

Currents - UX/UI Writing Guide

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[go/currents-writing](#)

A comprehensive guide to Currents' UX/UI writing

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Introduction

Why a style guide?

In this case, consistency.

A style guide exists to create a consistent user experience. Consistent patterns of information help users spend less time figuring out what to do.

It's also important to maintain Google's voice in-product. The language throughout affects how people perceive and feel about Currents. Currents is also a critical part of G Suite, and should look, sound, and behave similarly to other G Suite products.

How should I use this thing?

For generally self-service requests, such as:

- Finding the right word or pattern (Remove or Delete? They? She or He?)
- Using pre-approved language (Can't connect to the internet > Try again)
- For the glossary of terms
- Specific component messaging, e.g. error messages, snackbars
- For capitalization and punctuation questions
- If you're curious about the brand and marketing backbone that supports UX text

When to call in a UX Writer instead:

- Multi-step user flows
- In-product language that doesn't match a pattern here
- Marketing-related or persuasive text
- Text that might be high impact or emotionally charged (think really frustrating scenarios, like telling someone their post was removed by moderators)

Key actions

Posts, comments, sharing, and likes

<p>Use Post, posting, posted</p> <p>Comment, commenting, commented</p> <p>Not Share, sharing (see cell below)</p> <p>Share and sharing are already used throughout Docs and Drive in the context of collaboration. Posts and comments are authored by a single user.</p> <p>Exception When you refer to using the share button to share a post. (Post shared.)</p>	<p>For Text</p> <p>Images</p>	<p>Usage (note prepositions) Post Posted in [community name] Posted to Google+ Posted to [+mention name]</p> <p>Comment Comment on [Name] commented [content]</p> <p>This works because a community is a subset (within). Google+ is the whole (Posted in Ireland, Posted to the world)</p> <p>Pro tip: Avoid prepositions altogether by visually treating quotes differently.</p> <p>Carla posted <i>That was a long way...</i></p>
<p>Use Share, sharing, shared</p>	<p>For Links outside Google+ Content not original to the author (on Google+) Shared Drive files Location Other people's posts you share using the share button</p>	<p>Usage (note prepositions) Shared with (never "shared to") [Name] shared [content]</p>

<p>Use Create, created</p> <p>** Say “posted a poll” when referring to the act of publishing a poll **</p> <p>Not Share a poll, add a poll</p>	<p>For Polls</p> <p>New communities and collections</p>	<p>Usage (note prepositions) Create a poll [Name] created a poll [Name] created a poll [poll name]</p> <p>Create a community [Name] created a collection [Name] created [collection name]</p> <p><i>Note that a poll will always include the content type--a poll--unlike other types.</i></p>
<p>Use Reply, replied</p>	<p>For Threaded comments (after the first)</p> <p>Comments with + mentions</p>	<p>Usage (note prepositions) Reply Reply to [name]</p>
<p>Use Like, liked Remove like</p> <p>[Likes replace the +1]</p>	<p>For Referring to the thumbs-up icon.</p> <p>Note: This replaced the +1 of Google+</p>	<p>Usage <i>Likes</i> can indicate many things that are positive: agreement, acknowledgement ("I saw this"), approval, etc. <i>Likes</i> use the thumbs-up icon and operate similarly to other social media.</p> <p>Note: Reversing your like action is <i>remove like</i>, not dislike. There is no <i>dislike</i> option shown with the post.</p> <p>TBD: If/when <i>like</i> is used in quotes or italics in the middle of a sentence or as a suggestion..</p>
<p>Use stream, streams</p> <p>Not Admin stream, custom stream, feed</p>	<p>For The visual flow of content in Currents. Cards are displayed in a stream.</p> <p>In addition, streams are a feature that allow administrators to filter and route content based on saved search criteria.</p>	<p>Usage With regard to the home stream, as much as possible, say <i>home</i> instead of <i>home stream</i>.</p>
<p>Use</p>	<p>For</p>	<p>Usage</p>

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Key constructs

Streams

Streams are essentially content feeds set up by a user's organization, and operate on a set of saved search parameters.

The user can't control the search query for the stream or turn it on/off. **The user also can't post directly into a stream.**

Streams also refers to the method of content delivery.

