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THE TOP 10 COPYWRITING TIPS

For Ecommerce Brands Creating Ads Across All 5 Awareness Levels

A Practitioner's Guide from 20 Years in Copywriting & Media Buying

Cold • Problem Aware • Solution Aware • Product Aware • Most Aware

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INTRODUCTION

Most ecommerce brands waste money on ads because they write the same copy for every audience. A retargeting ad should never read like a cold prospecting ad, yet that is exactly what happens in the majority of ad accounts I audit.

After two decades of writing copy and managing millions in ad spend, the single biggest lever I have found is matching your message to your prospect's awareness level. Eugene Schwartz outlined five levels of awareness in *Breakthrough Advertising*. Here are all five stages mapped directly to your campaign structure:

Stage	Awareness Level	What They Know	Campaign Layer
1	Unaware (Cold)	Nothing about you or the problem	Top of Funnel – Prospecting
2	Problem Aware	They feel the pain but have no solution	Top/Mid Funnel – Education
3	Solution Aware	They know solutions exist, not yours specifically	Mid Funnel – Consideration
4	Product Aware	They know your brand, haven’t bought yet	Bottom of Funnel – Retargeting
5	Most Aware	Past buyers, subscribers, loyal fans	Post-Purchase – Retention/Upsell

Each tip below is designed to work across all five levels. I will show you the principle, then break down exactly how to apply it at each stage. Print this out. Tape it next to your monitor. Reference it every time you sit down to write an ad.

TIP #1
Lead with the Prospect's World, Not Your Product

The number-one mistake I see in ecommerce copy is opening with the brand. Nobody scrolling Instagram cares about your brand story—yet. They care about themselves. Your first line must hit a nerve, paint a picture, or call out an identity the reader claims. Earn the right to talk about your product by first proving you understand their reality.

How to Apply at Each Awareness Level:

- **Cold / Unaware:**
  Use a pattern interrupt that speaks to identity or lifestyle. Example: “You spend 40 hours a week at a desk. Your back shouldn’t pay the price.” No product mention. Just a truth they can’t scroll past.
- **Problem Aware:**
  Name the specific pain they’re already feeling. “That 3pm lower-back ache isn’t normal—it’s your chair failing you.” Validate their frustration before introducing any fix.
- **Solution Aware:**
  Acknowledge what they’ve already tried. “You’ve tried lumbar pillows, standing desks, even yoga. Still hurting?” This builds credibility—you know their journey.
- **Product Aware:**
  Reference their interaction with your brand. “You checked out our ErgoMax last week. Here’s what 4,200 buyers wish they’d known sooner.” Make it about their decision, not your pitch.
- **Most Aware:**
  Lead with their experience as a customer. “You already know how good the ErgoMax feels. Now try what 80% of our members pair it with.” Acknowledge the relationship—then deepen it with a relevant upsell or new release.

Pro Tip: Record yourself describing the customer’s day in two sentences. If the word “we” or your brand name appears, rewrite until it doesn’t.

TIP #2
One Ad, One Idea, One Ask

Clarity converts. Every ad that tries to communicate two ideas communicates zero. I’ve tested this across hundreds of accounts: the single-message ad outperforms the multi-benefit ad nearly every time. Pick the one claim that matters most at that awareness level and give it the entire frame.

How to Apply at Each Awareness Level:

- **Cold / Unaware:**
  The single idea is the PROBLEM or the curiosity hook. Don’t even hint at features. “Why do 73% of remote workers report chronic back pain?” One stat. One question. One click.
- **Problem Aware:**

The single idea is the MECHANISM—the reason behind the pain. “Standard chairs put 40% more pressure on your L4-L5 discs. Here’s why.” Educate on the cause, not the cure.

- **Solution Aware:**
  The single idea is your DIFFERENTIATOR. What makes your solution categorically different? “The only chair engineered with adaptive lumbar that moves when you do.” One unique mechanism. That’s it.
- **Product Aware:**
  The single idea is the OFFER or the urgency trigger. “$150 off ends tonight. Free returns. Zero risk.” They already know the product—give them the push.
- **Most Aware:**
  The single idea is the NEXT STEP—a new product, a loyalty reward, or a referral incentive. “Love your ErgoMax? Your exclusive member price on the new headrest attachment is live.” One clear action that deepens the relationship.

