# SendGrid®

# A-Z of Email Marketing Guide

# Contents

Email marketing can be one of your strongest channels for ROI and customer acquisition. The more informed you are about email marketing best practices, the more return you'll see.

To help, we've complied our top tips and tricks in this *A-Z of Email Marketing* guide. It's full of email marketing terms and concepts that are commonly shared by our email experts, and is also a directory for where you can find additional email delivery and best practices information at SendGrid.

## A — Audience

Nothing is more important than your audience. You have to know **who** you are talking to and **how** they prefer to be spoken to. These days, it's important to personalize and craft your messages—the days of the "batch and blast" method are officially over.

## B — Build Your Own List

It's tempting to purchase a list of email addresses. You figure that more email addresses must mean more clicks and opens—it's a numbers game, right? Wrong. Sending unexpected email to recipients who have not opted in (or maybe have never even heard of you) is the quickest way to get onto blacklists and doomed to the spam folder. Make sure you're building your subscriber lists the right way.

Look for opportunities to promote your sign-up on your website, blog, landing pages, "thank you" pages (after users have filled out a form), and at live events. Just make sure you communicate what they are signing up for when they submit their email address.

### Read It

For tips on how to authentically grow your email list, **check out our guide**.

# CTA

Your call(s) to action are one of the most important pieces of content in your email. Outside of getting your subscribers to open your email (via a compelling subject line), your next goal is to get your subscribers to click on your content. Delivering an actionable, inspiring (and dare we say, clever) CTA is your biggest content opportunity in your email. Be sure to build contextual content around your CTA that also helps to motivate a click.

Also, be clear and concise in your ask and make sure that you're not asking for too much up front. **Sometimes one CTA in your email is enough** (like if you're promoting a sale, or want someone to download an eBook) while other times a few CTAs are appropriate. Test what resonates best with your audience and don't be afraid to take some risks.

## Read It

For more tips on testing CTAs, download our **CTA Guide**.

# Design

Whether you're using a template or hiring a designer, keep in mind that you need to ensure your email fits your brand. You don't want your recipient to open your message and have no idea who it came from. Clicking through from an email to your website should be a smooth, continuous experience.

# Engagement

The best way to evaluate the success of your email campaign is by looking at engagement. Engagement metrics like opens, clicks, unsubscribes, etc. are your window into your recipient's inbox. If you see high open and click rates, you have a healthy email program. If you see addresses on your email list that never engage, it may be time to try to bring them back on board with a re-engagement campaign, and if that doesn't work, it's time to remove them from your list.

*Deliverability Tip:* You're much better off sending to a small, but highly engaged list of recipients, than a larger, but unengaged, list.

# Frequency

If you're watching your engagement metrics, then you should be able to derive how often your recipients would like to be contacted. An even better way to figure out how often your recipients want to be emailed is by giving them an opportunity to tell you in a preference center! A preference center is a powerful tool that helps maintain the right expectations between the sender and the recipient.
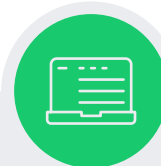
## Read It

For more information on preference centers, **read our blog post**.

# Give Before You Take

Unfortunately, sometimes email marketing can be perceived as overly spammy or promotional. This is because email marketers can tend to ask for too much from their recipients up front. Before asking your subscribers to purchase from you, or sign up for a service, offer them something of value first. Refer them to a whitepaper with helpful industry tips, share an informational "Top 10" list, or provide a discount code or coupon to encourage them to get started. Every interaction you have with your subscribers should provide value—make sure you're the one providing the value and they'll do the same in return.

# Holidays

The holidays are a great time to flex your email marketing muscle. Your subscribers are already on the lookout for deals leading up to the major holidays, so try to stand out from your competitors and get creative with your offers.

Just be careful not to overwhelm your subscribers with too much email communication in these busy times. Our delivery experts recommend modifying your preference centers to include a checkbox that asks your subscribers if they'd like to opt into holiday email communications. This helps to properly set expectations with your recipients and helps you better tailor your holiday email content to their needs.
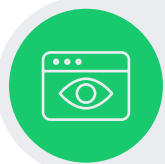
### View It

For more holiday email tips, check out our **Holiday Email Pre-Send Checklist on SlideShare**.

