

# How to Perfect Your Nonprofit Email Newsletter

Tips On How To Make An Impact On Your Audience's Inbox



# Foreword

We don't have to tell you that you want your emails to make an impact, especially your email newsletters!

Nowadays, many nonprofits are putting an even greater focus on email than any other form of communication. Email is still one of the primary drivers of channel communications-related revenue for nonprofits. Yet, many nonprofits struggle to keep up with ever-evolving email technology, especially with mobile formatting and audience segmentation.

This resource will walk you through your email audience, content, messaging, and design to help you create a newsletter format that you can keep on using over and over again.

Whether your email newsletter is weekly, monthly, or yearly, this Ebook will give you the tips to help you perfect each email moving forward.

Keep up the great work!  
The Neon One Team



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# Understanding Your Audiences

## 1 What is Audience Segmentation?

Audience segmentation, or “list segmentation,” is the process of dividing up your email list into groups with shared characteristics. These characteristics can be based on anything you’re tracking in your CRM — whether it be location-based, activity-based, or preference-based.

Segmentation is crucial for email marketing. It can help ensure that you’re always sending relevant content to your supporters. **For nonprofits, this can mean the difference between a successful call-to-action appeal and one that falls flat.**

To illustrate this, let’s look at an example. The Agloe Nature Center sends out one standard email newsletter to their entire list, one time each month. This month, they include a beautifully crafted CTA to regain lapsed donors. They’re super proud of the message they’ve put together and can’t wait to see the results.

After they hit send, they look at their email performance report and see they’ve gotten quite a few unsubscribes, including some from loyal donors! What they didn’t realize is that because they didn’t only send this message to lapsed donors, routine donors got it. This led to them feeling underappreciated and overwhelmed, causing them to unsubscribe.

One of the most common reasons people unsubscribe from email lists is because [they feel that the content they are receiving is irrelevant.](#)

Proper list segmentation ensures that your supporters always receive a personalized message that resonates.



## 2 Deciding on Audience Segments

As we mentioned in the last section, if you're tracking it in your CRM, you can build a list off of it.

That presents a lot of options, but remember, your time is valuable, and the goal here is to get the most impact out of the least time spent.

**That's why we recommend limiting yourself to 2-4 high-impact segments if you're just starting out.**

This will make reporting on results easier and limit any confusion that might occur as you move through your email setup process.

In need of some inspiration? Here are a few segment examples to get you started:

- **Recurring Donors:** These are your super fans, so this one is a no-brainer. Tailor their content with some extra appreciation, and remove any CTAs for donations, since you can already count on their contribution.
- **First-Time Donors:** Tailor the content for this group by adding more of your organization's backstory – your founders, your mission, and your vision. This can help establish a brand connection and encourage more donations down the road.
- **Location:** If your organization has a few locations or branches, it's smart to consider segmenting based on which brand your supporters are most engaged with.



# 3 Audience Maintenance & List Upkeep

Maintaining integrity is of the utmost importance to successful email sends. A lean email list can enhance your email deliverability, making your sends more meaningful.

## WHAT IS EMAIL DELIVERABILITY?

Email deliverability is the rate at which your email makes it to recipient inboxes. It can be seriously impacted when your email list has a high bounce rate or begins to get filtered into spam folders.

Keep your lists clean and enhance deliverability by asking your subscribers to add you to their address book. This will prevent you from ending up in a spam folder wasteland.

Run reports to see which email addresses are regularly bouncing and suppress those email addresses from email sends. A hard bounce means that the email is invalid, closed, or non-existent, so there's no re-opting in those contacts.

[For more on email deliverability, check out this resource from Hubspot.](#)



# Crafting Your Message

## 1 What is the Goal of Your Newsletter?

How many emails do you get per day? How many emails do you mark as 'unread' or ignore? If you're anything like the average person, [who receives 121 emails per day](#), probably a lot!

To make sure people are actually reading your email, you need to get them to trust your newsletter. Trust plays a huge role in email marketing. People are more likely to routinely open and click on your email if they're familiar with their brand and know they can expect valuable information from your organization.

Before you craft your next newsletter, take a step back and ask, "what is the goal of our newsletter?". Is it to provide updates on your organization? Is it to promote community engagement? Is it to make your supporters smile?

Getting clear on what you want to achieve with your newsletter will make drafting powerful, meaningful content much easier.

