Email Creative Guidelines

These guidelines are designed to give your blast the best results for opens and clicks, and intended to ensure that your email creative will display as expected in as many different email programs or providers as possible. *Some of our best results come from emails with one single click through link!*

Additionally, Click Maps will only be provided to those that follow these guidelines.

1. **Overall File Size:** 200 kb or less
   - Larger files will cause an email to load more slowly, leading to less response due to users' lack of patience to wait for the entire email to download.

2. **Image Types**: JPEG/JPG, GIF, or PNG
   - Ensure your images are optimized for fastest loading:
     o JPEG compression is best for photographs.
     o GIF or PNG compression is preferred when optimizing solid-filled objects.
   - Resize your images to match the dimensions used in your creative. Do not load a high-resolution 1,200x1,200 image and set its height and width to 120x120 – resize the image itself to 120x120 using image editing software.
   - **Do not use animated GIFS**. They are larger in file size and major email providers may remove the animation, only display the first frame, or block the image altogether.
   - **Do not use video, Flash, HTML5, or JavaScript embeds**. Major email providers will not display these, and may flag the email as spam or malware.

3. **Number of Images:** 20 or fewer
   - Even if small in file size, a creative including more than 20 images can significantly slow the load time
   - Do not use multiple different images to puzzle together or control layout, instead use nested HTML tables, inline CSS, or the same single pixel image with defined dimensions.
   - Having too many images can trigger spam filters.
   - Use a 50/50 split between images and test for best results.
   - **Note**: A *Single Image Creative* may be delivered, but isn't the preferred format:
     o Spam filters look at the Image to Text Ratio; if it's not about 50/50, your blast may be at greater risk for being flagged as spam.
     o *600 x 480* pixels are the optimal email dimensions for a single image for the best rendering across the majority of email providers and devices.
     o One single click through URL will be linked across the entire image space.

4. **Video**: Do not embed
   - Video and animation will not function properly within an email blast; period.
   - Use a still image of the video and link to it, instead.

5. **Background Images:** Do not use
   - **Do NOT use background images** – some email providers will not display background images. Use HTML or CSS colors for the background instead.
     o Use the full 6-digit hex code for colors, as the 3-digit codes may not show the correct color or may be ignored by many email providers. E.g., use #ff0099 instead of #f09.

6. **Email Creative Width:**
   - **A width of 400 to 600 pixels provides the best viewing experience across most email providers**. Keep in mind that many users view emails in a narrow preview pane, on a tablet, or phone. Creatives wider than 600 pixels may extend out of view.
7. **Email Creative Height:** 1,728 pixels or less
   - Images taller than the height of a screen may be truncated by some email providers, depending on the device viewing the email.
   - Creatives with tall images or that involve too much scrolling may push the core content out of view.

8. **Coding Languages:** HTML and inline CSS
   - The only languages that work universally with major email service providers are HTML and CSS markup. **Do NOT use JavaScript, PHP, XML, ASP and other common programming languages**, as the email provider may flag your message as spam or malware, and, of course, the programming won't work.
   - HTML5 tags are not commonly supported by major email providers.
   - Dynamic elements, such as a time or date, are not supported.
   - **No other markup or programming languages may be used**.
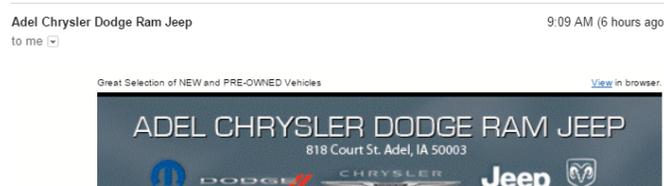
9. **Coding Best Practices**
   Email HTML is not Web HTML - be sure to follow best practices to ensure your designs display as intended!
   - **Do not use frames, iframes, embeds, rollover menus, or form fields.**
   - Tables instead of Divs
     - Use HTML with nested tables, instead of complex CSS. While frowned up in web page design, *using tables instead of CSS to control the position of your elements displays the most reliably across all email platforms*. Additionally, complex CSS that involves extensive use of position, float, and alignment elements that will display on all major email platforms reliably can be extremely challenging to create.
     - **Do not use colspaces and rowspaces**.
     - Place more tables inside the current table if cells need to be split up. The code may look ugly, but it works and lines can appear breaking up the email images if not used.
     - **Do not use CSS margins.** Margins can cause problems in email – use tables instead.
       - Example: use a centered 580-pixel wide table inside of a 600 pixel wide table to create a 10 pixel left and right margin.
   - Use inline CSS
     - **Do not use links to external stylesheets.** Links to external CSS files are not loaded by major email providers, causing your layout to display at all.
       - Example: <link href="http://link.to.my/stylesheet.css" rel="stylesheet" type="text/css" />
     - To easily convert external style sheets to inline styles, use http://premailer.dialect.ca/. Please, check your code afterwards, since the tool can occasionally create odd HTML errors.
     - Use CSS definition tags when applicable to define a table cell. *This may be redundant, but works across the majority email providers.*
       - Example: <td style="width:600px;background-color:#00FFFF" width="600" bgcolor="#00FFFF">
     - Here's a great blog that touches on how to create Mobile Responsive HTML code in CSS and then translate over to Inline Stylesheets that will render across most email providers: http://webdesign.tutsplus.com/tutorials/creating-a-future-proof-responsive-email-without-media-queries--cms-23919
     - **Avoid floating objects**, as multiple major email providers ignore the float element altogether.
       - Instead, use align="" to create the same effect.
       - Note that this does not work all the time for text and tables, however, it works fine with images.
   - Fonts
     - **Do not specify a font in the body tag.** Body HTML tags and CSS definitions are typically ignored or removed by email providers.
     - When using tables, set each table td tag to the preferred font. Defining a font style in a <table> tag **will not always carry over to the individual cells**, so make sure that each cell is defined individually.

