

HTML Email Best Practices

Why send HTML Emails?

- For Newsletters
- For Online Contact Forms
- For Autoresponders
- For Email Marketing of your Services

So what could go wrong?

- There are hundreds of email clients out there, both web and desktop based.
- If you are already pulling your hair doing web browser CSS, try pleasing all email clients and you're sure to go bald.
- Each email client has its own way of rendering HTML emails and CSS.

Template and AOL Webmail

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[Borders and an a hover background image](#)

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[subscribe](#)

Template and Lotus Notes

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Template and Windows Live Hotmail

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Template and Yahoo Mail

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So what can we do ?

- Use HTML tables for layouts.
- Use inline CSS for presentation formatting.
- Do not use CSS shorthand. (example: border: 1px solid #FFFFFF)
- Avoid Javascript. Most email clients do not support it.
- Keep to a maximum of 550 pixels in width and 300 pixels height for the preview pane.

What about images?

- Email clients turn “image displaying” off by default.
- For background images, use the `<table>`'s background attribute instead of CSS. This works more consistently.
- Store the email images on a web server.

What about images?

- Be sure your images have alt, height and width attributes set.
- *Outlook 2007 does not recognize the alt attribute.

Things to look out for...

- Spamminess.
- Using a 1×1 pixel image for spacing and/or presentation will increase the likelihood that your email will be classified as spam. This is because spammers use a 1×1 image to determine if their email has been opened.
- Linking. Always open link in new windows.

Wrapping Up...

- KISS Principle.
- Email clients have a long way to catch up in terms of supporting CSS properly.

References

- <http://www.email-standards.org/>
- <http://www.alistapart.com/articles/cssemail/>
- <http://www.sitepoint.com/article/code-html-email-ne>
- http://www.campaignmonitor.com/blog/archives/2005/08/optimizing_css_presentation_in.html

