

# Affiliate Classroom



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**Optimizing  
Your Opt-In  
Process**

**How to Write a  
Hot, Hot, HOT  
Newsletter**

**Email**

**Marketing**

**The  
Do's and  
Don'ts  
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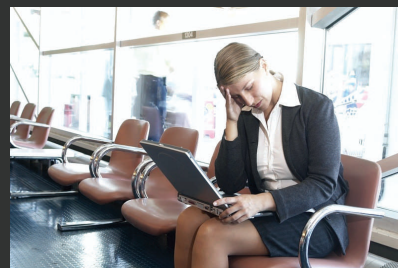
Staff, Helen Montgomery, Managing Editor  
Lurn, Inc.™ 100 Lakeforest Boulevard, Suite 610 Gaithersburg, MD 20877

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# The Do's and Don'ts of Email Marketing

By Mark Thompson

<http://www.income-academy.com>



**It's so much easier to lose subscribers than it is to engage them. If you want to be a successful email marketer, be prepared for hard work.**

Email marketing: either you love it, or you hate it! How many times have you heard someone say, "The money is in the list"?

Most of the time this is said by people who don't have any lists. It's just an easy phrase to say without thinking about what you are actually saying.

If the people who constantly go on about the money being in the list (it's the last time I'll mention it, I promise) actually thought about it for a while, they would realize that the money is actually in a "well-managed and responsive list of targeted prospects."

That doesn't glide off the tongue quite so well, does it? I've often heard Internet marketers boast about the size of their lists.

However, size doesn't mean a thing. One particular marketer told me that he had built a list of 40,000 people, and every time he sent an email, he made around \$400. He was actually quite proud of this. I didn't have the heart to tell him that I have often made \$750 from a list of 300.

The simple difference between both lists is that my small list is built up of people whom I have looked after and nurtured. It also contains targeted subscribers who are interested in the niche that I am promoting.

Before we go any further, I need to tell you the following: Despite what you may have been told, building a targeted list is not easy, and managing and maintaining that list is even harder.

It's so much easier to lose subscribers than it is to engage them. If you want to be a successful email marketer, be prepared for hard work.

That said, here is a list of do's and don'ts that may help you to build a list that is actually targeted and profitable.

## **DO Target Subscribers Who Have an Interest in Your Products or Niche**

It's all too easy to try to generate a list of subscribers who have a wide range of interests. Unfortunately, you will end up with lots of subscribers to whom you will never have any chance of selling.

Try giving away a free guide on a particular topic to attract subscribers who are going to be interested in what you have to offer.

The tighter and more appropriate you can make your offer, the better.

### **DON'T Use a Free Autoresponder**

Your ultimate success in email marketing comes down to your ability to get your emails or newsletters in front of your subscribers.

It goes without saying that if your emails end up in your subscribers' spam folders, they aren't going to see your carefully crafted email, and they won't have the option to buy your products or offers.

Premium services like [AWeber](#) and [Get Response](#) are premium because of their ability to ensure your email gets through to the intended recipient.

As tempting as it may be to use the free autoresponder that comes with your hosting account, it is likely to get your account marked as spam as quickly as you can ask, "Why aren't I making any sales?"

### **DO Personalize Any Messages That Go Out**

By starting the messages with the subscriber's name, you start to build a rapport with that subscriber.

If you have collected their names and not just their email addresses when they have signed up, then you should be able to choose to personalize the message with their first name by adding a simple bit of code — for example, "Hi, [first name]."

Check the autoresponder documentation for what code to use.

### **DON'T Send Too Many Emails (or Too Few)**

The quickest way to get people to unsubscribe to your list is to bombard them constantly with emails. I've been on lists for which the marketer assumed that I wouldn't mind receiving three emails a day from him promoting the same product. He was wrong; I did mind, and so would a lot of your customers.

Sending one email a week to your subscribers is fine, especially if you send it at the same time every week; people then start to expect it and look forward to it.

