The Definitive Guide to
PREHEADER TEXT in Email

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Preheader Text Can MAKE OR BREAK YOUR EMAIL

"Having trouble viewing this email? Click here to view it in a web browser."

No doubt you've seen this phrase at the top of hundreds, if not thousands of email messages. But you don't want this to be the first thing your audience reads after your subject line.

Marketers, developers and designers spend a lot of time crafting compelling offers, designing beautiful imagery and incorporating the newest CSS tricks into their email campaigns. All of this focus on the more complex elements of email campaigns means that some of the simple, yet highly effective pieces (like preheader text) are dealt with as afterthoughts.

However, with 93 billion marketing emails being sent each day, the battle for attention in the inbox is real. In fact, approximately 35 percent of email recipients report that they open an email based on subject line alone. That's why it's critical that your preheader text supports—and is just as powerful—as your subject line.

> **93 BILLION MARKETING EMAILS ARE SENT EACH DAY**, and **35%** of email recipients report that they open an email based solely on **SUBJECT LINE**.

This guide breaks down the basics of coding and executing stellar preheader text, so you can begin to use this prime email real estate to as an email open-booster and conversion-driver. Take a read through and **start to optimize your preheader text today**!

WHAT TO AVOID

Preheader text is the short summary text that follows the subject line in your email inbox view. Given this position, it's one of the main forces to influence whether your email recipient opens your email or deletes it without further attention.

The Real Simple, one of our favorite magazines, misses the mark by a long shot with this subject line + preheader text combination.

> **Real Simple**   Saturday ›
> Enter For A Chance To Win A Trip To T...
> Having trouble viewing this email?
> Click Here to view as a web page...

WHAT TO AVOID (CONTINUED)

Given the information we see in our inbox, Real Simple isn't giving us a very compelling reason to open this email. We can't even tell where we might be able to win a trip to (we just know it starts with a "T" but that could be Tahiti, Toronto or Tulsa, for all we know).

Wasting preheader space with "having trouble viewing this email" is a huge mistake. Just repeating your subject line text isn't winning you any points either.

	Road Runner Sports	6:47 AM ⟩
●	Your. Wait. Is. Over! NEW Shoe Updat...	
	Your. Wait. Is. Over! NEW Shoe Updates are Here! Discover How these Fantasti...	

Again, this subject line + preheader text combination from Road Runner Sports doesn't really persuade us to open the email, which is unfortunate because their emails often contain personalized suggestions and deals based on past purchases. But we have no way of knowing that from the inbox view.

IDEAL PREHEADER TEXT LENGTH

Just how much preheader text should you include? We recommend 50-100 characters. Though some clients are capable of showing more than this, it's usually only under special circumstances (like a very wide browser window). Check out this chart to see the limits of some popular email clients.

Email Client	Text Limit
iPhone (5S)	64
Gmail (Web Client)	100
Gmail (iOS Client, 5S)	34
iPad 5, Mail App	64
Android 4.4	97
Apple Mail 8	50-100
Outlook 2013	60-100
Outlook.com	124-236
Yahoo! Mail	135-202

IDEAL PREHEADER TEXT LENGTH (CONTINUED)

Since adding preheader text is actually quite simple in most email service provider platforms (and we'll cover the more difficult task of coding invisible preheader text later in this guide, so don't worry), let's take a look at five ways to maximize your preheader space to increase your email opens and overall email engagement:

THE PERFECT PREHEADER TEXT LENGTH?
50-100 characters.

5 WAYS TO MAXIMIZE PREHEADER SPACE

1. Provide a content overview

Use your preheader text space to give a quick summary or overview of the content contained in your email. NOVICA does a great job of this with their preheader text below. The subject line tells us that a huge sale is going on, but we can then see from the preheader text that the sale includes jewelry, clothing, accessories and handbags (the 10% off mention doesn't hurt, either!).

NOVICA News   Thursday >
Huge jewelry and fashion sale! Celebr...
Don't miss out on 10% off all jewelry, clothing, accessories, and handbags. I...

2. Elaborate on your subject line

Think about it: By making your subject line and preheader text one cohesive message, you double the amount of space you have to compel your reader to open the email you've sent.

In the following Priceline.com example, the subject line and preheader text work together to tell us that there are great deals available and then reassure us that we'll be able to see a number of things about the hotel we choose before finalizing the booking.

Priceline.com   Yesterday >
Hotel Deals from $32!
See the neighborhood, amenities and price of each hotel before you book. N...

3. Tease an incentive or offer

Does your email include a special offer? Let your audience know in the preheader text what awaits them upon opening the email.

