

State Control Checklist

The Copywriter's State-Control Checklist

Before You Write

1. Define the reader's desired state

Write down how the reader should feel after reading the copy: curious, confident, relieved, excited, concerned, determined, or ready to act.

2. Enter that state yourself

Do not try to manufacture confidence, urgency, or enthusiasm from a bored or hesitant state. Shift your own state before drafting.

3. Confirm that you believe the central claim

Ask whether you genuinely believe the main promise, argument, or recommendation. Weak conviction produces weak language.

4. Reconnect with why the message matters

State, in one sentence, why the reader should care. If the answer feels vague, the copy will probably feel vague.

5. Identify the strongest reader consequence

Clarify what the reader gains, avoids, changes, or understands by continuing.

6. Remove immediate distractions

Close unnecessary tabs, silence notifications, and clear unrelated material from the workspace.

7. Check your attention level

Do not begin an important draft while mentally scattered, emotionally flat, or half-engaged.

8. Activate genuine curiosity

Find the question, contradiction, fact, mechanism, or implication that makes the subject interesting to you.

9. Choose your writing posture

Decide whether the copy should lead, teach, warn, challenge, reassure, demonstrate, or invite.

10. Establish the governing emotion

Choose one primary emotional current for the piece. Do not try to create five conflicting emotional states at once.

While You Draft

11. Write toward the intended emotional response

Each section should move the reader closer to the state you identified before writing.

12. Lead with a clear direction

The reader should quickly understand where the message is going and why it deserves attention.

13. Make definite language choices

Prefer precise statements over vague suggestions, unnecessary qualifiers, and verbal hesitation.

14. Watch for timid language

Flag words such as “maybe,” “possibly,” “perhaps,” “might,” “could,” and “I think” when they weaken a claim you can support.

15. Maintain forward motion

Each sentence should introduce, develop, prove, clarify, or advance something.

16. Protect sentence rhythm

Vary sentence length deliberately. Avoid long stretches of sentences that all move at the same speed.

17. Do not explain past the point of understanding

Once the reader understands the point, move forward. Extra explanation can drain authority and momentum.

18. Use specifics to transmit certainty

Replace broad statements with concrete actions, examples, numbers, consequences, or observations.

19. Keep the reader oriented

Make sure the reader knows what the current point is, why it matters, and how it connects to the larger argument.

20. Stop when your state collapses

If the writing becomes dull, repetitive, or mechanical, pause rather than forcing low-energy paragraphs into the draft.

While You Edit

21. Read the copy aloud

Listen for drag, hesitation, awkward rhythm, weak transitions, and sentences that run out of energy.

22. Cut words that weaken certainty

Remove unnecessary qualifiers, apologies, disclaimers, and throat-clearing.

23. Tighten momentum leaks

Shorten sentences, paragraphs, and explanations wherever the reader's attention is likely to slow.

24. Check the emotional signature

Ask what state the finished copy actually transmits—not what you intended it to transmit.

25. Confirm that the copy models the desired response

Before publishing, ask: “Does this copy embody the confidence, curiosity, urgency, relief, or conviction I want the reader to adopt?”

Final Test

The reader should feel they are being guided by someone who:

- Believes the message
- Understands where the argument is going
- Makes clear decisions
- Respects the reader's attention

Before words persuade, they transmit a state. Control the state first. The copy follows.

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