

GUIDE TO STANDING OUT IN THE INBOX

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What are you going to learn from this PDF?

Think of your subject line as a first impression between you and your subscribers. And in most cases, it is. In fact, 33 percent of email recipients open an email based on the subject line alone.

With this in mind, it's important that you take full advantage of this opportunity to entice and delight your subscribers. That one little line can make a big impact on your open rate - and prospective sales. See why it's important?

We've created this helpful guide, brimming with actionable tips and ideas, to ensure you're getting the most out of your subject line.

START WITH THE "WHY?"

Email is still one of the most effective channels for acquiring new prospects and customers. And one of the most common hurdles on the path to email marketing success is a lackluster open rate. Before you can focus your attention on increasing conversions and growing your list, you'll want to ask "Why?"

Let's take a look at some of the common reasons your emails might be collecting dust in the inbox:

- **An unclear call-to-action** - Or worse, nonexistent. Arguably the most important step in getting subscribers to open your emails is providing them with a compelling reason to do so.
- **Irrelevant content** - Your readers aren't interested in the information you're pushing. This is where we stress the importance of [segmenting](#).
- **A tired list** - You're wasting efforts sending content to a list of dead-end leads. It's important to weed out subscribers who aren't active or engaged.
- **Poor deliverability rate** - This one is simple. If your emails aren't reaching the inbox, they aren't getting opened.

GETTING YOUR EMAILS NOTICED

Now that you're familiar with some of the reasons that contribute to a less-than-impressive open rate, you're probably wondering what you can do to reverse the damage.

This is where your email toolkit comes in:

- **The 'From' line** - This is the name and email address your recipients associate with your message in their inbox. It appears before your subject line, meaning this is likely the first thing your subscribers see.
- **The subject line** - As the headline for your email, it gives readers a glimpse of what's inside.
- **Snippets** - The text that appears after the subject line.
- **Preview panes** - A short preview into the content of the message.

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Let's go more in-depth with these four tools and how you can leverage each to double your open rate:

The 'From' Line

You wouldn't let a stranger into your home, so why would you let them into your inbox? Subscribers want to make sure the messages they are receiving are from a trusted and familiar source.

The 'from' line gives recipients an idea of who the sender is, which is why both the content and length of your 'from' line are important. We'll discuss ideas for making the most of both before getting into some 'from' line faux pas.

What To Include In Your 'From' Line

In your personal email account, the 'from' line is usually your email address or your name, depending on your settings.

Marketing emails are generally the same way: most 'from' lines include the person's name, company, or company email address.

If you choose to [use an email address in your 'from' line](#), make sure to choose one that is hosted by your company's domain. YourName@Company.com is more recognizable and more professional than YourName@Gmail.com. (This also helps improve your deliverability, too!)

If you do opt to use your name, make sure it aligns with your brand. If possible, it should be easily recognizable for the average subscriber.

What names do subscribers associate with your business? Typically, this is the company name, but you can also use a widely known executive or spokesperson. Using their name not only lends clout, it also makes your brand appear more personable.

If you do choose to use the name of an individual, it's important to be aware of the risks associated with doing so. What happens if said person leaves the company? Your established branding leaves with them.

Brand vs. Individuals

It's easy to identify emails from established companies. In looking at this screenshot, you'll notice that familiar brands all use their business names to identify their emails.

<input type="checkbox"/> ☆ □	Caroline	What's Your Next Move? - What's next, who's the winner and share y
<input type="checkbox"/> ☆ □	Into The Gloss	Presenting The Jenna Lyons Top Shelf - * Writer Caroline Solomon g
<input type="checkbox"/> ☆ □	Bloglovin	Bloglovin Weekly - Our top picks from this week GREASE & GLAMO

But what about that unrecognizable name, Caroline, at the top? You may have requested information from her company, but if you're unfamiliar with her individually, you won't recognize her messages in your inbox.

If she had used her business name, it is more likely that her emails would be recognized and opened, rather than sent to the trash. Sorry, Caroline!

On the other hand, it's possible that you're receiving her emails because you have dealt with her personally. In this instance, using a personal email address would be an appropriate route.

The Length Of Your 'From' Line

The 'from' line should be long enough to accurately represent your brand. In the screenshot below, you'll notice that some of the messages are too long to display, so they appear cut off in the inbox.

<input type="checkbox"/> ☆ □	Harvest Seasonal Grill &.	Last Chance: 25% Off! [Online Only] - SEASONAL MENU RESEF
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This is a common situation that is dependent upon the email client, as well as the size of the screen.

How Long Is Too Long?

That being said, it's better to err on the side of caution when determining the length of your 'from' line.

We recommend 20-22 characters **at most**. This way, the majority of your 'from' line is visible to subscribers. With a majority of emails being read on smart phones and mobile devices, you might even want to go shorter.

◉ 'From' Line Faux Pas: "Do Not Reply"

It's never a good idea to send to recipients from a "do not reply" email address. Not only does this come off as impersonal, but it leaves subscribers with the impression that your company does not value their feedback.

One of the major benefits of email is that it allows companies to communicate with subscribers, building and strengthening relationships. So giving them a way to talk to you is the first step in achieving that open communication.

Here are a few more reasons to avoid using a "do not reply" email address:

- You close yourself off from potential conversation
- You miss out on valuable feedback from subscribers
- You risk offending subscribers who try to contact you and receive no response
- You may miss out on informal unsubscribe requests - which, in turn, may lead to spam complaints (yikes!)
- Your company risks appearing indifferent to the thoughts and opinions of subscribers

Even the mere mention of "no reply" can seem off-putting.

Looking at the example below, it gives off the impression that they're unreceptive to feedback... and who wants to purchase from a company that is deaf to the voices of their customers?



