornate language and more evocative adjectives to make our whisky sound more reverent. Paint a vivid and poignant word picture, referencing key craftsmen to emphasise the importance of the blend. With older whiskies, reference to our heritage more can make it sound rarer. If appropriate, make your copy come from somebody important, like Peter Gordon, our Chairman.

# Writing tips

## Getting started:

A few general Grant's writing tips.

**Tell an engaging story.** Stick to the facts but don't be boring. Tell your audience a story with a beginning, middle and end. Hook them in from the start. Add details to add flesh to your story.

**Use shorter, sharper sentences.** It makes your messages more concise and your copy easier to read.

**Sound like you're speaking, not writing.** Use word contractions like we're or we'll to make your copy more conversational, warmer and more welcoming.

**Make sure you've got something to say.** Tone of voice is nothing without a good story, promotion, offer or blog topic.

**Write for your audience.** Think about who you're writing for, whether an online audience who are just skimming pages, time-conscious shoppers in the off-trade or people at tasting events, who are keener to soak up as much knowledge as possible.

**Try to avoid acronyms.** But if you can't, then use the name or term in full the first time you mention it, followed by the acronym in brackets. Eg International Wine and Spirit Competition (IWSC)

## Our litmus test

Hopefully this guide will have inspired you to continue to write in a way that reflects our personality. We've created a set three key questions that will help you decide whether you've written a bit of copy from Grant's.

# 1

Check your copy against the attributes section in this guide

*If it seems manufactured, pretentious or detached, try to let a more natural style come through.*

# 2

Try reading your copy out loud, imagining you're talking to someone you know well

*If you're in doubt about how warm, engaging and natural your writing sounds, try saying it out loud – you'll soon recognise whether it sounds like you or not.*

# 3

Are you writing like you're part of bigger family?

*We want to get across our warmth and informality, so use first or third person ('I', 'we', 'us' etc).*

# Stories

ALL BRANDS HAVE STORIES. However, not all brands have families. After five generations of whisky making, the Grant's family have many true stories to tell, both big and small.

Stories are forms of entertainment but they are also vehicles for passing on key brand messages and they are rich in our tone of voice.

If they are entertaining and well articulated they will be engaging, they will be remembered and they will be passed on again, with our customers becoming the messengers for our messages.

We have been researching and articulating several stories around the Grant's brand to help get us started with this and you can find them later in these guidelines in long and short format.

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# Some of *our* Stories

*Here is just a small selection of the many stories we can share around the world.*

1886

STORY: *Building the Distillery/Meta*  
BRAND MESSAGE: *Family Commitment*

STORY: *First Blend Sales*  
BRAND MESSAGE: *Quality of the Blend*

1903

1909

STORY: *Prohibition*  
BRAND MESSAGE: *Foresight*

STORY: *Charles Gordon's 1909 Tour*  
BRAND MESSAGE: *Internationally Renowned*

1920

1957

STORY: *Building Girvan*  
BRAND MESSAGE: *Best Ingredients*

STORY: *Triangular Bottle*  
BRAND MESSAGE: *Iconic*

1963

2001

STORY: *First Cask Finish*  
BRAND MESSAGE: *Innovators*

We've included one example story in this guide, and have shown how it can be used across different media, whether long or short in length, and still project the same *tone of voice*.

More stories will be made available as we uncover them.

#### OUR EXAMPLE STORY:

Charles Gordon building the Grant's grain distillery

#### SUMMARY OF STORY:

*Story:* The bicycle that built the Grant's grain whisky distillery

*Theme:* Charles Gordon's whisky first attitude and his relationship with his workers

*Key message:* Dedication of family to making the best quality grain whisky

## LONG VERSION

These would be appropriate for use in True Tales evenings / inclusion in a brand book for example.

### TRUE TALES SPEAKER

#### INTRODUCTION: *(if necessary)*

My name's Ludo.

Speaking tonight on the subject of family – I wanted to tell you a story not about my own family but about my extended family.

I am the Global Ambassador for William Grant & Sons, who make Grant's blended Scotch whisky.

Grant's is unlike anywhere I've worked before. It's family-owned and still very much family run. To give you an idea, I probably talk to at least one of the Grant's family on a daily basis.

As you can imagine, along with the whisky, there have been a few stories created over the years and there is always someone happy to tell them.

One of them is about how our Grain Distillery in Girvan was built by Charles Gordon, who was joint managing director of the company back in 1963.

# The bicycle that built the Grant's grain whisky distillery

One of the first things Charles Gordon did when he started building our Girvan grain distillery in 1963 was buy a bike.

