

Getting Familiar with HTML Email

This guide will help familiarize you with the use of HTML in email communications.

What is HTML?

- A. **H**yper **T**ext **M**arkup **L**anguage.
- B. Programming language used to create Web pages and graphic emails.
- C. Allows the arrangement of graphics and text **WITH** the ability to hyperlink both.

How does HTML work?

- A. Codes – there is a code for all formatting you see in the text of an email or Web page.
- B. Tags – all formatting (i.e. font, bold, italics, underline, color) is “turned on” by one tag and “turned off” by another.
- C. For every tag that turns something on, you must have a tag that turns it off.
- D. Images are not pasted into a document like MS Word. You place images on a server and “point” to them using HTML tags. This keeps servers from being overloaded with large email messages.

What is an HTML email?

An email that mixes graphics and text and outbound hyperlinks to engage the reader, elicit a response, and/or call the reader to an action of some sort.

HTML Email Templates

The law school communications department has created templates for Admissions, Alumni Relations & Development, Career Services, Dean’s Office, Financial Aid, Graduate Programs, Lawyering Skills, Legal Clinics, Student Affairs, and for special events.

Law school communications can create templates for your department. Plan a two- to three-week turn around for completion of templates.

What makes a good HTML email?

- A. Clear message – an easily understood call-to-action.
- B. Limited use of images that help further the story or concept.
- C. Brevity – be kind with everyone’s time.

Components of an HTML email:

- A. Copy – the text of an email, the written message.
- B. Graphics – the images of an email.
- C. Design –
 - a. How the email looks to the reader.
 - b. How the reader will interact with the message via text and image hyperlinks.

Web Reading

How much do readers read on the Web? **They don't.**

- A. 79% of readers scan any new page they came across; but only 16% read word-for-word.
- B. Users read email newsletters even more abruptly than they read websites.

More details at: <http://www.useit.com/alertbox/newsletters.html>.

Result: Web pages and HTML emails have to employ scannable text.

Scannable Text

What constitutes scannable text?

- A. Highlighted **keywords** (hypertext links serve as one form of highlighting; typeface variations and color are others).
- B. Meaningful **sub-headings** (not "clever" ones).
- C. Bulleted **lists**.
- D. **One idea** per paragraph (users will skip over any additional ideas if they are not caught by the first few words in the paragraph).
- E. The **inverted pyramid** style, starting with the key information first.
More on the inverted pyramid style at: <http://www.useit.com/alertbox/9606.html>.
- F. **Half the word count** (or less) than conventional writing.

Credibility (decreasing the SPAM factor)

Credibility is important for Web users, since it is unclear who is behind information on the Web and whether a page can be trusted. Credibility can be increased by high-quality graphics, concise writing and use of **outbound hypertext links**. More on credibility at: <http://www.useit.com/alertbox/990307.html>.

Outbound Hypertext Links

Outbound hypertext links to other sites show that the authors have done their homework and are not afraid to let readers visit other sites.

Promotional Writing No-no

Readers detest marketing babble, promotional writing with boastful subjective claims (best in the country). They want facts, not fluff. **Credibility suffers** when users see messages that exaggerate.

Getting Started

- A. Think about your audience
 - a. Who are they?
 - b. What do they need or want from the email? (NOT: What do I need to tell them?)
- B. Select your message or messages
 - a. What's the main point? What do you wish would happen?
 - b. What do you want the reader to gain or to do?
- C. What type of e-communication fits your need?
 - a. Save-the-Date

- b. Invitation
 - c. Reminder
 - d. Confirmation
 - e. Donation Ask
 - f. Newsletter
- D. Write your copy (body of the email).
- a. Hit your message or messages as soon as possible.
 - b. Be brief and to the point.
 - c. Don't waste time with background unless absolutely necessary.
 - d. Use highlighted keywords.
 - e. Use bulleted lists.
 - f. Keep it all in one pane if possible.
- E. Write your subject line (3-6 words, absolutely no more than 10 words).
- F. Select appropriate image or images.
- G. Have the law school communications department create your header or layout your images (allow one full work week for the creation and optimization of images). Images must be created by the communications department and then stored in a publicly accessed server.

Planning an Email Campaign

When you need to create continued correspondence with an audience during certain periods of the year or throughout the year, it's best to plan an email campaign.