Pro Tip: Before you publish, ask: “If the viewer remembers only one thing, what is it?” If you can’t answer instantly, the ad has too many ideas.

TIP #3

Write the Way Real People Talk

The best-performing ad copy I've ever written sounds like a text message to a friend, not a Super Bowl commercial. Formal, polished copy signals "ad" to the brain and triggers scroll. Conversational copy triggers curiosity. Use contractions. Use fragments. Start sentences with "And" and "But." Write at a 6th-grade reading level.

How to Apply at Each Awareness Level:

- **Cold / Unaware:**
  Sound like a friend sharing a discovery. "Ok so I didn't believe this until I tried it, but my back hasn't hurt in three weeks." UGC-style hooks dominate cold traffic for a reason—they don't feel like ads.
- **Problem Aware:**
  Sound like an empathetic peer who's been there. "I know the feeling. You stand up from your desk and your spine sounds like bubble wrap." Mirror their internal monologue.
- **Solution Aware:**
  Sound like a trusted advisor cutting through noise. "Look—most ergonomic chairs are just regular chairs with a markup. Here's how to tell the difference." Direct, no-fluff, slightly opinionated.
- **Product Aware:**
  Sound like a helpful nudge from someone who's already bought. "Still thinking about it? I was too. Bought it 6 months ago. Best purchase of the year." Testimonial tone, even in branded copy.
- **Most Aware:**
  Sound like an insider sharing something exclusive. "Hey—we just dropped something new and you're getting first look before it goes live." VIP tone. Personal. Like a DM from the founder.

Pro Tip: Read your ad aloud. If it sounds like something you'd skip in a magazine, rewrite it until it sounds like something you'd say over coffee.

TIP #4

The Hook Is 80% of the Ad

David Ogilvy said it decades ago: five times as many people read the headline as the body. On social media, it's more extreme. You have roughly 1.5 seconds before the thumb keeps scrolling. Your opening line—whether it's text on screen, the first spoken word in a video, or the primary text above the fold—must arrest attention. Everything else is wasted if the hook fails.

How to Apply at Each Awareness Level:

- **Cold / Unaware:**
  Use curiosity, controversy, or a bold claim. "This $12 hack replaced my $1,200 office chair." The hook must be strong enough to stop someone who has zero context.
- **Problem Aware:**
  Use specificity around the pain. "If your lower back locks up every time you stand—read this." Call-out hooks ("If you X") filter for the right audience immediately.

■ **Solution Aware:**

Use a contrarian or comparison angle. “I returned my Herman Miller for this.” They already know the category—surprise them with an unexpected take.

■ **Product Aware:**

Use social proof or scarcity as the hook. “47,000 sold. Back in stock for 48 hours only.” They’re familiar—give them a reason to act now.

■ **Most Aware:**

Use exclusivity or insider status as the hook. “Members only: 24-hour early access before the public launch.” Reward their loyalty—make them feel like they’re first in line.

Pro Tip: Write 20 hooks before you pick one. The first five are always clichés. The gold lives in attempts 12–20.

TIP #5

Sell the Transformation, Not the Product

Nobody buys a product. They buy a better version of their life. A mattress brand doesn't sell foam density—it sells waking up without stiffness. A skincare brand doesn't sell niacinamide—it sells confidence in the mirror. Map every feature to the emotional or practical outcome it delivers, then lead with that outcome.

How to Apply at Each Awareness Level:

- **Cold / Unaware:**
  Paint the "after" state as a vivid scene. "Imagine finishing an 8-hour workday and feeling zero stiffness when you stand up." No product. No features. Just the life they want.
- **Problem Aware:**
  Bridge the pain to the possibility. "What if that end-of-day backache was completely avoidable?" Create a gap between their current pain and the available relief.
- **Solution Aware:**
  Show the transformation through someone who's already experienced it. "Sarah switched three months ago. She hasn't seen her chiropractor since." Real outcomes beat feature lists every time.
- **Product Aware:**
  Remind them of the transformation they're one click away from. "You're one checkout away from the last office chair you'll ever need." Bring it back to the finish line.
- **Most Aware:**
  Sell the next level of the transformation they've already experienced. "Your back pain is gone. Now imagine your neck and shoulders feeling the same way." They trust the first result—bridge it to the next product or tier.

