

Florida Atlantic University Audience Writing Guide:

Incoming Freshmen

Prospective Generation Z (Gen Z) students

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1. How This Audience Engages With Florida Atlantic

Incoming freshmen come to Florida Atlantic content with curiosity first, not commitment. Their questions typically include:

- *“Is this a place where I see myself?”*
- *“Do students like me succeed here?”*
- *“Will I belong?”*
- *“Is this worth the cost?”*
- *“What’s different about Florida Atlantic?”*

They skim quickly, often on mobile, and respond strongly to:

- authentic student voices
- short, visual, conversational content
- clear next steps
- stories and specifics, not big claims
- outcomes they can imagine themselves achieving

Key things they look for:

- majors/programs
- what campus feels like
- affordability
- belonging and community
- research access
- student life, sports, residence halls
- safety and wellbeing
- job outcomes

Your writing should help them feel:

- excited, not overwhelmed

- welcomed, not managed
- seen, not generalized
- supported, not sold to

2. The Core Voice

This guide helps you write clearly and effectively for prospective incoming freshmen, many of whom are students (ages ~15–18) in the Gen Z cohort and are encountering Florida Atlantic University (FAU) for the first time.

To write for incoming freshmen you'll use a tone and approach that is different from the way you write for current students, transfer students and other student types.

This guide is for prospective incoming freshmen who are often:

- motivated by belonging, identity, purpose and real outcomes
- younger and earlier in their decision-making process
- skeptical of marketing or institutional language
- highly visual and mobile-first
- used to conversational, fast-paced communication

This guide also explains how to apply the Core Voice for this group and how to adjust tone, structure and message emphasis to meet the expectations of prospective Gen Z students. Refer to the [Florida Atlantic University Style Guide: Core Voice](#) [placeholder] and the [Florida Atlantic Audience Writing Guide](#) [placeholder] to learn about writing for other types of students.

3. Core Voice Essentials (Quick Reminders)

These principles from the [Florida Atlantic University Style Guide: Core Voice](#) [placeholder] apply to all audiences. Writing should be:

- Clear: Write in plain language they can process fast.
- Confident: Use direct, active voice.
- Human: Talk to them, not at them.
- Inspiring: Help them picture what's possible.

- Distinctively Florida Atlantic: Bring in movement, South Florida energy and opportunity.

For this audience specifically, highlight:

- *momentum, possibility, belonging and clarity.*

4. Audience-Specific Tone Guidance

Tone Should Feel:

- Conversational and real like a friendly, knowledgeable guide
- Optimistic and forward-moving, helping them imagine their next step
- Warm and inclusive, with no assumptions about background or familiarity
- Student-centered, using “you” often
- Visually aware; think in scroll-friendly chunks
- Authentic; no slogan-like phrasing

Tone Should *Not* Feel:

- Overly promotional or “salesy”
- Institutional (“Florida Atlantic University strives to...”)
- Condescending (“When you get to college...”)
- Heavy with jargon or process-first explanations
- Overly formal or serious
- Cliché (“world-class,” “cutting-edge”)

5. Key Messaging Priorities for This Audience

Focus on:

A. Belonging and Identity

Help them imagine themselves here.

- Show student diversity, first-gen stories and community life.

B. Clear Next Steps

Prospective Gen Z students love fast paths and clarity.

- Where to apply, when, what to do next.

C. Real Outcomes

They want evidence that their effort matters.

- Research access
- Job placement
- Internships
- Faculty connection

D. Affordability and Value

Be transparent and reassuring without slogans.

E. Support and Safety

Show that they'll be supported academically, socially and emotionally.

F. Experience, Not Just Academics

Campus vibe matters as much as programs.

6. Common Writing Scenarios

You'll use this guide to write:

- Admissions pages
- Microsite content
- Program finder intros
- Student life, housing, campus experience
- Orientation and campus visit communication
- Social media content aimed at prospects
- Email drip campaigns
- Video scripts

- Student testimonials and profiles
- Financial aid explanations for first-time applicants

Each scenario must be:

- skimmable
- warm
- actionable
- clear

7. Sensitive and Context-Dependent Terms

Please note that there are sensitive and context-dependent terms and phrases that can raise concerns depending on how they are used. You can find guidance on these terms in the [Florida Atlantic University Style Guide: Core Voice](#) [placeholder].