Clicking into a stream allows you to see a title and description.

STREAMS



All posts

99+



Apps leadership

Can be found:

Main navigation, inside the stream itself, onboarding

DO

- Refer to the home stream as just *Home* in the UI
- Say *create a stream*

DON'T

- Capitalize the word *streams*
- Refer to them as *custom streams* or *admin custom streams*
- Say *add a stream*

Tags

Tags (or hashtags) help users find content based on keywords. Most often, tags are user-generated and grow in usage as other people discover them.

Currents uses **several classifications for tags: popular, trending, and following.**

Popular tags have a fairly complex algorithm, but are essentially tags with a lot of usage over a longer period of time.

Trending tags have a sharp uptick in usage over a short period of time (typically a week).

Following tags will rank those posts higher and



Home



Tags



#dooglers

135 posts

Found in:

Main navigation, posts, post box, right rail (trending tags), management tools, onboarding, email notifications

you'll see more of them in your home stream. Users can start and stop following a tag at any time.	
DO <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shorten the word to just <i>tags</i> in the UI and <i>#tags</i> as an example in hint text • 	DON'T <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capitalize the word <i>tags</i> • Call it <i>unfollow</i> or <i>unfollowing</i> a tag

Profile <p>Streams are essentially content feeds set up by a user's organization, and operate on a set of saved search parameters.</p> <p>The user can't control the search query for the stream or turn it on/off. The user also can't post directly into a stream.</p> <p><i>Streams</i> also refers to the method of content delivery.</p> <p>Clicking into a stream allows you to see a title and description.</p>	<div> <div>STREAMS</div> <div>  All posts 99+ </div> <div>  Apps leadership </div> </div> <p>Can be found: Main navigation, inside the stream itself, onboarding</p>
DO <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refer to the home stream as just <i>Home</i> in the UI • Say <i>create a stream</i> 	DON'T <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capitalize the word <i>streams</i> • Refer to them as <i>custom streams</i> or <i>admin custom streams</i> • Say <i>add a stream</i>

Communities <p>Streams are essentially content feeds set up by a user's organization, and operate on a set of saved search parameters.</p> <p>The user can't control the search query for the stream or turn it on/off. The user also can't post</p>	<div> <div>STREAMS</div> <div>  All posts 99+ </div> <div>  Apps leadership </div> </div>
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<p>directly into a stream.</p> <p><i>Streams</i> also refers to the method of content delivery.</p> <p>Clicking into a stream allows you to see a title and description.</p>	<p>Can be found: Main navigation, inside the stream itself, onboarding</p>
<p>DO</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refer to the home stream as just <i>Home</i> in the UI • Say <i>create a stream</i> 	<p>DON'T</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capitalize the word <i>streams</i> • Refer to them as <i>custom streams</i> or <i>admin custom streams</i> • Say <i>add a stream</i>

<p>Management tools</p> <p><i>Streams</i> are essentially content feeds set up by a user's organization, and operate on a set of saved search parameters.</p> <p>The user can't control the search query for the stream or turn it on/off. The user also can't post directly into a stream.</p> <p><i>Streams</i> also refers to the method of content delivery.</p> <p>Clicking into a stream allows you to see a title and description.</p>	<p>STREAMS</p> <div data-bbox="844 903 1429 1092">  All posts 99+  Apps leadership </div> <p>Can be found: Main navigation, inside the stream itself, onboarding</p>
<p>DO</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refer to the home stream as just <i>Home</i> in the UI • Say <i>create a stream</i> 	<p>DON'T</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capitalize the word <i>streams</i> • Refer to them as <i>custom streams</i> or <i>admin custom streams</i> • Say <i>add a stream</i>

Spotlight The Spotlight module gives a prominent place in the home stream to posts by leadership (both execs and thought leaders). Spotlight posts are also collected in a stream accessible by clicking <i>view all</i> in a spotlight module. <i>Spotlight</i> is the verb, as in <i>spotlight this post</i> .	Can be found: On the home stream, has its own stream (<i>view all</i>)
DO <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Say a post is <i>spotlighted</i> • Say <i>spotlight this post</i> 	DON'T <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capitalize the word <i>spotlight</i> • Say <i>spotlit</i> posts (use <i>spotlighted</i>)

Post analytics <i>Post analytics</i>	Can be found: Main navigation, inside the stream itself, onboarding
DO <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refer to the home stream as just <i>Home</i> in the UI • Say <i>create a stream</i> 	DON'T <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capitalize the word <i>streams</i> • Refer to them as <i>custom streams</i> or <i>admin custom streams</i> • Say <i>add a stream</i>

How we talk to users

Briefly:

Voice is what a particular writer sounds like. Google has a lot of writers, but we all strive to write using the same voice.

