

Emails That Get Read (and Get Results)



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she/her
Cornell University

January 15, 2026

Author: ***Mailed It!*** A Guide to Crafting Emails
That Build Relationships and Get Results

But first...

Get out your device

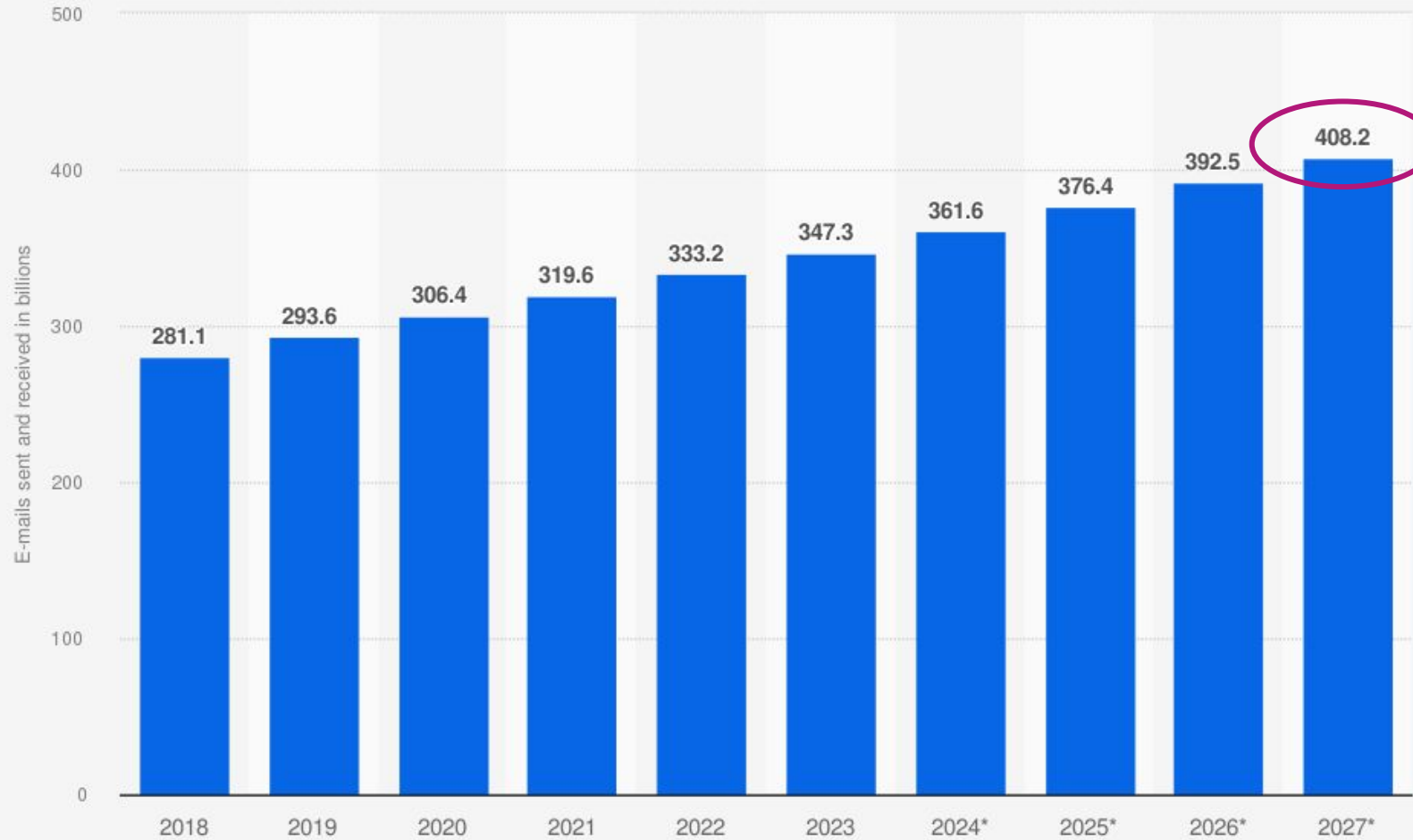
Head to slido.com

Join our poll using the code **#inbox**



Email can work for you.

Number of sent and received e-mails per day worldwide from 2018 to 2027 (in billions)



Source
The Radicati Group
© Statista 2024

Additional Information:
Worldwide; 2018 to 2023; for both business and private purposes

