

BRIDGE

 New message



To

Subject

GUIDEBOOK

Email Creative & Deliverability Best Practices

2021

SEND



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Importance of Strong Email Creative

Email creative is vital to the campaign. It is what sets the ad apart. We want to make sure we are controlling the message and directing clients to the end KPI.

Creative Best
Practices
Include:

Layout: a single column design is best practice for most emails and is much easier to optimize for mobile devices.

Dimensions: keep the maximum width of your email between 600px - 800px.

Images & Text: stick to a 60:40 or 70:30 image to text ratio.

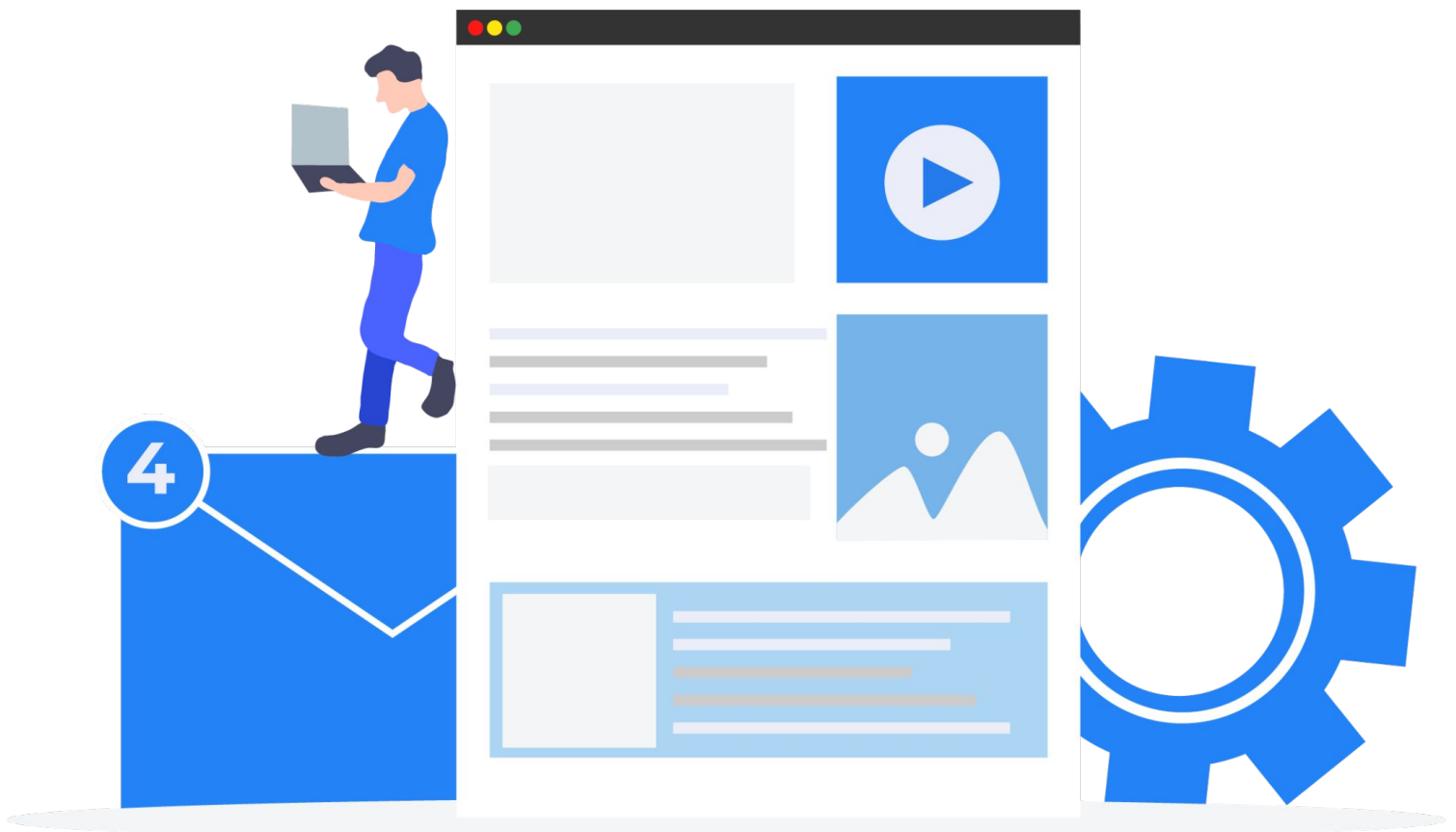
Fonts: use basic fonts such as Arial, Verdana, Georgia, and Times New Roman, and stick to one font in your creative.

