

ActiveCampaign >

**How to write subject lines that get
your emails opened**

Today's Speaker



Benjamin Elias

Director of Content Marketing
at ActiveCampaign



@BenjaminElias

Today's Agenda



Here's what we'll cover:

1. What's the “job” of a subject line?
2. Why do people open your emails?
3. 4 email types (+ how they affect subject lines)
4. The 2 biggest email subject line mistakes
5. Two ingredients to an effective subject line
6. Some example email subject lines that work

**Hot take: Headlines and subject lines
are the toughest type of copy**

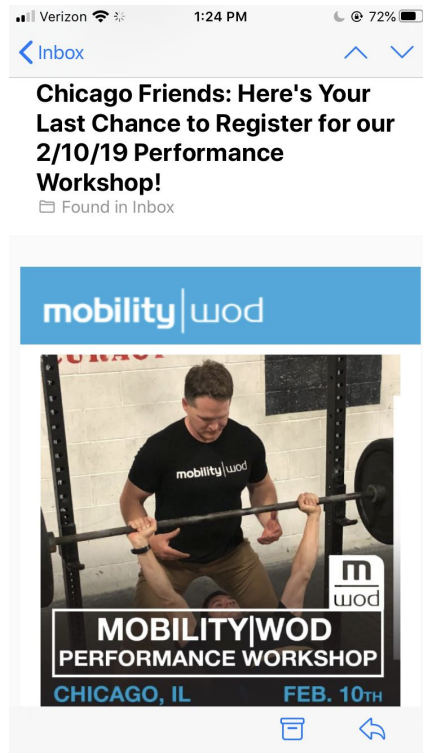
After all, why would stuff like this work?

	SUBJECT LINE	OPEN RATE
1	The thing that might've almost happened to me	43%
2	How to be famous	39.7%
3	Disappointing friends, stolen bathing suits, and incompetence	38.7%
4	Dork	38.4%



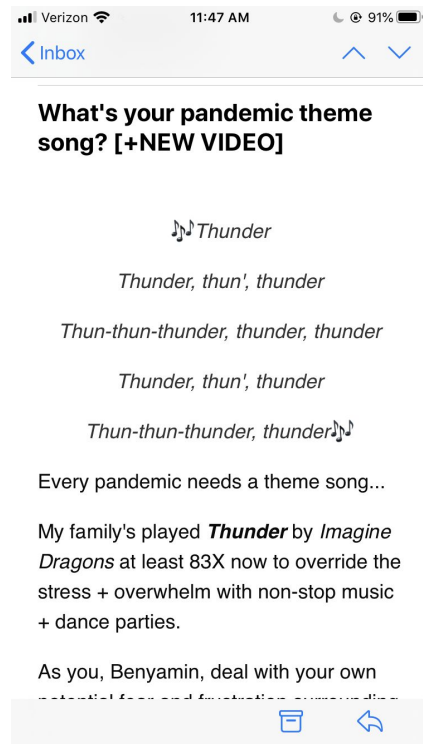
What's the “job” of the subject line?

1. Grab attention in the inbox
2. Narrow who you're talking to
3. Sell directly
4. Announce information (even to non-openers)



What can a subject line include?

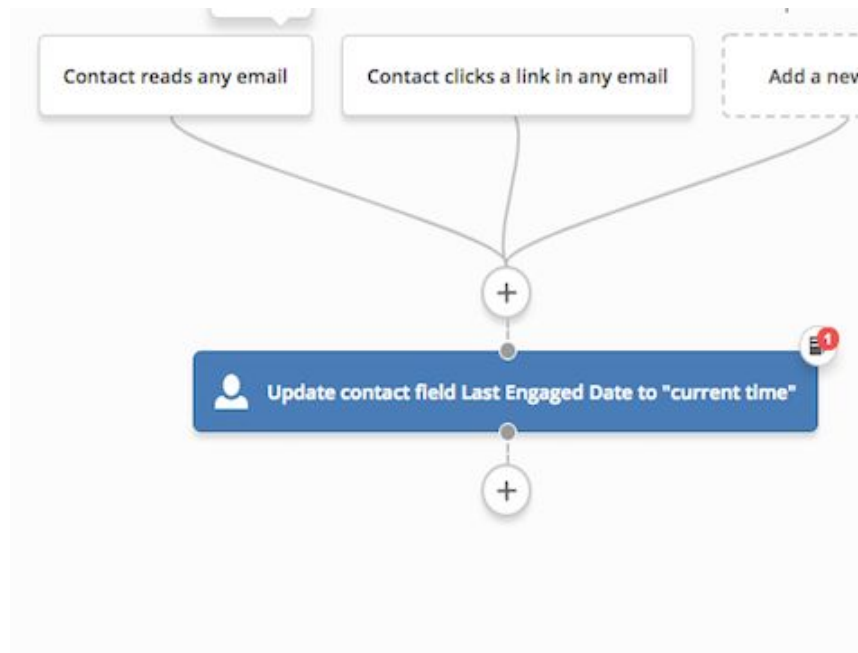
1. A benefit of what you offer
2. Pain points of the reader
3. Emotional words
4. Teaser phrases (“here’s,” “this,” “these”)
5. How-to, X ways, complete guide
6. Summary of the email