On the other hand, don't email too infrequently. I've had emails from people to whom I had no recollection of subscribing. It turned out that they hadn't sent an email for over six months!

**Your ultimate success in email marketing comes down to your ability to get your emails or newsletters in front of your subscribers. If your emails end up in your subscribers' spam folders, they won't have the option to buy your products or offers.**

Your subscribers are your subscribers, and no one else's. No matter how tempting it may be, don't supply your list to anyone else. You will lose your subscribers' confidence, and you will probably lose many of them in the process.

## DO Proofread Your Message before Hitting the Send Button

Sending links that don't work to your subscribers is one of the most annoying things you can do. I've lost count of the number of times certain marketers have sent out an email with the wrong link or basic spelling errors. In fact, I know of one marketer who seems to make a habit of this and then sends another email an hour later correcting the mistake.

Ask yourself, would you want to listen to advice from someone who can't even get an affiliate link right?

Most autoresponders have a test function; use it to send yourself the message, and then read it through and test the links.

## DON'T Sell, Rent out, or Share Your List of Subscribers

Your subscribers are your subscribers, and no one else's. No matter how tempting it may be, don't supply your list to anyone else.

You will lose your subscribers' confidence, and you will probably lose many of them in the process.

Don't believe that they won't know it was you who rented out the list. Many subscribers use unique addresses for each list they subscribe to; this makes it easy to spot who is selling lists of subscribers. Be professional!

## DO Include a Call to Action

If you want your subscribers to click on a link, tell them to do it; don't assume that they will. But do more than just tell them to click; give them **a reason** to click the links. "Click on the following link to find out about our amazing offer" will work much better than "Click here."

## DON'T Take Your List for Granted

Just as it takes time to build a list, it takes time for that list to become responsive. You need to develop your list by giving the members tips and advice.

Avoid selling in your early emails; instead, concentrate on building that rapport with them. Get personal with your subscribers; tell them about yourself and your family, and make them feel valued. The time you take at this stage will pay off in the long term.

You wouldn't walk up to a person you just met at a party and try to sell them something, would you? (Amway affiliates need not answer this question!) So why do it in your first emails?

Once you have nurtured the list for a while, then start to send them occasional offers. But, when you do, tell them **why** you are sending it to them. Let them think you are sending out the email as a personal favor to them. Most of all, don't try to sell them something in every email.

### **DO Check Your Stats**

A good autoresponder company will provide you with stats about your emails — how many were opened, how many people clicked on your links, etc. Use these to your advantage.

If the number of people who don't open your emails is increasing, then you aren't engaging them sufficiently and you'll need to capture (or re-capture) their attention.

Using the available stats to determine the mood of your subscribers is a vital task that shouldn't be overlooked.

Follow these simple do's and don'ts and you will soon have developed a very loyal list that will be not only responsive, but also happy to be your subscribers and to tell others about how good your emails are.

Building and maintaining a list is not as easy as you are led to believe, but it can be rewarding and profitable if you go about it the right way. Good luck with your list building and email marketing.

**A good  
autoresponder  
company will  
provide you  
with stats  
about your  
emails — how  
many were  
opened, how  
many people  
clicked on your  
links, etc. Use  
these to your  
advantage.**

### **About the Author**

Mark Thompson spent many years working in an IT consultancy in London. Following a re-evaluation of his goals and lifestyle in 2004, he sold everything he couldn't fit into the family car and moved to rural Spain, where he now pursues a variety of online ventures. Visit his website <http://www.income-academy.com> to learn more about the benefits of his low-cost online business coaching.

# How to Write a HOT, HOT, HOT Newsletter

By David Long  
[JDavidLong@gmail.com](mailto:JDavidLong@gmail.com)



There is no clear-cut list of items on how to compose a great newsletter that will guarantee a good open rate. Tastes change, and a talent for that indefinable "something" is always key.