Clean

Minimal

Professional

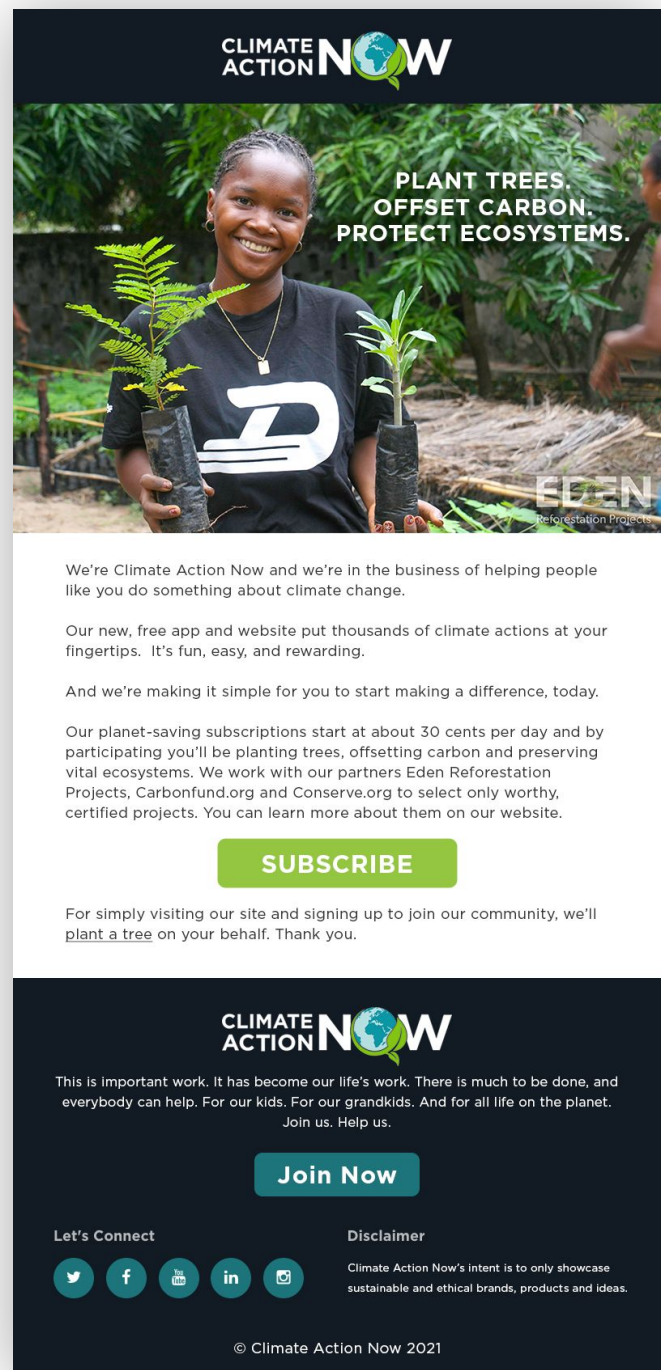
Reliable



Creating a Compelling Offer

A compelling offer increases the likelihood that your consumers will convert.

- + **Incentivize a response, and call this out clearly in your subject line:** give consumers a reason to open your email and take your desired action. Examples include: free shipping, discount offers and coupons.
- + **Strong call to action:** make sure your call to action is clear and relevant to your subject line. Consumers who open an email that doesn't match the subject line are more likely to opt out of communicating with you.
- + **Create a sense of urgency:** create an expiration date for your offer, even if you don't have one – this creates a sense of urgency and compels consumers to act.
- + **Landing page consistency:** your landing page should mimic the offer highlighted in your email with the same overall look and feel, and vice versa.



The image shows a landing page for Climate Action Now. At the top, the logo "CLIMATE ACTION NOW" is displayed with a globe icon. Below the logo is a photograph of a smiling woman holding two small potted plants. To the right of the photo, the text reads: "PLANT TREES. OFFSET CARBON. PROTECT ECOSYSTEMS." Below the photo, there is a green button labeled "SUBSCRIBE". Underneath the button, there is a paragraph of text: "We're Climate Action Now and we're in the business of helping people like you do something about climate change. Our new, free app and website put thousands of climate actions at your fingertips. It's fun, easy, and rewarding. And we're making it simple for you to start making a difference, today. Our planet-saving subscriptions start at about 30 cents per day and by participating you'll be planting trees, offsetting carbon and preserving vital ecosystems. We work with our partners Eden Reforestation Projects, Carbonfund.org and Conserve.org to select only worthy, certified projects. You can learn more about them on our website." Below this text is another green button labeled "SUBSCRIBE". At the bottom of the page, there is a dark blue section with the "CLIMATE ACTION NOW" logo again. Below the logo, there is a paragraph of text: "This is important work. It has become our life's work. There is much to be done, and everybody can help. For our kids. For our grandkids. And for all life on the planet. Join us. Help us." Below this text is a green button labeled "Join Now". At the bottom of the page, there is a section titled "Let's Connect" with icons for Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, LinkedIn, and Instagram. To the right of this section is a "Disclaimer" section with the text: "Climate Action Now's intent is to only showcase sustainable and ethical brands, products and ideas." At the very bottom, there is a copyright notice: "© Climate Action Now 2021".

CLIMATE ACTION NOW

PLANT TREES.
OFFSET CARBON.
PROTECT ECOSYSTEMS.

EDEN
Reforestation Projects

We're Climate Action Now and we're in the business of helping people like you do something about climate change.

Our new, free app and website put thousands of climate actions at your fingertips. It's fun, easy, and rewarding.

And we're making it simple for you to start making a difference, today.

Our planet-saving subscriptions start at about 30 cents per day and by participating you'll be planting trees, offsetting carbon and preserving vital ecosystems. We work with our partners Eden Reforestation Projects, Carbonfund.org and Conserve.org to select only worthy, certified projects. You can learn more about them on our website.

SUBSCRIBE

For simply visiting our site and signing up to join our community, we'll plant a tree on your behalf. Thank you.

CLIMATE ACTION NOW

This is important work. It has become our life's work. There is much to be done, and everybody can help. For our kids. For our grandkids. And for all life on the planet. Join us. Help us.

Join Now

Let's Connect

Twitter Facebook YouTube LinkedIn Instagram

Disclaimer

Climate Action Now's intent is to only showcase sustainable and ethical brands, products and ideas.

© Climate Action Now 2021

General Email Best Practices

Be sure to keep these general principles in mind when designing your email creative.



