# GUIDE TO USER FRIENDLY EMAILS

Sure, you've got your main call to action properly linked at the end of your email, and you'd of course prefer that every reader just click on that.

But you know that's not how it goes. One specific call to action doesn't attract every reader. Especially not all on the same day.

So it can help to include some other options. Those options are usually placed in the following three places:
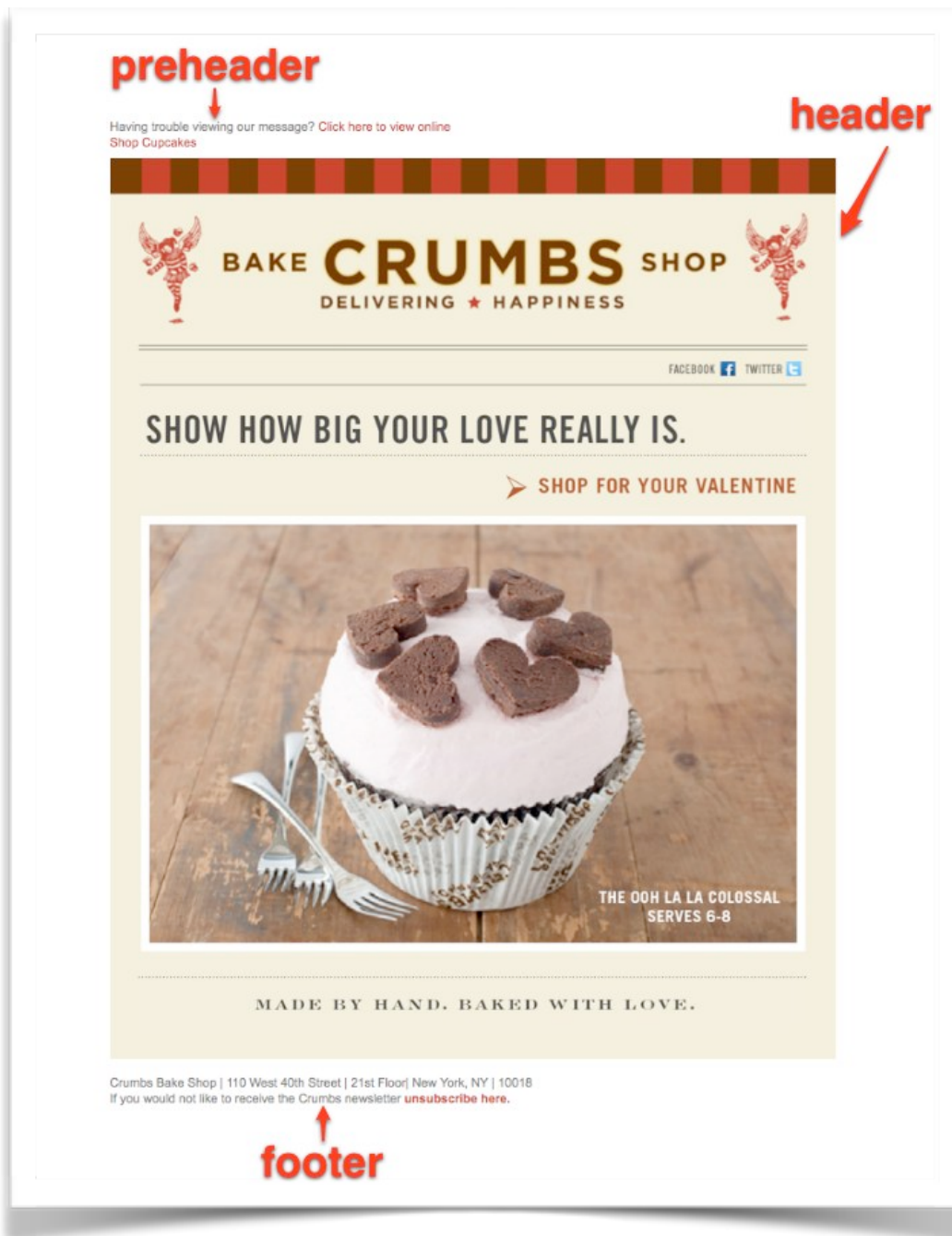
The **preheader**, when present, is displayed just above the email header. It usually consists of a line or two of text in small font.

The **header** serves to identify your brand as the message sender, evoke past experiences with your brand and introduce the subject of this specific email.

The **footer**, the bottommost portion of your message, supplements the information in the message body. It usually remains consistent from email to email.

In this guide, you'll see just how much potential the preheader, header and footer have to give readers a good experience with your emails.

Along the way, you'll probably find some ideas that you want to adopt yourself. So we've included some worksheets to help you keep track of them.

Go ahead and print them from the end of this document (pages 16-18).

Once you've got them, let's get started.

Preheaders

A preheader is a short line of text that appears at the very top of an email.

Because of it's placement, it's the first thing a subscriber sees when opening a message.