Here, One Kings Lane tells us about a number of deals available in their email and the structure of the preheader text statement—90% off, 85% off, 80% off—makes us wonder what other deals are included inside the email.

> ● **One Kings Lane**   Monday >
> More Columbus Day blowouts: up to 9...
> Up to 90% off lighting and mirrors; up to
> 85% off Moroccan rugs; up to 80% off...

4. Personalize your message

Subject line personalization has been shown to increase email open and conversion rates, and it's reasonable to believe that the same would be true of personalized preheader text. Tailor your message and catch a reader's eye by using their name in your preheader message, like Nextdoor did below.

> ● **Nextdoor Edgewater**   Yesterday >
> Welcome Mark and Jenna and 5 other...
> Hi Tanya, Recently 7 new members
> joined Edgewater Colorado! you can w...

5. Experiment with fun, engaging copy

Do something different to catch your reader's eye and entice them to open your email. Tell a joke that they have to open the email to complete (one so good, you know they'll open it). Use emojis to stand out from rows and rows of text. Or, like in the next example, include a sing-able line to a popular song.

> ● **PetCareRx Inc.**   10:02 AM >
> Fenway's special treat
> Who let the dogs out?! FRONTLINE
> PLUS FOR DOGS for 75% off! Enjoy yo...

PetCareRx does a really nice job with this subject line + preheader text combination. They've personalized the message with the dog's name, let us know about the 75% off discount being offered and referenced the classic Baha Men earworm, Who Let the Dogs Out.

Now that we've discussed ways to optimize the text included in your preheader space, let's get into the nitty gritty details of coding preheader text in your email development process.
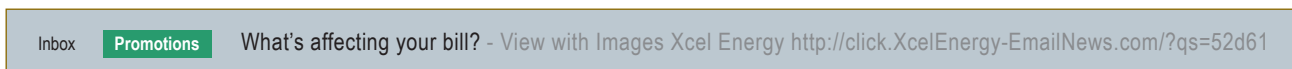
Preheader Text CODING VISIBLE & HIDDEN

As we discussed earlier, visible preheader text is pretty easy to add through the WYSIWYG editor in most email service providers. If you have some space above the email's header, perhaps currently occupied with a "View in Browser" link, you can replace that with visible preheader text. This Xcel email provides a nice example of how this might be accomplished.

CODING PREHEADER TEXT (CONTINUED)

As this email currently stands, the preheader text generated will be pretty underwhelming. Having a recipient see "view with images" isn't the end of the world, but like we discussed in the previous section, it's not the best use of this valuable space.

| Inbox | Promotions | What's affecting your bill? - View with Images Xcel Energy http://click.XcelEnergy-EmailNews.com/?qs=52d61 |

There's plenty of room in this layout to add a preheader sentence on the left, or to replace the "view with images" link with visible preheader text.

Some designs just won't accommodate visible preheader text for aesthetic or branding reasons. But adding hidden preheader text to your email isn't too difficult.

Begin by choosing a place where the preheader text won't cause issues in your layout. The text will take up, at most, one pixel of vertical space, but in some cases this can bump down content. If you put the preheader text into an existing header, give it a row to itself, so that if any content below is moved, it will all be moved the same amount. To hide the text, you'll want to include the following inline styles:

```
<td style="display:none !important;
          visibility:hidden;
          mso-hide:all;
          font-size:1px;
          color:#ffffff;
          line-height:1px;
          max-height:0px;
          max-width:0px;
          opacity:0;
          overflow:hidden;">
    This is preheader text.
</td>
```

As you can see, we have hidden the text in a multitude of ways. Many of these are fallbacks for clients that don't recognize the other styles in the list.

One tip: Don't use placeholder text here! The last thing you want is for an email to go out with "This is preheader text" as the actual preheader text... unless you are intentionally making a reference to "This is Spinal Tap."

That's it! You can now add hidden preheader text to a template and have a number of ideas for how to use your preheader text space to increase your email open rates and overall engagement.

QUICK TIP:
Don't use placeholder text for your invisible preheader text section. **You might forget it's there!**

WHERE TO NEXT?

Now that you've optimized your email's subject line and preheader text to encourage opens, what kind of first impression does that email make? Every email client's rendering engine is NOT created equal, but it's important to have your email look it's best wherever it is opened because 70% of people say they will delete an email immediately if it does not look good when they open it.

With the introduction of the beast that is Outlook 2016 and the way Android continues to strangle responsive design, it's even more critical today to ensure that you preview your email in the most popular inboxes and fix any issues that arise BEFORE you send.

Try Email on Acid
FREE for 7 days
and get access to
unlimited email, spam
and web page testing.
Then, send every email
with complete confidence.

START TODAY