- + Prioritize content hierarchy, with the most important content featured first — above the fold.
- + Avoid embedding forms in emails.
- + Use a [responsive design](#) optimized for both desktop and mobile devices -50% of emails are opened on mobile!
- + Maintain sufficient text to image ratio of 60:40 or 70:30. If a consumer has turned on image blocking, this can lead to them not being able to see anything in your email message.
- + Keep your email size under 100 kb. A lighter file ensures your email passes through more spam filters and prevents Gmail from “clipping” your email. It also ensures your email can be properly opened on a mobile device.
- + Avoid Javascript and Flash - most email platforms do not support this.
- + Try to send your email between Tuesday-Thursday. Emails sent on these dates are shown to have higher open rates.

Email Design Layout

Design your campaign to be clear, balanced and to promote engagement with these tips.

- + Your email layout should help the viewer know what they should check out first and where they should go from there. The reader should be able to scan your email quickly using a logical hierarchy with large headlines and images focusing the attention.
- + Aim to keep your email to 600px but no wider than 800px.
- + Keep your email size under 100 kb unless you're including GIFs. A lighter file ensures your email passes through more spam filters and prevents Gmail from "clipping" your email and ensures your email can be properly opened on a mobile device.



The image shows a promotional email layout for Bowl America. At the top left is the Bowl America logo with the tagline "Where Thousands Cheer!". At the top right is a blue button that says "BOOK NOW". Below the logo is a large image of five people (three men and two women) smiling and posing in a bowling alley. Overlaid on the bottom left of this image is a red banner with the text "STRIKE UP SOME FUN!" in white. Overlaid on the bottom right of the image is the text "Let's Party!". Below the image is a light blue section with the headline "THE PARTY NEVER STOPS AT BOWL AMERICA!" in bold. Underneath the headline is a paragraph: "Book your bowling, food and fun package today and get an extra hour of bowling FREE!". Below this is a dashed blue rounded rectangle containing the text "EXTEND YOUR FUN FOR FREE!" in bold. At the bottom of this rectangle is a red button that says "BOOK YOUR PARTY TODAY". At the very bottom of the email is the Bowl America logo again.

Bowl America
Where Thousands Cheer!

BOOK NOW

STRIKE UP SOME FUN!

Let's Party!

THE PARTY NEVER STOPS AT BOWL AMERICA!

Book your bowling, food and fun package today and get an extra hour of bowling FREE!

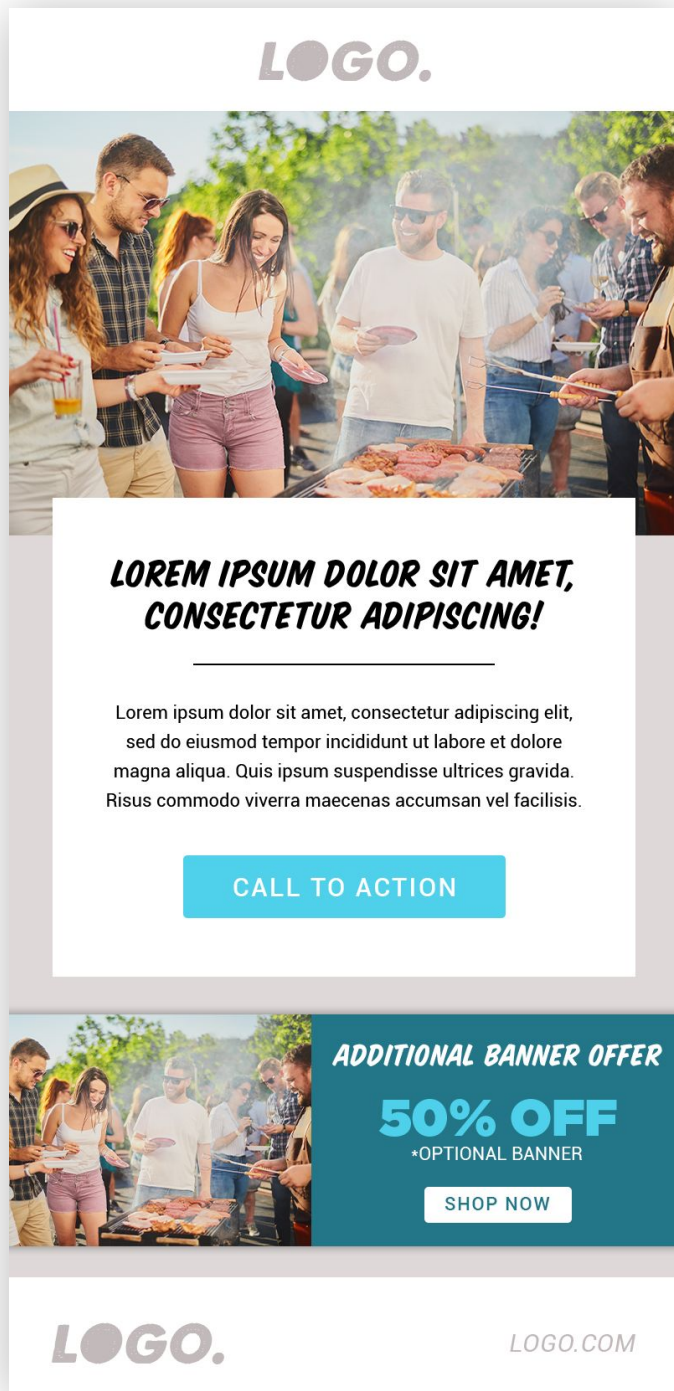
EXTEND YOUR FUN FOR FREE!

BOOK YOUR PARTY TODAY

Bowl America
Where Thousands Cheer!

