

Format Options (in order of effectiveness)

1. Send an HTML / text document.

This is the option that NAI uses for its monthly newsletter NAI Now. To do this, set up an HTML file as if you were designing a web page. Also (and this is important!) create a text-only version that can be sent out simultaneously for those recipients whose e-mail does not support HTML-based messages. These files can be sent using a service like iContact, Constant Contact, or PHPlist, which manage email addresses and send the message.

The advantages to this method include that the newsletter shows up in the recipient's in box without any extra effort on their part (such as clicking on a link or downloading a pdf) and it is a medium specifically designed for screen use (rather than a print medium converted to electronic, which is too often the case with pdfs).

The downsides of this option are that it requires the knowledge to set up an HTML file and the email management programs require a small monthly fee.

2. Send a link to a pdf.

To do this, upload your newsletter as a pdf to a website and then e-mail a link to newsletter recipients. This is slightly less cumbersome than actually sending a pdf as an attachment, but it still requires a lot of extra effort on the part of your recipients that will likely cause you to lose readers.

On the plus side, this is a low-tech solution.

(Note: If you choose this method, be sure to include a short greeting or other text rather than simply a link. You will also want to include a link to the Adobe site <http://get.adobe.com/reader/> for that rare individual who does not have Acrobat Reader on his or her computer.)

3. Send a pdf.

This is the most rudimentary and cumbersome method of sending an e-mail newsletter. It requires that you send an attachment to all recipients and for those recipients to download, open, page through, and read the pdf. These extra steps, combined with difficulties some recipients will surely have with receiving attachments, are obstacles that make this option undesirable.

On the plus side, this method is the lowest-tech way to send an e-mail newsletter and therefore requires the least technical know-how.

(Note: If you do choose this method, be sure to include a short greeting or other text rather than simply the attachment, and include a link to <http://get.adobe.com/reader/> to download Acrobat Reader.)

continued

Design Tips

1. **Keep blurbs short.** Text on screen is hard on the eyes and your readers' attention spans are shorter with electronic media. Fifty to 75 words per story is an optimal length.
2. **Avoid long stories or text blocks.** Use short paragraphs and delineate between paragraphs with line spaces rather than indenting to create white space.
3. **Make sure your links work.** When creating your HTML file, be sure to use absolute rather than relative links for all links and embedded images. (Relative links will not work!) Test the links before sending.
4. **Use a sans-serif font.** Sans serifs like Helvetica and Arial are typically easier to read on screen than serifs like Garamond and Times. (This is the opposite of what is recommended for print media.)
5. **Set text using a dark color against a light background.** But don't use pure black and white (it's too harsh for on-screen use). Use either a dark gray or neutral tone against a white background or black against a light gray or neutral background.
6. **Use a low-contrast color palette.** Avoid harsh contrast (as with complementary color combinations like blue/orange or red/green). Also, minimize use of bright warm colors, especially red.
7. **Keep it in the window.** Be sure the formatted HTML document does not exceed 600 pixels in width so that your recipient does not have to scroll back and forth to read it.
8. **Avoid overusing capitalization and punctuation** (especially &, ?, and !).
9. **When creating links, use actionable terms** like "Sign me up now" instead of "Click here" or simply copying the URL into your text.
10. **Keep your e-mail subject lines short** and to the point and be consistent each time you send an email. Including the text "NAI," your region or section name, and the date of issue will also help your readers identify your e-mail better.

Before You Send

1. **Make sure you have the most recent member list for your region or section.** Contact Jamie King at 888-900-8283 or jking@interpnet.com to get your list. This is important not only to make sure you're reaching all of the appropriate people, but it is the only way to ensure that you receive your newsletter rebate from the national office.
2. **Test your message to see if it looks like spam.** The website <http://spamcheck.sitesell.com/> has a free feature that allows you to send a test message and receive a detailed report explaining what you can do to avoid spam filters. (To do this, send your newsletter to spamcheck@sitesell.com with the word TEST in all caps at the beginning of your subject line and you will receive a report minutes later.)

Questions?

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