It's placement also means that the preheader is often the only thing shown in a [preview pane.](#)

Because of this, the preheader space is commonly used to **extend the information of the subject line**. The extra details provided can prompt someone to open who wasn't originally planning to.

Here are 7 things marketers often do with the preheader:

Summarize the Email

If the recipient is viewing the email on a small screen or has images turned off, having a preheader that summarizes your message can be helpful.

The preheader in this email from Pottery Barn explains the gist of the message for viewers who can't see the announcement below.

Include Instructions for Viewing

Depending on which email clients your subscribers are using, the email message that they see can sometimes look very unlike the message you originally intended to send.

Then there are readers viewing your email on their mobile phones, who might not be able to view your message in its entirety. And some subscribers might not have images enabled in their email clients.

By linking to an online version of your message or suggesting they enable images, you can eliminate confusion. Then readers can have a positive experience with your message - no matter how they are accessing it.

Bloomingdale's includes links for viewing the email online and also in a mobile format.
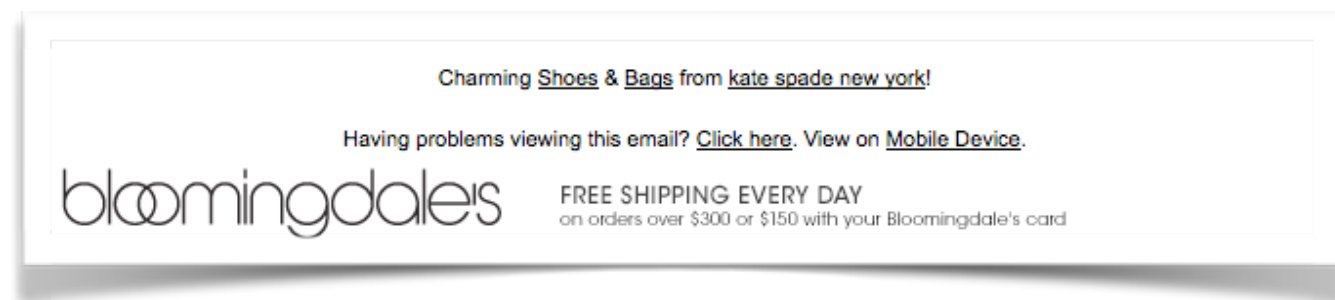

Encourage Sharing of the Email

Occasionally, a subscriber may open your message, read your offer and get so excited or impressed by it that they can't wait to share it with other people who will appreciate it just as much.

So they glance around for the best way to share it. This kind of option is usually kept with the housekeeping items, so they'll check out the top and bottom of your message, which is where you'll want to have a sharing link ready.

Forever21 wants readers to share their email with their friends, so their preheader includes a Forward to a Friend link
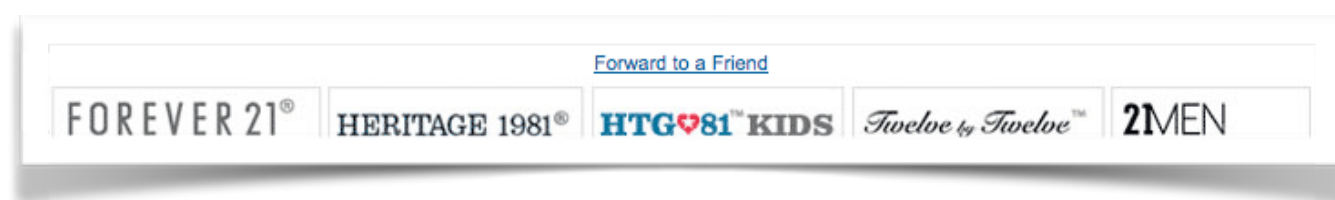
Include Coupon Codes, Discounts and Perks

As mentioned earlier, subscribers are often driven to open and read email when presented with discounts and special offers.

By placing those specials in the preheader, subscribers can then make a decision to read on further based on the perceived value of your offer.

Macy's includes a link for viewing images as well as a promotional code in their preheader. They also link to their site for immediate shopping. This way, interested subscribers can take action immediately, and don't even have to read the rest of the email if they don't want to.
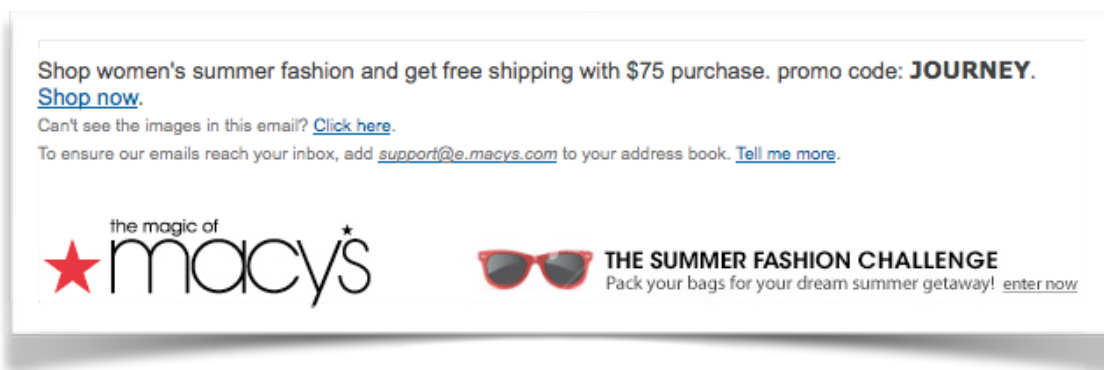

Link to An "Edit Preferences" Page

Some websites find it useful to offer email preference centers - personalized web pages where subscribers can review their stored information and alter their subscriptions based on their preferences.