Email Design Colors, Fonts and More

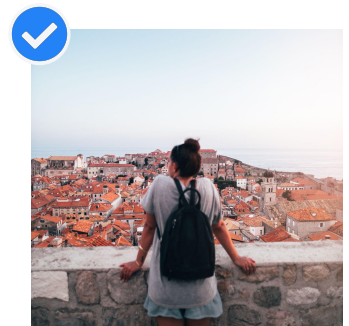
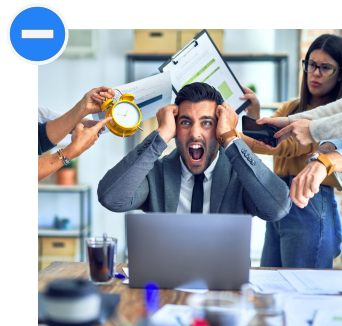
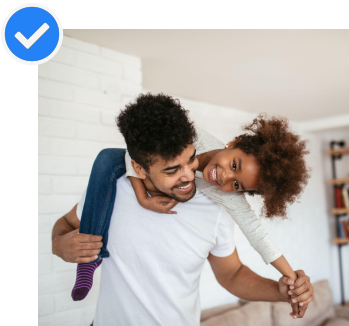
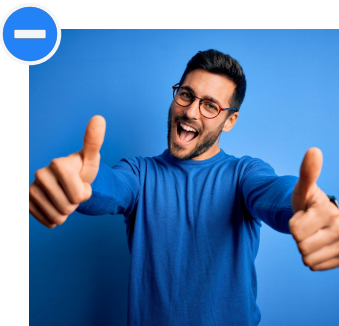
Design your campaign to be clear, balanced and to promote engagement with these tips.



- + Use headings and subheadings to maintain visual organization, and use plenty of whitespace. This helps to divide up your email into sections and makes it easier for the consumer to scan your email quickly.
- + Use email friendly fonts in minimum size 12-14 such as Arial, Georgia, and Times New Roman. In addition, use no more than three font colors in total.
- + Avoid using red or white in your creative. Red text often triggers spam while white can lead to hidden text.
- + Be consistent. Try not to stray too far from the content and design that your audience already associates with your brand, website, and/or social media channels.
- + Keep your emails under 500 characters.

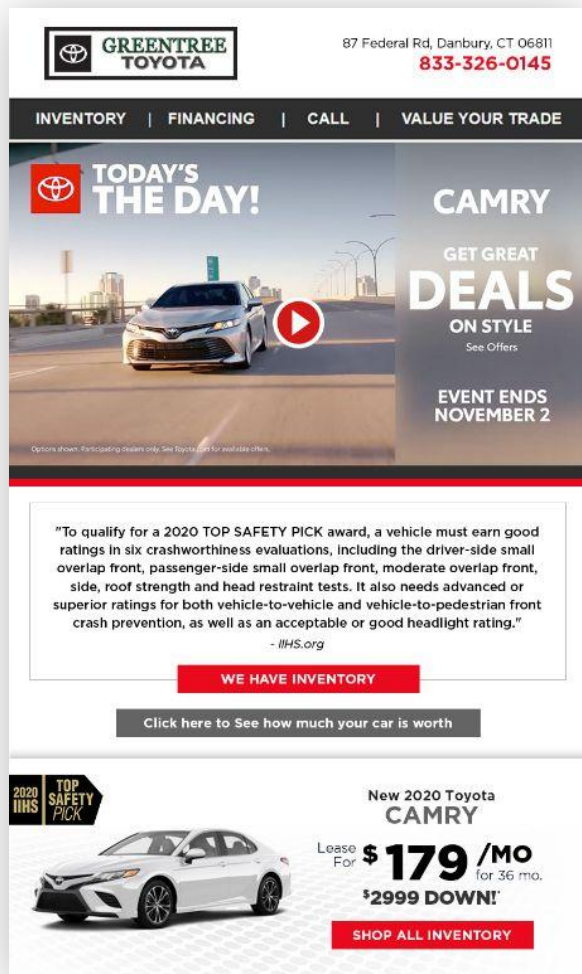
Email Design Images

- + **Dimension** – as stated previously, keep your email between 600-800px wide. However, to keep your image crisp on high-resolution displays, be sure to make your image 2x the size (ie. 1200px) and use the image attributes and CSS to keep the image the width you want.
- + **Alt Text** – Add in helpful alt text in case your image doesn't load or breaks during the sending process. This way, consumers can still read your text even if your image doesn't load.
- + **Use images that complement the email** – an image should add to the email and messaging and not *be* the messaging. A simple way to test this is to view your email with images turned off and make sure your email still makes sense and that your message is still clear.



Stock Images – If using stock imagery, make sure the images are on brand and genuine. A better alternative is to create specific imagery for your email campaign in lieu of using stock photography. If you absolutely must use stock photos, source them from paid sites or reputable free sites.

Email Design Video & GIFs



VIDEO

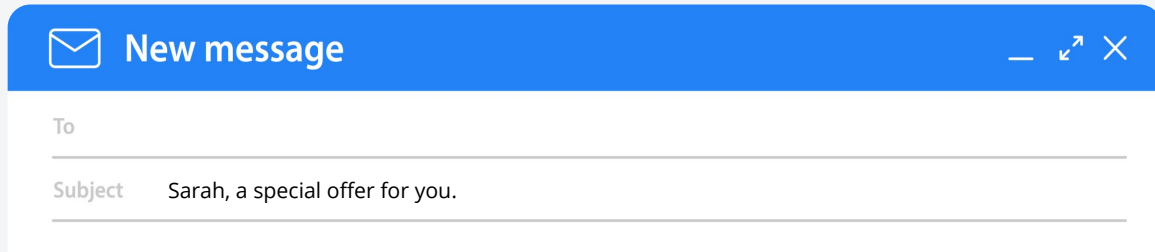
- + It's important to note that many email providers such as Gmail, Outlook, and Thunderbird don't support autoplay videos inside the email.
- + But, over half of email providers support HTML5 which allows you to embed the video in your email creative. Alternatively, many ESPs enable you to have a static image with a play button that links to the hosted version of the video. You can also use an animated GIF instead.
- + When including a video or GIF, add a video thumbnail with a play button or a GIF teaser of the video to generate more clicks.