Your 'From' Line Checklist

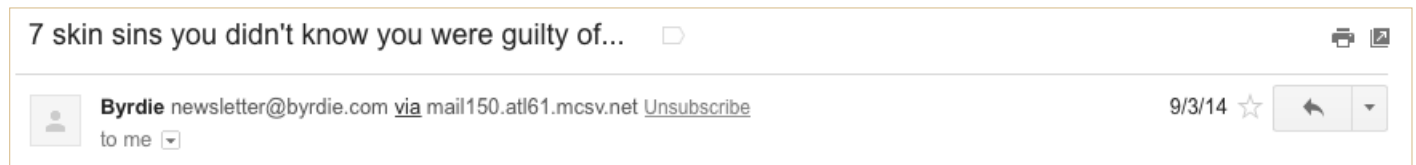
- ☐ Your 'from' line should be your **strongest branded presence**.
- ☐ Use the **same line** every time to create consistency.
- ☐ Keep it to a **maximum of 22 characters** for easy readability on various email clients and devices.
- ☐ Never use a **"do not reply"** email address. It discourages conversation.

The Subject Line

The **subject line** is essentially a headline to your email, which means it requires careful attention. Aside from relevance of the sender, it is the most important determinant in whether a subscriber chooses to open your message or move it to the trash.

The subject line serves two purposes:

- To accurately depict the content of the message
- To entice the subscriber to open it



Unfortunately, there is no magic formula for writing a subject line that guarantees opens. A subscriber's choice to open your message also depends on their expectations (set when they first subscribed), their past interactions with your brand, their state of mind and numerous other factors that might be out of your control.

But there are things you can do to increase the chance that they'll open your emails anyway.

In many cases, a compelling subject line can sway their decision. If the language and approach of your subject line isn't doing its job, ask yourself the following questions:

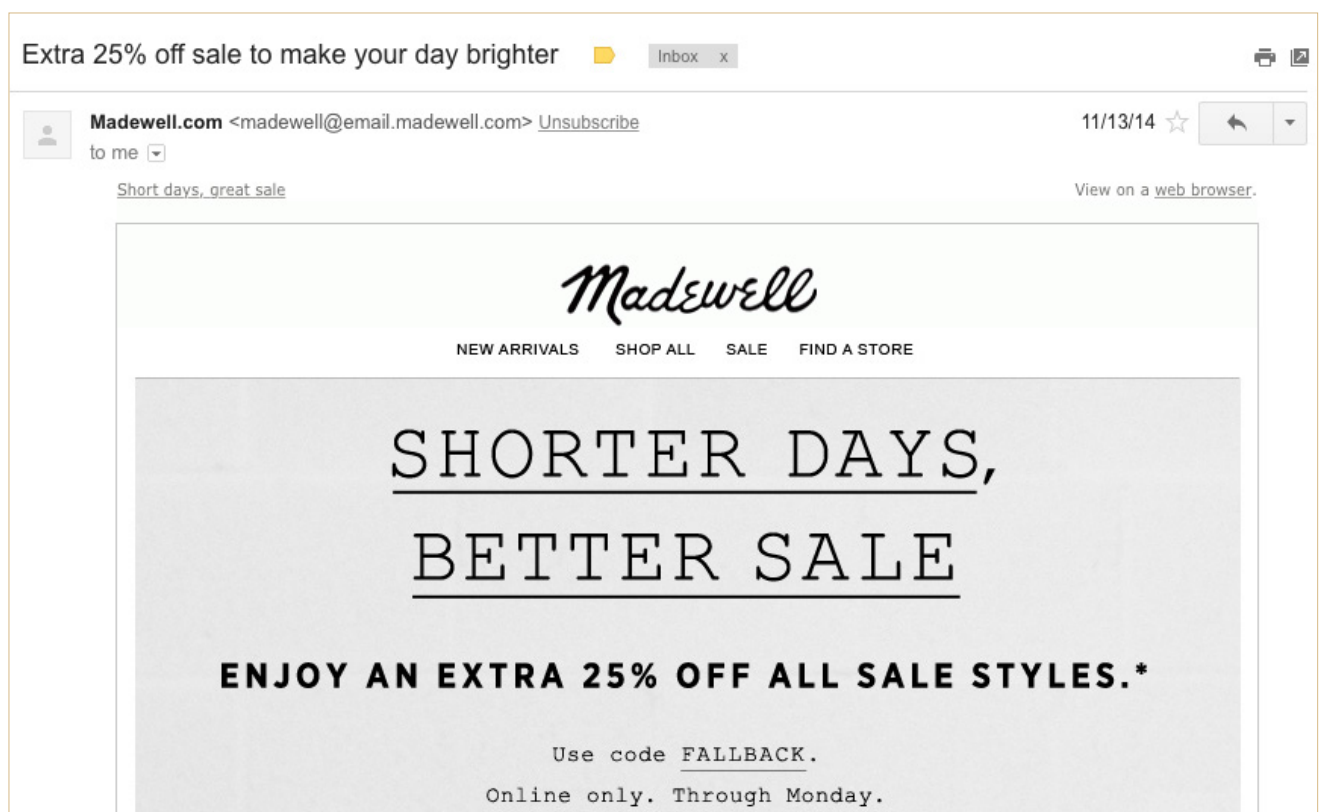
1. Is the content **valuable** to the reader? Will they care?
2. Is the offer **compelling? Remarkable? Unique?**
3. Does the message evoke a **sense of urgency?**

You can build urgency with:

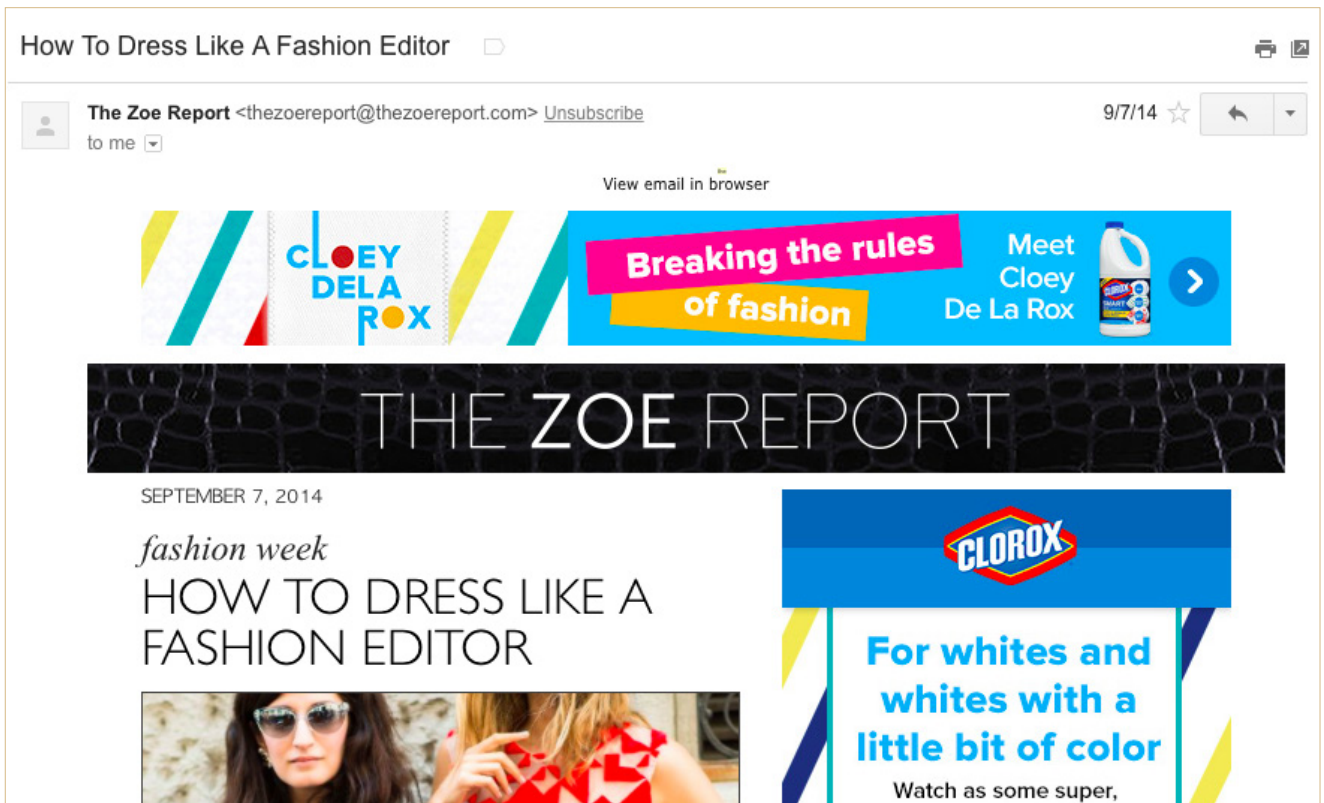
- **Expiration dates** - Adding a time-sensitive deadline on your offer can spark readers into action. Your subscribers know exactly how long they have to open your email before it's no longer relevant or valid.
- **Discounts** - These work especially well for thrifty audiences. Perhaps they are a fan of your product, but aren't ready to purchase it at retail price. By offering a discount in the subject line, subscribers might be compelled to open and save.
- **Questions** - Posing a question in your subject line can help add intrigue to your message, while boosting subscriber interest and engagement.

Beyond these basic fundamentals, here are three more strategies that help to execute a winning subject line:

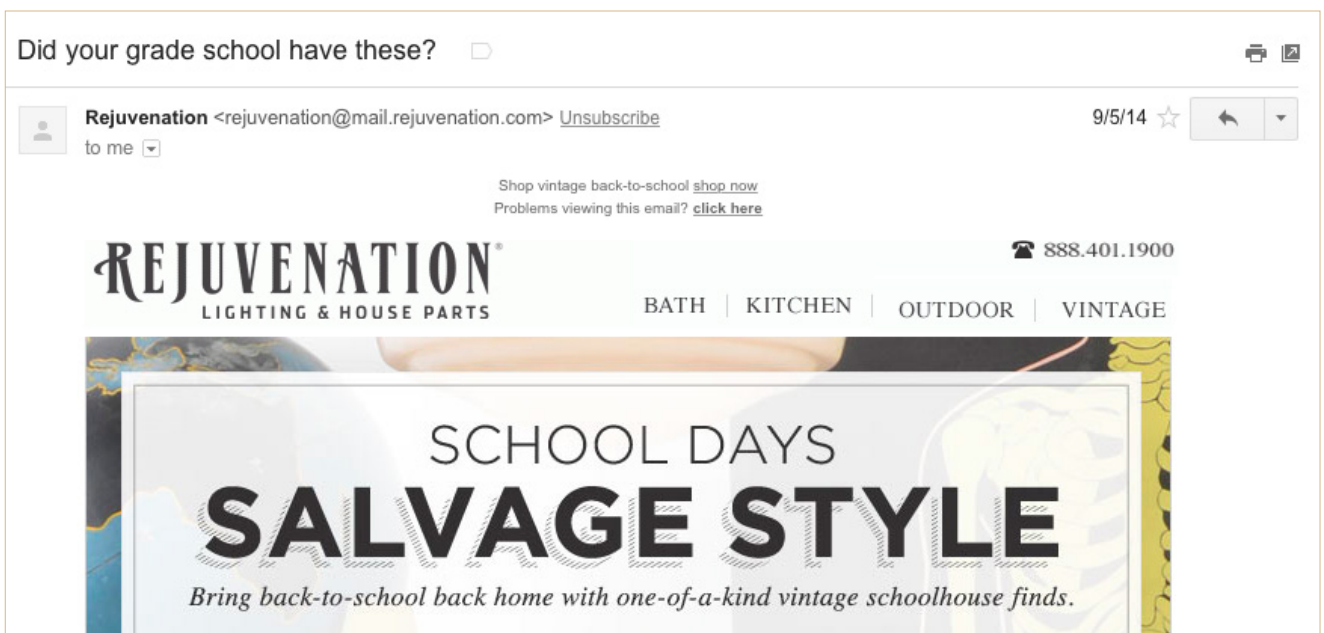
1. **Get to the point** - Sometimes the best way to appeal to subscribers is by being straightforward. Avoid fancy language and be frank about what you're offering:



2. **Introduce a 'how-to'** - Subscribers sign up for your list because they believe they can benefit from your products and services in some way. Telling them that you can help them accomplish something will compel them to open your email for the information inside:



3. **Pose a question** - Examine the content of your message. What questions does it answer? Ask them in the subject line. This tactic provokes curiosity in the reader, and they'll need to open it to satisfy their intrigue.



◉ Subject Line Writing Resources

Here are some additional resources to help you master the subject line, from seasoned experts:

[How To Write Magnetic Headlines](#) - From Copyblogger, this 11-part series addresses SEO keywords and includes 21 proven subject line templates.

◉ Testing Your Subject Line Strategies

Unsure of which tactic will be most effective in your own email marketing efforts?

You might want to perform a **split test**, which allows you to compare several strategies at a time during a controlled experiment.

To run this test, send different versions of the same message to segments of your list. Each version should be consistent in everything but the subject line. In each subject line, try out different strategies.

By analyzing the number of opens you get from each version, you can get a better understanding of what kinds of subject lines garner the best response from your subscribers.

Your Subject Line Checklist

- ☐ Your subject line should **clearly communicate the objective** of your message.
- ☐ When appropriate, a **discount code or freebie** can compel subscribers to open who may not otherwise.
- ☐ Increase your open rates with a subject line that is **straightforward**, offers a helpful 'how-to' or asks a question.
- ☐ When appropriate, create a **sense of urgency** to encourage subscribers to take immediate action.
- ☐ **Split-test** your broadcasts to help you find the subject line that will get you the best results.

Text Snippets

Your 'from' and subject lines aren't the only tools you have in your arsenal.

Some email service providers also display an auto-preview of whatever text they find at the top of your email. This text, displayed right after the subject line, is commonly called a **snippet**.

And that snippet could be the extra nudge subscribers need to open your emails and investigate further.

While the power of the snippet has yet to be proven, we encourage you to split-test a few broadcasts before you make any permanent changes.

To get started, here are four ways to be snippet-friendly:

◉ Extend Your Subject Line

If your emails are topped with a line of text, those words will also display after your subject line in the inbox -- so it's important to choose these words carefully. They act as an introduction to your content and can also serve as a supplement to your subject line by teasing what's inside.

Remember, snippet length will vary depending on each reader's screen size, so place the most important words up front.

◉ Relegate Requests To Sidebars

You may have housekeeping items at the top of your email, such as [whitelisting](#) a request or a link to unsubscribe.

To keep them from monopolizing auto-preview space, shift them slightly from the main body to the top of a sidebar or to the bottom of your email. They'll still be easily accessible, and they'll give you room to put snippet-worthy text where it needs to go.

FORWARD TO A FRIEND >



LOEFFLERRANDALL.COM

CUSTOMER SERVICE | PRIVACY POLICY | UNSUBSCRIBE

525 Broadway, 4th floor, New York, NY 10012 [888.982.8800](tel:888.982.8800)

◉ Snippet-ize Your Images

Your message may be designed with a logo, header or other image at the top. These won't appear in a snippet, but if you set alt text, some programs will show that instead.

This text should be written in a way that serves two purposes: It will need to stand in for the picture in case images aren't displayed, and it should also pick up where your subject line leaves off.

◉ Header Placeholder

What if you don't want text or an image to appear at the top of your design and you don't want to move anything? What if you just want the snippet to disappear once the email is opened?

It's easy to prevent a snippet from appearing in your email. The mechanics? Assign alt text to a tiny image - then render it invisible by matching it to your background color.

◉ Test It

Send your originally scheduled broadcast to half your list and a snippet-friendly version to the other half. Take note of any changes in engagement.

If possible, plan to use snippets in every email send.

Your Snippet Checklist

- ☐ If a good percentage of your audience is reading your emails in Gmail, Outlook or on a mobile device, you'll want to be mindful of what appears in the snippet space.
- ☐ The snippet is pulled from whatever appears first in the email: a pre-header, a header or the alt text from an image.
- ☐ You can create an invisible snippet by taking advantage of the alt text on a 1-pixel image that matches the background of your email.
- ☐ Remember that screen size will affect how much of the snippet appears, so place your key words in the beginning.

