

Writing Great Ads 101 — An Introduction to Copywriting

Change patients' lives. Grow your practice. Refine your skills. Whatever your professional goals, you won't achieve them without your most crucial marketing tool: people. But before you can build a professional reputation by word-of-mouth, you need to first establish a base of satisfied patients. How will you invite them to find you?

Advertising media may have undergone a dramatic change in form over the last several decades, but the [basic principles](#) remain unchanged: give people what they want. The essential formula for any kind of advertising is:

NEED/DESIRE + SOLUTION = ACTION

Audience. Start by deciding whom you want your ad to reach. Obviously you'll use a different approach for ads aimed specifically at [women or men](#), at various [age groups](#) or for specific procedures. But there are more complex factors to take into account: are you trying to reach people who are considering plastic surgery for the first time, or those who may need revision surgery; people who regularly get Botox treatments, or potential patients who are simply looking for more information before making a decision? Your audience should never be just "anyone who's out there." Imagine the person who will see your ad and be moved by it — a 50-year-old woman who's been noticing fine lines and wrinkles, a 35-year-old man who has long been putting off rhinoplasty — and the write directly to that person. Author [Stephen King](#) calls this the "Ideal Reader" (in this case, the Ideal Patient), and it really does work.

Purpose. We all want to look young and attractive... but our goals vary according to our needs and desires. What is it that your audience needs (or wants)? Self-confidence, professional success, romantic fulfillment? Remember, it is easier to remind people of a desire they already have, than it is to create in them a *new* desire for something they may not have wanted before.

Medium of publication. Print ads in newspapers and magazines, trade publications and conference proceedings can be somewhat lengthy — usually anywhere from 200–750 words. With this space, you have enough room to build a connection with your audience and persuade them with logic, credibility and emotion. Don't forget that your website is also essentially one long advertisement — make sure that patients' needs, your solutions, and a clear call to action are prominent on every page of your site.

Additional tips:

- Play on emotions — confidence, desire, empowerment. Try to avoid invoking negative emotions, though — if the emotional manipulation is too blatant, people will reject your message.
- Demonstrate authority, but also caring, and offer proof. Don't simply tell us that patients are happy with your work — show us by sharing reviews and before-

and-after images. You might even relate actual cases (with the names redacted or changed, of course).

- Give plenty of information. People are looking for ideas and facts that they can use. A well-stated fact is worth as much as a thousand gimmicks or catchy slogans.
- Use strong action phrases. Keep adjectives to an absolute minimum. Project a credible and professional image, but don't shy away from [showing your own personality](#). You can sometimes [be creative with graphics](#), though, especially if you want to reach younger audiences.

Once you have (hopefully) “hooked” your Ideal Patients and shown them that you can fulfill their needs and desires related to their appearance, it's prudent to end with a strong, clear [call to action](#). You don't just want to persuade them in theory. You want them to DO something — presumably to call or email your office right away to schedule an initial consultation. Be sure you state this clearly and positively in your ad (don't assume people will take action on their own). Offering an incentive, such as a free consultation or a 10% discount on a procedure for patients who respond to the ad, is an excellent strategy, as well.

If your practice has an in-house marketing team, consider hiring (or training) someone on the team to handle copywriting. You also have the option of hiring copywriters on a freelance basis, which may be more of a savings in the long run, and can add a fresh new voice to your advertising.