GIFs

- + Animated GIFs are a great alternative to using video if you want to add moving content to your emails.
- + Animated GIF files can get rather large the more animation, frames and colors there are in the image. To keep them as small as possible, only animate what you need to animate, keep it short and don't use every color in the book.
- + Keep your GIF file size as close to 1MB as possible.

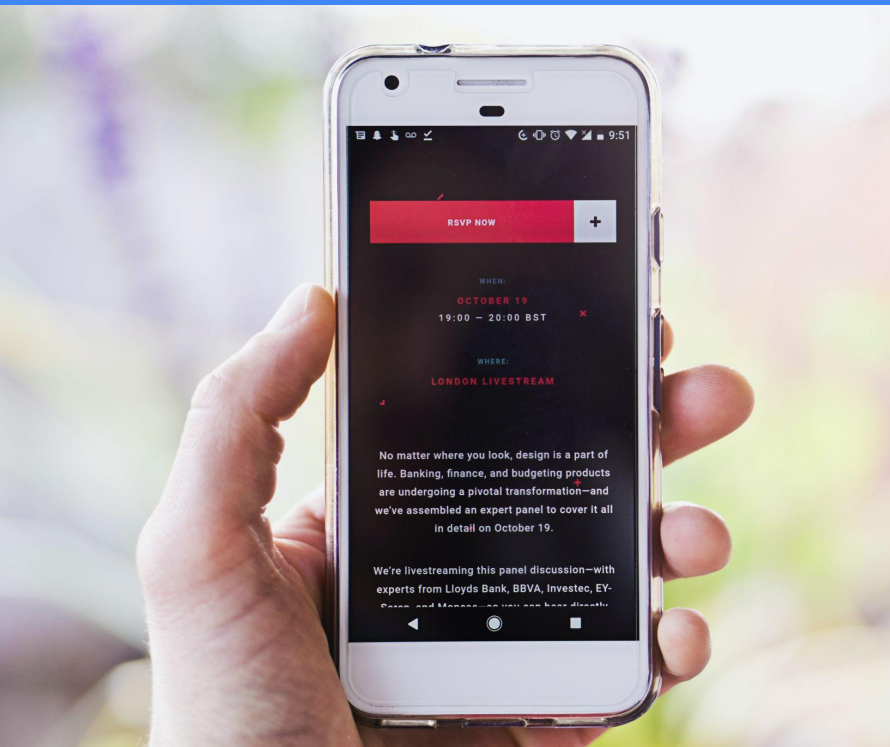
Subject Lines

Your subject line is the first opportunity to engage with your consumer and is a critical first step to driving strong performance.

A screenshot of an email client interface. At the top is a blue header bar with a white envelope icon on the left and the text 'New message' in white. On the right side of the header bar are three small white icons: a minus sign, a square with an arrow pointing up and to the right, and an 'X' mark. Below the header bar is a white form area. It has a 'To' label followed by a horizontal line. Below that is a 'Subject' label followed by the text 'Sarah, a special offer for you.' and another horizontal line.

- + **Length:** for many recipients (especially those reading emails on mobile devices), shorter is often better. We recommend you use no more than 9 words and 60 characters. In fact, most email subject lines are between 41 and 50 characters. If you need space for additional copy, use preheader text.
- + **Caps and punctuation:** avoid using all caps or excessive punctuation. Our research shows that it's best to use no more than 3 punctuation marks per subject line. Too many punctuation marks can make your email look like spam, especially if you use a lot of special characters.
- + **Copy:** use the subject line to announce what's in the email. Also, avoid using one word subject lines or spam trigger words (ie 'FREE').
- + **Personalization** is a great tactic that allows you to connect with consumers on an individual level. Subject line personalization is also shown to increase open rates for most users and may work well when combined with targeted automations such as birthday deals and post-purchase follow-ups. Emails with personalized subject lines are 26% more likely to be opened.
- + **Emojis** are another way to capture users' attention in your subject line with a visual element. Use emojis to complement your copy, not as a replacement for words. According to our research, you should use no more than 1 emoji at a time. [This](#) is a great place to source emojis.

Mobile Optimization



It's important that your email is optimized for mobile - over 50% of emails are opened on mobile devices, and **the average revenue per mobile email is 4x higher than that of a desktop email click.**