## IPs and Splitting Your Mail Streams

With most email service providers (ESPs), you can fall into one of two buckets when it comes to IP addresses: shared or dedicated. With shared IPs, you're put into a pool of other senders where their reputation can affect your reputation and vice versa. When you're sending from a dedicated IP address, you are the sole sender and your reputation (and how it affects your deliverability) is yours and yours alone. When being able to secure your IP reputation is within reach, why not have a dedicated IP? At SendGrid, dedicated IPs are available to users on **Pro plans** and above.

### Read It

Learn more about shared vs. dedicated IP addresses **in this blog post**.

## Don't Jinx Yourself With Simple Mistakes

Don't set yourself up for failure on your next email campaign—create a checklist of all the important steps you need to consider before pressing "send." These might include checking your **image to text ratio**, ensuring you have a text version to support your HTML email, having your copy proofread, and testing to see how your **email renders** on various clients and browsers. We've compiled **a simple checklist** that you can reference, but be sure to add your own items to the list to make sure you have a seamless sending experience, every time.

## Keep Your List Clean

It can be hard to come to terms with it, but the fact is people who opted in to receive your email two years, two months, or even two weeks ago may not be interested in receiving your mail anymore. Consistently monitor your engagement metrics and remove unengaged users to help maintain good deliverability.

*Action Item:* Check out R for re-engagement campaigns, they are one of the most effective tools to use to keep your list clean.

## Locations

In order to be compliant with both CAN-SPAM and the Canadian Anti-Spam (CASL) legislation, you need to include your physical business address in your email.
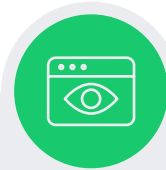
### View It

For more on CASL watch our webcast: **CASL Compliance 101**.

## Metrics

There are many ways to measure the success of an email campaign, which is why it's important to choose which metrics to use to deem it successful or not before you send. What is the purpose of your email? If you want recipients to read an important update to your terms of service (and the content is directly in your email), you will want to use a compelling subject line and measure your opens. If you want to extend an offer or discount, clicks (and subsequently visits and conversions from your offer) are your main metric to watch.

SendGrid helps you track nine unique metrics with our Event Webhook. Learn more about our Event Webhook in our **Event Webhook Guide**.

## Not All Designers are Email Designers

Email marketing is its own art form (ok maybe we're a little biased!) and so is email design. There's a lot to consider when designing your email template, so to get the most out of your email program, work with an email design specialist to create branded, responsive templates that you can test and iterate off of. If you don't have your own email designer, SendGrid's marketing feature set, Marketing Campaigns, includes **10 customizable templates that you'll feel confident using**.

## Opt-In

Requiring your recipients to expressly opt-in to receive your email communication is permission marketing 101 (see P below for more on permission marketing). Just because someone has signed up for an account with their email address as their username, or entered to win a giveaway, doesn't mean they want your email. By having an unchecked box as part of the sign-up flow for people to click if they'd like to opt-in to receive your mail, you're building a list of subscribers who will be engaged and excited to receive your email.

## Permission Marketing

**Coined by Seth Godin**, permission marketing is not only the most effective, but the best way to ensure you have a good relationship with your customers. Permission marketing goes hand in hand with not buying lists, securing opt-in, and sending wanted content. Email marketing is all about building and nurturing relationships and those relationships start by asking for permission.

## Quit With the "No-Reply" Email Addresses

Email is a powerful tool for communication, but it should be much more than a one-way monologue. By having a "no-reply" email address as the reply-to address in your marketing email, it's kind of like telling your customers you don't want to hear from them. Doesn't really send a great message, right? By allowing your customers to reply directly to an email campaign, you're opening up opportunities for conversations you may have never been able to start before.

### View It

If you're unsure on how to handle incoming mail to welcome engagement, check out our **Parse Webhook**!

## Re-engagement Campaigns

A re-engagement campaign is a tool to keep your list clean of inactive email addresses. But how do you know when to remove subscribers? Removal (or sunsetting) rates can vary based on your industry, but a standard best practice is to first segment out your recipients who have had consistently low engagement rates and then send them a "winback" email asking them if they're still interested in receiving your mail. (Some vendors will include a special offer or discount in this campaign.) If your recipient does not re-opt-in, it's time to remove them from your list.

### Read It

For more details and sample sunset schedules, **check out this blog post**.