Not exactly high-tech when you think he was trying to build the most advanced grain distillery in Scotland, but he reckons it was one of the most valuable bits of kit he bought in those nine short months.

It wasn't that he didn't have a car. In 1963 he had a snazzy little beige MG 1100 – but it wasn't any good at getting round the site as it couldn't get through the mud that had been churned up by the constant stream of trucks going back and forth.

He tried walking everywhere, but it took too long – at 64 acres, it was a big project on a big site.

It was only when he went into Girvan town to stock up on a few supplies that he came across a solution. One morning in J.D. Strachan grocers he saw a bicycle leaning up outside.

It wasn't like the sleek carbon fibre bicycles of today. It was an iron tank – all metal poles, a sturdy iron basket on the front and it weighed a tonne. Charles knew it was what he had been looking for.

A week later Charles was on a bike of his own, clunking and squeaking its way around the wheel ruts in the muddy building site.

The bike was important because it gave him the freedom to be hands on and face-to-face - he isn't one of those people who likes to conduct things by phone from an office miles away.

He says it was for the same reason that he started to live on site in a battered old caravan. He wanted things done quickly. He had set himself a pretty hairy deadline: nine months to build not only a distillery, but one that would produce a smooth grain whisky which the family would be proud to put in their blend.

Not everyone appreciated Charles' bike though. To the 400-odd construction workers, it was a constant source of irritation!

I spoke to Jackie Ross, a construction worker on the site in the 60s who stayed on to become one of our most respected coopers, and he remembers it well. "The man never slept", he told me, "Charles was always going to and fro on that damn bike trying to get us to finish the job. He must have done 10 miles a day."

On the plus side he said the bike's squeaks were like an early warning system. They meant a visit from the boss, and they knew that behind the cheery manner was a perfectionist who would go over every detail of their work, whether it was bricklaying or welding, to see if it was the best it could be.

Jackie told me that Charles even once 'accidentally' walked through some wet cement he didn't think was up to scratch. He said, "It hadn't been done well and when Charles came over, he planted his brogues right in the middle of it and apologised. He ruined his shoes, but we all knew what it meant".

Charles also knew the way to the workers' hearts (and mine!), and it is said he handed out up to 1500 bottles of Grant's Family Reserve as incentives. I asked him about it recently

(as he's not known for giving his whisky away for free) and he just smiled and said, "I wanted the distillery up and running by Christmas."

Some will tell you that the Christmas deadline was set because that was when the first spirit flowed from his great-grandfather's first distillery at Glenfiddich 80 years earlier. If you ask me I think the truth is he didn't want to spend Christmas in a caravan, but you can choose for yourself.

As Charles was constantly on site overseeing the work, often including weekends, his family and friends had to come and visit him there.

His nephew Peter Gordon, who is now the boss of our company, was just four when his uncle was building the distillery. But he can still vividly remember visiting Girvan – all the trucks, diggers, cranes and even riding in the basket of Charles' grocery bike.

Yes, for better or worse, that bike made an impression on all who came across it.

Charles told me that the day before Christmas Eve he went out on-site as usual and could hear all this laughing going on. He walked over and there was his grocer's bike, welded 100 feet up on the outside of the cooling tower. The workers had finally got their revenge – and made sure they would never have to suffer its squeaks again.

As the distillery was finished anyway he told them, with a twinkle in his eye, to pack up their tools, as they were all fired.

So it was a humble grocer's bike that was in some way responsible for the first grain spirit flowing from the Girvan stills on Christmas Day 1963. And that same smooth and rounded single grain whisky is still put into all Grant's whiskies today.

So my toast tonight is to a bike, a determined rider and the distillery they helped build.

Slainte.



## SHORT VERSION

This shorter version of the story would work well online, or in advertising for example.

# The bicycle that built the Grant's grain whisky distillery

The first thing Charles Gordon did when he started building our Girvan grain distillery in 1963 was buy a battered old grocer's bike.

Not exactly high-tech, but it gave him the freedom to whizz around the site and speak to all the workers in person. Not that they were overjoyed. You see, Charles was a total perfectionist, so every time they heard his bike squeaking they knew they had to work even harder.

Needless to say, the distillery got built in record time, but they got their revenge by welding Charles' grocer's bike 100 feet up on the cooling tower.



## Contact

*For more information on our tone of voice please contact:*

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*An online version of these Tone of Voice guidelines is available from the WGS extranet. <http://extranet.wgrant.com>*



[WWW.GRANTSWHISKY.COM](http://WWW.GRANTSWHISKY.COM)