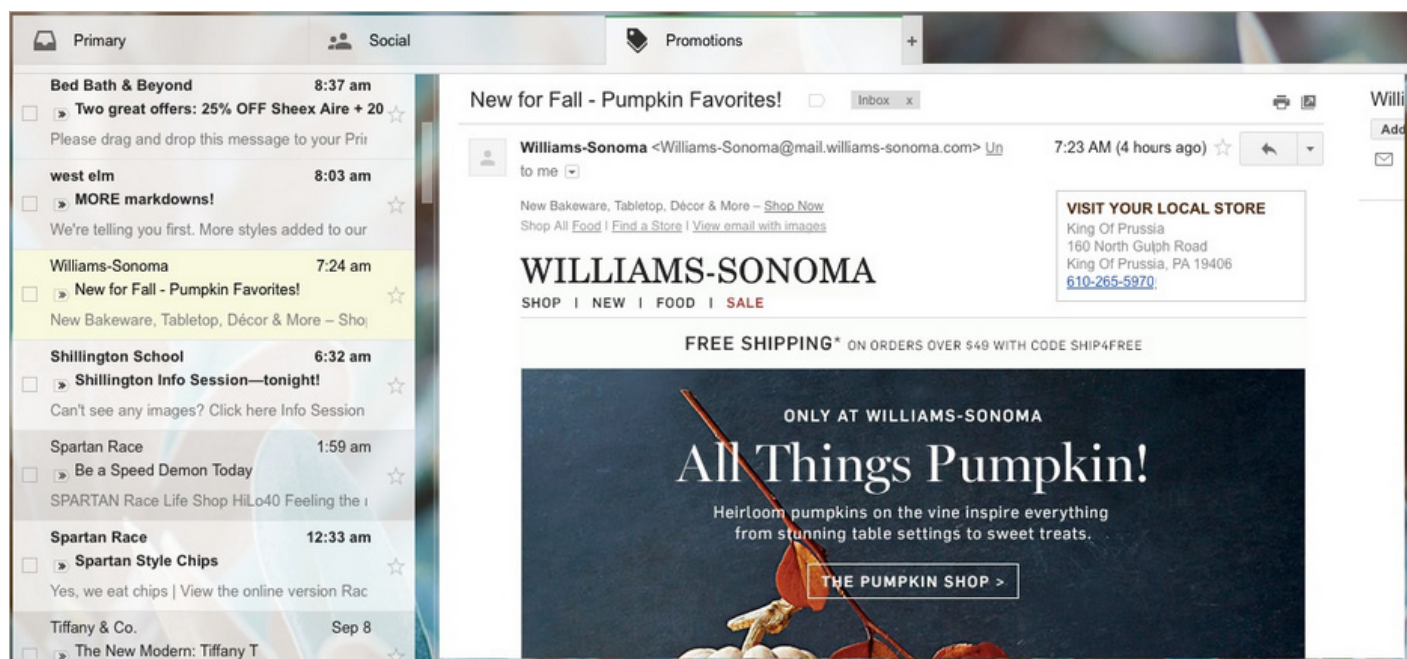
Preview Panes

Imagine being able to engage over half of subscribers with just a simple design tweak.

According to MarketingSherpa, about 53 percent of B2C subscribers first see your emails in a **preview pane**. For B2B customers, the number is even higher (around 80 percent).

Only some email providers feature preview panes as part of the email inbox. The purpose here is to provide users with a glimpse of their emails so they can decide whether they want to open them or not.

Here's an example of what this looks like in Gmail:

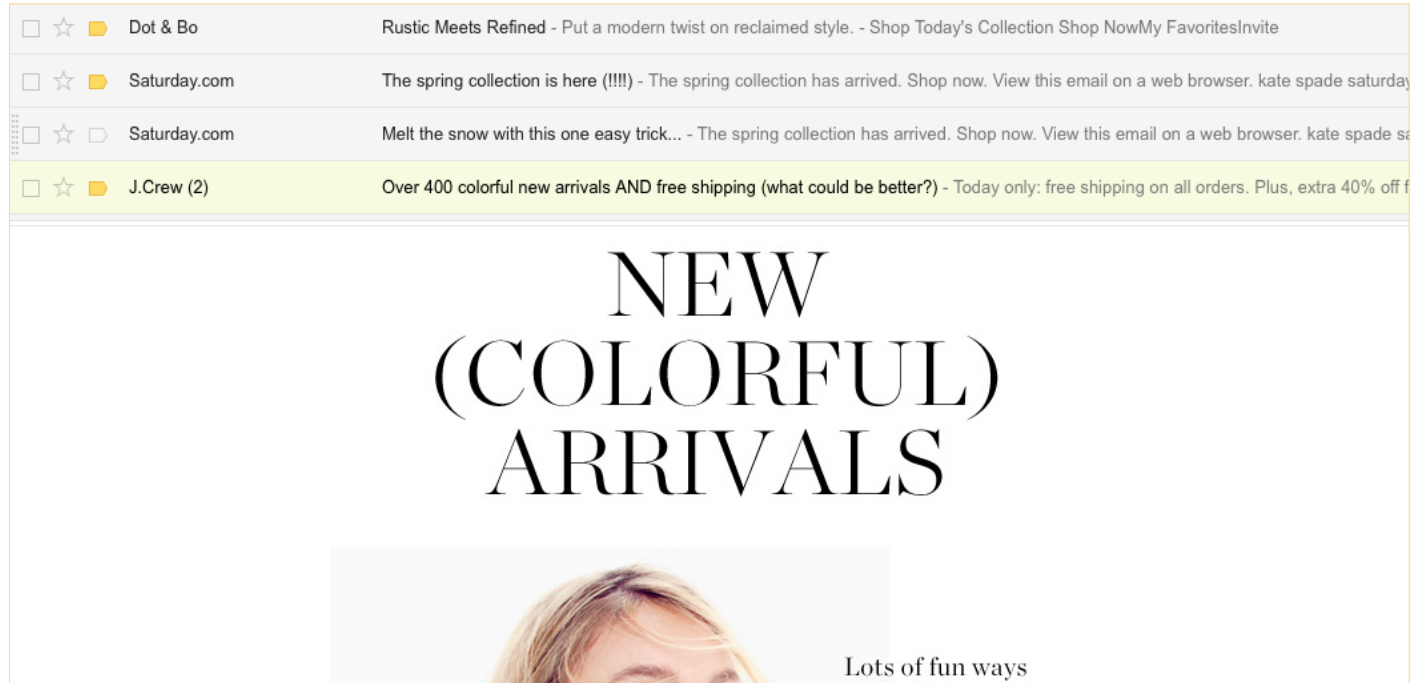


The important takeaway here is that if the top half of your email doesn't compel readers to open your message, they'll either ignore or delete it.