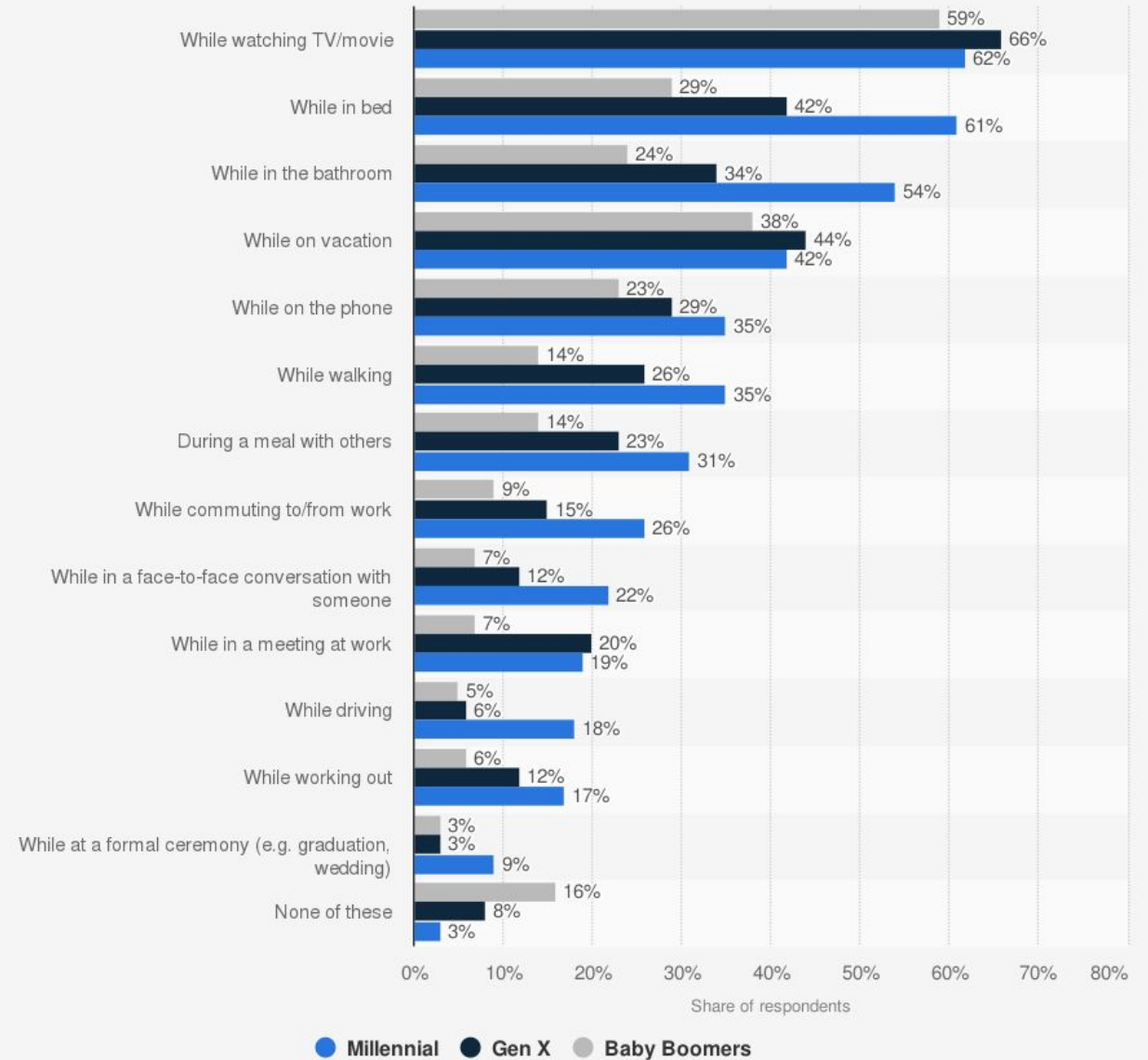
statista

408.2 billion is a
giant number!

Email behavior is evolving

- Watching TV
- In bed
- In the bathroom
- On vacation
- On the phone
- Walking
- Eating
- Commuting
- Talking

Situations in which workers in the United States have checked their personal e-mail in the past month as of July 2019, by generation



Source
Adobe
© Statista 2021

Additional Information:
United States; Adobe; July 2019; 1,002 respondents; 18 years and older; white-collar workers in the United States who own a smartphone

3,600%

return on investment (ROI): For every \$1 USD spent, the average return is \$36.

Source: Litmus (2024)

3x

The **conversion rate** on email marketing is **triple** that of social media advertising.

Source: EmailTooltester (2025)

	EMAIL	SOCIAL MEDIA
Open / View rate:	15-25%	2-4% (organic)
Click-through rate:	2.90%	1.36%
Conversion rate:	8%	3%
ROI:	3600%	180%
Maximum reach:	Limited to size of list	Unlimited

58%

of people say email is the **first thing** they check every morning, and 99% say they check it every day.

Source: Optinmonster (2025)

65%

**of parents want to be reached via email and
55% of parents check their emails several
times a day.**

Source: Ologie (2024)

72%

of students say email has a **positive influence on interest.**

Higher than any other channel. 🏆

Source: Senior Enrollment Survey by Niche (2023)

71%

of nonprofit email marketing managers
raised the amount they expected or more
from email fundraising appeals.

Source: Global NGO Technology Survey (2021)

33%

of donors in the US and Canada say email is the tool that **most inspires them to give** (19% print, 18% social media, 16% website).

Source: Global Trends in Giving Report (2020)

48%

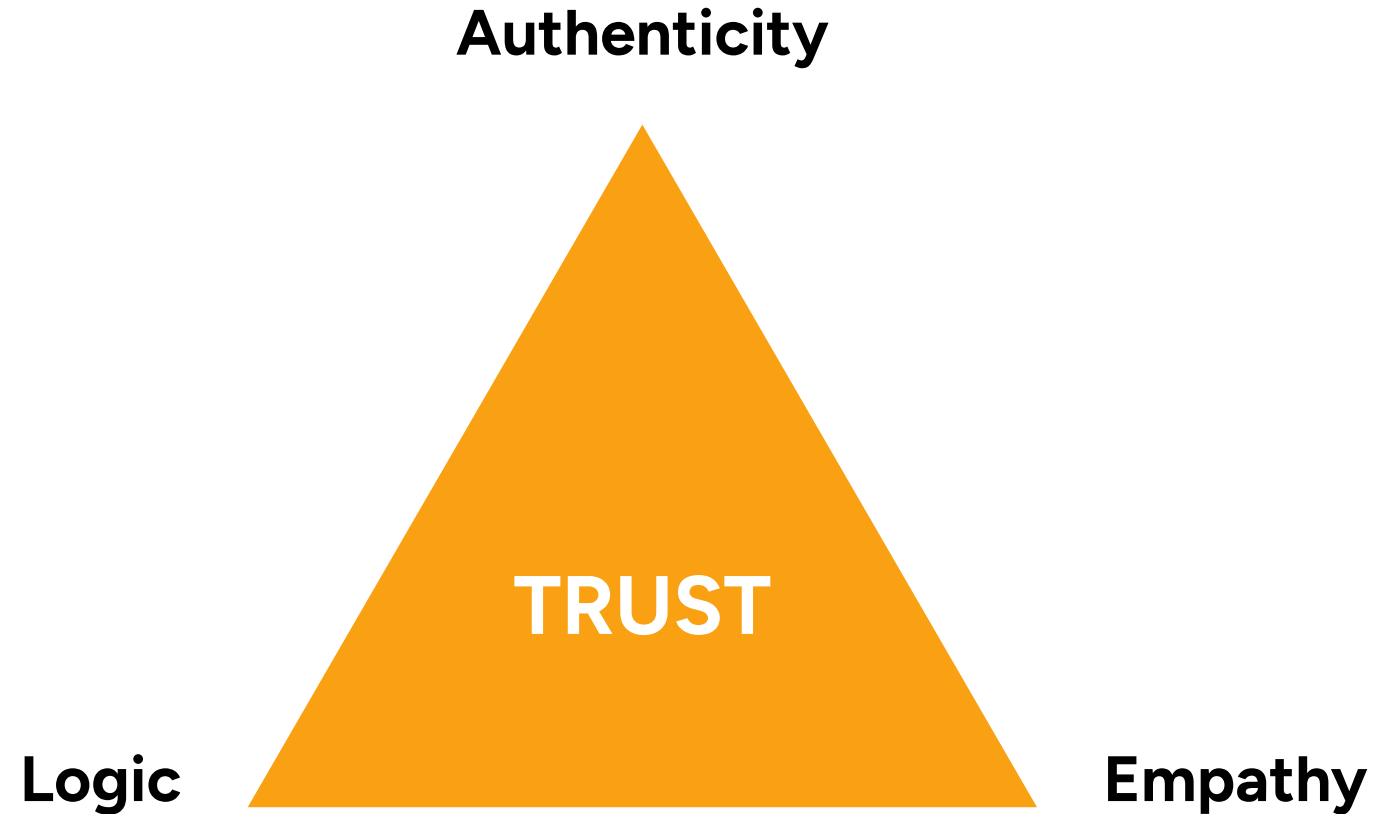
of donors cite email as their **preferred method of hearing updates** from organizations (21% direct mail, 17% social media, 8% text, 2% phone).