- A. Think about your audience.
- a. Who are they?
 - b. What do they need or want from the email? **NOT** What do I need to tell them?
- B. What type of e-communication fits your need?
- a. Save-the-Date
 - b. Invitation
 - c. Reminder
 - d. Confirmation
 - e. Donation Ask
 - f. Newsletter
- C. Select your messages.
- a. What are the main points you want to hit over time? What do you wish would happen?
 - b. What do you want the reader to gain or to do?
- D. Order your messages.
- a. What comes first? When do you want your audience to receive each message? How many messages per email (1-3)?
 - b. Space your messages in appropriate intervals. **If you over-mail someone, you will lose them forever.** Create a calendar for each email, no more than **one per week**. Remember that other people within the school are emailing similar lists. Coordinate with list owners on when you can use them.

- c. Use the **timed message** feature in BlueHornet to distribute your messages according to your calendar.
- E. Write your copy (body of the email) for each email (All emails should be written before the first one goes out).
 - a. Hit your message or messages as soon as possible.
 - b. Be brief and to the point.
 - c. Don't waste time with background unless absolutely necessary.
 - d. Use highlighted **keywords**.
 - e. Use bulleted **lists**.
 - f. Keep it all in one pane if possible.

For best results with email campaigns that require multiple mailings, or monthly email newsletters consult with Communications at least four weeks before you get started.

Email Distribution Lists

What makes a good list?

- A. Flexibility
- B. Compartmentalization, specialty
- C. Small blocks that can be used to build large mailing lists

Think Like a List-Builder

- A. Group people who have similar needs or interests into small, manageable lists (e.g. first-year students, taxation LLMs, Class of 1998, etc.).
- B. Use the group inclusion and exclusion features in Blue Hornet® to get the most out of lists.

Creating Email Distribution Lists using Excel

- A. Organize, compartmentalize. Be able to drill down.
- B. Don't be afraid to **use variable data** within the body of your email
- C. Separate each field you want to use: FIRST, LAST, EMAIL, CLASS YEAR, etc.

Power of Tacking Email Links

Any hypertext or hyperlinked image can be tracked on BlueHornet®.

- A. **Don't guess, research.** Plan to track your email links; which will tell you what your email recipients are interested in.
- B. **Test** your messages.

Prepare Lists for BlueHornet®

- A. Convert the EXCEL file to CSV or TXT
- B. Use one column per field you wish to import into Blue Hornet®

Dangers of Over-Mailing

- A. How many emails would you want each day? Week? Month?
- B. **Be kind with your constituents' time.**

List-Use Etiquette

Each department **owns** its lists.

- A. Ask permission if you want to use someone else's list.
- B. Work to **coordinate mailing schedules** of multiple lists to avoid over-mailing any list.
- C. **Talk to each other.** Consider consolidating messages. Think about other places to get your message out rather than by email (e.g. *Advocate*, The Docket, Obiter Dictum, etc.).
- D. And the ask the list owner to send law school communications an email stating the date and duration of time the list can be used. The communications department will then give you access to that list for the agreed upon duration. After that, the list will no longer be available to you.

Furthering Your Understanding

Below are a few items for you to further your basic understanding of HTML components.

Images

All images in print and on our screens are created by small dots of ink or light. The image resolution refers to how many **dots per inch** (dpi) are used to create the image.

- A. Resolution – computer screens do not need as much information to render a graphic clearly.
 - a. Web is 72 dpi (smaller file size) 20-60Kb.
 - b. Print is 300dpi (bigger file size) 1.25-40Mb.

We've all seen images when printed that look blurry or pixelated. That is the result of printing a low-resolution (low-res) image. There isn't enough information in the image file to render the graphic clearly on paper. Print graphics require more information to provide greater detail on paper.

Web Color

What's the difference between CMYK, RGB and Web equivalent?

- A. **CMYK** – **C**yan, **M**agenta, **Y**ellow, **B**lack is a four-color process used for printing. It uses for ink colors (CMYK) to recreate every color on a printed page.
- B. **RGB** – **R**ed, **G**reen, **B**lue is a three-color process used for monitors and TV screens. It uses three screen colors (RGB) to recreate every color on a monitor or TV screen.
- C. **Web Equivalent** – uses a string of six characters (A-Z and 1-9) to recreate color on a computer monitor. Web Equivalent is currently the best way to render color most accurately on screen.

To learn more about USD's official colors, please see the university's brand manual online at:

<http://www.sandiego.edu/marketing/brand-manual.php>.