Preference centers often offer subscribers the ability to:

- Opt down to a lower-frequency list, so they'll hear from you less often
- Change their email address
- Choose among various topics they want to get email about

If readers aren't happy with the current state of your correspondance, linking to an "Edit Preferences" page from your preheader gives them a chance to adjust things instead of completely unsubscribing out of frustration.

Shutterfly links to their preference center in their preheader, making it easy for subscribers to update their settings.
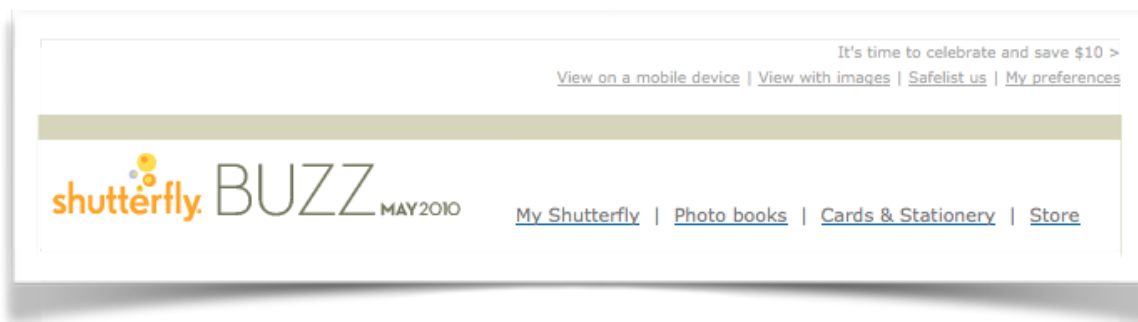
Link to An Unsubscribe Page

Preference centers are a great alternative for subscribers who don't want all of your emails, but still find value in some of them. But there will always be people who want to stop receiving your emails entirely.

Placing an unsubscribe link in your preheader makes it a cinch for subscribers to opt out of your messages. Otherwise, if they can't figure out how to unsubscribe, they may report your email as spam.

The very first link in Groupon's preheader is the Unsubscribe link. They want subscribers to have a positive experience with their emails, even if this is their last and they unsubscribe.
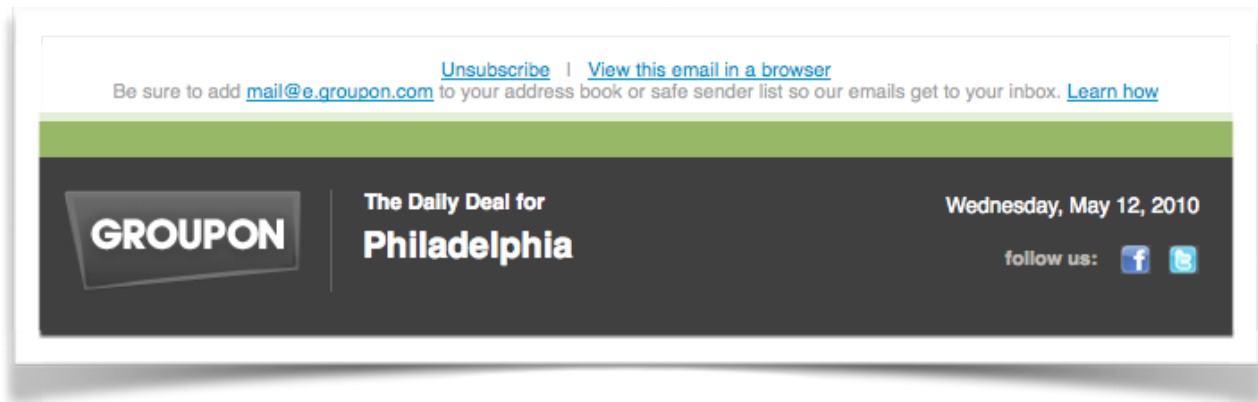

Request That Subscribers Add You to Their Address Books

All email providers want to protect their users from spam, scams and phishing attacks. So if they're not sure a subscriber wants an email, they filter it to the junk folder.

When subscribers add your email address to their address books, they whitelist you. This makes it much more likely that your email will land in their inbox.

By including this request in your preheader, you can eliminate confusion from subscribers who can't find your messages in their inbox after they request them because they were filtered out.