8. Do / Don't Guidance

Welcoming

- ✓ *You'll find people who share your interests and people who'll push you to explore new ones.*
- ✗ *FAU provides a wide array of student engagement opportunities.*

Experience

- ✓ *Live minutes from the beach and steps from your classes.*
- ✗ *FAU's geographic location offers numerous recreational opportunities.*

Action-Oriented

- ✓ *Start your application. Most students finish in under 20 minutes.*
- ✗ *The application can be completed through the university portal.*

Clarity

- ✓ *Here's what you need to apply: transcript, test scores (if you have them) and your online form.*
- ✗ *Applications require various academic materials for submission consideration.*

Authenticity

✓ *Students at Florida Atlantic can start research early, often in their first semester.*

✗ *FAU prides itself on offering early-stage research involvement.*

9. Before / After Examples

Example 1: Admissions Intro

Before:

Florida Atlantic University is committed to providing access to high-quality education for incoming freshmen.

After:

You can start your journey at Florida Atlantic with a community that supports you, challenges you and helps you build real experience from day one.

Example 2: Student Life

Before:

The university offers numerous extracurricular opportunities and student organizations.

After:

From 400+ clubs to D-I sports and beach days minutes away, you'll never run out of ways to connect and get involved.

Example 3: Housing

Before:

Residence halls provide various amenities for students.

After:

Live close to everything, including class, the gym, your friends and South Florida sunsets.

10. University Name

The naming conventions for Incoming Freshmen are slightly different from that of the Core Voice and other audiences, reflecting an approach that is consistent with the way Gen Z consumes information.

Use the full name, Florida Atlantic University, as the first reference on any page, adding the abbreviation for the university after the proper name for SEO purposes: Florida Atlantic University (FAU).

Use FAU after the first reference to the university on any page, in headers, subheads, or body copy.

11. Microcopy for Incoming Freshmen

Buttons and CTAs

- Apply Now
- Explore Majors
- Visit Campus
- Find Your Community
- See Scholarships

Form Help Text

- Use your personal email instead of your school-issued one so you don't miss updates.
- Have your unofficial transcript nearby.
- Need help? We'll walk you through every step.

Error Messages

- Please enter a valid email.
- That file's too large. Try uploading a smaller PDF.

Confirmation Messages

- Your application is in! Check your email for next steps.
- Thanks, your visit is scheduled. We can't wait to see you.

Typical Pitfalls to Avoid

- Overexplaining processes instead of showing the next step
- Using language that feels adult-to-child
- Exaggerating outcomes
- Using long blocks of text
- Over-relying on statistics without people or stories
- Assuming familiarity with admissions terms (AP credits, FAFSA, major requirements)
- Sounding like a brochure instead of a person

12. Accessibility Considerations for Incoming Freshmen

- Many read on mobile, so keep text short and scannable.
- Use simple, literal headings (“How to Apply,” not “Application Overview”).
- Avoid idioms or overly clever phrasing.
- Don’t depend on visuals alone; describe key information clearly.
- Ensure all steps are numbered or bulleted.

13. SEO and Discoverability Notes

Prospective Gen Z students often search for these terms:

- *FAU majors*
- *FAU acceptance rate*
- *FAU dorms*
- *FAU scholarships*
- *FAU campus tour*
- *FAU deadlines*

For search-friendly content:

- Use program names exactly as students search them.
- Use clear headings (e.g., *How to Apply to FAU*).
- Include benefits early (“You can apply in under 20 minutes”).
- Make links descriptive (*See dorms*, not *Click here*).

14. Additional Examples and Reference Materials

Examples may include:

- Microsite hero copy
- “Why FAU?” statements for freshmen

- Short program intros
- Student profile templates (“Owls Who Soar”)
- Social media captions for recruitment

These examples should follow the [Florida Atlantic University Style Guide: Core Voice](#) [placeholder] (clear, confident, human) and reflect Gen Z tone.

15. Writing Gen Z-Friendly FAQs

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) help readers quickly find answers to common questions. For prospective students, especially Gen Z, FAQs should feel clear, direct and human. The goal is to answer real questions in a way that reduces uncertainty and helps readers move forward.

Use the Core Voice when writing both questions and answers, but lean toward plain, conversational language.

a. Writing FAQ Questions

Write questions the way students would actually ask them. It will be the same way they might type them into Google, ask a friend, or message admissions.

Gen Z readers respond best to questions that sound natural, specific and relevant to their experience.

Best practices

Write from the reader’s perspective.

Use “I,” “my,” or “we” when it reflects how a student would ask the question.

Use plain language.

Avoid institutional or administrative terms whenever possible.

Keep questions short and focused.

Each question should address one topic.

Use real questions.

