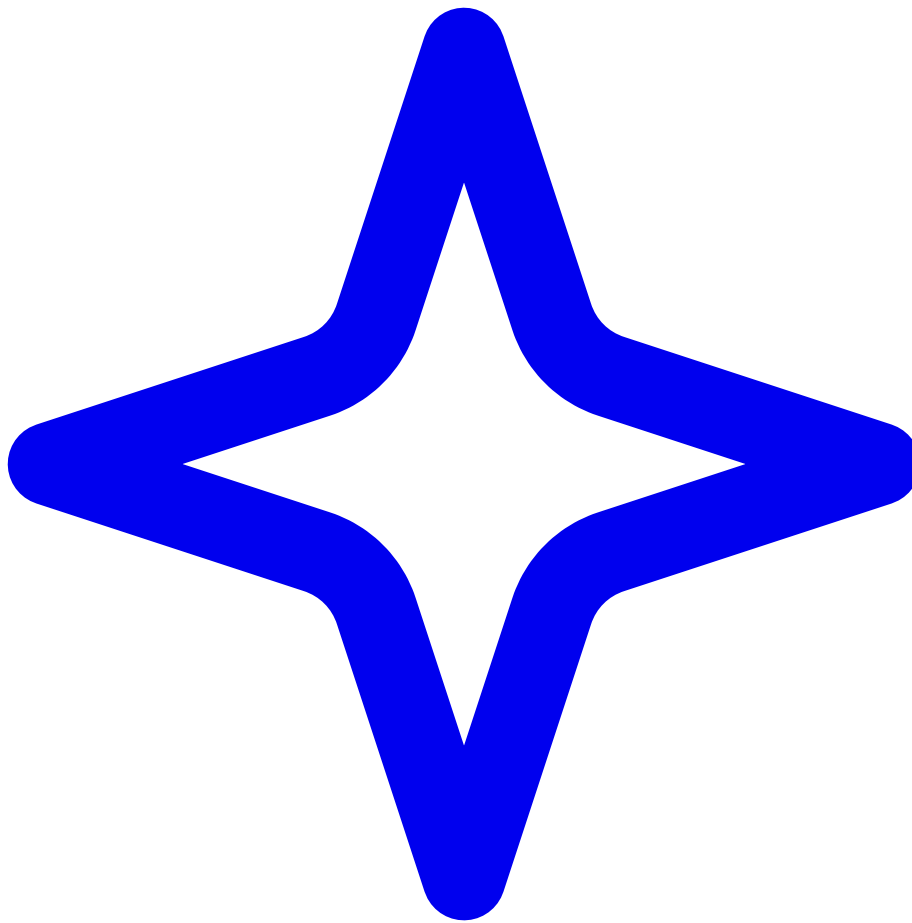




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Fundamentals

How to Create a Brand Style Guide (Step by Step)

By the [Belman Branding Editorial Team](#) · Reviewed against our [editorial standards](#) · 8 min read ·
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How to Create a Brand Style Guide (Step by Step)

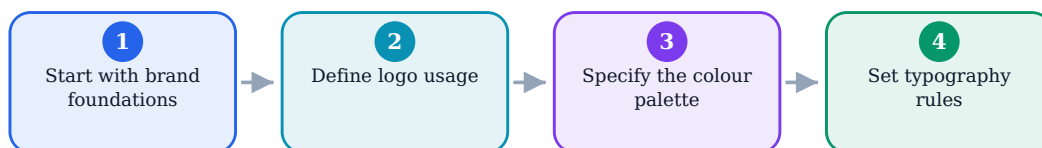


Figure: How to Create a Brand Style Guide (Step by Step)

A brand can only feel trustworthy and recognisable if it looks and sounds the same everywhere it appears — and that consistency almost never happens by accident. It happens because someone wrote it down. A brand style guide is that document: the single reference that keeps your logo, colours, typography and voice consistent across everyone who touches your brand.

This guide walks through creating a practical brand style guide step by step, covering what to include and how to make it genuinely useful.

Advertisement

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Start with brand foundations

Before the visuals, capture **who the brand is**. A short statement of your brand's purpose, values and personality gives everything else meaning — it explains *why* the colours, type and voice are what they are. Even a few sentences on what the brand stands for and how it wants to be perceived turns a style guide from a rulebook into a guide people can reason from.

Define logo usage

The **logo** section protects your most recognisable asset. Show the primary logo and any approved variations (for different backgrounds or sizes), specify the clear space around it, set a minimum size, and — importantly — show **what not to do**: don't stretch it, recolour it, add effects, or place it on clashing backgrounds. Clear do's and don'ts prevent the most common misuse.

Specify the colour palette

Define your **colours** precisely so they reproduce consistently everywhere. List primary and secondary colours with their exact values (such as HEX for digital and the relevant print values), and explain how they should be used — which are dominant, which are accents. Consistent colour is one of the fastest ways a brand becomes recognisable, so leave no ambiguity here.