Source: Neon One Email Report (2024)

How do we break through the noise?

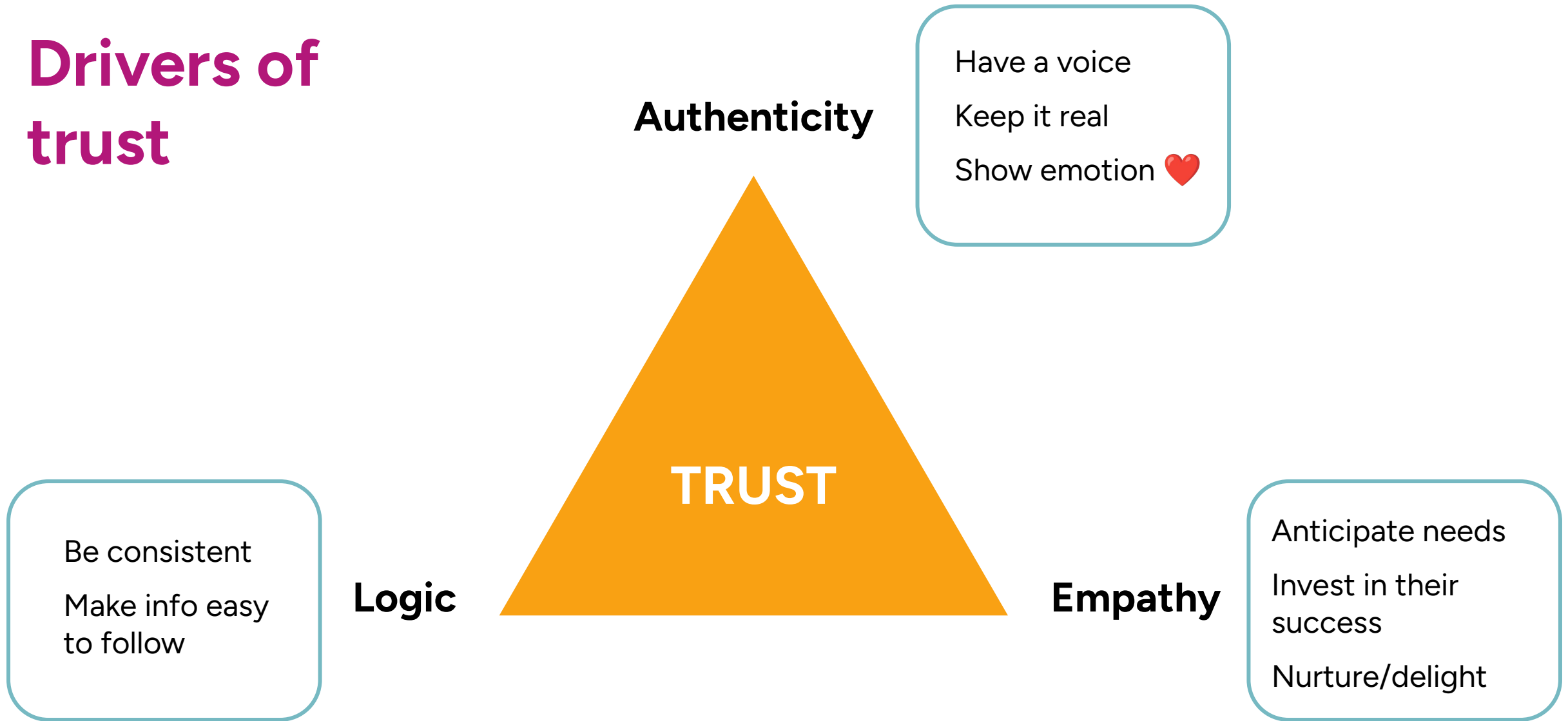
Through trust.

Drivers of trust



Source: "Begin with Trust," by Frances Frei and Ann Morriss, May-June 2020, [HBR](#)

Drivers of trust



Your work is about relationships.

You need content to...

Build relationships

- Engage
- Entertain
- Show empathy
- Add value

Guide to action

- Explain
- Remind
- Direct/Ask

You need both.

Content for *them* requires planning

- Brainstorm quarterly themes 🧠 ⚡
 - Think about what your **audience needs** during that week or month
- Select the most relevant stories
- Share upcoming deadlines or events
- Have a go-to source for photography and digital downloads



A-peel-ing trivia 🍏 🍏

Since 1880, how many apple varieties have been developed at Cornell?

20+

50+

70+

100+



GET YOUR SUGAR FIX 🍁

Love the flavors of fall? Our friends at Cornell Maple will teach you how to properly tap a maple tree. For more information on tapping, consult their [Beginner's Notebook](#). Happy tapping!

[Watch now →](#)

🍂 Fall career resources



Clickbait for good

- Inline links
- Quizzes
- Digital downloads
- Instant feedback

Did you enjoy this tip?



The screenshot shows a Cornell University webpage with a red header containing the university logo and name, and a search bar. Below the header is a large image of a red apple with water droplets. The main content area features a quiz titled "A-peel-ing trivia" with two apple icons. The question is "Since 1880, how many apple varieties have been developed at Cornell?". There are four red buttons for answers: "20+", "50+", "70+", and "100+".

Cornell University Search Cornell

A-peel-ing trivia 🍏 🍏

Since 1880, how many apple varieties have been developed at Cornell?

