Handshake Style Guide

Voice

When we write for the Handshake app, we want to use a consistent voice. Here's how to sound like Handshake.

Voice characteristics

- **Clear and informative.** Avoid vague statements or questions that don't clearly define the action the user is taking, what happens after they complete that action or provide next steps.
  - **DO:** Cancel this payment request? Canceled payment requests will appear on the Time tracking page as unsubmitted timesheets.
  - **DON'T**: Are you sure? This cannot be undone.
- **Trustworthy.** Use language that reassures users their projects and personal information is safe when using Handshake.
  - **DO:** Make easy and secure transactions through the "Payments" tab.
  - **DON'T:** Just enter your account number and leave the rest up to us!
- **Friendly.** Use a warm tone that offers users a welcoming experience throughout the app.
  - **DO:** Have a question? We're here to help.
  - **DON'T:** Error. Try again.

Word choice

USE THIS WORD	DON'T USE THESE WORDS	WHY (RATIONALE)
Timesheet	Clock in/out	The freelancer and business owner will need a way to track hours and a timesheet is a universal method and term that most people are familiar with and fits the tone of the app better than "clock in/out".
Budget	Quota, Allotment	"Budget" fits the conversational, friendly tone of the app unlike "quota" or "allotment" which sound like finance jargon.
Payment	Fee	It's easier to make a statement sound conversational when using "payment" instead of "fee". E.g. "Remember, you can easily keep track of your *payment* schedule in the app." vs. "Remember to pay your *fee* by Nov. 1."
Payment request or payment history	Statement, Bill, Invoice	"Statement" is a term that's commonly used by banks, credit card companies and other financial institutions. The terms "bill" and "invoice" are also general finance terms that don't fit the tone of the app as well either.
Client	Customer, Consumer	"Client" is a term that is most commonly used in a

		professional business relationship versus "customer" or "consumer" which describes a person buying goods from a store.
Track	Supervise	"Supervise" makes it seem like there is a hierarchy when the freelancer and business owner will be working side-by-side.
Hourly rate	Fee, Commission, Charge	"Hourly rate" better fits the tone of the app unlike "fee" or "commission" which sound transactional and not as conversational.
Collaborate	Report (e.g. report to the business owner)	Again, the term "report" gives the impression that there is a boss/employee dynamic.
Connect	Correspondence, Acquaintance	We use the word "connect" to remind users that the app is designed to bring them together and make one-on-one collaboration easier and more efficient.

Tone

The app will generally have an informative, trustworthy and friendly tone. An example of when the tone will change is if the business owner misses a payment due date to the freelancer. We will send them a notification and email with a neutral, but non accusatory tone, reminding them to make their payment.

Example:
Headline: You missed your payment due date

Body: It looks like you missed your payment to Jane Doe on Nov. 1, 2021. Please make your payment today to avoid additional delay.

Button: Make a payment

Another example of when the tone will change is when the freelancer has received their payment. The tone will take a more upbeat approach letting the business owner and freelancer know the payment was successful.

Example of business owner notification:
Headline: Thank you for your payment!

Body: Jane Doe just received your payment. View your payment history and upcoming schedule under the "Payments" tab.

Button: View payment history

Example of freelancer notification:
Headline: You just got paid!

Body: We're processing your payment from John Doe. The deposit will be available in your account within 1-3 business days. View your payment history under the "Payments" tab.

Button: View payment history

Styles

Follow these style rules throughout the app interface.

Page (screen) headings

- Sentence case
- Headings should not end with punctuation. They can have an exclamation mark if the goal is to reflect a friendly and exciting tone. Headings with exclamation marks should be used sparingly and deliberately.

Subheadings

- Sentence case
- Subheadings should not generally end with punctuation, but can have question marks or exclamation marks when necessary.

Instructions

- Sentence case
- Instructions should end with punctuation.
- Instructions should be clear and concise directive statements written in second person.

Tooltips

- Sentence case
- Tooltips are informative statements and should end with punctuation.
- Use a tooltip when the user may need additional context to successfully complete a step. Tooltips should be used only when necessary.
- Do not use tooltips as a substitute for instructions.

Button text

- Sentence case
- No punctuation for buttons. Exclamation marks can be used in some cases, but should be used sparingly.
- Buttons should begin with a verb and should not contain more than three words. (e.g. "Get started", "Sign me up!" or "Pay now"). The exception for this rule is if the button is in response to a dialog box that is asking a question (e.g. "Ok" or "Cancel").

Date formats

- Dates should be formatted with the month written out or abbreviated and the day of the month.
- The year can be used where it makes sense to add it and where space permits.

- When including the year, write it out in its entirety, not just the two last numbers of the year. This method is preferred to avoid confusion as dates can be formatted in several different ways, especially when written numerically.

Example: November 1, Nov. 1, November 1, 2022

Currency formats

Currency should be displayed in USD. This ensures consistency across the app and minimizes confusion among users when negotiating project budgets and making payments through the app.

E.g. $75.49, $116.00