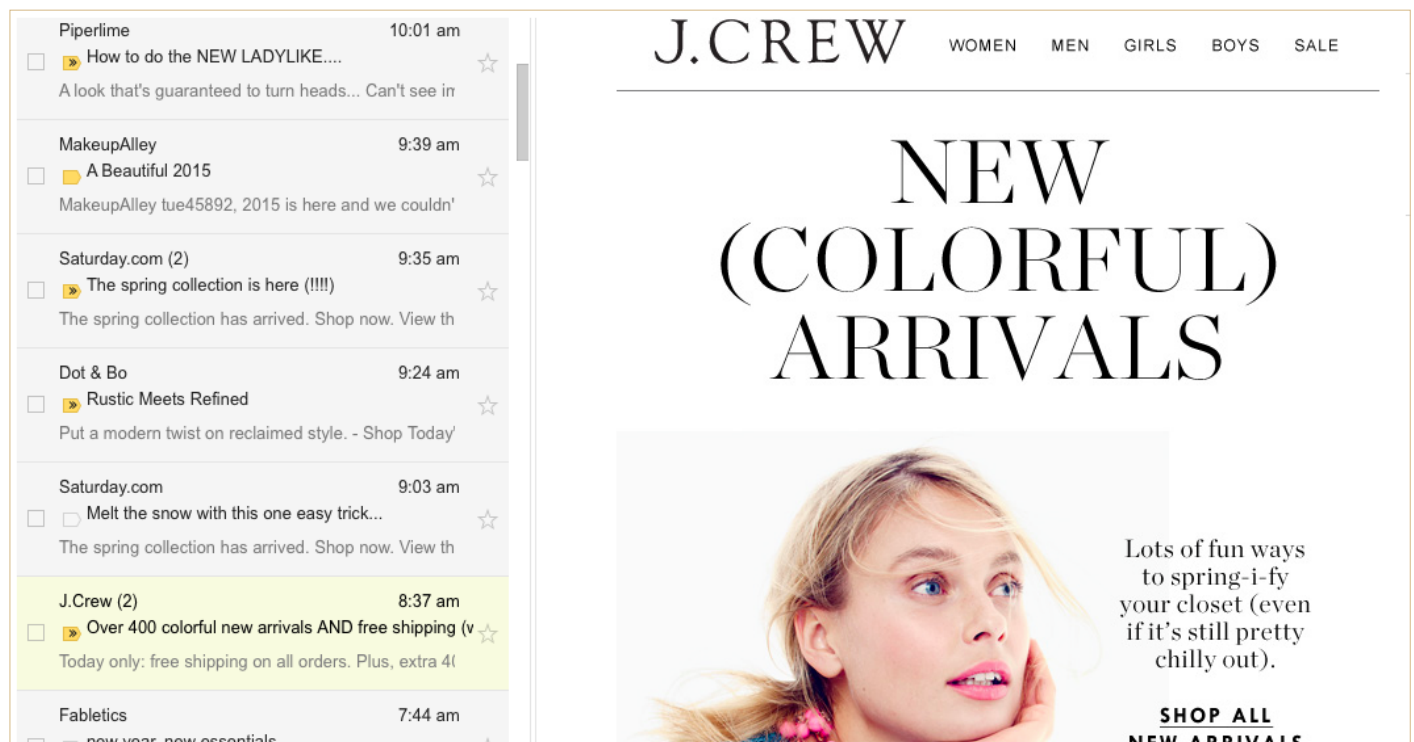
Take Advantage Of The Preview Pane Space

To encourage your subscribers to open your email, you can make some simple design changes to optimize how you emails appear in preview mode. Before we dive into those tips, it's important to note that preview panes might appear in either a horizontal or vertical layout:

Horizontal:



Vertical:



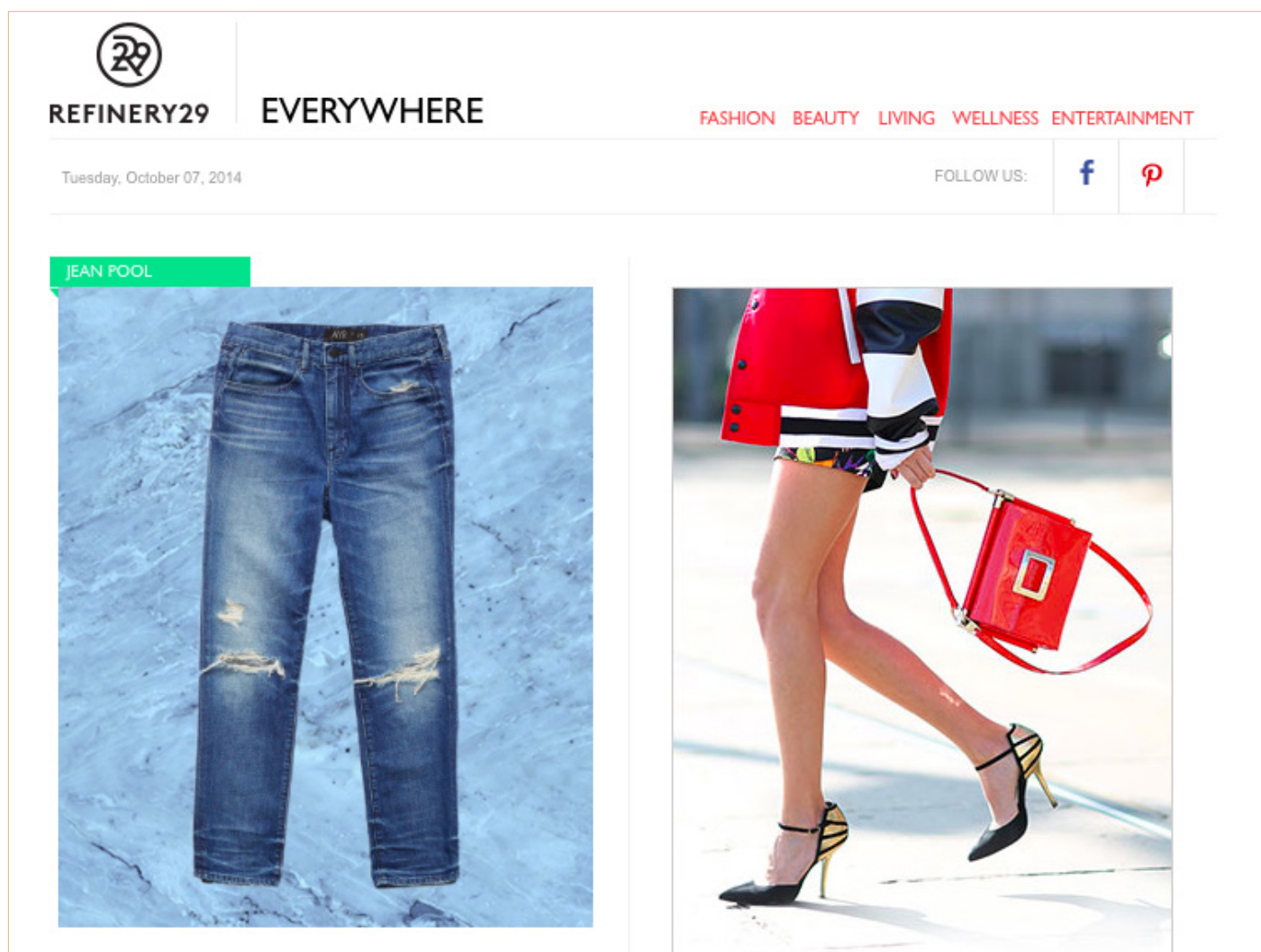
To accommodate both a horizontal and vertical display, fill the top left of your message with items that grab previewers' attention. (Bonus: This will make your emails more mobile-friendly as well!).

Be sure to also include:

- **Your logo, company name or other brand indicator** - This is especially important if your subject and 'from' lines aren't easily identifiable. Subscribers are far more likely to open emails from trusted senders.
- **Compelling copy** - Hook subscribers with a strong offer or teaser near the top of your message.
- **A table of contents** - If applicable, a table of contents of your email message might make it easier to grab your readers' attention in preview panes. If you send a newsletter for example, you could include featured articles at the top. You never know if one might appeal to a subscriber!
- **A call-to-action** - Some readers may not have time to read your entire message, but may still be interested in your offer. Providing it in the preview pane allows them to act immediately.

Fitting all of this at the top of your email can be tough, depending on your design.

You can avoid unsightly cramming with the addition of a side column, like the one in this email below:

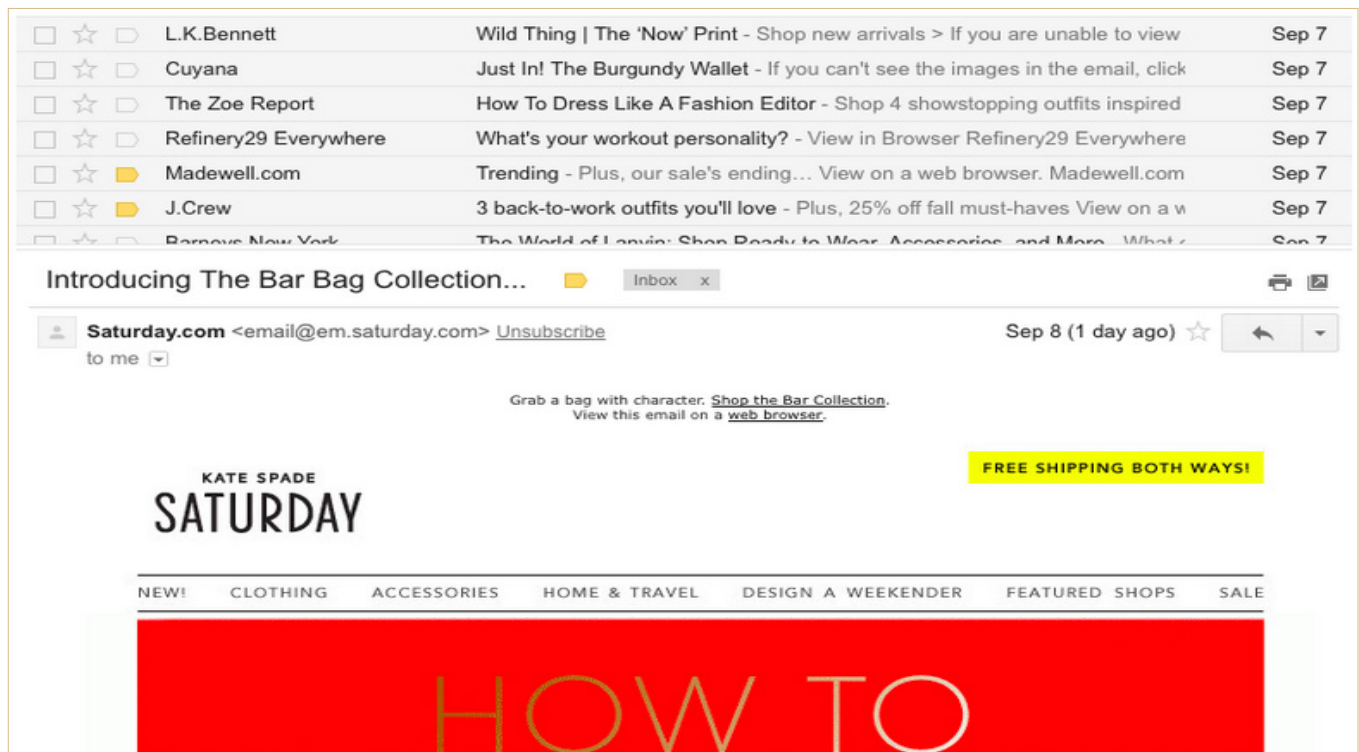


What To Avoid When Designing For Preview Panes

When filling the top of your email with content, you may need to shift things around and remove less compelling items.