20+ 50+ 70+ 100+

When it's time for action

- Consistent voice
- Be direct
- ✨ Inspire ✨

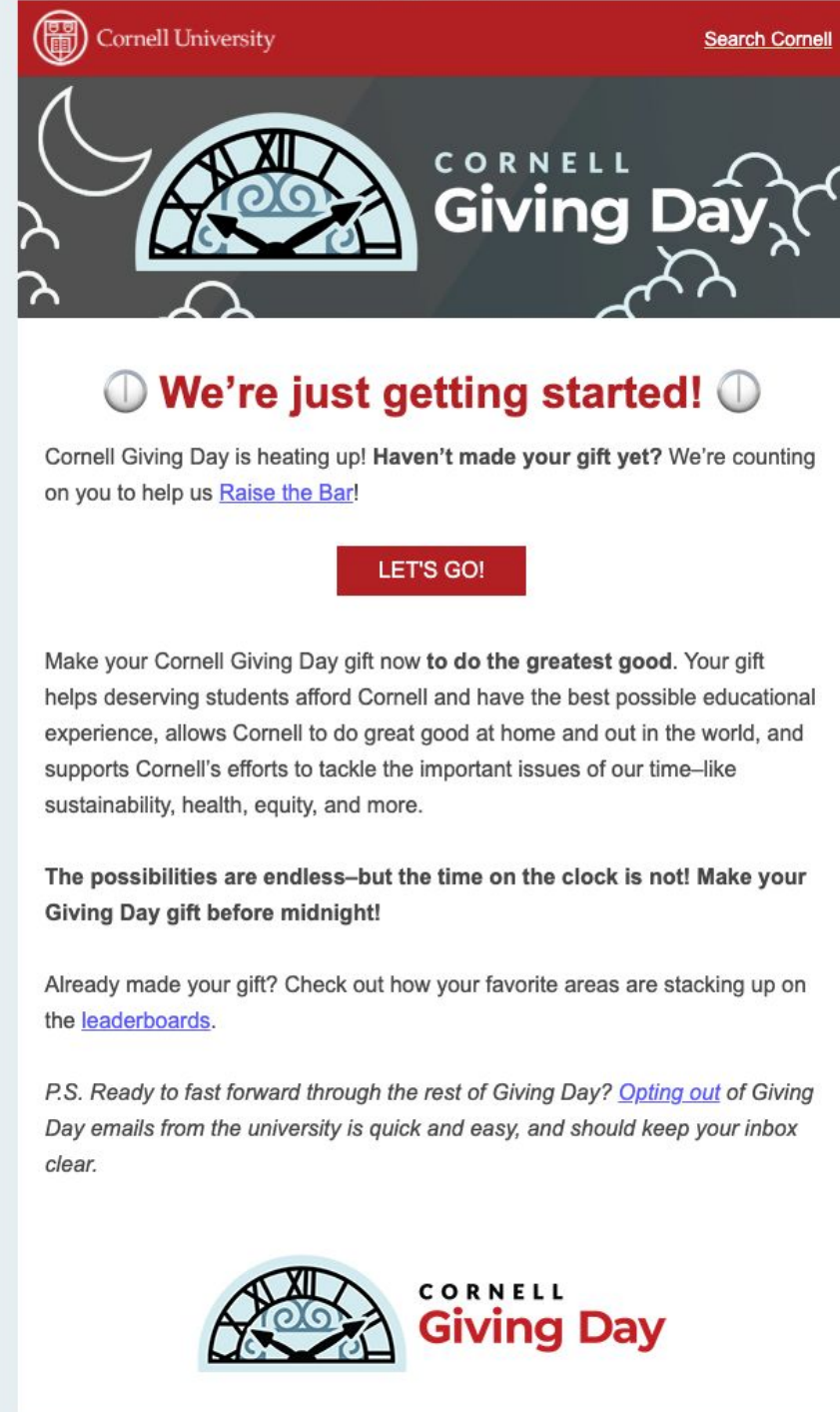
Giving Day emails:

48-55% open rates

3.5-5.0% click rate

0.04% unsubscribe rate

\$2.26M raised by email



We're just getting started!

Cornell Giving Day is heating up! Haven't made your gift yet? We're counting on you to help us [Raise the Bar!](#)


LET'S GO!

Make your Cornell Giving Day gift now **to do the greatest good**. Your gift helps deserving students afford Cornell and have the best possible educational experience, allows Cornell to do great good at home and out in the world, and supports Cornell's efforts to tackle the important issues of our time—like sustainability, health, equity, and more.

The possibilities are endless—but the time on the clock is not! Make your Giving Day gift before midnight!

Already made your gift? Check out how your favorite areas are stacking up on the [leaderboards](#).

P.S. Ready to fast forward through the rest of Giving Day? [Opting out](#) of Giving Day emails from the university is quick and easy, and should keep your inbox clear.

 **CORNELL Giving Day**

Show empathy

Give readers an option to pause (so they don't leave you forever 🥰)

