



A Small Business Guide to Formatting Your First Email Marketing Campaign

Description

Sending your first email marketing campaign is an exciting step for your business. Clear formatting helps you create professional emails that connect with customers and make the next step easy. You do not need a large marketing team to get started.

Start With a Clear Goal and the Right Audience

Email can be a useful sales channel. Statista reported that global email marketing revenue was projected to exceed \$9.5 billion in 2024 (Statista, 2024). However, your campaign needs a clear purpose, not just a promising channel.

Before you write, choose one goal. Do you want to bring people to your website, promote a new product, or announce a discount? Too many goals can weaken your message.

Next, choose one group of subscribers. A bakery offering a seasonal discount to regular customers needs a different message from one welcoming new subscribers. Focus on what that group needs.

The Excellent Business Plans Campaign Brief Template can help you record your goal, audience, message, and call to action. Available in Word, Google Docs, and PDF, it also provides space for responsibilities and approvals. In a small team, name one person to approve the email before sending.

Write a Subject Line That Earns the Open

Your subject line helps readers decide whether to open your email. Twilio reports that mobile inboxes display around 33 to 50 subject-line characters. Put the most important words first, as the visible length varies by device and app (Griffin, 2025).

Prioritize clarity. A subject line such as “20% off all holiday orders” tells readers what to expect. Vague wording, such as “You won’t believe what’s inside,” gives them less useful information.

Also, write preview text, or the short text beside or below the subject line in many inboxes. Email marketing platform Litmus reminds marketers that “You have limited space (and time) to convince subscribers to open your email, so every character counts.” (Litmus, 2024) Add a useful detail, such as an order deadline, rather than repeating the subject line.

Write Email Copy That Sounds Human

People respond to personal, respectful messages. Use short sentences and everyday words. Avoid pressure and writing in all capitals, which can feel like shouting.

According to customer relationship management platform HubSpot, “It’s always a good idea to communicate your message in a way that’s respectful and considerate to your reader” (Kolowich, 2026)

Write as you would speak to a customer in person. Explain the offer and why it matters to them.

Keep paragraphs short, with one idea in each. Use clear headings and leave space between sections so readers can scan the message. Finish with one main call to action, such as booking an appointment or viewing a product.

Format Your Email to Work on Any Device

Forbes Advisor reports that 41% of email views come from mobile devices (Kaan, 2026). This published figure is a useful reminder to design for smaller screens, though your audience may differ.

Start with a simple, single-column layout. Choose a readable font and keep key information in text, not only in images. Add brief image descriptions, known as alt text, for readers who cannot see the images.

Make your main action easy to find and tap. According to Campaign Monitor, a platform offering responsive email templates, “Instead of using text hyperlinks, use buttons with bright contrasting colors when linking to your landing pages. Take the minimalist route in regard to your links, as including too many options to click can overwhelm readers, causing them to “freeze” and not click anything at all” (Campaign Monitor, 2019)

An email platform such as this with responsive templates can adjust your layout to different screens without coding. Still, send a test email and check it on a phone and a computer. Test every link, including the unsubscribe link.

Send on a Consistent Schedule

Choose a schedule you can maintain: weekly, every two weeks, or monthly. Regular, useful messages help customers remember your business. Avoid sending simply to fill a gap in the calendar.

Email and SMS marketing platform Mailchimp stresses, “Long-term performance comes from showing up predictably, delivering value, and earning attention. When you build strong relationships with your audience, they’ll turn into loyal customers.” (Mailchimp, 2026)

Match your schedule to readers’ expectations and adjust it when their response changes.

The Marketing Plan Template includes an action calendar and budget planning. Use it to connect email campaigns with your wider promotions and avoid last-minute work.

Protect Your Deliverability and Stay Compliant

Make it easy for people to stop receiving marketing emails. Designerly cited U.S. CAN-SPAM penalties of up to \$51,744 per violation (Adwin, 2024). That is a historical figure, not a current or worldwide limit. Check official guidance for current penalties.

For U.S. commercial email, the Federal Trade Commission requires businesses to honor opt-out requests within 10 business days (Federal Trade Commission, 2023). The unsubscribe method must work for at least 30 days after sending. You cannot charge a fee or request personal information beyond an email address to process the request.

Rules differ between countries and may depend on where your recipients are based. Check applicable consent and privacy rules before sending. Use accurate sender details and include required business information, such as a postal address where applicable. This is general guidance, not legal advice.

Place the unsubscribe link in a clear, readable footer. Respecting readers’ choices supports trust, but it does not guarantee inbox placement.

The editable Digital Marketing Checklist covers email marketing and customer relationship management. Add your own pre-send checks and local compliance requirements; it is a planning tool, not a legal compliance service.

Measure Whether Your First Campaign Worked

Sending the email is only part of the campaign. Afterward, review the results to understand what worked and what to improve next time. Start with a few key performance indicators (KPIs):

- **Delivery rate:** Shows whether your emails reached subscribers
- **Click rate:** Shows how many people visited your offer
- **Conversion rate:** Shows how many completed the desired action
- **Revenue:** Shows the financial result
- **Unsubscribe rate:** Can indicate whether the message was relevant to your audience

For example, imagine a bakery sends an email to 1,000 subscribers. If 400 open the email, 40 click through to the website, and four customers place an order worth \$75 each, the campaign generates \$300 in revenue. That is a 4% click rate, and 10% of the people who clicked placed an order.

Use these results to plan your next send. Return to your goal and audience, adjust the offer or message, then compare the new numbers with this first campaign. Over time, you will learn which audiences, offers, and messages create the most value for your business.

Frequently Asked Questions

Common questions help clarify the formatting process for first-time senders.

What should a beginner include in their first email marketing campaign?

Include a clear subject line, useful preview text, short body copy, and one main call to action. Use a mobile-friendly layout and a footer with your business details and a working unsubscribe link.

How many emails should a beginner send each month?

One useful email per month can be a manageable starting point. Increase to two or four only if you have enough relevant content and readers respond well. Review clicks, inquiries, and unsubscribes before changing the schedule.

Do small businesses need an email service provider to start?

An email service provider makes campaign management easier. These tools offer templates, manage subscriber lists, track results, and support unsubscribe handling. Choose one that fits your budget and team. EBP planning templates help you prepare campaigns; they do not send emails.

Turn This Guide Into Your First Successful Send

Start with one goal, one audience, and one clear action. Keep your message friendly, your layout simple, and your schedule realistic. Before sending, ask a colleague to check the wording, links, and mobile layout. Then review the response and use what you learn to improve your next campaign.

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