Tone is the attitude behind those words, which can change depending on the situation. Is the situation serious (e.g., dealing with money), or more playful (e.g., a Photos surprise)?

Voice = climate. Tone = weather.

Voice and tone are important. Be sure to evaluate your writing with these attributes in mind.

Google	Useful: Put the most important info first, and don't burden users with the details	Honest: Be clear and direct with bad news or complicated concepts	Human: Use plain language. Contractions, short words, nothing fancy.
<u>G Suite</u>	Authentic: Don't use jargon or technical terms. Give each interaction a touch of humanity that reminds our users there are people behind G Suite.	Empowering: Our users are the star of the show. We build tools to help them do what they do best and take seriously the responsibilities that come with it. Ultimately, they're in the driver's seat.	Enthusiastic: In a sea of enterprise software, G Suite differentiates by being ourselves: comfortable enough in our own skin to admit we're excited about the future of work.
Currents	Connective: Currents brings together people <i>and</i> knowledge. Use words that evoke a feeling of community and sharing, but be wary of overly "social" language in an enterprise tool. Think connective tissue. Think sparking ideas across an <i>entire</i> organization, rather than just a team.	Thoughtful: This is where Currents can differentiate itself from other comms tools, by supporting longer-form posts and slowing things down a little. Think conversation or discourse (but don't use the <i>word</i> discourse); about bringing attention to conversations that matter, that aren't task-based like email or chat. Don't use hurried or mission-critical language like "most important"	Harmonious: Currents has an opportunity to bring an entire organization together, both to make decisions and understand how an org's mission applies on a team or personal level. Everyone has a voice here. Try not to create division by relying heavily on terms like "senior leadership" to draw attention to highlighted posts. Be especially careful with negative or discouraging language ("you can't post in a private community"). Currents is "we're all in this together."

G Suite is a group of products designed to work together seamlessly. To reduce confusion, **Currents should use the same vocabulary as Docs, Drive, Sheets, Gmail, Chat, Meet, and Calendar** anytime it makes sense to do so.

[Full glossary](#)

Writing for an administrator? Many of these words (and more) can be found in the [enterprise documentation](#) style guide.

Writing error or permissions messages for a non-IT user? Always good to check the same article for alternative words!

Term	Description	Usage and Notes
Use Post, posting, posted Comment, commenting, commented Not Share, sharing (see cell below) Share and sharing are already used throughout Docs and Drive in the context of collaboration. Posts and comments are authored by a single user. Exception When you refer to using the share button to share a post. (Post shared.)	For Text Images	Usage (note prepositions) Post Posted in [community name] Posted to Google+ Posted to [+mention name] Comment Comment on [Name] commented [content] This works because a community is a subset (within). Google+ is the whole (Posted in Ireland, Posted to the world) Pro tip: Avoid prepositions altogether by visually treating quotes differently. Carla posted <i>That was a long way...</i>
Use Share, sharing, shared	For Links outside Google+ Content not original to the author (on Google+) Shared Drive files Location Other people's posts you share using the share button	Usage (note prepositions) Shared with (never "shared to") [Name] shared [content]
Use Create, created	For Polls	Usage (note prepositions) Create a poll

