PRODUCT SPECS

Email Marketing **Creative Guidelines**

These guidelines help you create great-looking emails that render correctly across inboxes. They cover the most common issues we see:

- Accepted creative formats
- Creating HTML
- Images
- Creative size
- Coding
- Spam triggers

ACCEPTED EMAIL CREATIVE FORMATS

Hosted HTML file (recommended)

A finished HTML file with images hosted on a server and click-through URLs (CTURLs) already coded in. See "Creating HTML" and "Coding" below.

- Email builders such as Unlayer can be used, but remove any wrapper text or mention of the builder from the HTML before submitting.
- If you use Mailchimp, some code must be removed from the downloaded HTML. Ask our team for the steps (and see the note at the end).

Static image

A JPG, PNG, GIF, or PDF that we turn into an HTML email using the CTURL(s) you provide.

- If you want multiple links on one image, include a link map showing exactly which part of the image goes to which link.

HTML .zip file

An HTML file whose images are not hosted on a server, sent as a .zip in this format:

- The HTML file must be named **index.html** and sit in the root folder.
- Images must be in a folder named **images** inside the .zip.
- Image references must be relative URLs, like **images/[image-name]**, with no spaces in image names.

We highly recommend adding **UTM parameters** to any links that lead to your website. Our team can add UTMs to static-image creatives only; we can't edit links already coded into HTML.

CREATIVE SIZE

- **Width:** 650 pixels recommended (minimum 550, maximum 750).
- **Height:** no strict limit, but shorter emails avoid being clipped by Gmail. Individual images can't exceed 1,728 pixels tall.
- **File size:** keep the full email, including images, to about 200 KB.

CREATING HTML

- If you're not hand-coding, use HTML editing software such as Adobe Dreamweaver.
  - We can build custom HTML for you for an additional cost, quoted based on the work involved.
- For one large image with multiple links, slicing it with an image editor can create compatible code.
  - We can do this for you for an additional cost (one to six links). Ask your account executive for details.
- **One image with one link? We create the HTML for free.**
- Emails exported from other email platforms often contain extra code meant for that platform. They can work, but we don't recommend it.
- We also have ready-made creative templates you can use.

CODING

Build your email's structure with **tables** (and DIVs inside them) so it holds a fixed width. Outlook doesn't support the CSS max-width property, so set a fixed width on the main container table. Without a table, links on images won't work in Outlook.

Tables or DIVs?

Tables are the safest choice. For consistent rendering, build the main structure with tables and use DIVs lightly inside them.

Doctype and meta tags

Always include the doctype and meta tags, especially this one. Without it, some characters may not display correctly:

```
<meta http-equiv="Content-Type" content="text/html; charset=UTF-8">
```

Place font styles inline on table cells.

Fonts and special characters

Stick with web-safe fonts. Hosted fonts don't work in every email client. If a symbol doesn't display correctly, use its HTML entity (for example, © should be entered as **©**).

No JavaScript, Flash, or image maps

These cause delivery problems and inconsistent tracking, so leave them out.

Preheader text

Many email clients show a short preview next to or below the subject line. Use it to complement your subject line by adding a hidden span right after the <body> tag:

```
<span style="display:none; font-size:0px;">PREHEADER TEXT HERE</span>
```

Alt text

If images don't load, alt text shows in their place. Always include it: it helps your spam score and makes your email accessible to people using screen readers.

IMAGES

Background images

Don't use background images; use a background color instead, with foreground images on top. Keep more live text than imagery, since image-heavy emails trigger spam filters.

Image file names

No spaces in image names, and keep names short. Otherwise images may not load in Outlook.

Emojis

Emojis are fine. Just make sure you're using an actual emoji, not a look-alike Unicode character.

Video

Video can't play inside an email. Instead, use a screenshot with a "play" button on top that links to the video on your website.

Need email creative?
Don't have creative ready for your campaign? Our team can design and build it for you. Ask your Max Media Digital team about creative services.

SPAM TRIGGERS

- Misleading subject lines that don't match the email's content.
- Emails that are all images with little or no live text. Stay at **no more than 75% images to 25% text**; ideally 50/50.
- HTML/CSS coding errors or broken links.
- Subject lines longer than 50 characters.
  - Words like "free," "last chance," and "offer."
  - Excessive symbols like $ or %.
  - ALL CAPS.

A NOTE ON MAILCHIMP

We advise against building campaigns in Mailchimp for our platform. Its code formatting doesn't integrate cleanly with our system and has caused disruptions during campaigns.

Questions about your creative?
Your Max Media Digital team is happy to review your email before launch and help it render, land, and perform.

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