Set typography rules

Typography shapes how your brand reads and feels. Specify the fonts for headings and body text, any fallback fonts, and basic rules for sizes, weights and spacing. If you use a distinctive font, note where and how. The goal is that anyone producing content — a website, a document, a social post — uses type that looks unmistakably like your brand.

Define imagery and visual style

Beyond logo and colour, define the **look of your imagery**: the style of photography or illustration, the mood, any filters or treatments, and what to avoid. Include examples of on-brand and off-brand images. This ensures the pictures across your website, marketing and social channels feel like they belong to the same brand rather than a random collection.

Capture your brand voice

A complete style guide covers **voice and tone** — how the brand sounds in words, not just how it looks. Describe the personality (for example, friendly and clear, or authoritative and precise), give guidance on tone in different situations, and show short before/after examples. Then keep the finished guide **accessible** to everyone who needs it, and **update** it as the brand grows — a style guide is only useful if it's actually used.

What a complete style guide includes

A useful way to check your guide is comprehensive is to run through the core sections it should cover. Each answers a specific question a designer, marketer or partner will eventually ask:

Section	Answers the question	Typically includes
Foundations	Who are we?	Mission, values, personality
Logo	How is the logo used?	Variations, spacing, misuse examples
Colour	Which colours, exactly?	Primary/secondary palettes with codes
Typography	Which fonts and how?	Font families, sizes, hierarchy
Imagery	What should visuals feel like?	Photo style, illustration, iconography
Voice	How do we sound?	Tone, do's and don'ts, examples

If your guide can answer each of these clearly, anyone producing work for the brand can stay consistent without needing to ask.

Common style-guide mistakes

Even well-designed guides fail in predictable ways. Avoid these:

- Being too vague — ‘use blue’ instead of exact colour codes.
- Showing only correct usage and never what misuse looks like.
- Making it so long and rigid that no one actually reads it.
- Never updating it as the brand evolves, so it drifts out of date.

Keeping the guide alive and used

A style guide only delivers value if people actually reach for it, which means its creation is the beginning rather than the end of the work. The most beautiful document is useless if it sits forgotten in a folder, so it pays to make the guide easy to find, easy to navigate, and available in a format everyone can access — increasingly a shared online version rather than a static file that quickly becomes outdated. Onboarding new team members and external partners with the guide sets expectations from day one and prevents the slow accumulation of off-brand work. It also helps to treat the guide as a living document: brands grow, add products, enter new channels and occasionally refresh their look, and the guide should be reviewed and updated to reflect that rather than being frozen at launch. Gathering feedback from the people who use it day to day reveals gaps and ambiguities you didn't anticipate, and closing those gaps steadily makes the guide more genuinely useful. Consistency, ultimately, comes not from the existence of rules but from their being understood and applied, so the effort you put into keeping the guide clear, current and visible is what turns it from a nice artefact into the practical backbone of a recognisable brand.

Printable checklist

Print this page or save the PDF to keep these steps handy.

- ☐ Start with brand foundations
- ☐ Define logo usage
- ☐ Specify the colour palette
- ☐ Set typography rules
- ☐ Define imagery and visual style
- ☐ Capture your brand voice
- ☐ What a complete style guide includes
- ☐ Common style-guide mistakes

Summary

A brand style guide is a reference document that defines how your brand should look and sound. The core elements are logo usage rules, a defined colour palette, typography, imagery style, and brand voice and tone, ideally anchored by a short statement of brand purpose and values. Build it so it's clear, practical and easy to follow, then keep it accessible and update it as your brand evolves. Consistency is the whole point.

Key Takeaways

- A style guide keeps your brand consistent across everyone who uses it.
- Core elements: logo rules, colours, typography, imagery and voice.
- Anchor it in a brief statement of brand purpose and values.

- Show clear do's and don'ts, not just specifications.
- Keep it accessible and update it as the brand evolves.

Frequently Asked Questions

How long does a brand style guide need to be?

As long as it needs to be useful and no longer. A small brand may need only a few well-organised pages covering logo, colours, type and voice; larger organisations may need more. Clarity matters more than length.

Who needs access to the style guide?

Anyone who creates or represents your brand — designers, marketers, writers, partners and freelancers. Keeping it accessible is what makes consistency possible across everyone involved.

How often should I update it?

Review it whenever your brand evolves — a refresh, new channels, or new needs. A style guide should be a living document, not a file that's created once and forgotten.

Related Guides

- [Typography in Branding](#)
- [How to Choose Brand Colors](#)
- [How to Define Your Brand Voice](#)
- [Why Brand Consistency Matters](#)
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- [Personal Branding Basics: How to Build a Reputation That Works for You](#)
- [Understanding Your Target Audience: How to Define and Reach the Right People](#)
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