

Email Guidelines

Structure

- Wrapper: All email content should stay within a 600-750px wrapper to avoid requiring horizontal scrolling on email clients such as Yahoo, Gmail, and Outlook.
- Layout Options: There are two main layout options: boxed and fluid. While either option requires the content to stay within the wrapper, a boxed layout will have 2 background colors, one for the interior content and one for outside the wrapper, giving it a boxed appearance. A fluid layout would have each main content section having the same background color for inside and outside of the wrapper, giving the email more of a striped or banded look.
- Mobile Responsiveness: All emails should be designed and coded with mobile responsiveness in mind. This means all content should be altered as needed using media queries based on a viewport of anything less than the width of the email on desktop. For example, an email that is 640px wide should assume a mobile layout at anything 639px or less. Elements that should change for mobile should be arranged multiple columns into single, stacked columns, adjusting font sizes and text alignment, or hiding and showing elements such as banners.
- Columns: 1, 2, or 3 column layouts are all appropriate for email, but more than 3 is not due to the column widths being too small to effectively present content. Multiple columns (2-3) should have separate aligned tables. Custom Outlook code should be added to allow for the floating of tables on most email clients but override Outlook breaking the floated layout.
- Syntax: Div tags should not be used in html emails. Instead the table, tr, and td tags should be used
- For all elements with set widths and/or heights, both the css and html attributes should be used to allow all desktop clients and Outlook DPI scaling to render the element correctly.

CSS and Javascript

- All CSS should be inline and not in a <style> block or using an external style sheet
- Javascript is not compatible with html email due to client incompatibility and should not be used

Accessibility

- While not required, using the alt tag on images helps accessibility
- If preferred, h1, h2, h3, p, ul, and ol tags may be used

Text

- These properties should nearly always be used: text-align, font-family, font-size, line-height, color, font-weight.
- For font families, include a stacking order that starts with your preferred font and has fallbacks for email clients that don't render the preferred font.
- @font-face is not widely supported for importing custom fonts so this method is not encouraged
- Google fonts are acceptable to use as a primary font but are not rendered on many email clients, meaning that fallback fonts should always be used.

Images

- Display:block OR the align attribute, but NOT both should be used on all images
- Alt text can be used on images and should be descriptive as to what the image is
- For background images, vml code should be used and the height / width of the container must be defined. This ensures that background images render properly on all email clients, including Outlook.

Links

- Standard links to websites should open with target="_blank" to open in a new tab
- Mailto links should have the email address and the subject line set (Example:
- Images that are linked need border="0" applied to avoid having blue outlines on IE.
- Tel links should follow this format (Example: <a href=<tel:+18001231234>>
- All text links should be manually styled to avoid automatic blue hyperlinking by default on many email clients
- Some email clients like Google and Iphone automatically link things like addresses and phone numbers. If you do not wish these to be linked or appear linked, simply wrap the element in a link and set the color as desired, the text-decoration to none and the cursor to default. Thus they will not appear linked.

Platform testing

- All emails should be platform tested on a service such as Email on Acid or Litmus