



hello

The Ultimate Guide to Email Subject Lines that Get Replies

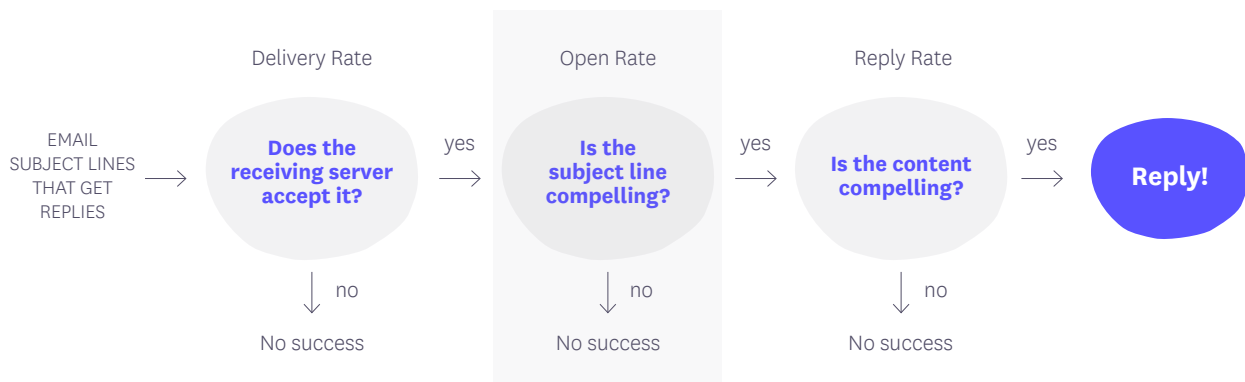
Did you know: half the people you email decide whether or not to open your email solely based on your subject line?



That's a lot of pressure to make a good first impression. With a subject line that flops, you could lose half of your audience before they even click open!

Now think about this a different way: with a catchy, engaging subject line, you could vastly increase your email open rates by earning the attention of that half of your email list who was ready to dismiss your note as yet another piece of vendor spam. If there's one critical factor in determining whether your email ends up in the trash folder vs. sparking a conversation, it's a powerful subject line.

After all, once you've successfully sent your email, the subject line is the first step in getting that elusive reply:



As salespeople, we live and die by our email engagement rates. And as a company focused on sales excellence, we're all about helping you maximize your email open and reply rates. We've sent over half a million emails this year and have learned a thing or two about what works. Here are our top actionable tips to get replies in your inbox based on our tried and tested data.

The secret formula to subject lines that get replies

Would you show up to a black-tie event in your “takeout and Netflix” finest? Of course not. Your email subject lines are the first impressions you make on your prospects. Here’s how to put on your metaphorical best suit every time you hit send.

Seven tips for top-performing subject lines

1. A good subject line is short, sweet, and straight to the point. No need to write a novel!
2. They’re written in a human way – lowercase, casual subject lines perform best.
3. They’re personal - they directly reference the company or the prospect’s name.
4. They include a simple call to action.
5. They’re relevant to the role, title, and persona of who we are reaching out to.
6. Ambiguity is OK - as long as it gets the email opened and give your content a chance.
7. “RE:” and “FWD:” prefixes can be very powerful when used appropriately.

Send personalized emails at scale!

[Learn more >>](#)

Your go-to subject lines: What to write and why they work

Subject 1: The Personal Shout-out

What to say:

“(Name), quick call next Tuesday?”

Boom. Results:

Across over 4,800 emails delivered, this subject generated an impressive 34% open rate.

Why it works:

The most read part of any email is the first word of the subject line. When someone reads their name first, it ensures their brain will pay just a bit more attention. Everyone loves to hear their name called out, even if it is just reading something aloud in their own mind. After grabbing your prospect’s attention with their name, they now have a simple call to action that can be answered with one word and very little thought. The mind says “yes” or “no” immediately because the line from consideration to decision is so short. And by giving them a day of the week to meet, that’s one less thing for them to have to consider. Tuesday either works, or it doesn’t. This email works well for busy leaders by empowering them to make a split-second decision of “yes” or “no”.

Subject 2: The Open Question

What to say:

“Tech question / (Company) sales process”

Boom. Results:

This subject line has a 30% open rate with over 4,250 emails delivered.

Why it works:

Everyone wants to share their opinion. Referencing a question that needs to be answered piques the recipient’s curiosity. They’re more likely to open the email so they can figure out if they can show off their expertise in answering your question. Since we sell into sales organizations, we’ve increased the level of desire to be an “expert” by referencing what most sales leaders consider to be their secret sauce: the sales process. Adjust this subject line to reference the secret sauce of your target prospect.

Subject 3: The Casual Meeting

What to say:

“Time to meet?”

Boom. Results:

Emails with this subject were opened an outstanding 42% of the time across more than 600 emails delivered.

Why it works:

Time to meet... about what? This subject is just ambiguous enough to make your recipient want to know why you want to meet and open your email. Also, this very short subject line allows more of a message preview on mobile devices and desktop email clients. When your recipient scans their inbox, they’ll probably see

the first sentence in your email, too. With this approach, the first sentence of your email is just as important as the subject, especially since your content needs to be compelling enough to keep the attention of the prospect.