<p>** Say “posted a poll” when referring to the act of publishing a poll **</p> <p>Not Share a poll, add a poll</p>	<p>New communities and collections</p>	<p>[Name] created a poll [Name] created a poll [poll name]</p> <p>Create a community [Name] created a collection [Name] created [collection name]</p> <p><i>Note that a poll will always include the content type--a poll--unlike other types.</i></p>
<p>Use Reply, replied</p>	<p>For Threaded comments (after the first)</p> <p>Comments with + mentions</p>	<p>Usage (note prepositions) Reply Reply to [name]</p>
<p>Use Like, liked</p>	<p>For Referring to the thumbs-up icon.</p> <p>Note: This replaced the +1 of Google+</p>	<p>Usage [Likes replace the +1] "Likes" can indicate many things that are positive: agreement, acknowledgement ("I saw this"), approval, etc. Likes use the thumbs-up icon and operate similarly to Facebook.</p> <p>Note: Reversing your like action is "remove like," not dislike. There is no "dislike" option shown with the post.</p> <p>TBD: If/when "like" is used in quotes in the middle of a sentence or as a suggestion. Full guidelines coming soon.</p>
<p>Use stream, streams</p> <p>Not Admin stream, custom stream, feed</p>	<p>For The visual flow of content in Currents. Cards are displayed in a stream.</p> <p>In addition, streams are a feature that allow administrators to filter and route content based on saved search criteria.</p>	<p>Usage With regard to the home stream, try to use “home” instead of “home stream.”</p>

Communities and collections

Term	Description	Usage and Notes
Communities Your communities Recently visited Join community Leave community	Text on the communities page and related sections “Your communities” are any community you’re a part of (owner or member)	<i>Your communities</i> works despite different levels of ownership. Partial ownership can be implied as a member of a community. You can contribute and help make decisions.
Collections are being deprecated (may take time) Collections Owned collections Followed collections Create a collection Toasts: Following [collection name]... Unfollowing [collection name]...	UI text associated with collections To get to collections, it’s profile > communities and collections (view all) This language should also be used for confirmation toasts.	It may not even be in the UI, but <i>Your collections</i> would only consist of collections you own. Unlike communities, you can’t contribute content to someone else’s collection, meaning you don’t have any ownership.
# followers # posts Public, private	Within a collection you’re following	We need to revisit the terms used for different levels of access (privacy).
Owner Moderator Member	Three levels of ownership. See this article for details about each level.	Don’t capitalize owner, moderator, or member. They aren’t proper nouns.
Visibility: Public Private		TBD after audit and alignment of public/private usage
Membership: Ask to join Public		TBD after audit and alignment of public/private usage Should <i>public</i> be <i>open</i> when referring to membership?

Notifications (in progress)

Term	Description	Usage and Notes
Highlights	Weekly re-engagement notifications that focus on new and popular content	
Weekly Briefing		May also be referred to as “In case you missed it” emails

Card labels (hats)

Term	Description	Usage and Notes
What you missed	A “hat” above a card that explains why you’re seeing it. Usually light grey.	Note: Legal may ask to change to: what you “may have” missed
Popular now at Google		This should <i>not</i> use a domain, but there are cases where an organization may not enter their actual name.
Trending tags		
Spotlight		

Tags

Term	Description	Usage and Notes
Tag / Tagged / Suggested tags		

People and Circles

Term	Description	Usage and Notes
Follow/Following/Followers	Following people, their	Follow [name]

Toasts: Following... Followed	collections, or someone following you: Buttons, toasts, dialogs	Follow [collection name] Follow this collection?
Unfollow / Stop following Toasts: Unfollowing... Unfollowed	Ceasing to follow a person or his/her collections: Buttons, toasts, dialogs	This is partly dependent on the consequences of taking this action. If the action is easy to reverse, unfollow is fine to use (short beats good). If the action is irreversible or difficult to reverse, crystal clear language helps make that point. Unfollow [name]? Stop following [name]? If you stop following them, you won't be able to start again. <i>The singular "them" is now the Google standard to replace gender.</i>
Find people Suggestions for you	Text on the People page	8/2017 screenshot
Circles are being deprecated (may take time) Your circles Circles Circle someone	Users assign people to Circles (like a Venn diagram) to then address posts to specific groups. Pre-created groups are friends, family, acquaintances, and following.	TBD. See this bug or project Xor for context.