Nevertheless, there are many good rules of thumb that are proven to work for just about everybody.

## Things to Avoid

To get you into the ballpark of success, it's important to remember some "mechanical" rules about things not to do. Fortunately, they're the easiest to follow.

The first involve truly simple things like making sure not to have a newsletter having typos, spelling errors, and grammar mistakes. Do whatever you have to in order to avoid this.

That may mean sharpening your skills or getting a second pair of eyes. But however you achieve it, this is vital for creating a professional-looking newsletter that gets read, rather than tossed.

Similar considerations apply to formatting. Sloppy-looking newsletters "just don't get no respect, ya know?" Keep sentences and paragraphs relatively short. That's important in order to provide content that is easy to scan, and looks it. People are busy. If they think your email is going to be a struggle to read, they're much less likely to even try.

Avoid listing email addresses in the TO field. Few people are thrilled to see their address shared with five strangers on a list, much less 50 or 500. It may not make any practical difference, thanks to good virus-checking software, etc. But good newsletter writing is much more about customer psychology, anyway, and the customer is always right.

Avoid providing broken links. Check all your included links carefully. Few things annoy readers like clicking on a link only to go to a Page Not Found (or worse, someplace having nothing to do with your content). You've spent all that effort to write great content to urge them to click; why blow it at the last moment?

Whether to include explicit URLs (e.g. <http://www.whatever.biz>) or to embed everything for the sake of a cleaner-looking newsletter is an unresolvable issue. For one thing, apart from issues of appearance, some

**Keep sentences and paragraphs relatively short. People are busy. If they think your email is going to be a struggle to read, they're much less likely to even try.**

**Avoid including  
a hardsell in  
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fact, the fewer,  
the better.  
People love to  
buy. They rarely  
enjoy "being  
sold."**

users will be more nervous about clicking an embedded link (out of concern over viruses, cloaking, etc). Others don't care and like the embed better since explicit links sometimes won't click, creating an annoyance and the need for extra effort to go where you want.

Also, always spell out the full URL (including http://), whichever method you choose.

[Note: By the way, I did test the URL in the previous paragraph. As of the time this was written, it was dead — i.e., not registered. Time marches on, though, and someone could grab it at any time. (It sounded pretty good to me.) Don't waste time beating yourself up if your links don't work perfectly forever. Just keep your odds high by doing due diligence.]

Consider your particular audience, experiment with a smaller group of recipients, then do your best. Be prepared to change your policy on the basis of feedback.

That last point applies to much more than just links in your newsletter, of course. Anything you create should be tested on a small group of trusted recipients.

Ideally, that group would consist of people who really like you, and are therefore very tolerant of experiments, but who also are willing to give tough, objective criticism.

That balance of "eager to see what you have," yet "willing to tell you the truth with some tough love" applies to everything about your newsletter — content, appearance, products recommended and the reviews on them, you name it. Those types of recipients are invaluable; treat them well.

On the other hand, if they're all very good friends, be cautious. No newsletter is worth spoiling a friendship over, but more directly relevant here is the fact that they may not have the objectivity you need. Those who know you well may be able to infer what you meant; you need people who only get what you can explain clearly.

Last, don't try to fool your audience. Most affiliate newsletters exist ultimately for the purpose of selling something. Readers understand that. But avoid including a hardsell in every newsletter every time; in fact, the fewer, the better.

People love to buy. They rarely enjoy "being sold." Subtlety is the call of the day, and encouraging sales by including worthwhile content covering more than just what **you** want is always appreciated.

## Things to Do

As luck (OK, it was really design) would have it, that last sentence leads us directly from things to avoid into the category of things to do. Here the guidelines necessarily get a little fuzzier, but experience shows they work when wielded by thoughtful and creative hands. (No boasting intended; I learned these tips from much wiser heads than mine.)

Item number one is content, content, content. What that means, of course, is that your newsletter should have more than just links and pretty pictures; it should include content your audience will really value, whether it nets you an immediate sale or not.

