

## Copywriting tips for successful e-mails

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### 1. Get to the point early.

Be aware of how much of your message will appear on the first screen. Make that information count. You'll need people to start scrolling down to read the rest of your message. And they won't bother to scroll down if the first few lines of your message are not sufficiently compelling and relevant.

### 2. Use a personal voice.

The basic nature of the e-mail medium is personal. A personal voice works harder, even for companies and organizations. Be genuine and real. A bogus 'personal' voice sounds manipulative to your readers

### 3. Don't get caught by spam filters.

To get past the filters you need to be very careful about the language you use both in your subject lines and in the body of your content.

### 4. Avoid 'selling' words like "free" and "now."

ISP content filters might also count it against you if words like "opt-in," "unsubscribe," "guarantee," or "click here."

Before you send your e-mail, you can run it through a SpamCheck service. Here's one that will alert you if your e-mail subject line or text is likely to trigger any filters:

<http://spamcheck.sitesell.com/excessvoice.html>

More information on this subject at "Are your e-mails CAN SPAM compliant?"

[http://www.excessvoice.com/marketingsherpa\\_email\\_filters.htm](http://www.excessvoice.com/marketingsherpa_email_filters.htm)

### 5. Write a great subject line

Keep your subject lines under 50 characters in length.

Don't try 'selling' or even 'teasing' in your subject line. The use of marketing or sales words in your subject line can easily lead to your e-mail being filtered. In other words – it might look like spam. And even if your message gets past e-mail and spam filters, your subscribers might also see it as 'spammy' and delete it.

The key here is to achieve recognition. Use the subject line to get recipients to want to read the e-mail. Use your company name, or newsletter name. Say something to help the recipient recognize that this e-mail is from a source they trust.

If your list is large enough, test your subject lines before the main 'send'. It's almost impossible to predict which subject line will work best. Without testing, you are simply guessing.

And before you send it, test it through one of the 'spam detector' services...just to see if it is likely to trigger any e-mail filters.

### 6. Write powerful welcome e-mails

If you send out automated e-mails in response to a visitor action on your site, take full advantage of the moment. Perhaps you send a thank-you e-mail when people subscribe to your newsletter. Or a confirmation e-mail when people make a purchase.

Whatever the reason for the e-mail, make full use of it. In other words, don't just say 'thanks'. You have a high quality of attention at that moment – so use it. Let people know what else they can do on your site. Provide links to the most popular areas and pages. And write in a way that is personal and engaging.

### 7. Make your e-mails relevant and expected

If you're sending e-mails that are irrelevant and unexpected, you are essentially spamming, even if technically you are not.

Whether you are writing an announcement e-mail, promotional e-mail or customer service e-mail, make sure that every e-mail delights your readers and also meets your own marketing or communication needs.

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## Five Writing Rules for E-mail Marketing

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"E-mail has emerged as a powerful communications tool with its own set of copywriting rules. MarketingSherpa's Kristin Zhivago recently offered five writing tips to increase response:

- Pick a single theme for each e-mail campaign and stick to it. It's tempting to toss every feature and benefit into an e-mail message, but that overwhelms the reader. So focus on one thing at a time -- like financial aid opportunities -- and include links to relevant landing pages and forms.
- Keep the copy lively and active. Use lots of verbs. Break up informational paragraphs with bullets.
- Avoid exclamation marks. "They make you look loud and desperate," Zhivago writes. And they can trigger spam content filters.
- Test your copy against content filters to see which words or phrases may increase your spam score and increase the likelihood of being mistaken for junk mail.
- Make the message as relevant as possible and personalize as much as you can. Use demographic information to target your e-mails and match the interests of recipients.

"These tips are based on the proposition that people don't read e-mails; they skim and scan. So keep their interest until you can get them to click through to your Web site."

## Writing Rules Redux

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[The] e-mail copywriting rules [above] just scratched the surface, according to two of the leading figures in electronic recruiting.

Bob Johnson, the legendary editor of "Your Higher Education Marketing Newsletter," offered one of his favorite tips for writing an effective e-mail message:

"Make the first paragraph a single smashing sentence that builds from the subject line -- especially so that people with e-mail readers that allow peeking before opening get the point as quickly as possible...and can't wait to open and read more."

Brian Niles, the foremost authority on e-mail recruiting, provided a few of his favorite do's and don'ts:

- **Write it like you say it.** We tend to talk in short sentences, using short words. That's the way your e-mails should read.
- **Include only one idea per paragraph,** and try to keep paragraphs to three sentences or less.
- **Don't use academic jargon and "institution-speak."** Use words and terms your target audience is familiar with.
- People are much more action-oriented when they're online, so your **copy should always be driving them to take some action** -- like clicking through to special landing pages on your Web site.
- **Put important words in bold and use subheads to break up your copy.** Remember that people read books, scan Web sites, and glance at e-mail messages. So help them to absorb key points in a hurry.