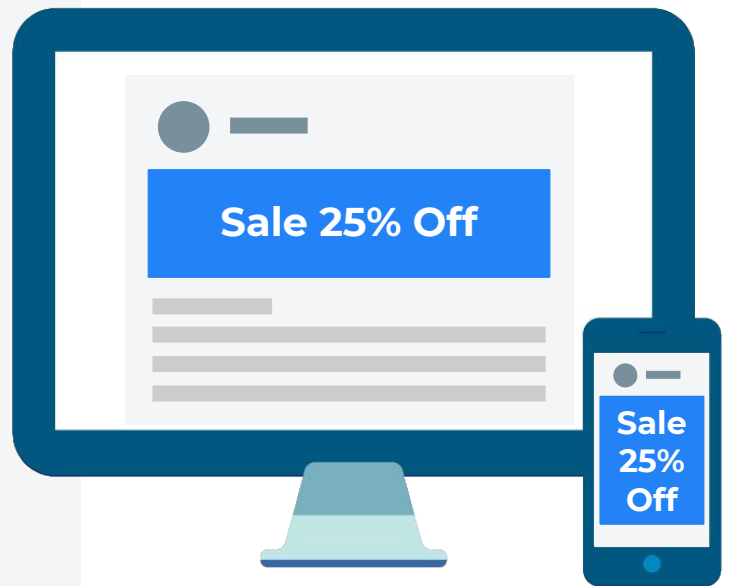
- + Make sure your email has a [responsive email design](#) - this allows users to view your email optimized for whichever device they are consuming it.
- + Keep subject lines short so the reader knows exactly what your email is about.
- + Use preheader or snippet text to your advantage by summarizing your email content or including a CTA.
- + We recommend including a call to action button in your mobile creative to drive engagement.
- + Your CTA should be big and bold to ensure consumers who are viewing your email on a smaller screen can still easily click on it. Additionally, CTAs can be coded differently for mobile and desktop using the hide and show method.

SAVE NOW

USE CODE FREESHIP

Responsive Design

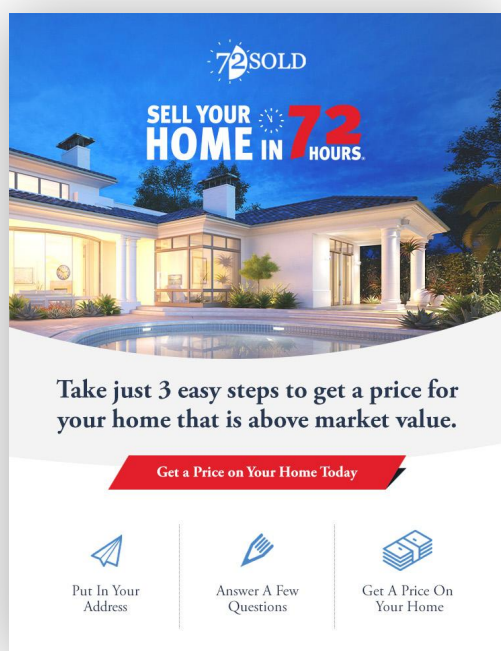
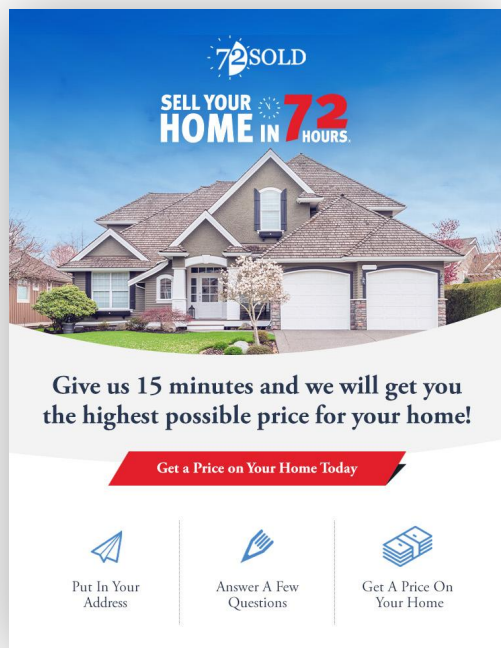
Responsive design ensures your email renders properly across a variety of devices, window and screen sizes such as desktop, mobile and tablet. It allows your creative to adapt to the device and screen size where consumers are viewing your creative for an optimal viewing experience.



- + Stick to a single column layout.
- + Your title font size should be at least 22px.
- + Keep your copy line width to 6 words of 12-14px font size - this is ideal for both desktop and mobile.
- + Keep line spacing around 1.5 times your font size.
- + Don't forget to include a call to action button. An ideal size for the button itself is 44x44 pixels with a font size of at least 16px for your button copy.

A/B Testing

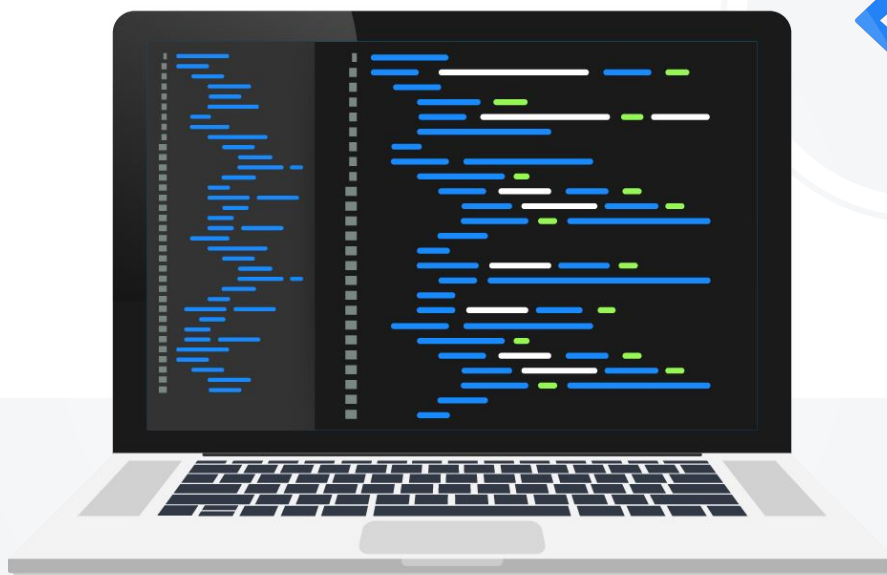
Test your email to see what works best and to address any issues before your live email deployment. Below are some A/B tests you can try.