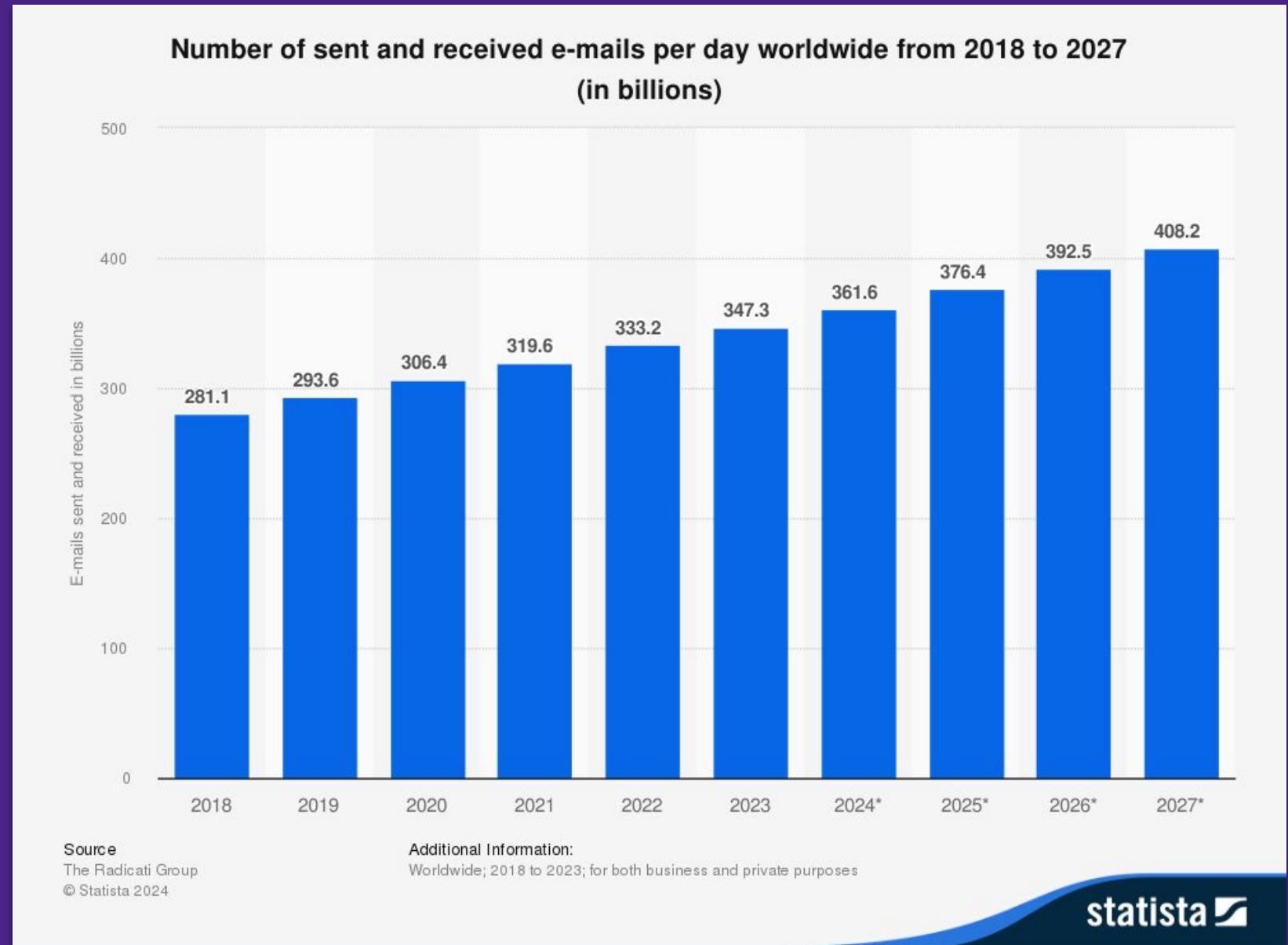
P.S. Is Giving Day not your thing? That's OK too. [Opting out of Giving Day emails](#) from the university is quick and easy, and should keep your inbox clear.

Too much in your inbox? [Let us know here](#) that you'd like to get less email and we'll remove you from this newsletter until June 30.

Are you unable to support Cornell financially at this time? We understand. [Opting out of giving emails](#) should minimize how much you hear from us. You can [opt out of these communications](#) at any time!

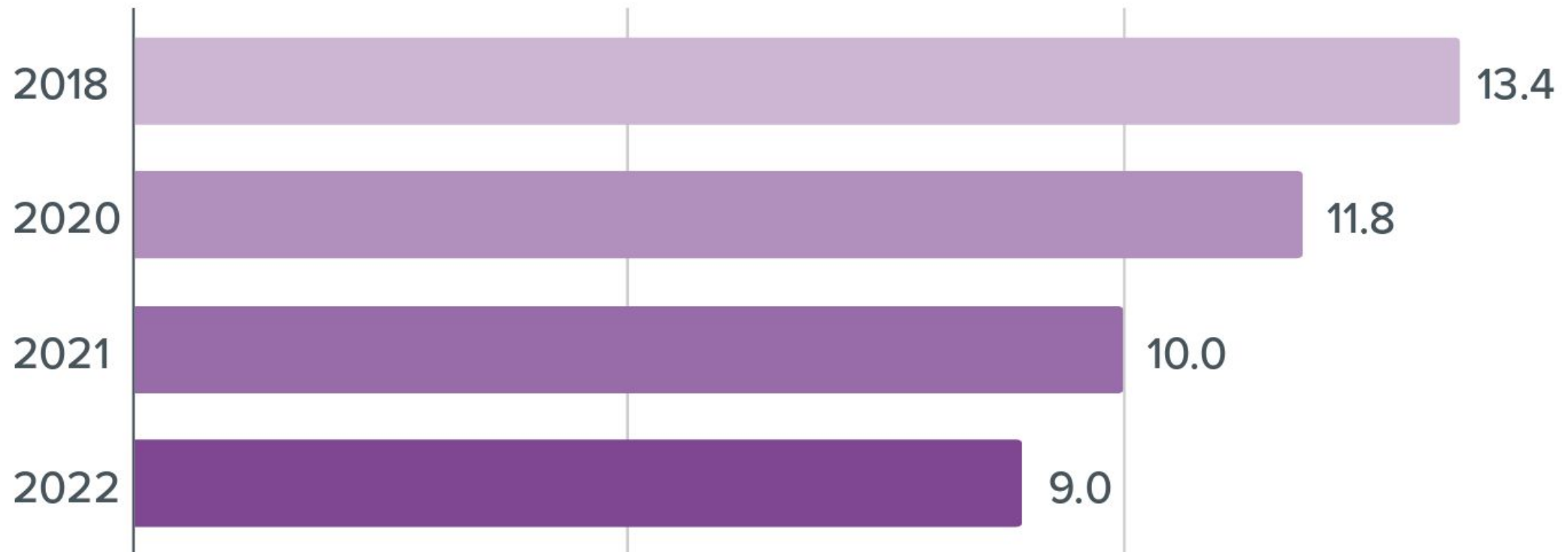
**Small tweaks make a big
difference.**

Remember this?