RueLaLa asks subscribers to add them to their address book, stating that they will never miss a boutique via email if they do.
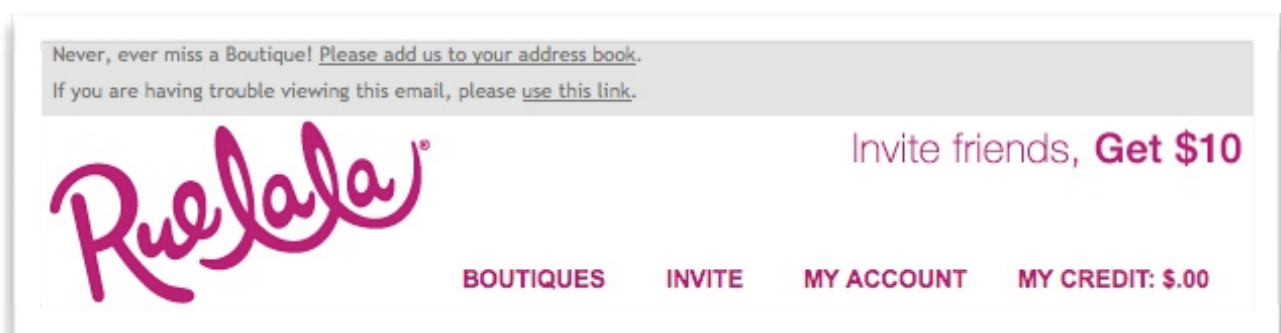
No matter what you choose to include, you should consider taking advantage of preheader space in your messages. Using preheaders can:

- Increase your response rate
- Improve your email delivery rate
- Give a better subscriber experience by showing those using Gmail, Outlook and the iPhone a "teaser" in the inbox

Busy subscribers can decide in one glance whether they want to read your email by the content of the preheader. And with the readily available and actionable links, they'll have an uncomplicated, pleasant experience with your brand.

In Summary: Your Preheader Tips

1. If you use a preheader, provide something helpful to subscribers – something that may prompt them to open your email that is different from the subject line.

2. Only use one or two lines of text. If you have a long preheader, the compelling content in the header (which we discuss in detail in the next section) will be pushed down in your message and people might lose interest before ever reaching it.

3. The preheader should be visible, but not overpowering. This is often accomplished by using smaller text than your message body, and a color that is less prominent than the color used in the email itself.

Planning Your Preheader

Now, we're going to take all the ideas discussed above and work them into a preheader that's right for your own emails.

Using the worksheet called "In Practice: Putting Together a Preheader," do a little preheader planning of your own before moving on to the next section.

Headers

Your header, the top portion of your message, introduces the email's content. In HTML emails, it's also where you introduce your design.

Because the header is usually similar (and sometimes identical) in every message, eyes often skim right over it. But when the reader has a question, it's often the first place they look for answers.

So it's important that you include the basic, vital information they need. It's also important that you only include the basic and vital – you don't want to overwhelm readers before you make your point.

For the most effective header, consider including some (but not all) of the following:

Your Logo

When you send emails, you want readers to be able to easily associate your emails with your brand. The easiest way to inspire recognition is to include your logo.

If you don't have a logo, you could always use your business name. If you can, match the colors and font to the way your name appears at your location or on your web site.

When your name or logo appear in every email, you reap these benefits:

- Your business is presented as an authority in your field.
- Any loyalty readers have to your brand comes into play when they interact with the email.
- Readers who catch a glimpse of the message in a preview pane may choose to open when they recognize your brand.

World Market takes a simple approach to their email header, including only their logo and a few navigation links.
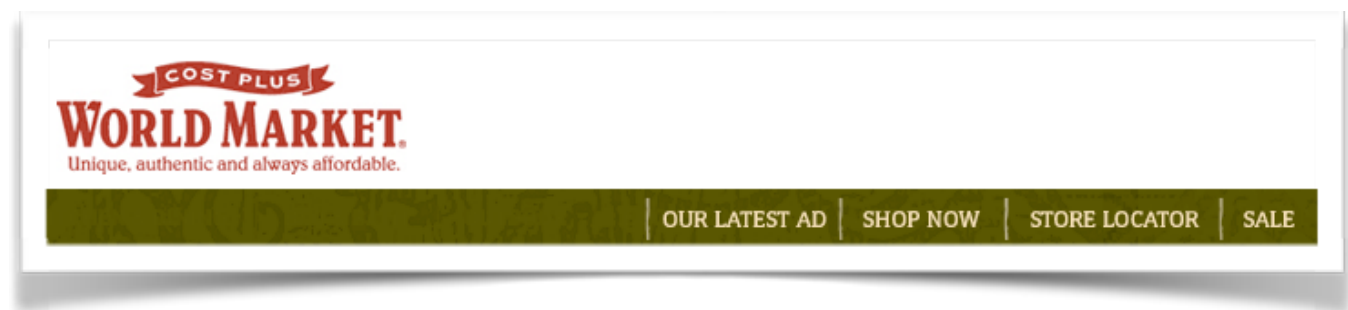
The Date

Sometimes, subscribers may not read your emails for months. Perhaps the messages are filtered to a folder for later review. Or maybe they're just left in the inbox.