Pro Tip: For every feature on your product page, write "which means..." after it and finish the sentence with the real benefit. That second half is your ad copy.

TIP #6

Use Specific Numbers Instead of Vague Claims

Specificity is the currency of believability. "Thousands of happy customers" is invisible. "4,217 five-star reviews" is concrete. "Lightweight" means nothing. "1.4 lbs" means everything. Whenever you can replace an adjective with a number, do it. Numbers stop the scroll because the brain processes them differently than words.

How to Apply at Each Awareness Level:

- **Cold / Unaware:**
  Use a surprising statistic to create a knowledge gap. "82% of office workers will experience chronic back pain by age 45." Data-driven hooks feel like news, not advertising.
- **Problem Aware:**

Quantify the problem to make it feel urgent. “The average desk worker sits for 9.3 hours a day—that’s 15% more compression on your spine than standing.” Specific numbers make abstract pain feel real.

- **Solution Aware:**
  Quantify your advantage over alternatives. “3x more lumbar support than the industry average, at half the price point.” Comparison + numbers = instant credibility.
- **Product Aware:**
  Quantify the offer and the social proof. “$150 off today only. 4,217 five-star reviews. 90-day free returns.” Stack the numbers to make the decision feel risk-free.
- **Most Aware:**
  Quantify the customer’s own results and loyalty rewards. “You’ve been with us 14 months. Here’s 20% off your next order—our top members save an average of $340/year.” Personal numbers make loyalty feel tangible and valued.

Pro Tip: Audit your current ads. Circle every adjective (fast, lightweight, premium, powerful). Replace each one with a number. Watch your CTR climb.

TIP #7

Match Your CTA to Their Awareness Temperature

A cold audience will never “Buy Now.” A retargeting audience doesn’t need to “Learn More.” Your call-to-action must match the commitment level the prospect is ready for at that stage. Mismatched CTAs are one of the most common reasons ads underperform—the copy does its job but the ask kills the momentum.

How to Apply at Each Awareness Level:

- **Cold / Unaware:**
  Use soft, curiosity-driven CTAs. “See how it works,” “Watch the video,” “Find out why.” You’re asking for attention, not a wallet.
- **Problem Aware:**
  Use education-oriented CTAs. “Read the guide,” “Take the quiz,” “Get your free assessment.” Exchange value for engagement.
- **Solution Aware:**
  Use comparison and evaluation CTAs. “See how we compare,” “Explore the difference,” “Try it risk-free.” Lower the barrier to consideration.
- **Product Aware:**
  Use direct, urgency-driven CTAs. “Claim your discount,” “Complete your order,” “Get it before it’s gone.” They’re ready—make it easy.
- **Most Aware:**
  Use relationship-driven CTAs. “Reorder now,” “Unlock your member reward,” “Refer a friend, get $25.” The CTA assumes the sale—it’s about deepening, not convincing.

Pro Tip: Run your CTA through this filter: “Would I do this if a stranger asked me on the street?” If no, the ask is too big for that awareness stage.

TIP #8

Stack Social Proof in Layers

Social proof is not just a testimonial section. It’s a strategic asset that should be woven throughout your copy at every awareness level. The type of proof changes based on what the prospect needs to believe at that stage. Raw numbers, expert endorsements, peer reviews, UGC, media mentions, and certifications are all different flavors—and each one hits differently depending on where the prospect sits in the funnel.

How to Apply at Each Awareness Level:

- **Cold / Unaware:**
  Use scale and authority proof. “As seen in Forbes, GQ, and Wired.” “Over 100,000 sold.” Big numbers and recognized names borrow trust from institutions the prospect already respects.
- **Problem Aware:**

Use empathy-driven proof. “I was skeptical too—I’d tried everything.” Testimonials that mirror the prospect’s current struggle validate their pain and position your brand as the answer they haven’t found yet.

- **Solution Aware:**
  Use comparison and outcome proof. “I switched from [Competitor] and the difference was night and day.” Side-by-side results, before/after imagery, and specific metrics outperform generic praise.
- **Product Aware:**
  Use volume and recency proof. “327 people bought this today.” “Just restocked after selling out in 6 hours.” Recent, specific activity creates FOMO and confirms the decision they’re about to make.
- **Most Aware:**
  Use community and milestone proof. “Join 12,000+ members in our VIP community.” “You’re one of our original 500 customers—here’s your founder’s discount.” Make them feel part of something bigger than a transaction.