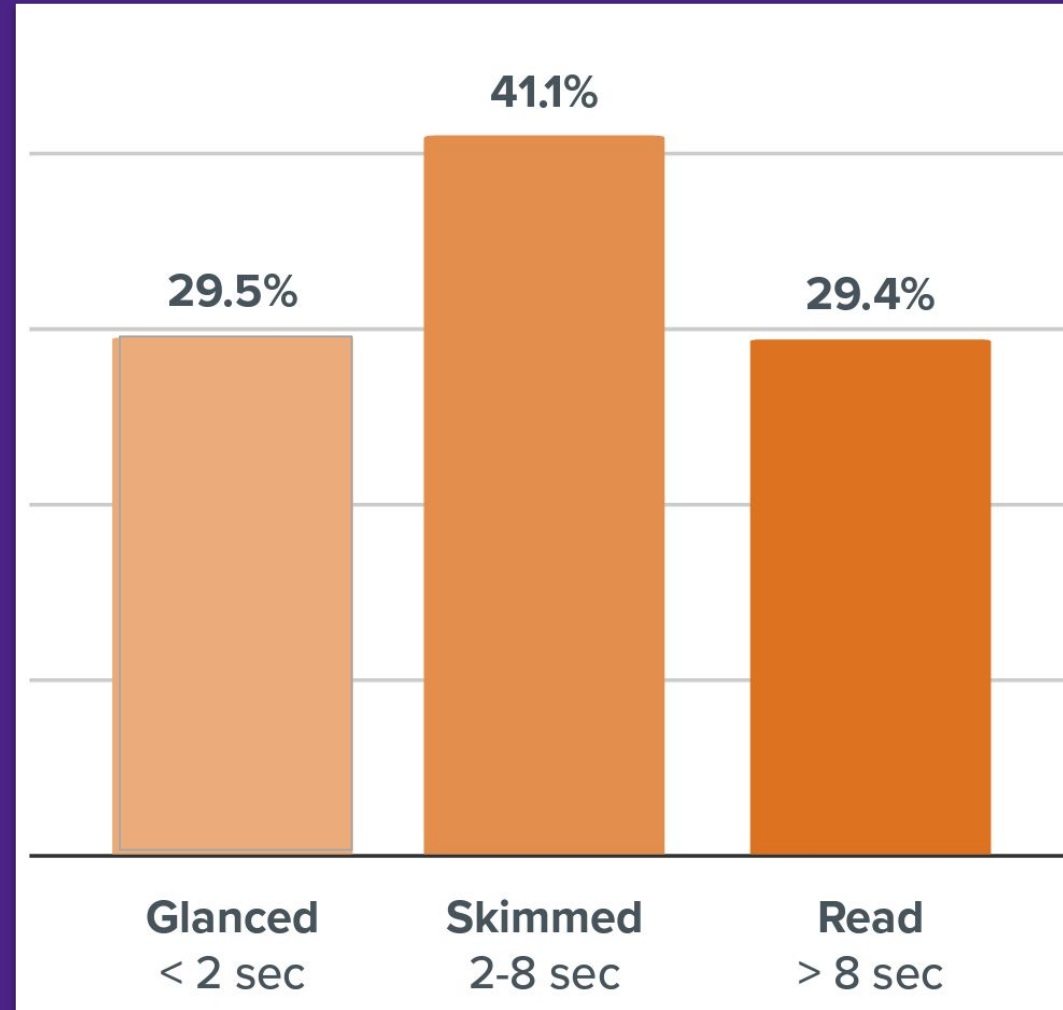
A day still has 24 hours, so time per email has gone down.

Read rate in seconds



Source: [Litmus Email Engagement report \(2022\)](#)

And not everyone "reads"...



Source: [Litmus Email Engagement report \(2022\)](#)

We have **2 seconds** to get our message across.

How to write emails people will read

1

A trusted
"from"

2

A clear
subject line

3

Simple
language

4

Action-driven
links and buttons

5

Format for
scannability

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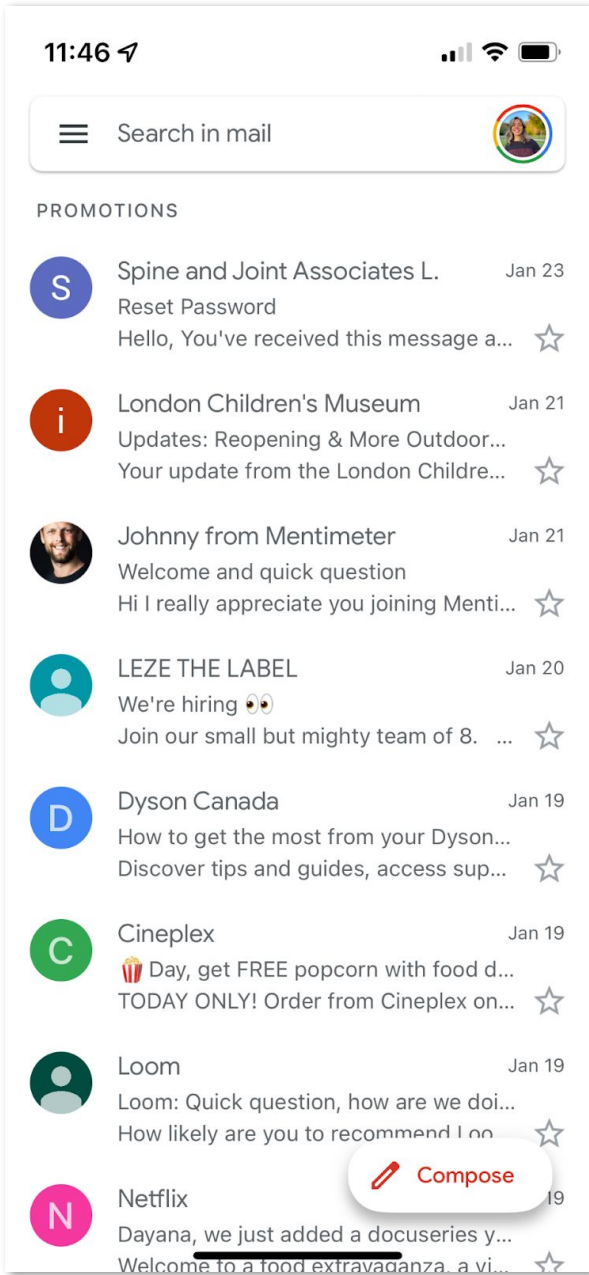
Action-driven
links and buttons

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Format for
scannability

From

- The first thing people see
- Generates trust or distrust
- Person or organization name?



From

The email should come from the entity the recipient has a relationship with.

- ☆ Cornell Annual Givi.
- ☆ Ryan Lombardi
- ☆ Cornell's Adult Uni.
- ☆ Cornell University.
- ☆ AAP Communications
- ☆ Sharon Detzer '88
- ☆ AAP Communications
- ☆ Engineering AAD Ste.

- ☆ CUSail
- ☆ Cornell Annual Givi.
- ☆ Cornell University .
- ☆ AAP Communications
- ☆ AAP Alumni Affairs .
- ☆ Cornell Giving Day
- ☆ Office of the Vice .
- ☆ Cornell Atkinson Ce.
- ☆ Risa Mish '85, JD '.
- ☆ Cindy van Es
- ☆ AAP Alumni Affairs .

How to write emails people will read



A trusted
"from"



A clear
subject line



Simple
language



Action-driven
links and buttons



Format for
scannability

Subject line

54%

of email recipients choose relevance as their number one reason to open an email.

Source: [Statista](#) (2025)

Subject line

Tell them what's in the email in six words (or so).