Settings

Term	Description	Usage and Notes
N/A	UX doesn't own the Settings page; you can refer to it as needed for in-product help.	Proposed settings rewrite 5/2017

Other terms

Term	Description	Usage and Notes
Access Permission		<p>Avoid using “access” in end-user facing text. Use “view” instead (for that meaning of access).</p> <p>In cases of limited or restricted access, use “permission.”</p> <p>This aligns with G Suite and Identity guidance.</p>
Organization Not work, company, school, or business (but <i>work or school</i> is okay)		<p>Use instead of company, work, or school.</p> <p>To write around, try <i>work or school</i> or <i>work and school</i>.</p> <p>This is consistent with G Suite.</p>
<u>Do not use</u> domain	As in, “limited to your domain” or “domain name” for a URL.	<p>Use organization, or spell out the URL, instead.</p> <p>Consistent with Google-wide UX wordlist.</p> <p>*May be used for specific admin-facing circumstances</p>
App		Permissible to use instead of application.
OK No thanks Done	Common calls to action	Use “OK” instead of “Got it,” which doesn’t localize as well.
Cancel	Common call to action	Use to cancel a workflow or quit without saving.
Try again	Common call to action	Use instead of “retry”
Turn off		Frequently found in association with toggles. Use turn off for end users, but use “disable” for admins.
Turn on		Frequently found in association with toggles. Use turn on for end users, but use “enable” for admins.
Streams	A “stream” of content based on a saved search query. Streams show up in the left-side nav and	<p>Don’t use “Admin custom streams” or “custom streams.” The functionality of a stream is the same; it’s just the parameters that change.</p> <p>Instead, use “streams” and a visual indicator on</p>

	can be created by org admins or (future) users. Streams can be shared (future).	streams that were created by admins and thus can't be modified by users.
Post analytics Analytics		
Internal only: Suggestions		Internally referred to as "in-line recommendations." G Suite uses "suggestions" rather than "recommendations."
User-facing: Suggested/ Recommended		Use sparingly and with caution! Per legal, don't use when content is not clearly associated (spelled out in the UI) with the specific user seeing it. "Suggested posts" = not okay "Suggested trending post" = not okay "Suggested because you follow #cats" = okay "You follow #cats" = good Don't use anywhere it could be misconstrued as Google endorsing a post's author or the content of said post. Also, use sparingly to avoid over-promising.
People you may know		Acceptable, because there's a clear association to the specific user without over-promising.
Posts you might like	Do not use for (inline or other) recommendations.	This is too vague to bring any benefit to the user, and they have no way to know <i>how</i> we chose these posts. If we get it wrong, users will notice and start to lose trust. Google as a brand is known for intelligent suggestions and innovation, and when that doesn't hold true across all products, it's disappointing. Focus instead on the value of the post, not the perceived value to the user (don't assume we know what's important to them without signals).
Show		Use with show/hide situations
See		Use "see" instead of "view."

		See all, see more, see your profile, etc. Remember: what would you say to a friend, offline? <i>I want to view your pictures or I want to see your pictures?</i>
"Go to"		Use instead of <i>visit</i> <i>Visit</i> is the equivalent of stopping by for a friendly chat. <i>Go to</i> is the action taken by a user to open the app or land on another site.

Deprecated or minimized terms

See the old style guide for the terms +1, Circles, Collections, and public, private, and hybrid modes.

For additional **enterprise-specific** and more technical terms, see the [enterprise documentation](#) guide.

Common UI elements

[More on these visual components](#) in Google Material Guidelines (links to snackbars).

Onboarding

Google+ onboarding is different for consumers than for enterprise, mostly due to different permission levels.

Check out this [guide to better onboarding](#). Google Material also has their own [guidelines](#).

Deck showing the [new user flow](#) (for public users, not enterprise) as of 4/2017.

<< Links to Google+ onboarding screens, current and proposed, will go here >>

Dialogs

- Dos and Don'ts

- **Do** shorten headlines by using questions and skipping words that aren't critical to understanding (Leave this community?)
- **Don't** make the body text more than 2-3 short sentences. If you're trying to convey more, consider if it's something critical to understanding, or something that could be in a "Learn more" help center article, instead.
- Can use "Learn more" for subjects too long to convey
- May need to refer to special "Mutombo" [messaging](#)

Snackbars

- Limit snackbar text to a single line directly related to the operation performed
- [Google+ snackbars audit](#)
- Dos and Don'ts
- Can use "Learn more" for subjects too long to convey

Toasts

- Android-only; should be even shorter than snackbars
- [Toasts audit link](#)

Hint and helper text

- See "[Placeholder text](#)" in Material Guidelines
- [Google+ hint text audit](#)
- [Post-box hint text](#)
- Dos and Don'ts

Error messages

If you are writing error messages, you *must read* the linked guide.

