

## Dedicated Email Best Practices

The following creative and technical best practices are to help ensure optimal dedicated email performance. We encourage all advertisers to use this checklist that is based on industry best practices, past performance insights and testing.

### Design & Layout

- Design mobile first, then scale up for desktop. Mobile constraints should define hierarchy, spacing, and content priority; use a single-column layout.
- Strive for visual simplicity and delineation - the audience should be able to quickly understand an email without reading it:
  - Place the primary message and primary CTA above the fold.
  - Use the hero area to present the primary value and first CTA.
  - Ensure logical, linear reading order for screen readers.
  - Use relevant, literal imagery; never rely on images alone for critical information.
- Total content size under 100K to avoid clipping in Gmail

### Dark Mode & Color

- Use strong color contrasts and avoid pure black and pure white (use dark gray/light gray alternatives).
- Expect partial or full color inversion in dark mode.
- Avoid background images with embedded text; text in images does not adapt in dark mode & can lose contrast.
- Ensure WCAG-compliant contrast (minimum 4.5:1 for body text).
- Use transparent PNGs for logos and icons and avoid baked-in backgrounds. Use outline on light logos, so logos remain visible when backgrounds are darkened.

### Typography & Readability

- Use email-safe web fonts at a minimum of 14px for body copy (H1 60pt, H2 36pt, Legal 12pt).
- Left-align body text and avoid all caps or decorative fonts.
- Keep total copy under 200 words and sentences under 25 words.
- Use short paragraphs, clear headings, and bullet points.

### Content & Messaging

- Maximize preview text to reinforce the primary value message.
- Lead with a strong, customer-centric headline (2–8 words).
- Avoid jargon, idioms, metaphors, or ambiguous phrasing.
- Although we offer unlimited height, keep email as short as possible
- Underline hyperlinks embedded in the email

## **Calls to Action (CTA)**

- Feature a clear primary CTA in the hero and supporting CTAs throughout.
- Use descriptive, action-oriented verbs (e.g., Explore, Get, Start, Save).
- Ensure CTA buttons meet touch target minimums (preferred 44×44px).
- CTA buttons should span the width of the body of the email for ease of touch.
- Use solid CTA button fills (not outlines only) to ensure dark mode visibility.

## **Links & Tracking**

- Make the email highly clickable with multiple link opportunities.
- Use descriptive link text (avoid 'click here').
- Assign unique URLs by section and device for tracking and optimization.

## **Accessibility & Operability**

- Ensure all content is operable by touch, keyboard, and assistive technologies.
- Provide meaningful alt text for informative images; decorative images should use empty alt.
- Avoid hover-only interactions, flashing elements, or motion-triggered content.

## **Writing for AI Readiness**

- Assume AI may rewrite subject lines and previews:
  - State value propositions clearly and literally.
  - Limit each sentence to a single idea.
  - Use clear hierarchy to support AI extraction and summarization.

## **Subject Lines**

- Write AARP member-focused subject lines using 'you' or 'your' and include the advertiser's name.
- Recommended subject line length is 4 to 6 words. Typical mobile inbox cutoff is 30 characters.
- Preview Text = 2nd Subject Line
- Preview Text should ensure the first 5 to 8 words hit your key message.
- There is a wide range of mobile inbox preheader character cutoffs so any words beyond that are at risk of not appearing on certain mobile devices.