Subject 4: #Winning

What to say:

“more (results) for (company)”

Boom. Results:

This subject line drove a 29% open rate over 570 email deliveries.

Why it works:

The more casual an email looks, the more “off the cuff” it seems. When someone does something for you in the moment, it creates a feeling of thoughtfulness. This subject line feels hurried, like the writer can’t wait to share thing that’s prompting them to write this “impromptu” email. This is further supported by using lowercase letters.

Subject 5: The Magic Combo

What to say:

“new tool / increase in results / (company reference)”

Boom. Results:

In over 500 deliveries, emails with this subject were opened 38% of the time.

Why it works:

Everyone is interested in new things and in increased results. It’s a simple and obvious hook. The danger is that it’s too obvious or too overtly salesy. That’s why the last piece is important. By putting in a short reference to a company initiative, news, or product, it adds a layer of personalization that causes the reader to think the sender knows them and wonder what information they have to help.

What if you get a no?

First of all, don't get discouraged. Your prospect heard you loud and clear, and thinks what you have to say is valuable enough for them to take the time to respond to. Way to get that reply! The key to maneuvering this situation is to acknowledge the prospect's response and then respond appropriately to the specific message they sent you, while continuing to show your value. We've analyzed over 10,000 email replies to a "not interested" note, and our top performing responses share 4 things in common:

1. They acknowledge that your prospect has rejected your initial offer. It's important for them to know that you've read their email and are attentive to their needs.
2. They show the prospect that you're human. It's easy to reject a robot, but harder once you've built a connection.
3. Show you have their best interests at heart. You're here to help, not just to make some quick \$\$\$.
4. Acknowledge you might have made a mistake by reaching out to the wrong person, and provide an actionable step by asking for the correct contact. Every human makes mistakes!

Always know what happens after you click send.

[Request a demo >>](#)

The email that can take you from “not interested” to a positive reply 39% of the time

Still at a loss for words? We’ve got you covered with a great reply that can turn your no into a demo.

The objection: “We’re not looking for a solution right now, thanks.”

What to say:

(Name),

When people say they’re not in the market, it’s like music to my ears. Since you’re not under pressure to buy from a board of directors or upper management, it’s the perfect time to look at (our product) because you can more thoroughly evaluate a solution and only move forward if it’s something that could add real value to your team.

Based on what I know about your company, (Name), I think you would see a high ROI from adding (solution) to your tool stack. I’d love a chance to get a few minutes for a quick phone call to explore more about your business processes and properly explain what it is that we do and how we do it. Then, you can make the call if it makes sense for us to continue the conversation.

When is the best time to get a few minutes on your calendar?

(Your name)

Why it works:

It’s not anything flashy – just a simple and upfront way to humanize the connection you’re building with your prospect and open up a dialogue. At the very least, your prospect will respond back with the reasons they didn’t think your product would be a fit, which is valuable feedback to help you personalize your outreach to other prospects in that account.

Now that you know what works for us, how do you figure out what works for you?

Pro Tip:

A subject line that doesn't perform well isn't a failed piece of content... it's just a great A/B test!

We've told you once, and we'll tell you again – we love data! The only way we know what works and what doesn't is by testing everything and documenting our successes (and failures). Here are 4 key principles for you to test your email messaging to know what works for your audience:

Be consistent

The goal of A/B testing is to pick one element and identify what works and what doesn't. If you're trying to test your subject lines, try and keep other elements of your email pretty consistent, such as the persona you send it to and the time or day you send the emails. Isolate a single variable until you feel confident in the results, then move to testing another variable.

Let technology do the heavy lifting

You need to be thoughtful about what you're going to test, but not about the mechanics of executing your A/B test. Find a program that will automate the heavy

lifting for you! For instance, Outreach lets you A/B test different email templates within a sequence so you don't have to think about when to send your emails. By automating your email sends you reduce the risk of bias or human error impacting your results. And you can save time for the important things – like making strategic decisions based off your results. Or happy hour.

Embrace failure

So your award winning email subject line totally bombed... time to hide under your desk in shame, right? WRONG! The best part about A/B testing is that failure makes for a successful test. When one thing does poorly in an A/B test, that means something else did better, and you've learned a little more about the language that resonates best with your customers. The most beneficial thing you can do at this point is learn from the data you collected and let the results shape your path forward.

Build your own best practices

As you uncover findings from your tests, we recommend compiling them into an internal document so that as your company grows, others can leverage your work! Too often the tribal knowledge of what works gets lost as teams change. Communicate and publish your findings so that others can be inspired to build upon your successes!



Looking for a platform to enable your team to test and refine emails for your organization? The [Outreach Sales Engagement Platform](#) is designed to power sales automation and personalization at scale. With Outreach, you can create multiple email variations and test them as part of a sales sequence — measuring open rates, click-through rates, and even sentiment and reply rates. You can also test other parts of your sales process, such as your call messaging or the time of day your team calls their prospects.

[Learn more and request a demo today!](#)



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