Then one day, a subscriber decides to catch up. They can automatically see when the content was intended for by glancing at the date.

Style.com's newsletter includes the date in the header, so that readers know if they are reading the current issue.

Links Back to Your Site

The main aim of your email message is to get subscribers interested in your product and to get them to interact with your brand.

By including a navigation menu in your email header, you give readers an easy way to get back to your website, which will hopefully lead to more sales.

Tea includes links to each of their website departments, which makes for quicker clicking-through to shopping.

And if they're not interested in the specific offer in this particular email, they're easily able to see the other options your site has to offer.

Rent the Runway uses a simple and clean navigation menu in their emails.

Link to Preference Centers

We touched on preference centers (websites where email subscribers can review their stored information and make changes) when discussing preheaders.

If you want that option to be more prominent, consider including it in the header instead.

Overstock links to their Email Preference Center right from their header, making it hard to miss in the email.
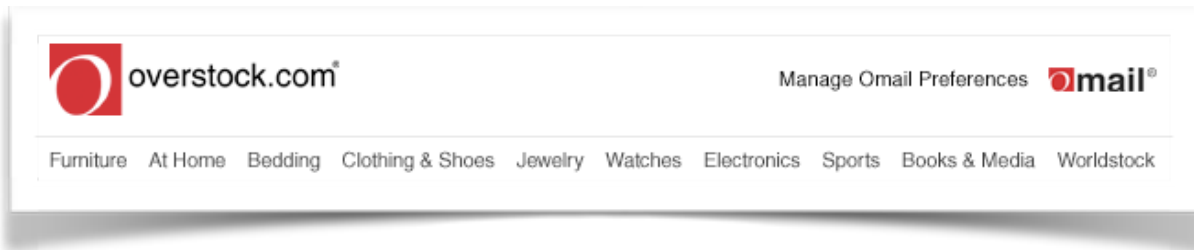
A Headline or Tagline

Perhaps your email campaign has an identity of its own – a name that you use to refer to it on your website, butdon't include in the from line or subject lines.

The header is the perfect place to include this information. It gives you one more way to show subscribers what you're all about when they open a message.

Similarly, you can include a byline or phrase that accompanies your headline in each email.

Cows From My Window includes their slogan in their header.

An Offer

The preheader is not the only place you can add a special offer to your message. The header is prime real estate for such important information.

In addition to using a navigation menu, Barneys New York also places an offer in their headline.

In Summary: Your Preheader Tips

- If you use a preheader, provide something helpful to subscribers – something that may prompt them to open your email that is different from the subject line.

- Only use one or two lines of text. If you have a long preheader, the compelling content in the header (which we discuss in detail in the next section) will be pushed down in your message and people might lose interest before ever reaching it.

- The preheader should be visible, but not overpowering. This is often accomplished by using smaller text than your message body, and a color that is less prominent than the color used in the email itself.

Designing Your Header

There are a lot of good ideas listed above – now's the time to write down the ideas you want to incorporate into your own emails.

Grab the worksheet called "In Practice: Designing Your Header" to start planning your new header.
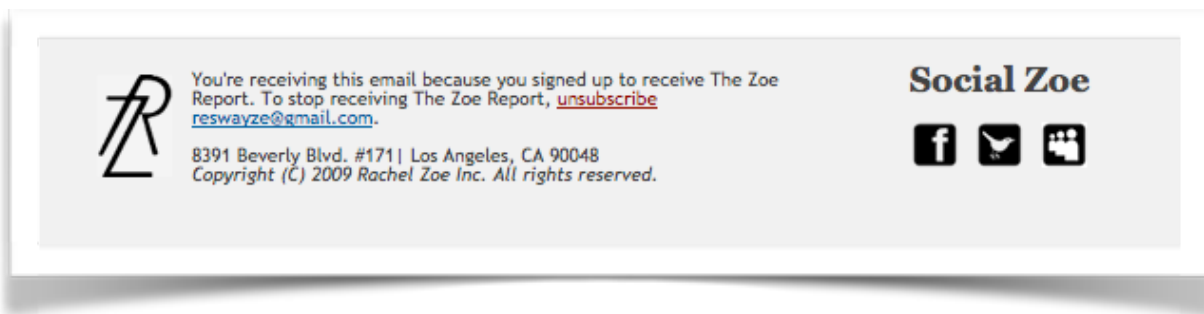
Footers

The bottom area of your email gives you the opportunity to include supplemental information about your message without distracting from your offer.

Often these items are for general housekeeping, and and usually include at least one or two the following:

Your Contact Address

The CAN-SPAM Act, a U.S. law that regulates commercial email, requires that all emails must contain the sender's valid physical postal address.

