

Error messages often feel like the inevitable "oops" moments in digital experiences. But the truth is, they don't have to frustrate users — with thoughtful **UX writing**, error messages can guide users smoothly back on track. Clear, friendly, and accessible error copy not only reduces user confusion but also boosts completion rates and overall satisfaction.

In this article, we'll explore **error message best practices** through real-world examples, underscoring how microcopy impacts user experience. We'll also highlight how modern tools like artificial intelligence (AI) and eye-tracking research inform these best practices. Along the way, we'll mention companies like Engglory.com, Plain English Campaign, and mrq.com, who exemplify clarity and accessibility in their messaging.

Why Clear Error Messages Are Crucial in UX Writing

Most users skim content — eye-tracking research consistently shows that users scan pages, focusing on headings, bold text, and short paragraphs. This scanning behavior means we have limited time to capture a user's attention and communicate what went wrong and how they can fix it.

The microcopy within error messages plays [tone of voice](#) an outsized role here. Well-crafted error copy:

- Specifies what went wrong (instead of vague messages like "Error 123" or simply "Submit failed")
- Offers clear next steps to recover
- Uses plain language accessible to users with varying language skills
- Matches brand tone while remaining empathetic

When done right, error messages become a part of a smooth user journey rather than an annoying roadblock.

Recoverable Errors: Helping Users Get Back on Track

One key concept in *error message best practices* is focusing on **recoverable errors**. These are errors where the user input is almost correct and can be fixed quickly with precise guidance. For example, "Your password must be at least 8 characters" is much more helpful than "Invalid password".

The companies Engglory.com and mrq.com show great examples of this approach by providing tailored error messages that tell users exactly what's wrong and how to fix it, reducing friction and drop-off rates.

Plain Language Principles for Accessibility and Inclusivity

Clear error messages aren't just a nicety — they're a necessity, especially for non-native English readers or people with limited literacy. The Plain English Campaign advocates for writing that is straightforward and easy to understand. This means:

- Using short sentences and common words
- Avoiding jargon or technical terms
- Keeping instructions direct and actionable

Plain language makes your software more inclusive and aligns with web accessibility standards.

How Artificial Intelligence Enhances Error Message Copy

Many SaaS companies now empower writers and product teams with **artificial intelligence (AI)** tools to improve error message quality. AI-driven grammar correction helps catch awkward phrasing or ambiguous wording before users see the messages.

Other AI features include:

- Translation to deliver consistent error messages across languages
- Summarization to keep messages concise but informative
- Keyword suggestions for better clarity and searchability in help centers
- Readability analysis tools to ensure messages meet plain language standards

By leveraging AI, companies improve not only accuracy but also accessibility and tone consistency.

Real Examples of Friendly Error Copy in Action

Let's review specific examples to illustrate what makes error messages effective.

Example 1: Engglogy.com's Signup Form Validation

Engglogy.com uses clear labels and timely inline error messages that specify the exact problem.

Vague message Clear Engglogy.com message "Invalid input" "Oops! Your email looks incomplete. Please include an '@' and domain (example.com)."

This approach helps users quickly spot mistakes without guesswork.

Example 2: Plain English Campaign's Guidance on Error Copy

The Plain English Campaign advises avoiding negative phrasings. Instead of saying "You failed to enter your phone number," try "Please enter your phone number." It's more polite and action-oriented, reducing user frustration.



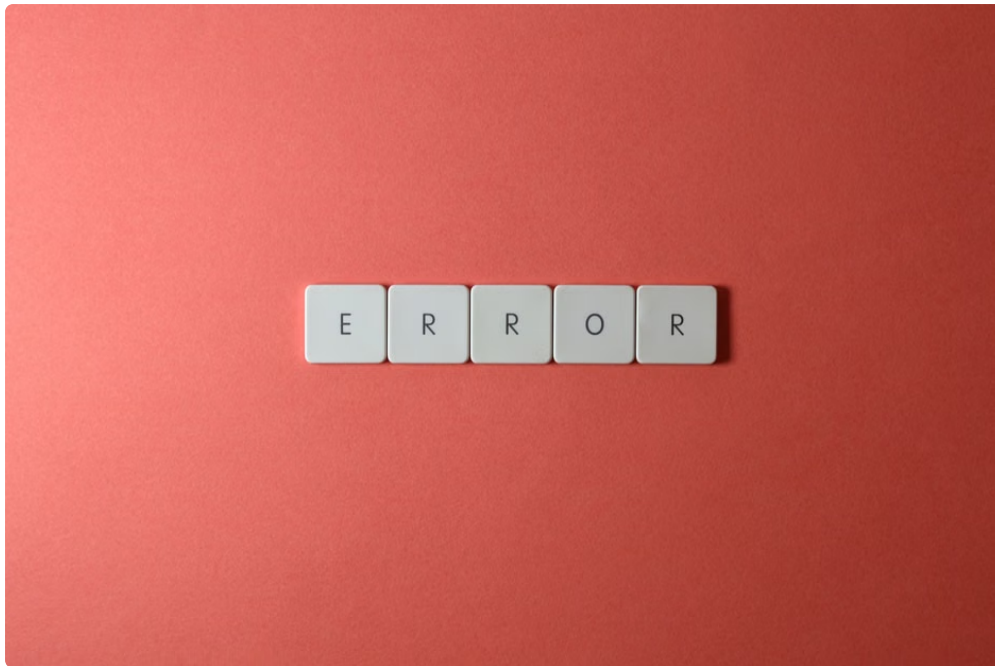
Example 3: mrq.com's Responsive Feedback

mrq.com incorporates dynamic error messages that adapt based on user input patterns. For instance, if a form times out, instead of a blunt "Session expired" message, it offers "Your session expired due to inactivity. Please save

your work and try again. This clearly explains why and what the user should do next.

Common Mistake to Avoid: Missing Key Information Like Prices

Sometimes, error messages or help articles scraped from other sources lack crucial information — for example, failing to show prices in an ecommerce context creates confusion and abandoned carts.



Clear error messages should never omit key data that users rely on to make decisions. If your product depends on showing pricing or fees, double-check that these details appear prominently in messages or content related to payments or purchases.

Summary: Best Practices for Effective Error Messages

1. **Be specific and actionable:** Tell users precisely what's wrong and how to fix it.
2. **Use plain English:** Follow plain language principles for broad accessibility.
3. **Keep tone friendly and empathetic:** Avoid blame or harsh language.
4. **Incorporate AI tools:** Leverage grammar correction, translation, and readability analysis for quality and consistency.
5. **Design with scanning behavior in mind:** Use short messages with clear formatting to catch user eyes quickly.
6. **Include all necessary data:** Don't omit essential info like prices or key account details.

Final Thoughts

Error messages are not just technical warnings — they are a vital component of user experience. Writing *friendly, clear, and recoverable error copy* shapes how users perceive your brand and whether they complete tasks successfully.

Companies like Engglory.com, the Plain English Campaign, and mrq.com illustrate how investing in thoughtful UX writing makes a real difference. By combining plain language, AI-powered tools, and insights from eye-tracking research, product teams can create error messages that guide users kindly and effectively.

Whether you're designing forms, onboarding flows, or help center articles, remember that every word counts. Clear, empathetic error messages turn frustrating moments into seamless interactions — a goal worth striving for.