

From guesswork to guidance

Illustrative rewrites for forms, dashboards, permissions, notifications and API outcomes.

Forms

Before: There were errors with your submission.

After: Select an incident location. For Lab Three, choose West Wing - Lab Three; we will fill the facility code and department for you.

Why: Explain success before the attempt. Derive facts the system already knows instead of testing whether users remember them.

Review: Do field guidance and backend rules describe the same requirement?

Dashboards

Before: A blank table with no explanation.

After: No incidents match these filters. Clear filters to see all incidents you can access.

Why: Filtered results are a different state from no incidents, no access, loading or a failed request.

Review: Can the user tell which state they are in and what to do next?

Permissions

Before: 403 Forbidden.

After: You do not have approval access. Request access or return to the list.

Why: Give an authorised route forward without revealing private record details.

Review: Is an access request actually available, and will sign-in or approval return the person to their task?

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Notifications

Before: Your request has been updated.

After: Your equipment request needs a decision. Review the request and approve or return it for changes.

Why: Name the change, the required action and its destination.

Review: Does this need history, a notification, a direct message, an urgent alert or escalation?

API responses and outcomes

Before: SUCCESS.

After: Report 2026-0847 was submitted. First Aid: delivered, awaiting acknowledgement. Containment doors: failed to lock. Evacuate using the west stairwell.

Why: A saved report is not proof that every downstream action succeeded. Represent each outcome separately.

Review: Does each message reflect a state the system can verify?

Adapt the pattern, not just the sentence.

- Use your users' words, then explain necessary technical terms.
- Only offer actions that exist. Do not promise saved work or retries unless implemented.
- Keep frontend guidance and backend rules aligned.
- Avoid leaking private records, internal errors or security-sensitive details.