Pro Tip: Create a “proof bank”—a document with every review, testimonial, stat, and media mention organized by awareness level. Pull from it every time you write an ad.

TIP #9

Handle the Objection Before They Think It

Every prospect has a reason NOT to buy. Price, trust, timing, need—there's always something. Great copy doesn't wait for the objection to form. It preempts it. When you name the objection and dissolve it inside the ad itself, you remove friction that would otherwise kill the click or the conversion. The objection you address changes at each awareness level.

How to Apply at Each Awareness Level:

- **Cold / Unaware:**
  The objection is relevance: "Why should I care?" Preempt it with stakes. "Ignoring this costs the average office worker $4,300/year in medical bills." Make not caring feel expensive.
- **Problem Aware:**
  The objection is skepticism: "Nothing has worked before." Preempt it by calling out failed solutions. "Pillows, stretches, standing desks—none of them fix the root cause. Here's what does."
- **Solution Aware:**
  The objection is differentiation: "How is this different?" Preempt it with a direct contrast. "Most ergonomic chairs adjust in 3 places. Ours adjusts in 14." Specific, measurable, undeniable.
- **Product Aware:**
  The objection is risk: "What if it doesn't work for me?" Preempt it with a guarantee. "90 days. Full refund. We'll even pay return shipping." Remove every possible friction point.
- **Most Aware:**
  The objection is "Do I really need another one?" or "I already have this." Preempt it with relevance. "This isn't a repeat—it's the upgrade your setup is missing." Show them what's different and why it complements what they already own.

Pro Tip: Survey your customers with one question: "What almost stopped you from buying?" The top three answers become your objection-handling playbook.

TIP #10

Test the Message Before You Test the Creative

I've seen brands burn thousands testing different thumbnails, colors, and video styles while running the exact same weak message underneath. Creative testing matters, but message testing comes first. The hierarchy is: right audience → right message → right creative → right offer. Most brands start at the wrong end. Nail the copy angle first, then dress it up.

How to Apply at Each Awareness Level:

- **Cold / Unaware:**
  Test 3–5 completely different angles: identity-based, stat-based, story-based, contrarian, and curiosity-driven. The goal is to find which emotional entry point resonates before optimizing anything visual.
- **Problem Aware:**

Test different problem framings. Is the audience more motivated by pain avoidance or aspiration? “Stop waking up stiff” vs. “Wake up feeling 20 years younger.” Same product, wildly different response rates.

■ Solution Aware:

Test different differentiators. Lead with price? Technology? Speed? Guarantee? The winning angle tells you what this audience actually values—data you can use across your entire funnel.

■ Product Aware:

Test different urgency and offer structures. Percentage off vs. dollar amount. Free shipping vs. free gift. Limited time vs. limited quantity. The message frame around the offer often matters more than the offer itself.

■ Most Aware:

Test retention and expansion angles. Referral rewards vs. loyalty points. Subscription upsell vs. bundle offer. Early access vs. exclusive discount. The winning angle reveals how your best customers want to be rewarded.

Pro Tip: Use a simple 2x2 testing framework: 2 messages × 2 creatives = 4 variants. Kill the losing message first, then iterate on creative within the winning message.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

These ten principles are not abstract theory. They are the distilled lessons from two decades of writing copy that had to generate measurable revenue, not win creative awards. Every tip has been pressure-tested across thousands of ad variations, millions of dollars in spend, and dozens of ecommerce verticals.

The framework is simple: know where your prospect is in their awareness journey, then match your hook, your message, your proof, and your ask to that exact stage. When you do this consistently, three things happen:

- Your cost per acquisition drops because you stop showing the wrong message to the wrong people.
- Your click-through rates climb because every ad feels personally relevant to the person seeing it.
- Your return on ad spend compounds because each funnel stage is doing its actual job—warming the prospect up for the next one.

Your next step: Open your ad account right now. Identify one campaign at each awareness level. Rewrite the primary text using the principles in this guide. Run the new versions against your current copy for two weeks. Let the data prove the point.

"The best copywriters don't write for everyone.

They write for someone—at the exact moment that someone is ready to listen."



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