- Google+ specific (matrix)
- [Writing error messages](#)
- Can use "Learn more" for subjects too long to convey

In-product callouts

- [Feature discovery](#) messages help users get more from our products. These are helpful tips, not promotional. Focus on how the user will benefit.
 - Keep them short! Headlines should be < 28 characters.
 - Can use “Learn more” for subjects too long to convey
- Google Consumer Support (or GCon) writes Google+ help center articles.

Greenlines and localization

What are **greenlines**? Paraphrased from [go/greenlines](#):

Greenlines are annotated mocks for elements on a page that help screen readers process a layout as if someone were looking at it.

Greenlines help 9+ million visually impaired users better navigate our products. New features in Google+ should have associated greenlines. For a crash course, [get the greenlines tool](#) and read this one-page on [writing a11y labels](#).

As new strings are checked into a file, **localization** at Google is mostly an automated process (with real people doing the translations). Localization is yet another reason to keep text short, free of idioms and colloquialisms, and free of jargon. Google Material has [excellent guidelines](#) for localization-conscious writing.

The [translation console](#) is great for locating specific strings and, sometimes, context.

Mobile differences

Thanks to Kristen Yee of [Writing for Novitas](#)

	Android	iOS
Capitalization	Sentence case	Title Case
Periods	Single sentence: no period Multiple sentences: no period after last sentence	Always use

Referring to apps	Don't enclose in quotes	Enclose in quotes
Guidelines	Google Writing Guidelines	Apple Writing Guidelines

Capitalization and punctuation

In general:

- **Use sentence-style caps:** *I walked to the store* not *I Walked to the Store*
- **Omit periods** after single sentences, or in hover text, bulleted lists, and labels/buttons
- **Don't use colons.** They make localization tricky.
- **Don't use exclamation points** unless you're really shouting
- **Use contractions**

Features of Google products are not proper nouns. That means they're always lowercase.* Don't capitalize streams, tags, communities, or other concepts.

* When directing someone to a specific navigation item, caps are permissible. For example, *Click "Tags" to see popular tags and tags you follow.*

See the [Material Guidelines](#) for more information. Note: Google uses AP Style with the exception of the Oxford (third) comma.

Gender and localization

Google uses *they* as a singular pronoun. [Substitute they and them](#) for he, she, his, and hers. Using someone's name is often a good workaround, but don't use it to the point it sounds contrived or awkward.

Keep strings short to avoid trouble with **localization** and screen size issues. (But [don't sound like a robot](#).) Avoid idioms, slang, and references to UI location like "left, above."

WIP - Currents pillars & narrative - WIP

Currents is a social product, but we're *more* than just a social network

[Marketing messaging pillars](#) to draw from

WIP - One-sentence description - WIP

Latest candidates:

Currents delivers the right content at the right time to keep you in the loop on important topics.

Currents delivers the content most relevant to you, while showing you how it relates to your organization's big picture.

Currents makes it easier to share ideas and information with the right audience, no matter where they are in your organization.

Related document (newly started):

[G Suite comms writing strategy](#) for Currents, Chat, and Gmail

Resources

- [UX Writing Survival Guide, Comms](#) > Includes tons of comms-specific examples of UXW principles and exercises
- [Google Brand Standards](#) > Google voice, tone, and branding matters
- [Google Material](#) > UI focused language, tone, punctuation, etc
- [Work UX > writing guidelines](#) > Not currently updated, but super helpful!
- [Writing for Enterprise](#) > Not currently updated, but good examples of enterprise diffs
- [UX wordlist](#) > Very outdated, but might help with specific terms
- [Error messages](#) > How to write them in a non-annoying way
- [Google Research Archive](#) > A UXer's best friend. You can filter to Google+.
- [Collaborating with a UX writer](#) > So how long does it take to come up with 10 words?
(Hint: Longer than you think, if you want data!)