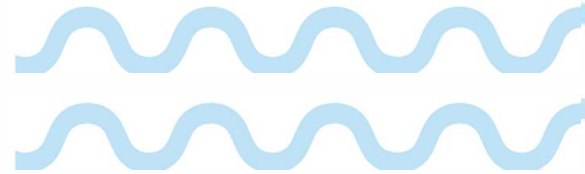


## 2 Drafting Content for Segments

In the last chapter, we talked about the importance of segments, and recommended starting off with 2-4 segments as an initial test.

Before you get your brainstorm started, know that **multiple segments don't necessarily mean multiple 100% unique emails with different content, visuals, and links**. Newsletters typically contain a lot of information and links, and some are likely interesting to all your followers.

When drafting newsletter content, tailor your message by focusing on how you can alter your text to be more meaningful to your intended audience segment. This can mean minor or major changes, but start with minor tweaks when you're just starting out. That will make it easier to measure what is working.





### 3 Mastering the Art of the Subject Line

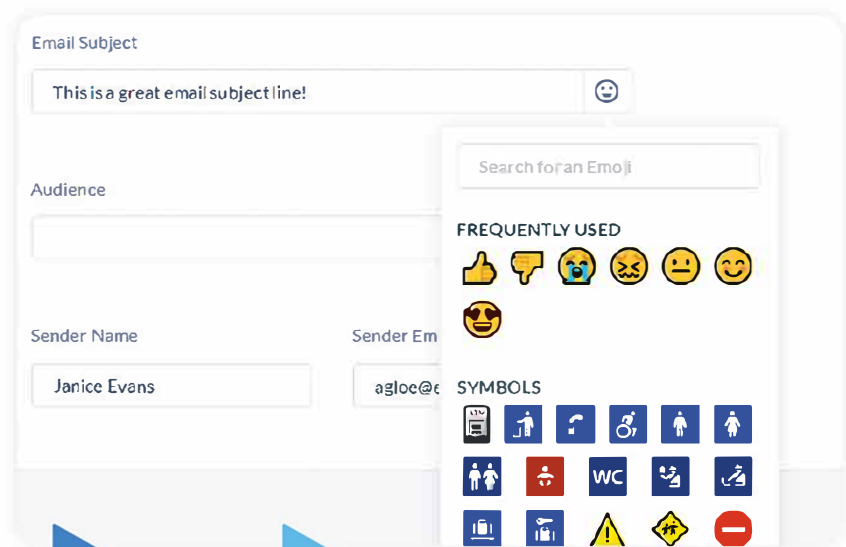
Crafting an effective subject line is an art. Capturing the full value of your message in [41 characters](#) is no easy feat, so grab a piece of scratch paper and get ready to brainstorm.

When coming up with an email subject line, we recommend you think of quite a few. Come up with 5-10 options, and from there, choose the best one. This is something you can easily get your team involved in, too.

If you want to take it a step further, you can always run an [A/B subject line test](#), which will run two different email subject lines to a percentage of your audience, and send your full audience the one with the highest click-through rate.

Here are few quick tips for better subject lines:

- **Tell Readers What's Inside:** Alluding to your email's content creates a higher chance that people will follow through on a CTA once your email has been opened.
- **Use Personalization Tokens:** Research shows that including a personalized subject line (for example, the inclusion of a first name) can increase the email click-through rate.
- **Avoid ALL CAPS (and exclamation points!!!):** Writing in all caps or including too many exclamation points can make your message look spammy, and may get marked as spam before your email ever gets read.



# Designing Your Newsletter

## 1 Formatting Your Newsletter

Once you've finished drafting your newsletter, we recommend you take what we call an "engagement sweep."

An engagement sweep is a final editing round where you simply look for ways to make your content more engaging for readers.

Many simple formatting tips can elevate your message and grab your supporter's attention.

Here are some of our favorites:

- **Use Section Headings:** 22% of all emails are skimmed, and 23% of emails are simply glanced at. Section headers give readers an idea of what the body section will contain, giving them more points of entry to your content.
- **Break up Long Chunks of Texts:** Long chunks of text are easy to lose focus on. Although it may look odd while drafting your content, try to keep each "paragraph" to two sentences or less.
- **Keep it Concise:** Remember, a major goal of your newsletter is to drive people to your website, where they'll get the full scoop on all the great work you're doing. Save the long-form content for your blog!