- Include the action
- Add urgency when there's a reason for it
- Don't lie, don't exaggerate
- Use personalization (this doesn't just mean name)

Compare these subject lines

The time is here!

Sign up for our open house by June 3

Compare these subject lines

Preparing for camp + Tips for summer fun 🎨

Monthly Camp Newsletter

Pre-header

Anticipate their questions and answer them.

Answering your camp questions live on Mar 15 - 7:00 pm ET | Register early to submit questions to the Director



Your grade 12 summer guide ☀️ - Our camp counselors share senior summer tips so you don't miss a thing.

Emojis

Use them only if they add value and at the end.

Value = context or emotion

 = the email has an event in it

 = a freebie or gift

 = caring

 = celebratory

- Accessibility
- Display issues
- Interpretations

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Use simple language

7th- to 9th-grade reading level

Most popular mass-market novels, blogs, and websites are written at a 7th-grade reading level.

Source: Hollister Creative (2017)

Why?

- Makes your content more accessible to everyone
- Readers are more likely to take action and performs tasks faster
- Reduce questions, doubts, hesitations, anxiety
- Makes them feel good

Source: Nielsen Norman Group (2005)

How?

Write like you speak.

1. Identify the action or the information you want the reader to know.
2. Pretend you are explaining what you want to say in the email to someone sitting across your desk.
3. Write down the exact verbal words you used.
4. Cut out the verbal fillers and fluff.
5. Check yourself: [Hemingway Editor](#) or Grammarly.
6. Ask ChatGPT for help!

Tips to revise your draft

- Write in second person (“you”)
- Use one-syllable words
- Use periods, not commas
- Eliminate leading phrases, like “in order to,” “often,” “in fact,” “please”
- Simplify wordy phrases
 - On a daily basis → Daily
 - Make an effort → Try
 - Take into consideration → Consider
 - Prior to → Before

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Button

Using a button instead of a link
increases clicks by **28%**.

(Psst. Buttons aren't magic. It's because they look different
and they're surrounded by white space.)

Source: [Campaign Monitor](#) (2019)

Links should be specific.

Verb + what/when/why

- Donate now → Donate to the travel fund
- Learn more → Explore the activities in your program
- Click here → Get your camp event guide
- Register → Sign up for Spring Open House

How to write emails people will read



A trusted
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A clear
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Simple
language

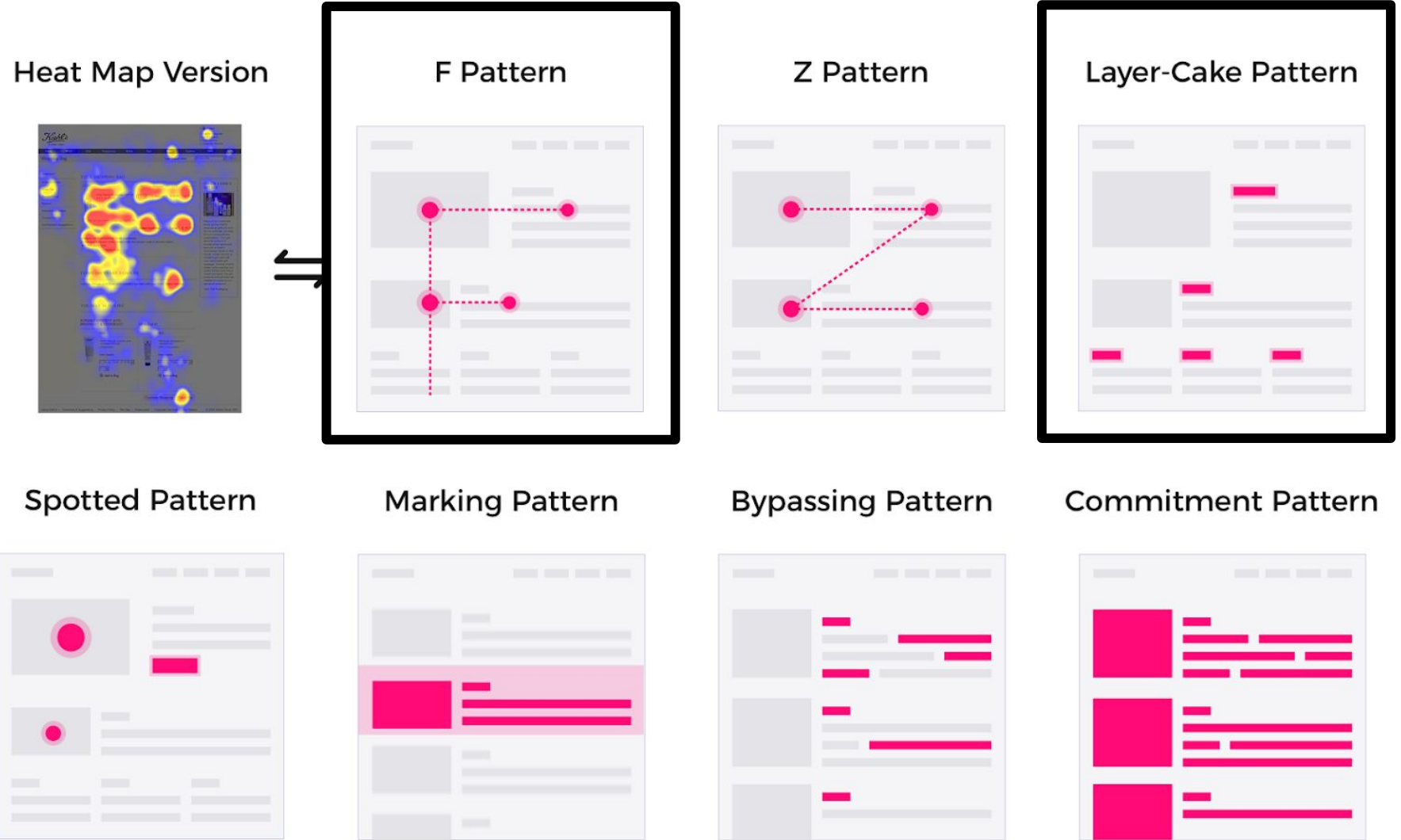


Action-driven
links and buttons



Format for
scannability

Format for scannability



Single-action email template

From: Entity or person the audience knows
Subject: 6-ish words, including action

Dear Person,

This is where the action goes. No one reads the rest of this paragraph. Too direct? Frame the action as a question. Reinforce the [action](#) by **date**.

Do the action

Here are some details. No one reads this.

