

CREATIVE BEST PRACTICE - DESIGN, COPYWRITING AND HTML PROGRAMMING

Emails should be supplied in HTML and Plain Text (.txt) format and include a subject line. There are some notes on page 2 regarding words and phrases that should be avoided in both your copy and subject lines.

HTML should be ideally be 500-600 pixels wide and **must** use tables for layout. **Do not** use complex colspan or spacer gif-driven spacing, CSS float or positioning as this is not fully supported. Any images present within the HTML **must** be set to run from a remote rather than a local location. Note that we will not accept copy that does not strictly adhere to these minimum requirements.

There are three basic choices when it comes to constructing the style of your HTML copy:

[Inline HTML](#), where each line of code has to be defined.

[Internal CSS](#), where the stylesheet is contained within the HTML itself

[External CSS](#), where the file is referenced on another server.

According to a recent research paper performed with 36 different email clients, [Inline HTML](#) had the best rendering rate, and was [94% accurate](#). As such, although this style is more labor intensive, we highly recommend the use of inline HTML to accurately portray your message.

Outlook 2007 / 2010 / 2011 Specifics:

[Outlook 2007](#) and it's successor [Outlook 2010](#) no longer uses Internet Explorer to render HTML emails (as it did with Outlook 2003), and instead uses the Microsoft Word rendering engine. This has the following notable effect on HTML emails:

- >> Very basic CSS support (CSS level 1)
- >> **No support for background images**
- >> Poor background colour support
- >> No support for CSS float or positioning - HTML tables only ([mandatory](#))
- >> No support for web forms
- >> No support for Flash, or other plugins (a red cross will be displayed) ([mandatory](#))
- >> No support for replacing bullets with images in unordered lists
- >> No support for animated GIFs (only static) ([mandatory](#))

Please note that we will not make changes on your behalf to accommodate these requirements. We can redesign existing copy to suit but this is at a cost of £250 GBP+VAT per email.

Things to avoid - Text and Case Related:

- >> Upper case letters in both Subject Line & Message Body
- >> Upper case HTML tags
- >> Punctuation in Subject lines
- >> Don't use consecutive exclamation marks or question marks in Subject Line & Message Body
- >> HTML Keywords in image names: as they can be replaced by « void » in Lycos Mail (e.g.: would be replaced in Lycos by:)

Things to avoid - HTML Coding Mistakes:

- >> Images source using an IP address (eg: http://65.25.65.14/image.gif)
- >> JavaScript code: this is usually filtered by corporate firewalls and deactivated by most Web based Email clients
- >> ActiveX and Flash (works in MS Outlook by not compatible with most Email clients)
- >> Internal or External CSS (<link> or <style>)
- >> Pure HTML (no text version)
- >> Too many Images
- >> Too many nested tables: this increases the size of the HTML and raises readability issues with some email clients
- >> Too many columns or rows merging ('colspan' or 'rowspan' attribute) for Lotus Notes compatibility
- >> Big fonts
- >> <DIV> and <LAYER> HTML tags
- >> Basic colors like « blue » or « red » , (e.g:)
- >> Spaces in image source names, (e.g:)

List of English keywords to avoid:

Full time income from home	Strong buy recommendation	read this email
best prices	free investment	auto email removal
act now! don't hesitate!	additional income	buy direct
click below	loan	affordable
free	casino	casinos
unsolicited	no fees	no middleman
no obligation	one hundred percent free	guaranteed
opt in	opt out	order now
please read	risk free	satisfaction guaranteed
strong buy	take action now	why pay more?
your income	financial freedom	for free
free investment	great offer	limited time only
cheap	million	millionaires
lowest price	unbelievable	100%
no catch	no fees	money back
money making	fantastic deal	gambling
£££	\$\$\$	
Commission(s)	Resolution	Reduce
Difference	Costs	seen
Warning	improve	advice
range	powerful	fully
global	industry	low
client	spread	London
register	necessary	follow
valued		

Spam scoring

Most spam filters use a point scoring system to determine which category and email fits into - i.e solicited or unsolicited. They use a combination of word matching, source identification, header analysis, master blacklists and more to determine this score. No-one really understands the system fully as there are many different systems in place. Some filters will permit mail through if it appears to have come from a legitimate source. Properly coded HTML (not code written in MS Word, for example), a proper signature sign off, disclaimers etc all help to lend credibility to an email and have a better chance of actually landing in the recipients inbox.

There are several free websites which you can use to test your message for a spam score. One of the best is:

<http://www.lyris.com/contentchecker>

This will test your message at no cost using SpamAssassin's filters.

These guidelines are not absolute and adherence does not guarantee delivery. However, we recommend that you stick as close as possible to the above guidelines paying particular attention to the layout requirements of tables and inline HTML style.

W3C Testing

All HTML documents submitted for distribution should pass W3C standards; files can be tested for no cost at the following URL.

<http://validator.w3.org/>