That's easier said than done, naturally. But the first step to success in email marketing is thinking about what your audience wants from you, not just what you want from them. Fortunately, there is often nothing particularly mysterious about what that is, when you consider your niche.

People take the trouble to open and read your email newsletter because they hope (or, better, know from past experience with you) that it holds something worthwhile for them.

That can run a pretty wide swath. It might be just a few minutes spent chuckling over your witty writing. It could be the superb product reviews you provide. Sometimes it's really serious and valuable diet, medical, or other information on topics on which you have become a real expert.

Whatever type of newsletter you provide, your open or response rate (and, by extension, your click-through rate, sales, etc.) will zoom if you think more about **giving** value and less about getting sales.

Worry less, or at least less directly, about how to maximize your click-through rate. Give the customer something he or she yearns for, in the clearest and most engaging way possible, and your revenue will take care of itself.

That last sentence contains the key to everything else, it goes without saying. It also leads us to the subject that is hardest to teach: how to create subject lines and content that will make your readers eager to receive your next email newsletter.

## **100% Open/Click-Through Rates, and Other Impossible Goals**

First, a caveat. Open rates on email newsletters varies from nothing to 25%–50%, rarely higher. So, don't beat yourself up if yours are in the 2% range. (That's a decent number, for example, for major clothing retailers who sell by catalog. Occasionally, it will double if they offer a big sale that comes around only rarely.)

From that wide variation we learn that the first lesson here is to set realistic goals. What those should be can only be discovered by experience based on your niche, your audience, etc. If you hit 5% from the beginning, that's excellent. If not, don't become discouraged.

That said, if you try for months and can never get above 1%, it may be time to reevaluate whether email marketing is the right form and forum for your marketing efforts.

**Whatever type of newsletter you provide, think more about *giving* value and less about getting sales. Give the customer something he or she yearns for, in the clearest and most engaging way possible, and your revenue will take care of itself.**

**In the absence of good style guides, the best thing to do is read, read, read. Pick a newsletter or even a website or 10 whose content really grabs you. Read once for interest, then reread it to try to pinpoint *how* they grabbed you.**

Time is limited, and it may be that your customer demographic prefers other venues. Email is no longer the universal method of communication it was just a few years ago. With the coming of YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter, among others, the market has splintered somewhat.

### **Say It With Style**

The last subject is the hardest because style is so much a matter of individual taste. There are tons of books on how to avoid grammar and spelling errors. Only a few (like the classic *The Elements of Style* by Strunk and White) talk much about style. Yet, it's still very important. Some writers/newsletter publishers are hugely popular and some not so much, at least in part because of **how** they write, not what they write.

So, in the absence of good style guides, if you (like me, and like most of humanity) are not possessed of natural brilliance in this area, the best thing to do is read, read, read. Pick a newsletter or even a website or 10 whose content really grabs you. Read once for interest, then reread it to try to pinpoint **how** they grabbed you.

### **Subject Lines**

A great subject line is the first place to focus on, naturally. A grabber is a must if you're going to get people to read the body of your email. (Sure there are exceptions, but those are usually because the recipient already knows that you have valuable content inside.)

Writing great email subject lines is like writing great one-liners for standup comedy. There's a knack to it, and some do it better than others. Humor helps — a lot. But it's not the only way to create an eye-catching subject line.

Aim for individuality, but not freakishness. You need to be fresh and original, but if you reach far outside the mainstream to achieve that, then you'll appeal only to a select audience, smaller than you want. (Unless that smaller, out-of-the-mainstream demographic is your target, of course.)

Test your best efforts on a small group. Get feedback. Get it hard, right between the eyes. Suffer the humbling experience and emerge better for it.

### **Body**

Apart from the mechanics mentioned near the beginning (correct spelling and grammar, good formatting, functional links, etc.), the body of your email newsletter is wide-open territory. Most contain a table of contents, but that's not appropriate for everyone.