The Zoe Report includes their contact address, in addition to their unsubscribe link and social sharing icons.

Your Unsubscribe Link

CAN-SPAM also requires that your email offers a way for the recipient to opt out of your list.

Vosges Haut-Chocolat links to their unsubscribe link in their footer.

Options for Sharing with Different Social Networks

The footer gives subscribers one last chance to share your message content with their social networks. Many companies link to different social sharing sites right from their email footers.
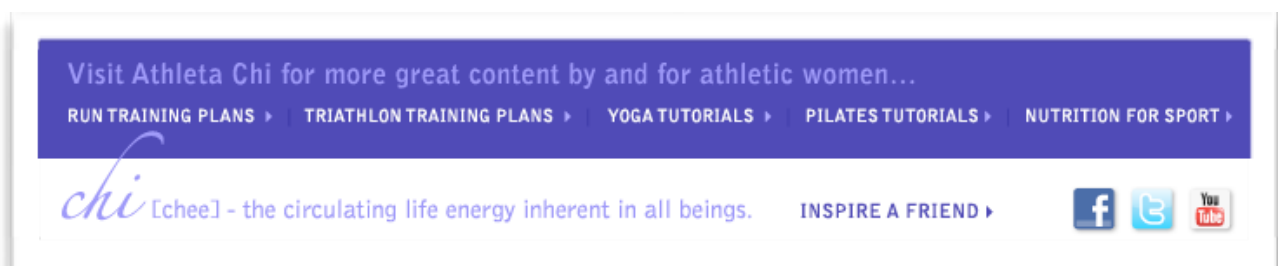
Banana Republic links to their social networks.
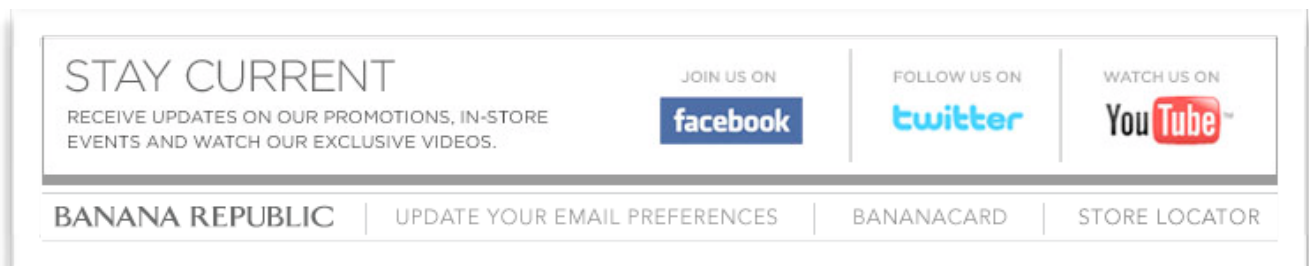
Navigation Links

The bottom of your message is also the perfect place for including links back to your site.

Athleta links back to their website in a navigation-menu style in their footer.

In Summary: Your Footer Tips

1. Include your unsubscribe link in your footer, in the same place, each time you email so subscribers can find it easily.

2. Insert your mailing address so you'll be Can-Spam compliant. Add your contact information so subscribers can always reach you.

3. If you're trying to establish a strong presence on a social media site, provide a way for subscribers to connect with you there.

4. You may want your footer to mirror the navigation links on your site so subscribers have the opportunity to do more than respond to your main offer.

Creating Your Footer

Let's take what we talked about here and come up with a rough design for a new potential footer for your emails. It's time for that "In Practice: Creating Your Footer" worksheet.

Your New User-Friendly Template

By this point, you should have a pretty good idea of how you want your new preheader, header and footer to look.

If you're adding any of those sections to your emails for the first time, congratulations! You'll be providing a more helpful experience for your readers in the future, one they're sure to appreciate.

To make sure that experience stays consistent with every email, you can use your new preheader, header and footer as a template.

Just put them together in an email without any other content and save it. Then you can copy it into a new message every time you want to send something new to your subscribers.