## Segmentation

When you hear the words segmentation in reference to email, just think of it as a form of personalization. Email marketing (much like direct marketing) used to be more of a "batch and blast" form of communication—everyone gets the same message at the same time. These days, you'll see much better engagement if you cater your messages to specific characteristics you know about your customer. What did they purchase lately? Where do they live? What time are they opening your other mail? By taking into account how you can directly cater messages to your subscriber's tastes, interests, activities, etc., the more successful your email marketing will be.
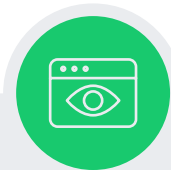
### View It

For some insider segmentation tips, check out **this blog post**.

## Testing

It's important to A/B test every part of your email, from subject lines to your calls to action (CTAs). Some tips to keep in mind: only test one element at a time (otherwise your results will be inconclusive), make sure you have a significant sample size in your testing, and once you find a winning element, move onto the next one! Remember, your product changes and so do your recipients, so a good email marketer is never done testing.

### Read It

For more tips, read our **A/B Testing Guide**.

# U Unsubscribe

The key point with unsubscribes is to make them easy on the user. Make your unsubscribe visible and an easy, one click process. Remember: If users can't find the unsubscribe, they CAN find the SPAM button.

# V Volume

When it comes to maintaining good deliverability with the major ISPs, consistent sending volumes is a must. That means you won't send 100 emails on Monday and then 100 thousand on Tuesday. Breaking up your sending volumes to a consistent level shows the ISPs it's just business as usual (and you're not a phisher or spammer). If you do end up sending high volumes of mail, make sure you build up your volume gradually (this can be done when **warming up a new sending IP**)—send too much mail at one time and you're asking to be throttled by ISPs.

*Deliverability Tip* - What is **throttling**?

# W Welcome Email

It may seem obvious, but give your new subscribers a warm welcome! Welcome emails give you an opportunity to say "hello," re-introduce yourself, and set expectations for what kind of email your recipients will be receiving from you and how often. It's also a perfect opportunity to send subscribers to your preference center so they can adjust the frequency and type of mail they'll be receiving. Getting started on the right note can make a world of a difference in keeping your subscribers happy.

# X Example Email

It's always best to be transparent with your subscribers and that transparency starts on your newsletter opt-in page. Share an example of a recent newsletter or promotional email you've sent on the sign-up page, so your subscribers know what to expect.

## Your Customers Comes First

We know this is a familiar customer service motto, but it's worth repeating for email marketing as well. Don't send email just to send email (or to hit quotas)—send email that is going to be valuable to your users and that will strengthen your relationship with them. Listen to your subscribers by watching your metrics, grant unsubscribes in a timely fashion, and never forget to show your appreciation by saying "thank you."

## Zone in On Your VIP Recipients

Your VIP recipients are your best brand ambassadors. They are your subscribers who always open and click (and maybe even share!) your email. By recognizing who these recipients are, you can use it to your/and their advantage. Have a new email template or call to action you'd like to try out? It's a good idea to start with your VIP recipients first. Survey your VIPs to see how you can improve your email program (or highlight what you're doing right) and be sure to reward them with special offers and discounts. Reward and retain them and you'll both reap the benefits.

If you're interested in putting all of these tips into practice, check out our full-featured marketing email service, Marketing Campaigns. With a flexible workflow, powerful list segmentation, and actionable analytics, Marketing Campaigns helps you build meaningful relationships with your recipients at an affordable price.

**In case you're still wanting more, check out these additional resources:**

SlideShare: Email Marketing 101: Content
SlideShare: Email Marketing 101: Strategy
Webcast: Anatomy of a Marketing Email
Guide: The ABCs of ISPs
Guide: Email Deliverability Guide

# Get Started with SendGrid

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[Learn More](Learn More)
[Read Our Customer Success Stories](Read Our Customer Success Stories)
[Sign Up](Sign Up)

## About SendGrid

SendGrid helps you focus on your business without the cost and complexity of owning and maintaining an email infrastructure. We manage all of the technical details, from scaling infrastructure, to ISP outreach and reputation monitoring, to whitelist services and real-time analytics. We offer world-class deliverability expertise to make sure your emails get delivered, handle ISP monitoring, DKIM, domain keys, SPF, feedback loops, whitelabeling, link customization, and more. To learn more, visit www.sendgrid.com.