

HTML email design — tips for designers

HTML email design elements should be **simple, minimal and non-essential**. This is the second article in a three-part series on HTML email. You can also [download these HTML email design tips in PDF](#). Check out MailChimp's comprehensive [how to HTML email marketing guide](#) for a lot of great best practices. We've condensed and reorganized many of those HTML email tips to specifically address designers.

Design HTML email for the unique medium.

- Use simple static images because **interactive elements like Flash, movies, and Javascript won't work**.
- Use graphics minimally because image-heavy emails can look like spam.
- Make your images non-essential because **webmail programs will frequently turn off image-loading by default**. Your email should communicate well even without the images.
- Avoid using background images and tiling because some email programs, like Outlook, won't show them. You can use them if they don't matter.
- Set your canvas to **500-600 pixels wide** to fit smaller preview windows.
- Design the recognizable brand to fit into the top leftmost 200x200 square because of tiny preview panes in some email programs. Give subscribers a reason to open the email in a full window.
- Make the first line of text relevant and unique because it will show in Gmail and future programs that show a snippet of the first line along with subject lines.
- **Design plain-text formatting** with headings, lists, links, dividers, etc.
- Read [SitePoint's HTML email design principles](#).

Include essential elements.

1. **From name** should be recognizable.
2. **Subject line** shouldn't look spammy.
3. **To line** should be personalized with a name, not just an email address.
4. **One-click opt-out link** should be easy to access, perhaps at the top.
5. Link to an **archived web version** just in case the template breaks.
6. Link to a **privacy policy** page.
7. **Street address**, phone number and other contact information adds legitimacy.
8. **Reminder** how the subscribers got on your list.

Articles in this series

- [Email blast marketing — tips for email list owners](http://www.crosscomm.net/blogs/web-strategy/online-marketing/email-blast-marketing/)
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- [HTML email design — tips for designers](http://www.crosscomm.net/blogs/web-strategy/online-marketing/html-email-design/)
<http://www.crosscomm.net/blogs/web-strategy/online-marketing/html-email-design/>
- [How to code HTML email — tips for coders](http://www.crosscomm.net/blogs/web-strategy/online-marketing/how-to-code-html-email/)
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