Base questions on what students actually ask admissions, advisors or current students.

Avoid marketing tone.

Questions should sound curious or practical, not promotional.

Make the question feel relatable.

If appropriate, include the context students care about (housing, majors, cost, campus life, etc.).

Examples**✓ Do:**

How do I apply to FAU?

X Don't:

What is the application process for prospective undergraduate students?

✓ Do:

Can I visit campus before I apply?

X Don't:

What campus visit opportunities are available to prospective students?

✓ Do:

Do freshmen have to live on campus?

X Don't:

What are the residential requirements for first-year students?

b. Writing FAQ Answers

Answers should be clear, friendly and easy to scan. They should feel like a helpful response from someone who knows the process, not like a policy statement.

Best practices**Start with the answer.**

Respond directly instead of repeating the question.

Use short sentences and everyday language.

Avoid policy language or internal terminology.

Write in active voice.

Use “you” and “we.”

This keeps the tone conversational and student-focused.

Explain what to do next.

If a student needs to take action, say exactly how.

Link to the next step.

Include links to applications, visit scheduling, program pages or resources when relevant.

Remove unnecessary detail.

Students should get the key information quickly, with links for deeper reading if needed.

Examples**Question:**

How do I apply to FAU?

✓ Do:

Apply online through the FAU admissions portal. You'll submit your application, high school transcript and test scores (if required). After you apply, you can track your status through your admissions account.

✗ Don't:

Applications are processed through the appropriate admissions system and require submission of the necessary documentation prior to the published deadline.

Question:

Can I visit campus before I apply?

✓ Do:

Yes. You can schedule an in-person tour, attend an open house, or take a virtual tour. Many students visit campus before they apply so they can see the classrooms, residence halls and student spaces.

c. Structure and Formatting for FAQs

To keep FAQs easy to scan:

- Keep answers to **one short paragraph when possible**

- Use **bullet points or numbered steps** when explaining a process
- Place **links at the end of answers** to guide readers to the next step

Gen Z readers often skim quickly, so formatting should make answers easy to spot and understand at a glance.

d. When to Use FAQs

Use FAQs when:

- readers commonly ask the same questions
- a process has several steps
- prospective students need reassurance before taking the next step
- a page helps students make decisions (applying, visiting, choosing a major)

Don't use FAQs to add extra marketing messages or information that belongs in the main content. FAQs should answer questions, not promote the university.

16. Quick Guide to Platforms Prospective Gen Z Students Use

This is a brief introduction to social media platforms for writers unfamiliar with Gen Z's digital habits.

Instagram (IG, Insta)

What it is:

Photo- and video-forward platform focused on aesthetics, daily life and short Reels.

How Prospective Gen Z students use it:

- Campus vibes
- Student life glimpses
- Reels for quick entertainment
- Stories for daily updates
- DMs for asking questions

Writing tips:

Keep captions short; prioritize vibe and clarity.

TikTok**What it is:**

Short-form video platform with algorithm-driven content discovery.

How Prospective Gen Z students use it:

- Learn about colleges through student-led content
- Campus tours
- Authentic day-in-the-life videos
- Educational explainers
- Humor and trends

Writing tips:

Keep scripts conversational and fast-paced. Avoid anything overly polished.

YouTube**What it is:**

Longer-form video platform (vlogs, explainers, campus tours).

How Prospective Gen Z students use it:

- Research colleges
- Watch residence hall tours
- See student testimonials
- Understand programs and careers

Writing tips:

Use clear, natural spoken language; prioritize story and clarity.

Snapchat**What it is:**

Messaging platform with disappearing messages, AR lenses and stories.

How Prospective Gen Z students use it:

- Keeping in touch with close friends
- Sharing small, real-time moments
- Quick updates

Writing tips:

Ultra-short, friendly, real-time tone.

BeReal**What it is:**

Photo-sharing app prompting users once a day to share a real, unedited moment.

How Prospective Gen Z students use it:

- Authentic, unfiltered daily snapshots
- Peer connection

Writing tips:

Authenticity over polish.

Discord**What it is:**

Chat servers organized around interests, games, clubs and study groups.

How Prospective Gen Z students use it:

- Community through shared interests
- Group chats, voice channels
- Club and academic communities

Writing tips:

Be conversational, supportive and clear.

Reddit**What it is:**

Forum-style communities (subreddits).

How Prospective Gen Z students use it:

- Researching honest opinions about colleges
- Asking anonymous questions
- Checking admissions threads

Writing tips:

Transparency and clarity matter most.