

1. Text-only Copy

Final Proofed Format of Copy. This will be received by email users who can only read plain-text messages

Total size should be around 30-60 lines with no more than 67 characters each line.

2. HTML-copy

Final Proofed format of HTML copy. This will be received by email users who use HTML-compatible email readers. **Maximum file size should be less than 12K** (this is for the html file only, and does not include images). Please do not use MS*Word to create HTML file. **DO NOT PROGRAM USING JAVA SCRIPT, LAYERING or STYLESHEETS!**

3. Ignoring Preview Panes

Most email providers, including AOL and Outlook, provide your reader with a limited space in which to preview your e Newsletter before deciding if he/she wants to open it. This is a crucial part of designing your email campaign.

- Don't design your emails too wide. About 600 pixels wide is a perfect width.
- Make sure the most important content stands out in the preview pane. Try to get your call to actions at the top of the page, so people don't have to scroll.
- Left-align your company logo, as well as your content. You don't want that to be hidden behind the preview pane somewhere.

4. Assuming All Images Will Show Up

Most email clients block images in emails until the recipient unblocks them. Don't automatically assume your subscriber will elect to see all of your images. They will probably be too lazy to unblock them.

- Make sure to include alt-text for your images. Some email programs will even apply CSS to alt-text. The downside to using alt-text is that if you're too descriptive about the missing image, they won't actually need to view the image.
- Don't put the important content into images. Always use text for the important stuff, including most of your links.

5. Using TOO Many Photos

Don't use one giant graphic for your mail piece. It will more than likely get deemed as SPAM and will never make it in front of your subscriber. A lot of SPAM filters employ an image to text ratio to determine which emails are real and which are spam.

Make sure your image to text ratio is good enough to make it past SPAM filters:

- Lots of small thumbnails seem to work better than tons of big graphics. Include a lot of text to balance it out, though.
- If your content is just one or two lines of text, don't insert more than one or two graphics into the email.
- If you do use a giant graphic, make sure the image is well compressed with flawless HTML coding. You might want to use a designer for these types of emails.

6. Background Images:

Factors may include accessibility, browser support, dynamic content, or any kind of technical limits or usability principles.

- Use IMG plus alt attribute if the image is part of the content such as a logo or diagram or person (real person, not stock photo people).
- Use IMG if you intend to have people print your page and you want the image to be included by default.
- Use IMG (with alt text) when the image has an important semantic meaning, such as a warning icon. This ensures that the meaning of the image can be communicated in all user-agents, including screen readers.
- Use IMG if you rely on browser scaling to render an image in proportion to text size.
- Use IMG for multiple overlay images.
- Use IMG with a z-index in order to stretch a background image to fill its entire window.

Using img instead of background-image can dramatically improve performance of animations over a background.

7. Java Script/CSS/FLASH:

Webmail services are deceptively tricky and that 99% of CSS creatives do not work (display properly) in browser-based email services. In addition, email services that are browser-based, like Gmail, YahooMail, Hotmail, etc., will strip out your DOCTYPE, BODY, and HEAD tags since they don't want your code to potentially override theirs. Anything you'd normally code inside those tags (bgcolors, embedded CSS, JavaScript, background music files, etc) will therefore get stripped as well.

Once again, unfortunately 99% of CSS creatives do not work (especially not in the browser-based email services like Gmail, YahooMail, etc.) which means no CSS-positioning, DIVs, etc. Again, when your email is opened in Gmail, for example, the CSS in your HTML email could potentially override the CSS on the rest of their page therefore gmail is setup to automatically disable a lot of it. Finally, Inline CSS is safer, and plain-old FONT tags are safest (my recommendation would be to always think and code like it's 1999).

8. Forgetting to Utilize Your Footer

In addition with including an unsubscribe link in your footer—which you have to include somewhere according to CAN-SPAM laws—you should never ignore your footer. Although most people will quickly scroll through your newsletter, some readers will absorb every detail of the campaign, and you should never waste any space.

Tips for your footers:

- Always include an unsubscribe link
- Always include your physical (postal) mailing address.
- It might be a good idea to provide a link to your Privacy Policy in your footer.
- The footer is also an excellent place to insert a "forward to friend" link.

9. Not Testing in Multiple Browsers and Email Providers

No two email clients or browsers are alike. While most people still rely on Internet Explorer and Outlook, not everyone uses these. There are a few dozen email programs and webmail clients out there, and they all render HTML email differently. When you're building your newsletter, you will want to test it in different email clients. Mail a few test emails to your coworkers or buddies and make sure they can see your email properly.

10. Getting Too Complicated

Once again, remember this rule: design your emails like it's 1999. Most email providers don't support Flash, animation or embedded videos, so it's best to keep your mail piece as simple as possible. If you do want to include a video, make it photo with a link to the real video instead. Or if you want to include stunning graphic, link your advertisement to it as a landing page on your site. It's best to get your email read and subscribers clicking on links than ending up in the SPAM folder.