- Read first word, but read nothing else.
- Also this one, but read nothing else.
- Less likely this one, but read nothing else.
- Force them to **read by bolding**.

Last chance to get their attention.

Sign with your niceties,
Your name

P.S. Reinforce or complement [this action](#).

- Important information in the F pattern
 - They can't help but read it!
 - Use bolding if you need the eyes to break the pattern
- If they read nothing else, they should know what to do from buttons and bolded text
- If more content is needed, add white space and headings

Newsletter email template

- Only include new or relevant content
- List content in priority order, based on what action you want them to take
- Important information in headers or links

From: Entity or person the audience knows
Subject: 6-9 word summary of what's most important

Dear person,

Quick glance here, but the rest of this paragraph gets ignored.

Event on date

Info about this. They won't read this unless they are interested in the heading. [Sign up for event.](#)

Activity for you

Info about this. They won't read this unless they are interested in the heading. [Prep for this activity.](#)

News about person

Info about this. They won't read this unless they are interested in the heading. [Read Ashley's bio.](#)

One more thing

Info about this. They won't read this unless they are interested in the heading, **unless you bold it like this.**

Sign it like you would a letter or don't sign it at all.

The 2-second test

Hi Mouse,

How was Virtual Fall Preview Day?

TELL US HOW THE DAY WENT

We hope you got all your questions answered and learned lots about Western.

But—this isn't goodbye! Let's keep the conversation going.



Watch Recordings



Chat With Us



Live Presentations

**What did this email
want you to do?**

Hello Clay Camp Guardians!

This email is to let you know that your children's work from any camp is ready for pickup! You may pick up your work anytime between 10AM-4PM Monday-Saturday. If you are unable to pick it up then we are happy to ship it to you for a fee.

All work will be located in our clay room in a bag or box with your child's name on it. Someone will be around to help you find your child's work if needed! Enter the middle orange door in the parking lot and go up the ramp and through the door.

Ceramics is a sensitive art form and things may go wrong. We do our best to make sure everything comes out! Sometimes there are complications with kilns and materials. Please let us know if you have any issues and we will do what we can to remedy the situation.

Please remember we do 7 week classes during the year as well! They start on 9/17!

<https://www.saratogaclayarts.org/youth-classes>

See you soon :)

**What did this email
want you to do?**



SARATOGA CHILDREN'S THEATRE

Saratoga Children's Theatre | 518-886-8800 | [E-mail](#) | [Website](#)

Hello SCT Family,

Summer camp is almost completely sold out—but we still have a few spots left in two of our most imaginative and exciting camps for ages 7-12!

Supervillains Anonymous

The city's supervillains are ready to call it quits—until one determined newcomer shakes things up! In this hilarious and action-packed camp, kids will bring to life a cast of quirky villains, relive their most embarrassing defeats, and decide whether evil is really all that bad after all... or just misunderstood. Cue the dramatic entrance of Wonder Man and his trusty sidekick, Star Kid!

Magic in Me

Little Do-Nothing Dale might not look like much of a wizard—but when she sets out to discover her own magic, she uncovers a world full of laughter, music, and self-discovery. This heartwarming story encourages every camper to embrace what makes them unique, with whimsical characters, colorful adventures, and three musical numbers to bring the magic to life!

**What did this email
want you to do?**

Counting down to Virtual Reunion 2021!



The countdown is on for Virtual Reunion 2021, June 10-13! If you haven't registered yet, now is the time to plan your agenda. Whether you're in for the full weekend or just the highlights, check out all the good vibes, timely topics, and Reunion nostalgia in store for you!

[See the schedule and register →](#)

A big part of Reunion is seeing your Big Red family. ❤️ Want to see who else is tuning in?

[See who's coming →](#)

**What did this email
want you to do?**



Dear Friend,

Registration for [Pre-Conference Intensives](#) is now open!

We are offering three pre-conference sessions as part of the JCamp 180 conference this year. They will take place from 8:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. on Monday, October 20. Registration is required and **space is limited** – sessions will be filled first come, first served. Please discuss the three options below with your team and register soon.



**What is this
email about?**

GIVING TUESDAY
MAKE A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE
RUNNERS TO THE RESCUE



#RunnersToTheRescue

In the spirit of the [Ruffalo Stampede](#) and [Dog Days of Summer](#), The Buffalo Marathon and Tito's Handmade Vodka have joined forces again to support fifteen local animal rescues and shelters.

During this unprecedented time and with many facing joblessness and illness, millions of pets will end up in shelters this year. About half of those pets will be euthanized due to overpopulation. With your help in getting the word out about this opportunity to donate, together we will build awareness to the plight of homeless pets and help to save lives.

Tito's is a supporter of dogs and started [Vodka for Dog People](#) to better the lives of pets and their families far and wide.

In the spirit of [Vodka for Dog People](#), Tito's has offered a [dollar for dollar match up to \\$15,000](#) to help us support the fifteen local animal rescues and shelters listed below. Here at the Buffalo Marathon we are dedicated to making a difference in the community, so please help us raise the \$15,000 to match Tito's generosity. This will ensure each group receives \$2,000.

We have until the end of Giving Tuesday (12/1) to collect donations. To date, we have raised \$680 from 17 people, which averages \$40 per person. If everyone receiving this email donated \$5 or \$10 we could reach our goal today with time to spare. Please consider joining the effort as well as sharing this message with friends and family.

**What did this email
want you to do?**

From: Buffalo Marathon

Subject: Will you help us save the kittens & puppies? 🐶🐱

Hi Ashley,

Our four-legged friends need our help to live.

[Donate to save pets](#)

Many fellow humans are facing joblessness and illness and millions of pets will end up in shelters this year. About **half of them will be euthanized** due to a lack of resources.

But, if we can raise \$30,000 for 15 local shelters, we can save their lives.

Tito's Homemade Vodka partnered with us to match your donations up to \$15,000. This means **every dollar you give will double**.

We've raised \$680 so far. Will you [donate \\$10 to save our furry friends?](#)

**Did you catch it
that time?**



Buffalo Marathon
to me ▾

Sat, Nov 28, 2020, 11:47 AM ☆ ↶ ⋮

GIVING TUESDAY
MAKE A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE
RUNNERS TO THE RESCUE



#RunnersToTheRescue



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Tell them
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Simple
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Write like you
speak.

4

Action-driven
links and buttons



Verb +
what/why/
when

5

Format for
scannability



Use F pattern
for single
actions, or
layer cake for
newsletters.

Thank you.

Happy
emailing!



Get the book at:

emailbook.co