## 2 Newsletter Design Do's and Don'ts

Because newsletters can be used as a brand-building tool, it's important to establish some visual consistency over time. That doesn't mean that once you design your newsletter, you can never change it. It just means that those changes should happen incrementally over time.

Take some time and give yourself a few options. Your first attempt might take a while, but drag-and-drop email builders are designed to make this process much easier and intuitive over time.

Use these do's and don'ts for some general guidelines, and remember to look through your own inbox for inspiration!

DO'S	DON'TS
 DO embrace your brand! Find creative, minimal ways to tie in your brand color and look.	 DON'T over-do it on fonts and graphics. While it can be tempting, there's a high chance they won't translate properly on a variety of email clients.
 DO test your email a few times. Sending a test email will allow you to get an exact look at how your email will show up on desktops and mobile devices.	 DON'T make it too long. Certain email clients like Gmail and Yahoo impose size limits that can make your email appear clipped once it arrives in inboxes.
 DO highlight CTAs! Format your calls-to-action as buttons so that they stand out from the rest of your text	 DON'T forget to include an unsubscribe link. This is mandatory for CAN-SPAM compliance.




# 3 Putting it All Together

Now that we've gone over some email newsletter basics, let's take a look at what a finished product might look like. The example below has all the major necessary components you'll need to include before you hit send.

Give it a look next time you're in need of some inspiration!

**EXAMPLE**

  
AGLOE  
NATURE  
CENTER

Hi {{Constituent First Name}},

Hope you're enjoying some fine weather wherever you are. We here at Agloe have been hard at work, preparing for the summer season, and we can't wait to share what we have planned. We're so excited that we're actually sharing a first look at our summer calendar with our beloved email subscribers. Check it out below, and reach out to our team if you're interested in volunteering!

**First Look: Our Summer Calendar**


We have over 20 fun-filled activities planned for our upcoming summer season. Remember, members get free admission to all events, so if you haven't yet, now's a great time to become an Agloe Adventurer!

[Check Out the Calendar](#)

**Thank You to Everyone Who Came to Picnic in the Park!**

Last week, we planted over 55 trees while enjoying the sun and snacking on goods kindly provided by local farmers. Check out all the pictures from the event in our event recap, live on our blog today!

[Read The Blog](#)



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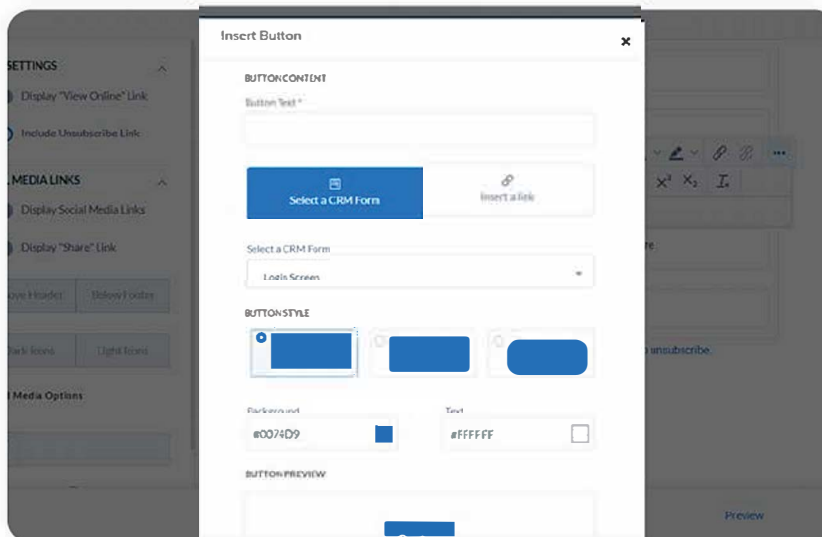
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TRY IT OUT

# Want to build better newsletters, faster?

Check out Neon CRM's completely revamped email builder and email reporting tools. Our new drag-and-drop editor makes it easy to design stunning emails straight from your Neon CRM system.



SEE IT IN ACTION

## About Neon One

Neon One was founded with the mission of becoming the most comprehensive and authentic end-to-end technology ecosystem for nonprofits. Our purpose is to help social good organizations build sustainable, long term growth to enable them to succeed in their mission.

Explore Neon One's collection of social good technology.