Some have images, others don't. Some have tons of links, others none. Everything depends on your situation, and what and to whom you are selling.

Beyond those individual variables, one thing is important in (almost)

every case: Be interesting! Put another way (the best that some of us can hope for), don't be boring.

Boy, is **this** ever easier said than done. But it's vital, except in those rare cases where what you offer inside is so important that readers will tolerate anything to get at it.

Here, reading good newsletters and web articles helps, sure. But what helps more than anything is writing, writing, writing.

Unless you hire out the job (in which case the advice is mostly for them but still partly for you, as you need to judge that content), practice really is essential. It will make very few of us perfect, but it will make us as close to it as we personally can get.

How much effort you should put into writing, like every other aspect of your email newsletter, depends on personal circumstances. Some audiences are more tolerant than others, and you have lots to daily to-do's to balance.

But consider some of the newspaper columnists you enjoy reading, for example. If you didn't like the way they write, you wouldn't pay as much attention to what they say, right?

And, paying attention to what **you** say is your ticket to sales.

So, to maximize your revenue, optimize your content. Good luck, and keep on sending!

**Some  
audiences are  
more tolerant  
than others,  
and you have  
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do's to  
balance.**

### About the Author

David Long is a freelance writer and editor with over 20 years of experience. His PLR articles and eBooks have appeared on hundreds of websites. They cover topics that include Wine & Beer, Travel, Gardening, Health & Fitness, Pets, Stocks & Bonds, and dozens more subjects. He can be contacted for hire at [JDavidLong@gmail.com](mailto:JDavidLong@gmail.com).

# Optimizing Your Opt-in Process

By Evelyn Grazini

[www.bestaffiliateniche.com](http://www.bestaffiliateniche.com)



**In order to automate your opt-in process, I highly recommend that you use a professional email delivery service instead of messing with a list-building script that may or may not work in the future.**

Most marketers have heard, and understand, that it takes seven or more contacts with a new prospect before a purchase will be made.

That's why it's so important to take full advantage of the selling opportunities that are right at your fingertips when you're setting up your subscriber opt-in process.

You should always use your first few messages to reintroduce yourself as an expert in the niche you are talking to. Then start adding gentle sales messages. Actually, most people give away something to get people to opt in. This makes the first few contacts immediate and automatic.

This article will show you how to set up your autoresponder, and what to include in the first email messages. This will get them used to seeing your name come into their email box.

By following this process, you will reduce the number of newsletters it takes to make that first sale.

But remember, if you're only developing a small newsletter series, make sure there are at least four more newsletters sent on a consistent basis directly after the person opts into your list. Once or twice a week in the beginning is perfect.

Because the autoresponder (AR) is the key ingredient in the opt-in process, I'll discuss the sections that should be available in most AR systems. Then I'll explain what should be included in the areas to make sure you are fully utilizing the power of your autoresponder.

## Setting Up Your Autoresponder

In order to automate your opt-in process, you will need either to have either list-building software or to subscribe to an AR service. I highly recommend that you use a professional email delivery service instead of messing with a script that may or may not work in the future.

You should select a company that has a good reputation for getting their email delivered. The one I use, and see most super affiliates use, is [AWeber](#).

There are a lot of AR services in the market today, so you can make your own decision.

Most of them work the same way, but I will use the AWeber system in this article, since I am very familiar with their system.

**The Web Form:** After you've sign up for the AR and named your list, you need to set up the "web form" to collect subscriber names and email addresses.

A web form is really just a fancy name for the opt-in form that subscribers use to sign up for your newsletter.

The web form should be easy to locate in the AR's setup area. In AWeber, it's done through the "List Settings" tab. Here are the areas on the form you should pay particular attention to:

**The Thank You Page Link:** If you are using a double opt-in system (which is HIGHLY recommended), this section will include a default link that takes the subscriber to a **generic** activation message.

