

email design tips

Create effective email campaigns starting with the basics

best practice

- 1 PRE HEADER**

Sometimes referred to as trust earning text this is the first thing that people will see when they open your email. This is the best place for a "view in browser" link so people can click straight through to a web version and also a good place to let them know why they are getting the email. A line letting them know they have brought a product or signed up to your newsletter provides a reassurance that your email isn't spam.
- 2 HEADER**

Most emails will carry a branded header but make sure you keep it short otherwise subscribers opening the email in a narrow preview pane will see a big blank space.
- 3 TEASER / TITLE**

Alongside your logo and within the header of your email include a catchy headline or some teaser text that will be viewable in narrow preview panes to encourage your recipients to keep reading.
- 4 KEEP IT CONCISE**

People won't spend a long time reading your email so keep it short and interesting. Encourage them to click through to the website but don't go to extremes and leave in sufficient content to make the email worth reading. Mobile browsers that are quickly checking their email and can't click through will thank you for it.
- 5 HAVE AN OBJECTIVE**

Don't send out an email unless you know what you would like it to achieve. Your goal might be to boost website visits, make a purchase/enquiry, sign up for a service but use a clear call to action and monitor conversions.
- 6 GET SOCIAL**

Make sure you tell your recipients how to connect with you, especially if you are using a no-reply address for broadcasting. Use the opportunity to grow your social media fan base and encourage recipients to share the email via their own networks.
- 7 INCLUDE COMPANY DETAILS & UNSUBSCRIBE**

It is a legal requirement that you include your company details and address on your email. Insert this in the footer along with the essential unsubscribe preferences. Make it as easy as possible for somebody to unsubscribe but consider an optional exit survey to find out why as it might save your mailing list from dwindling for easy to fix reasons.



COPYWRITING SPAM

Don't use words that will be flagged by spam filters. Avoid overusing the following or risk ending up in the junk folder.

OFFER ^{money} free
special ^{huge} DEAL discount
bargain cash !\$£

EMAIL CLIENT USAGE

27.62%	Outlook
16.01%	iOS Devices (iPhone, iPad)
12.14%	Hotmail
11.13%	Apple Mail
9.54%	Yahoo! Mail
7.02%	Gmail
1.84%	Windows Mail
1.70%	Android
1.25%	AOL

Source: <http://goo.gl/t1ynW>
Date: June 2011

SOCIAL SHARING

You can embed easy social sharing buttons onto your email to allow users to simply share your email.

As well as adding a "forward to a friend" link make sure you include a "tweet this" and "like this" button. Avoid using JavaScript to implement this as it won't work well from an email.

best avoided

- USE IMAGES CAREFULLY**

An image heavy creative increases both the email size and chances of being blocked by spam filters. Be aware that images are often not displayed so the message should be clear without them. Don't use background images as they will not show on many browsers.
- WATCH YOUR LANGUAGE**

Avoid using spam-like words. Your email may trigger spam filters and never reach your recipients' inboxes. This is true for both your subject lines and body copy.
- AVOID BULLETED LISTS**

Bullets are hard to style and don't always render very well in emails. By all means use a list but create them with line breaks and dashes instead.
- TAKE CARE WITH COPY AND PASTE**

Avoid copying text from webpages or Microsoft Word (or similar) as they may have applied formatting to the text and you may see strange characters in your emails.

technical tips

- KEEP IT NARROW**

The width of your email should not exceed 600px. The majority of email clients and browsers don't use the full width of your screen to display an email message, and many people will access their email on a mobile device.
- DON'T USE PLUG INS**

JavaScript, ActiveX, Flash, streaming media or any other plug-in based technology should be avoided. It won't work.
- GO OLD SCHOOL WITH CODING**

Forget XHTML and go old school. Use nested tables for layout rather than DIV. Use CSS with caution and only use inline CSS. Classes and ID won't work.
- OPTIMISE IMAGES**

Don't set width or height on images to make sure the content is able to degrade when images don't load. Take care with your IMG tag and use style="display:block" to fix spacing issues in Gmail and Hotmail. Make sure you optimise the file size and crop images before using them.
- CODE SPECIAL CHARACTERS**

Special characters such as £ symbols should be defined using the HTML escape codes, e.g. &#pound; to prevent odd symbols and spaces in some email clients.