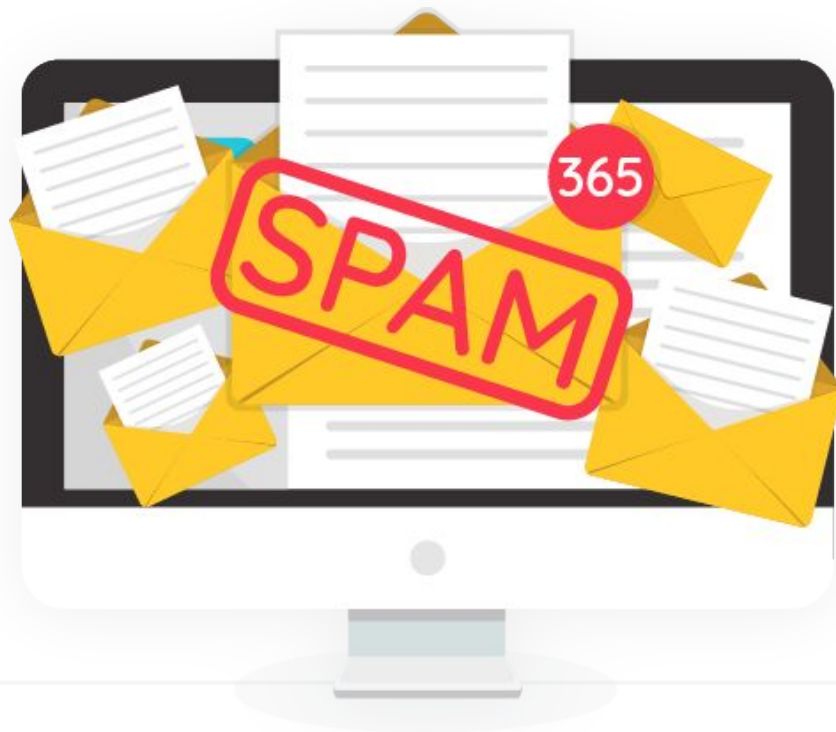
- + **'From' name:** try sending your email from different variations.
- + **Email length:** though you should keep your email to under 500 words max, test your email length *within* these parameters. For example, create a version with more text versus a version that sends the consumer almost immediately to your landing page.
- + **Call to action:** test different treatments and styles for your CTA buttons and links.
- + **Subject line:** try variations in length or copy. For example, [Mailchimp](#) found that subject lines with more than one word capitalized perform best.

Creative Coding

- + Keep your HTML simple and use basic HTML tags for coding.
- + If your HTML software uses Cascading Style Sheets (CSS) for formatting, adjust the preferences to apply formatting using basic HTML tags only. If absolutely necessary, inline style sheets are an acceptable substitute for CSS.
- + Avoid comments in the HTML code - these can potentially flag spam triggers.
- + Create the HTML in an HTML editor in **plain HTML**. Do not use MS Word, MS Publisher or other graphic/desktop publishing software. These programs often carry code which is already in the document which can negatively impact the code in the email. Additionally, heavily coded pages take longer to download, and Google often penalizes sites with slow download times. Finally and perhaps most importantly, users are impatient so slow download times can negatively impact the user experience.
- + Avoid JavaScript, submission forms, layers, or rich media (e.g., flash movies, animation). These cause deliverability issues that affect the campaign response and hinder deliverability for future campaigns and do not render correctly in many email ISPs.
- + Keep the offer, CTAs and key information above the fold – 250 to 300 pixels in height is recommended.
- + Design as a half-page rather than a full-page ad. Do not force the consumer to scroll.