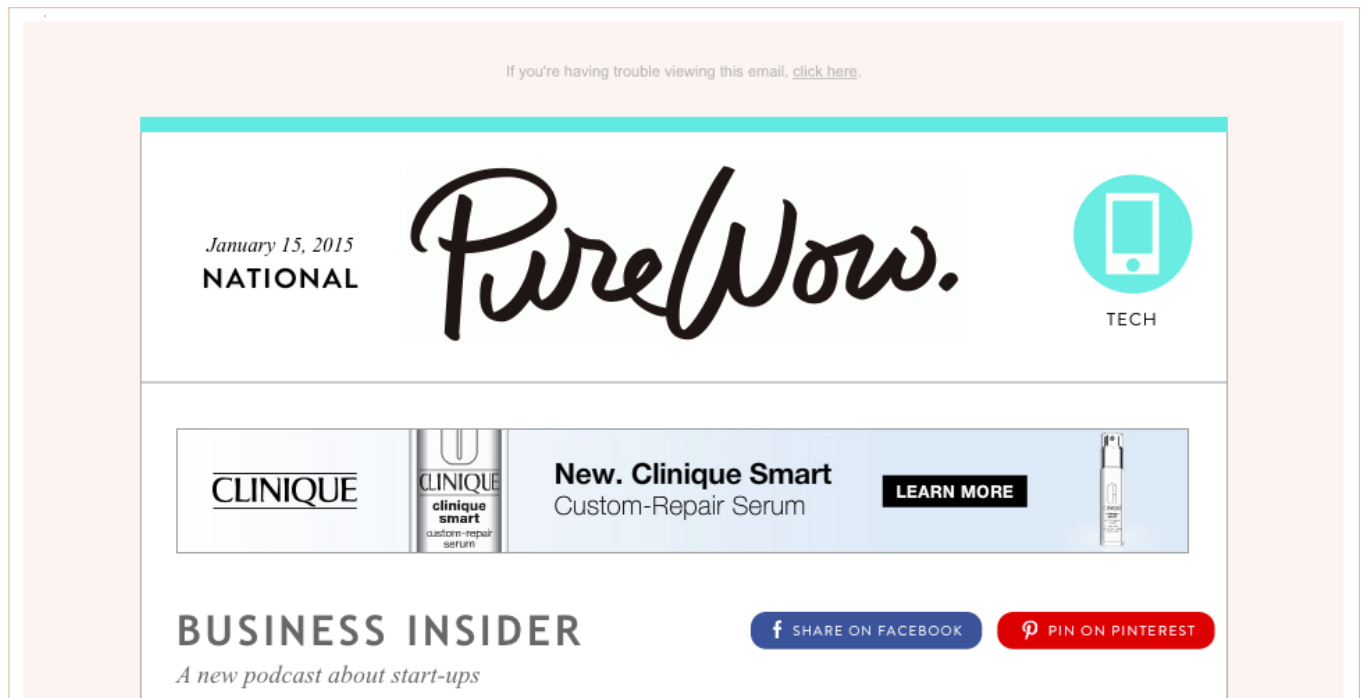
Here are some common culprits that may be detrimental to your design:

- **Large images or headers** - These drain the efficacy of your design for numerous reasons:
 - o If images are turned off, they'll appear as blank space.
 - o If they take too long to load, readers may move on.
 - o If they do appear, but don't provide any value, they're taking up space that could be used for more compelling content.



- **Too many navigation links** - A row of links that mirror the tabs on your site can be helpful and convenient for readers, but can also detract from more important items. Consider shrinking them, reducing the number of tabs or moving them to the bottom of your message.
- **Ads** - Place them elsewhere in your message, or risk previewers clicking through to advertisers' sites rather than your own.

- **Ads** - Place them elsewhere in your message, or risk previewers clicking through to advertisers' sites rather than your own.



Your Preview Pane Checklist

- ☐ **Be mindful of the content** in the top left of your emails - it should entice the reader to open the message and read more.
- ☐ Keep large emails (unless carefully chosen to encourage opens), navigation links and ads **out of the top** of your emails.
- ☐ Consider positioning your **call-to-action at the top** of your emails for readers who want to click straight through the preview.

TYING IT ALL TOGETHER

When you have a recognizable and approachable 'from' line, catchy subject lines and several ideas for emails that show up well in snippets and previews, your email will be ready to shine in the inbox. And if you do have any questions along the way, [feel free to contact us at any time](#) – we're happy to help!

Are you ready to start sending AWesome emails that stand out in the inbox?

Sign up is easy – and the first month is free.
[Get started now.](#)

Already an AWeber customer?

Log in now to [start sending engaging emails.](#)

About AWeber

AWeber is an easy-to-use email marketing tool that allows business owners and entrepreneurs to cultivate relationships with their customers. Since 1998, AWeber has been the email engine powering the growth of organizations around the world, including leading sites like Social Media Examiner and ProBlogger and industry influencers such as Peter Shankman and Ann Handley.

Today, more than 120,000 small- and midsize-businesses, entrepreneurs, agencies and nonprofits are making the most of AWeber's sophisticated segmentation and analytics capabilities, split testing applications, extensive template libraries and industry-leading deliverability and live support.

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