- Colors
  - Use the full 6-digit hex code for colors, as the 3-digit short codes do not always show the correct color or may be ignored by some email providers. Example: use #ff0099 instead of #f09.

10. **Coding Tips**
    - Email "Preview" Text
      - Preview text is the line of text that appears below the subject line in the user's inbox. This text is the first text embedded in the HTML file.

      - **Note**: While this line of text must be the first line of text embedded in the HTML file, it doesn't necessarily have to be visible when the email is opened or contain a link to the webpage version of the email. Use white font to avoid the text from being seen when the email is opened.

    - Does line height of text appear too large in Hotmail? Use the following code within a style tag in the header of the HTML. (This code actually should be done as CSS)
      - `.ExternalClass * {line-height: 100% !important;}`
    - Text is appearing too large when viewed on an iOS device? Apply the following CSS definition to your creative's body tag:
      - `<body style="-webkit-text-size-adjust: 100%">`
    - Are your images in tables breaking? The following two attributes should be applied to each individual image tag:
      - `style="display:block"`
      - `border="0"`

11. **Links**: **Some of our best results come from emails with one single click through link!** Don't use more than 5-7 links.
    - Too many links may affect the variance in Google Analytics Sessions and Clicks.
    - **UTM codes are required** for end clients who wish to use Google Analytics to review clicks from their creatives. Data Dynamix will apply UTMs when possible.
    - **Do not nest additional HTML inside links.** E.g., do link instead of link.
    - **Do not use relative links.** A relative link is a link that relates to the current website the user is viewing., and does not include the full URL to the website (e.g. `<a href="mypage.html">` or `<img src="images/myimage.png">`. Since email users are viewing email, not a website, **relative links won't work!** Use "absolute links," e.g., `<a href="http://mysite.com/mypage.html">` or `<img src="http://mysite.com/images/myimage.png">`.
    - **Do not use empty links.** This includes `<a href="">` and `<a href="#">`. Many visual HTML editors will insert an empty link tag by default, so be careful. Empty links can throw of click reporting or the display of click maps.
    - **Do not use image maps.** While most major email providers support image maps, some do not, and our post-campaign "click map" results reports are incompatible with this approach.
    - **Do not use JavaScript.** JavaScript will be stripped out prior to testing; most spam filters identify and stop emails containing JavaScript.
    - To indicate a link point to a version of your email in a web browser (e.g., "View this email in browser," use `<a href="#">`.

12. **UTM Codes for Google Analytics**:
    - UTM Codes are snippets text applied to links allow accurate and detailed reporting within Google Analytics. For end clients who wish to review their campaign's clicks in their own Google Analytics accounts, UTM Codes **must** be applied to all links. Upon request, Data-Dynamix can apply a single UTM code to all embedded links.
    - For more information, visit https://ga-dev-tools.appspot.com/campaign-url-builder/ or contact your Data Dynamix representative.

13. **HTML Editors**
    - **Recommended:** Adobe Dreamweaver, Adobe Fireworks, Microsoft Expression Web
    - Adobe Dreamweaver
        - **Note**: When inserting a link in Dreamweaver using any of its graphical tools, if your link contains an & symbol (which many do), it may convert the & symbol to its HTML equivalent of & – instead, when inserting a link, do so in code view, or double-check it previewing in your browser and clicking the link, or by looking at the source code in your browser.
    - Adobe Fireworks
        - Adobe Fireworks is an HTML creation tool that uses the same slicing features found in Photoshop and InDesign for those artists looking for a solution with similar functionality to their current design tool.
        - When slicing, avoid making uneven rows and columns.
        - Do not use margins – rowspans and colspans are used by Fireworks in HTML code built using margins, but if used there is a high probability that the email will display incorrectly; not all email providers accept rowspans and colspans code.
    - **Do not use Adobe Photoshop, InDesign or Microsoft Word.** These programs are not built to create email-specific HTML and should not be used.

14. **Tracking Pixel**
    - Only 1x1 image pixels are supported and must be identified at time of order placement.
      Note: The tracking pixel will register a count during testing and during the live broadcast when the images load.
    - Dynamic elements, such as a date or time stamp, are **not supported**.

15. **Special Characters**
    - Avoid goofy font display issues! All special characters must be use HTML-equivalents in the email body.
    - For subject lines, ese UTF-16-compliant characters for foreign language entities in the subject line. See #16).
        - **Do not use HTML codes for special characters in the subject line.**
    - Do use HTML codes for special characters in the HTML creative. Example: © needs to be coded as ©
    - **Note:** Many HTML programs will leave special characters as they are if copied from another program; characters like apostrophes, bullets, or dashes copied from Word often will need to be retyped for proper display.

16. **Emojis**
    - May be used in the email's subject line or the body text of the creative.
    - A list of usable symbols can be found here: http://getemoji.com/ - copy/paste the emoji into the Subject Line field within the customer portal or on the order form.