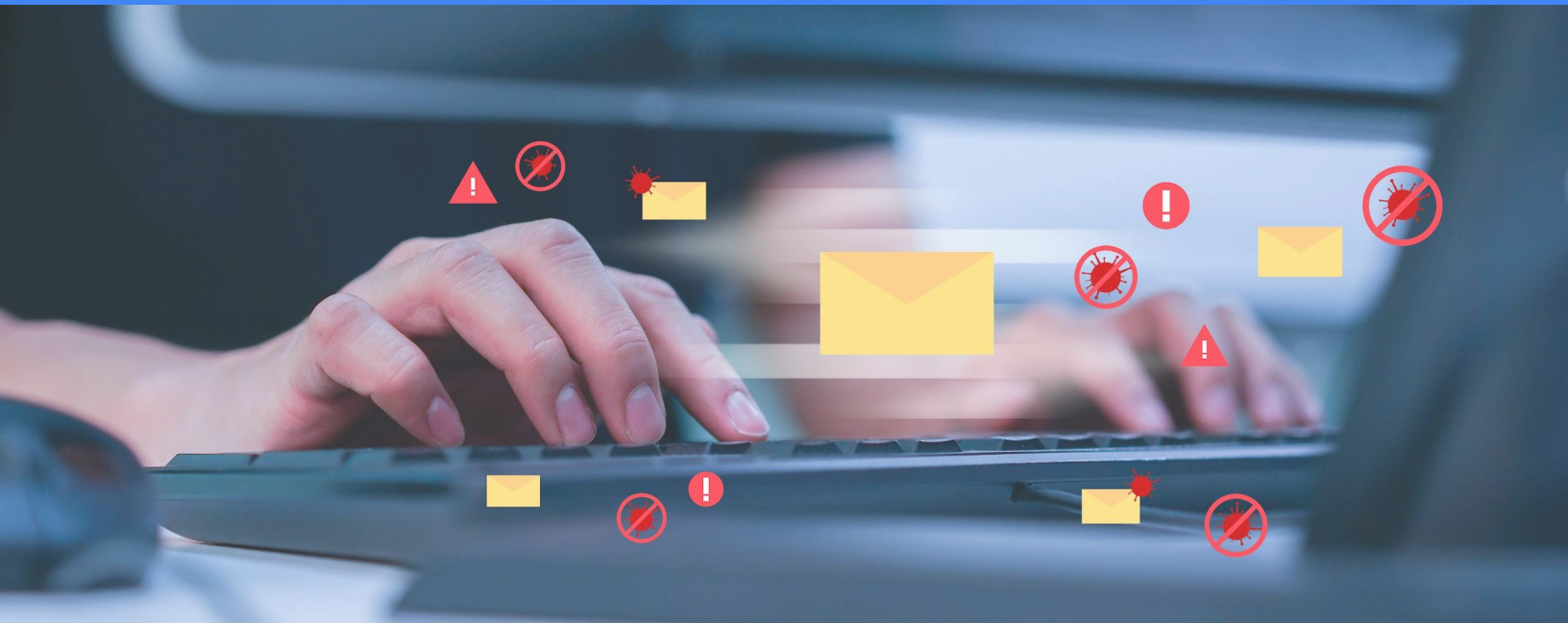


Tips for Avoiding Spam Filters



- + **Campaign metadata:** spam filters want to know that you're acquainted with the person receiving the email. We recommend using merge tags to personalize the 'To' field of your campaign, sending through verified domains and asking recipients to add you to their address books.
- + **Spam filters can be triggered** by sloppy code, extra tags and/or code pulled in from Microsoft Word. We recommend using one of our templates or working with a designer.

CAN-SPAM Compliance




Follow the tips below to ensure your email is CAN-SPAM compliant.

- + From name: for CAN-SPAM compliance, the 'From' name must be that of the client as the perception of the consumer is that the message is coming from the ultimate client marketer. Keep your 'From' line to under 50 characters.
- + Reply to address: Make sure your reply to address makes it easy for consumers to ask questions upon receiving your email. It's ok if the reply to address is different from what's in your email signature.
- + Similarly, avoid using 'noreply' as your reply to address. This prevents consumers with engaging with you further, and people are more likely to engage with an email that comes from a person. Additionally, a noreply address makes it harder for consumers to opt out - this could be a violation the CAN-SPAM Act which gives consumers the flexibility to opt out of email marketing at any time.
- + Unsubscribe link: make sure your email contains an unsubscribe link and a physical mailing address - these are required by the CAN-SPAM Act.

Spam Words

Avoid using these words in your email copy.
Creative containing these terms are commonly marked as spam.

 **New message** — ↗ ✕

To

Subject **WINNER!!!**

Dear friend,

Order now, or else this offer will expire! Take action now, this is urgent.

100%	Collect	Investment	Remove
#1	Compare rates	Junk	Request
\$\$\$	Congratulations	Limited	Risk-free
Act now	Credit card/check/offers	Lose	Sales
Action	Cures	Lowest price	Satisfaction
Additional income	Deal	Luxury	Save
Affordable	Dear friend/somebody	Make \$/money	Score
All natural/new	Debt	Medicine	Serious
Amazed	Direct email	Money	Spam
Apply now	Discount	Name	Success
Avoid	Don't delete/hesitate	No credit check	Supplies
Be amazed	Double your income/cash	No experience	Take action
Be your own boss	Earn	Now	Terms
Beneficiary	Expire	Obligation	Traffic
Billing	Extra	Offer	Trial
Billion	Fantastic	Only	Unlimited
Bonus	Free access	Open	Urgent
Boss	Free money/gift	Order now	Weight
Buy	Freedom	Please	While supplies last
Call free/now	Friend	Presently	Win
Cancel	Get it now/started/paid	Problem	Winner
Cash	Great	Promise	
Casino	Guarantee	Purchase	
Certified	Hello	Quote	
Cheap	Income	Rates	
Clearance	Increase sales/traffic	Refinance	
Click here	Instant	Refund	



BRIDGE Specific Requirements

Keep the following in mind when running email campaigns with BRIDGE.

- + Make sure to state your clear goals to your BRIDGE Account Manager prior to the campaign. This will help us design an email strategy that fits your client specifically.
- + Don't be afraid to have the email direct to different parts of the website. This will help us identify hot zones, which can lead to a more directed email campaign.

BRIDGE Email Creative Services Menu

PRODUCT	DESCRIPTION
Email coding only	BRIDGE adds HTML code to a client's creative
Email design & coding	BRIDGE designs and codes the email creative
Email design & coding + banner design	BRIDGE designs and codes the email creative and display banners
Creative revisions (>3)	Revising an email creative or banner set
Translation	Language translation on creative

Sources

- [Campaign Monitor: Email Design: The Best Practices Guide for 2021](#)
- [Constant Contact: Email Design 101: Best Practices for Email Marketing Design](#)
- [Convert: The Complete Guide to A/B Testing with Email](#)
- [Customer.io: Why the worst day of the week is the best day to send emails](#)
- [Email on Acid: Developing HTML Emails for Gmail: 12 Things You Must Know](#)
- [Email on Acid: Email Development Best Practices](#)
- [emailmonday: The ultimate mobile email statistics overview](#)
- [Hubspot: 17 Email Marketing Best Practices that Actually Drive Results](#)
- [Hubspot: The Ultimate List of Spam Trigger Words](#)
- [Mailgun: Emoji In Email and Email Subject Lines – Should You Use It?](#)
- [SuperOffice: Email Marketing Strategy: A Data-Driven Guide](#)
- [Uplers Email: Email Design Best Practices](#)
- [Vertical Response: Email Design Do's and Don'ts](#)