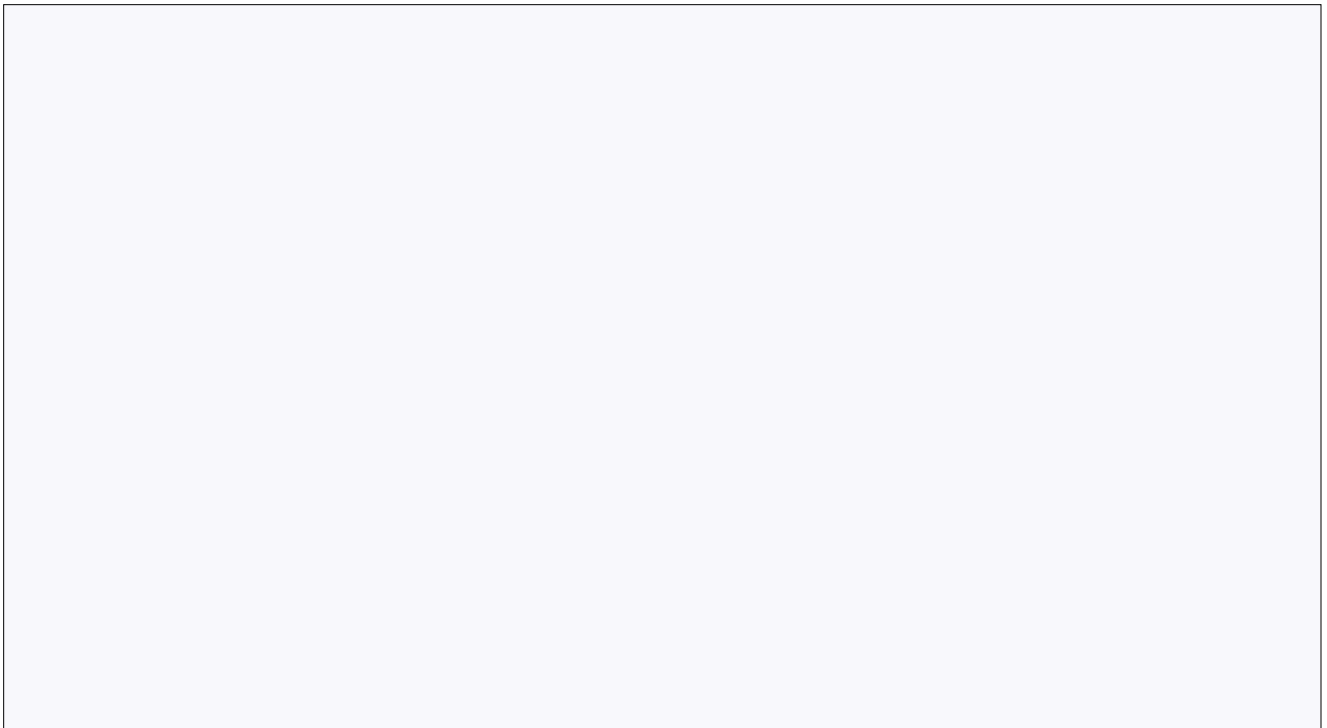And with all the new options you've put in place, you'll be all set to send more user-friendly emails.

In Practice: Putting Together a Preheader

A preheader can provide lots of new options for your subscribers, too many new additions can pile up into clutter – less than helpful. So it's important to choose your preheader content carefully.

Listed below are all the potential preheader items we've gone over. Circle the ones your emails would benefit from:

- viewing options

- an unsubscribe link

- coupon code or discount details

- a link to a preferences page

- sharing links

- an address book request

Now roughly sketch how you'll lay out your new content in your preheader:
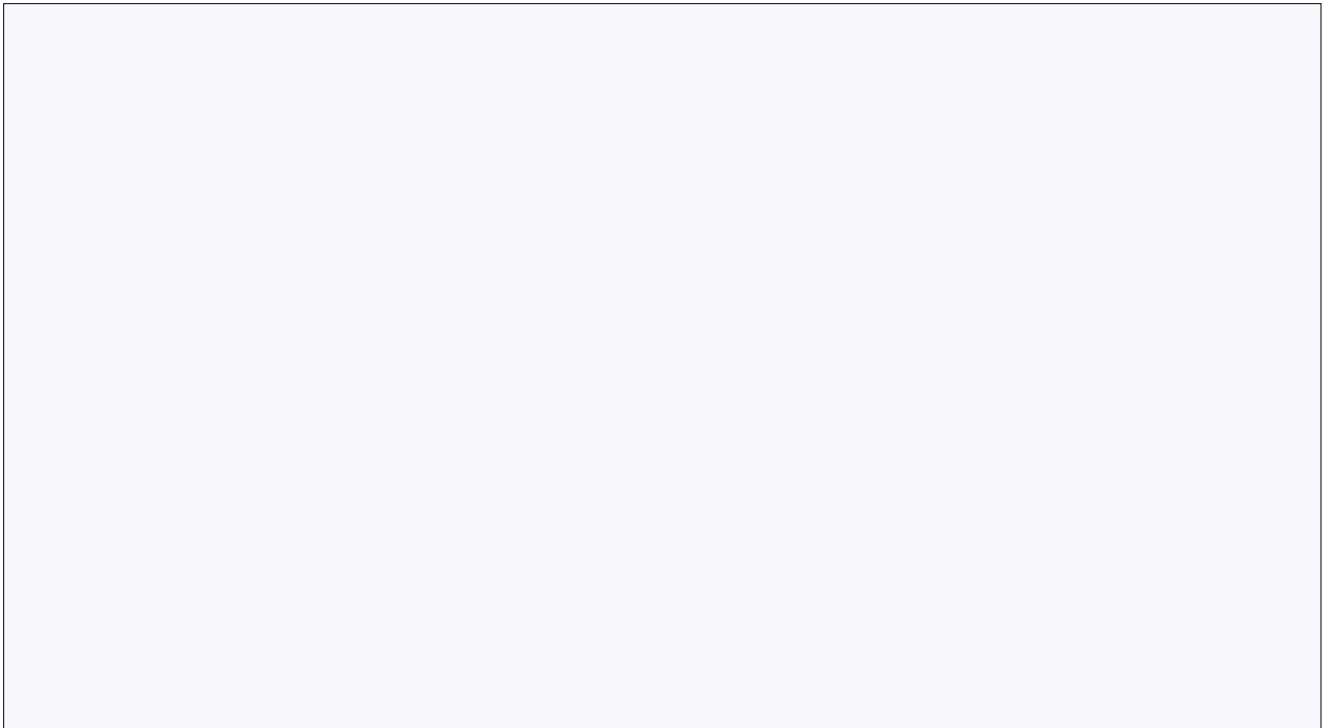design note:

In Practice: Designing Your Header

Out of all the items discussed in this section, which do you want subscribers to notice first when they open your email?

- Your logo

- The date

- Links back to your site

- A link to a preference center

- A headline or tagline

- An offer

You'll want to make sure those are prominently included in your header.

Take a minute to roughly sketch what your new header will look like with all of those items in place:
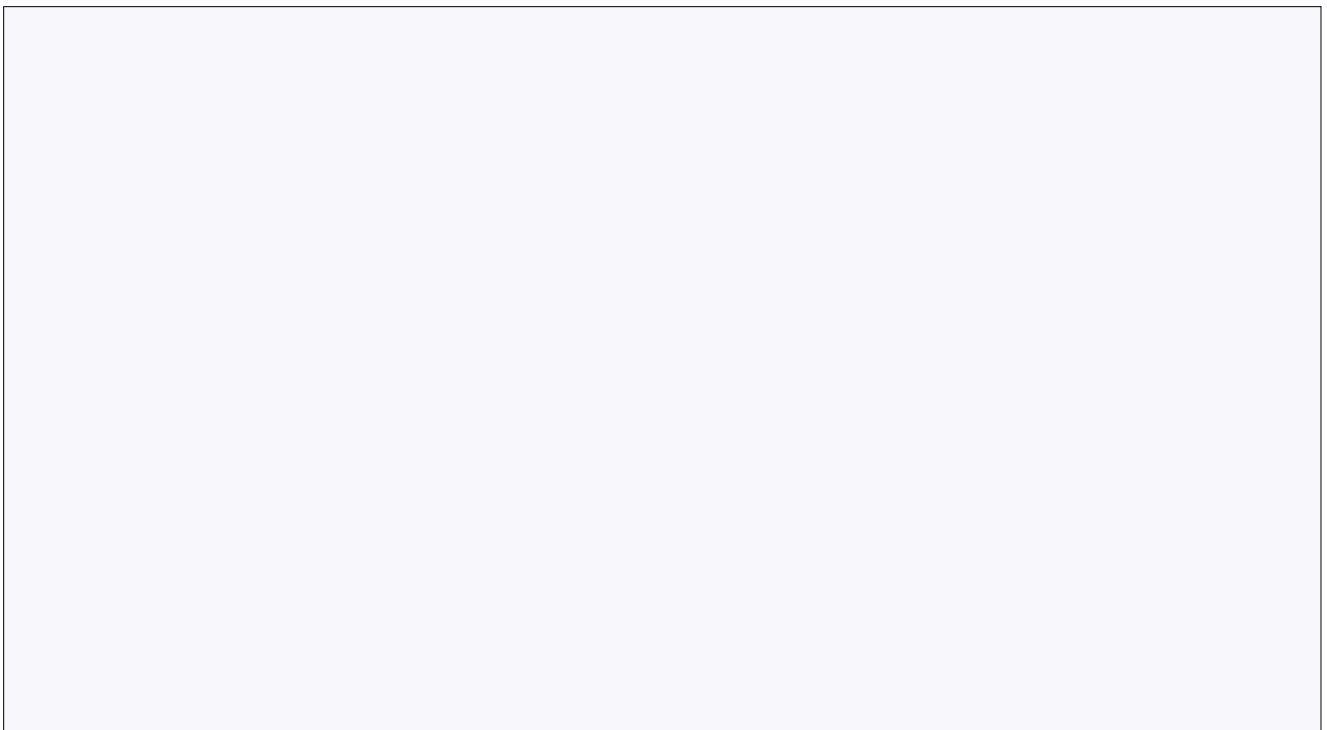
In Practice: Creating Your Footer

Because many companies include various types of housekeeping information at the bottom of their emails, subscribers have gotten used to automatically looking to the footer for certain items.

When they glance at your footer, what kind of information do you want them to find? Circle your choices:

- Your contact address

- An unsubscribe link

- Sharing links

- Navigation links

Using all of the items you've selected, roughly sketch what your new footer will look like:

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.

For digital marketing advice, examples, and inspiration, follow us here:

Blog   Webinars   YouTube   Twitter   Facebook   Pinterest