This message might say something like:

*"Please check your email and click the confirmation link to activate your subscription."*

However, since this is your first official contact with the subscriber, you should NOT use the generic message. Personalizing this message will go a long way to ensure that the visitor actually clicks the link and opts in.

I recommend that you add a simple page to your site that has the confirmation message. Then in the AR form, enter the link to YOUR confirmation page.

Then, after the person fills out the initial form to subscribe, they will be sent back to your website. You then tell them to look for the email that has the download link for the free report.

Since this is an information-type page, you can also add a banner for an affiliate product at the bottom of the page. This gives your first soft-sell opportunity.

If you do not set up your Thank You page correctly, the visitor may go somewhere else after subscribing to your list.

By adding this one simple page, you've kept them on your site, and you've given them somewhere else to go — to your recommended affiliate product!

Experience proves that when visitors are done subscribing, they quickly go on to the next thing. Why not make the next thing something that tags them with your affiliate number?

If you do not set up your Thank You page correctly, the visitor may go somewhere else after subscribing to your list. By adding this one simple page, you've kept them on your site, and you've given them somewhere else to go — to your recommended affiliate product!

**Don't go overboard with personalization here. The key is to get the person to click on the link and opt in to your list.**

## The Verified Opt-In Message

Now, the visitor has signed up for your newsletter. And hopefully confirmed their subscription.

The next thing you can personalize is the opt-in email the visitor receives with the confirmation link in it. This is your second opportunity to “make friends” with your new subscriber.

Don't go overboard with personalization here. The key is to get the person to click on the link and opt in to your list. But you should personalize a little. Your AR system should allow you to set up the message that is sent to the subscriber.

Leave the default information alone, but add the name of your company, and a short reminder that they will get their free gift after they click on the link and subscribe.

Your opt-in message might say:

*Hello, {!firstname}  
Please confirm your subscription to XXXX News*

**After you confirm, you will immediately be given the link to download your free ebook.**

*P.S. If you don't have time to download the book now, don't worry. The download link will be sent to you via email after you confirm your subscription.*

**The Confirmation Success Page:** In your AR, you should have an optional field to put in a link to a “Confirmation Success Page.” This is where you should include the link to your download page.

People want information immediately! By adding a download link to this field, they will be sent directly to the download page. This ensures that they actually get the freebie, without having to open another email message.

It also tells them that if they don't have time to download the report right now, they will be sent an email with the download instructions in it. Now they're EXPECTING to hear from you again.

**The Confirmation Email:** Even though you send subscribers to the download page immediately after subscribing, you also want to send them the download link in an email.

This is for one very good reason: sending the link will greatly reduce the amount of time you spend answering support tickets for people who didn't get the item downloaded right away.

People can get cut off before the download is complete; they can get interrupted; or any number of things can happen in the download process.

**The Download Page:** As we just said, in the confirmation email, you send them to a download page. Therefore, you will need to add one more page to your site. This page includes the download instructions.

Download pages can include simple instructions with the download link (for example, "Right click on the link below and choose Save Target As to save this ebook to your computer"), or they can go deeper into explaining about the Adobe Reader and how to download it, etc.

The best way to find instructions you like for the download page is to pay attention when you order or sign up for something. Get a feel for what others are doing. Then you can use the aspects you like and add them to your own download page.

You've now contacted your new subscriber four times using a process that runs smoothly, and automatically. Your customer is confident in your delivery ability.

This confidence is very important.

Now you can begin writing newsletters that deliver more information on your niche subject. You can also start recommending affiliate products to your new readers, and watch your sales soar!

### About the Author

Evelyn Grazini has been marketing as an affiliate for over five years, and teaching marketing for two years. Find her blog and affiliate marketing resources at <http://www.bestaffiliateniche.com>.

**The best way to find instructions you like for the download page is to pay attention when you order or sign up for something. Get a feel for what others are doing.**

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