

# Who We Are

Our organizational philosophy and voice come from all the unique things that make us, us: our values, our culture, our people, our priorities, our practices—all the bits that together create our identity. Our voice personifies our brand and expresses our identity: it's how we write, how we speak, how we act and how we appear in all our communications and interactions.

When our voice and actions are consistent, the customer experience becomes seamless and familiar, no matter where they go or who they deal with. A compelling voice humanizes our organization, engages our customers, and lets people know that every part of their BPL experience will be equally good.

Our voice is at every public touch point:

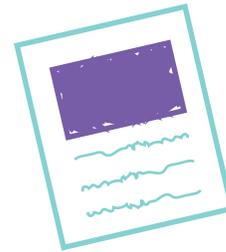
- > Face-to-face interactions
- > Phone
- > Comment forms
- > Ask a Question replies
- > Program descriptions
- > Signage
- > Social media
- > Posters
- > Website
- > Instructions
- > Computers
- > Contracts
- > Minutes



- > Forms
- > Notifications
- > Job postings & descriptions
- > Requests for Proposals/  
Quotations
- > Invoices
- > Newsletter
- > Speeches
- > Flyers
- > Guide
- > Ads
- > Press releases etc.



Although much of our voice is packaged by our Marketing Communications team into consistent visuals and language, it really is a reflection of how we interact with our customer and the public.



## OUR VOICE

Burlington Public Library provides a human service: we help people improve their lives in some way. Our priority is to understand what our customers seek and help them get it. We want to find and share trustworthy information and resources that people can easily understand and use, without them feeling judged, confused, or uncomfortable.

**We are helpful** but not pushy = Reliable – Reasonable – Honest – Neutral

**Friendly** but not overbearing = Courteous – Open minded – Warm – Engaging

**Knowledgeable** but not academic = Curious – Creative – Trained – Trusted – Fact-based

**Current** not but trendy = Aware – Informed – Responsive

**Casual** but not unrefined = Upbeat – Approachable – Fun

**Enthusiastic** but not demanding = Encouraging – Supportive – Positive

## OUR TONE

Our voice is how we communicate our identity and stays fairly constant from day to day. On the other hand, tone of voice conveys attitude and frequently changes. Examples of tone are: serious, playful, formal, casual, angry, ironic, cheerful, sarcastic, etc.

Tone is how we adapt our voice to different audiences and situations. Tone is more about how we say it, not what we say, and the impression each interaction or conversation leaves on our audience.

## VOICE & TONE STYLE

Basic guidelines to keep in mind when creating written communications.

WHAT IT SOUNDS LIKE	WHAT IT IS NOT
Respectful; sensitive to differences and diversity	<i>Offensive, biased, or inappropriate</i>
Simple, literal, plain words	<i>Jargon, buzzwords, or slang terms</i>
Conversational yet concise, using everyday casual speech	<i>Wordy, overcomplicated language; government-speak</i>
Easy to understand content; context is clear	<i>Vague or confusing; content could be misread or misunderstood</i>
Short sentences that can be read aloud in one breath	<i>Long, complex sentences</i>
First-person (we) & Second-person (you)	<i>Third-person</i>
Contractions (you're, it's, don't)	
Clear and direct sentences (active voice)	<i>Limit using indirect expression (passive voice)</i>
Grammar rules favour spoken English, so some leeway okay, such as starting a sentence with "and."	<i>Spelling mistakes or improper word use</i>
Neutral pronouns (they/them)	<i>Gender pronouns (he/she, his/her) unless known</i>