Set Up Your Shop Voice

Your shop already has a voice. It shows up in the note you tuck into the mailer and the way you describe a color variation in a handmade mug. Hand a task to an AI and it strips all of that away. It defaults to "polite, helpful robot." Your listing reads like a catalog; your email sounds like a bank notice.

A voice guide fixes this in ten minutes. It is one block of text you paste at the top of every prompt. The AI reads it first, then writes the draft. You get copy that sounds like you wrote it on a slow Tuesday morning—only faster. No copywriting degree needed. Just make a few decisions once and reuse them forever.

Build Your Voice Guide in 5 Steps

1. **Pick exactly three adjectives.**

Do not choose ten. Three is what an AI can hold onto without diluting them. Think about how your best customers describe you. Are you *brief, witty, precise*? *Warm, chatty, practical*? *Calm, earthy, direct*? Write them in that exact order: feeling, pace, texture.

1. **Give each adjective an "Always" and a "Never."**

Adjectives alone are too abstract. Translate them into behavior. For "practical," your Always might be "Use plain verbs like wipe, toss, hang," and your Never "Avoid elevate, curated, luxurious." For "warm," Always is "Address the reader as 'you' in line one," Never is "Do not open with 'Dear Customer.'" Six short rules give the AI real guardrails.

1. **Mine three real phrases from your inbox.**

This is the highest-leverage move in the guide. Find three sentences you have already sent or received that sound unmistakably like your shop. "This survived my toddler and the dishwasher" is gold. Your own "I double-stitched the strap because I hate flimsy bags" is better. Paste them under "Sample Lines to Match." The AI mirrors the cadence without copying the words.

1. **Lock down rhythm and mechanics.**

Decide the small stuff now so you never have to correct it later. Tell the AI your sentence length. Contractions? (Write "don't," not "do not.") Em dashes or commas? Emojis at all? If

never, say "No emojis, no exclamation points in listings." Add your shop name, city, and shipping carrier. Local detail anchors generic output.

1. **Assemble the master block and save it.**

Put steps 1–4 into one plain-text block. Save it in your Notes app or a snippet tool like TextExpander. Name it `VOICE.md`. Every prompt from here starts with that block pasted on top. Do not retype it. Copy and paste. The goal is zero friction on a busy morning.

Voice Guide Checklist

- Three adjectives chosen (feeling, pace, texture)
- One "Always" and one "Never" written for each adjective
- Three real phrases pulled from past customer emails or reviews
- Contractions, punctuation, and emoji rules decided
- Shop name, city, carrier, and one real price added
- Master block saved where you can paste it in under two seconds
- Date stamped so you know when to revisit it

A Real Example: Maple & Thread Co.

Maya runs a one-person apron shop out of her kitchen in Asheville, North Carolina. She sells heavy canvas aprons for $48.00, ships via USPS Priority in 2–3 business days, and cuts them to a 32-inch length with 28-inch waist ties. Her old listings sounded like everyone else's until she built this guide. She prints the block on a sticky note and keeps it beside her laptop.

Her three adjectives: Warm, Practical, Unfussy.

Her rules:

- Warm → Always open with a kitchen-specific greeting. Never say "Dear Valued Customer."
- Practical → Always name real messes (pulled pork, marker, flour). Never say "liquid-resistant technology."
- Unfussy → Always write sentences under 14 words. Never use "luxury," "elevate," or "curated."

Sample lines she pasted in:

- "Survived a pulled pork fundraiser and a toddler with a marker."

- "I double-stitched the neck strap because I hate flimsy gear."
- "Fits my 6'2" husband and my 5'1" sister without a trip to the tailor."

Mechanics: Contractions yes. Em dashes yes. Emojis no. Exclamation points in emails only, never listings. Shop: Maple & Thread Co., Asheville, NC. Ships USPS Priority.

Her master block (ready to paste):

> Voice: Warm, Practical, Unfussy.
>
> Shop: Maple & Thread Co., Asheville, NC. Ships USPS Priority in 2–3 business days.
>
> - Always open with a kitchen greeting. Never use "Dear Valued Customer."
>
> - Always name real messes (pulled pork, marker). Never say "liquid-resistant technology."
>
> - Always write sentences under 14 words. Never use luxury, elevate, curated.
>
> - Use contractions and em dashes. No emojis. No exclamation points in listings.
>
> Match: "Survived a pulled pork fundraiser and a toddler with a marker." / "I double-stitched the neck strap because I hate flimsy gear." / "Fits my 6'2" husband and my 5'1" sister without a trip to the tailor."

Ask her AI for a new $52.00 cross-back apron (34" length, 30" ties) and it returns:

> Morning, kitchen crew. This cross-back apron is built for the messy part. Spilled coffee? Wipe it. Flour everywhere? Shake it out. We cut it to 34 inches with 30-inch ties, so it fits a 6'2" cook and a 5'1" baker without a trip to the tailor. The neck strap is double-stitched—I hate flimsy gear. Ships USPS Priority in 2–3 business days from Asheville. $52.00.

No "elevate your culinary experience." No robot tone. Just her.

Common Mistakes

Writing a guide that is too long. Past 250 words, the AI starts skipping the middle. Keep it tight. Six rules and three quotes beat a two-page style manual. If it scrolls off your phone screen, it is too long. If you cannot paste it in one breath, cut it.

Only listing negatives. "Don't sound fancy" tells the AI what to avoid, not what to do. It replaces "fancy" with "casual-but-awkward." Pair every Never with a positive Always. "Never

say 'elevate' → Always say 'wipe, shake, hang.'"

Forgetting the numbers and place. Context-free AI invents generic details. It writes "fast shipping" instead of "ships USPS Priority in 2–3 business days." It says "one size fits most" instead of "32-inch length, 28-inch ties." Put your real figures in the block. Specificity is the fastest route to sounding human.

Letting emojis sneak back in. Without an explicit ban, models sprinkle in 🧵 or ✨ to boost "engagement." One line ("No emojis anywhere") fixes it. Same for exclamation points —say exactly where they are allowed.

Setting it and forgetting it. Your shop in November sounds different from July. After a holiday push or new line, spend two minutes swapping a sample line. Date-stamp the block so you know when it was last true.

Do This Today

Open a blank note. Set a timer for ten minutes. Write your three adjectives, then one Always and one Never for each. Send yourself three real lines from past customer messages. Add your shop name, city, carrier, and one real price or measurement. Save the block as `Voice Block v1`. Then paste it above this prompt and see what comes back: "Write a two-sentence product blurb for my best-selling item." If it sounds like a robot, tighten one rule and run it again. You are done when you would actually hit send.