The most important job of a subject line is to get your emails opened

Other factors that affect email open rate

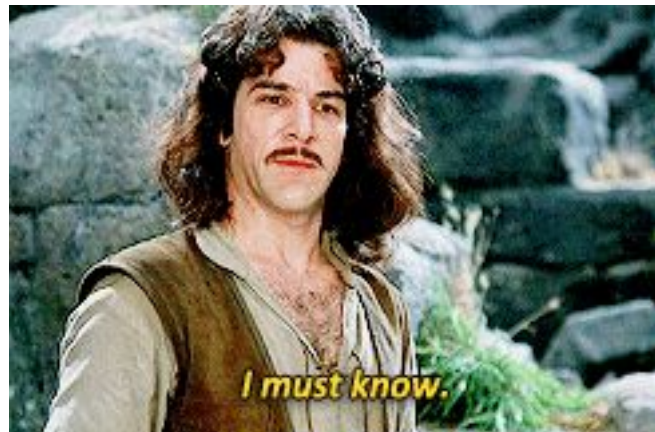
1. Email list!
2. Deliverability/Inbox placement
3. From name
4. Lifecycle stage



[Pre-built automation recipe](#)

Why might people open your emails?

1. They're expecting your email
2. They trust and enjoy emails from you
3. Your subject line promises them something they want
4. Your subject line makes them so curious they have to click

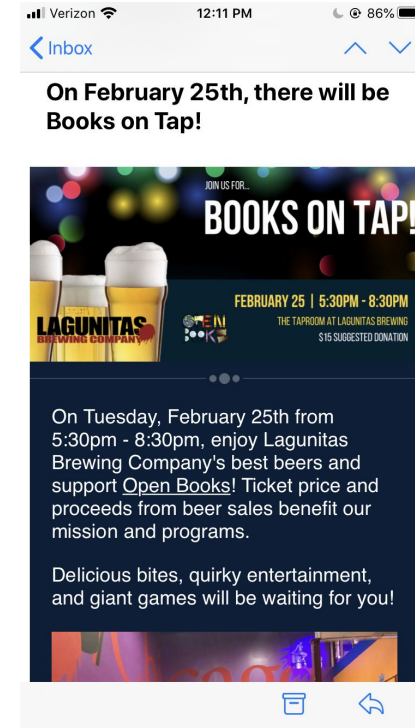


How does the type of email affect your subject line?

1. Announcement/Special offer

“Tell the truth, but make the truth fascinating” — David Ogilvy

State the announcement as clearly as you can. List quality makes a huge difference.

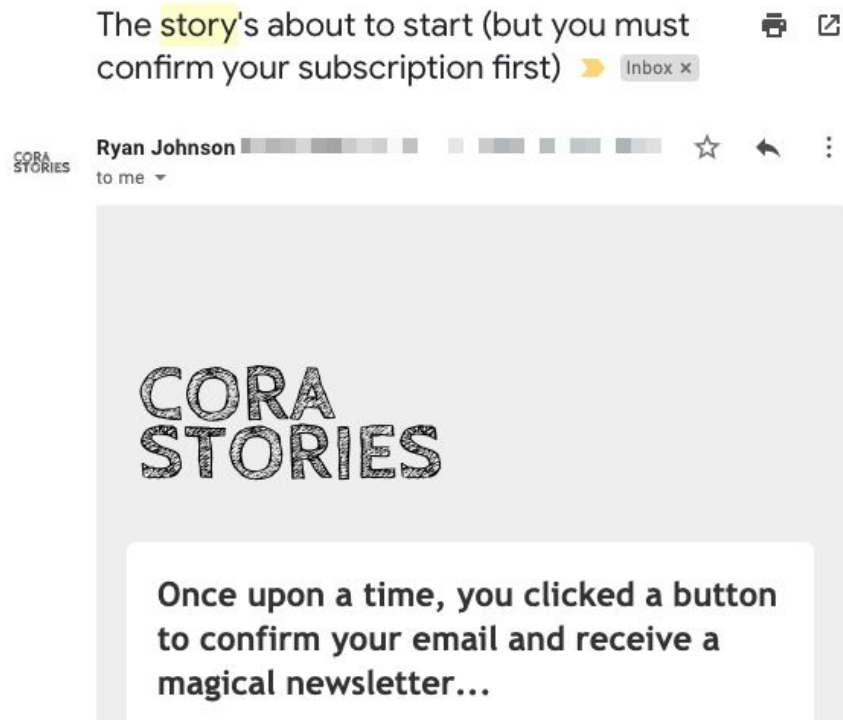


2. Resource delivery

“What I am doing here is taking the reader by the hand and leading him exactly where I want him to go.”

– Gary Halbert

Tell people exactly what to expect, and what they signed up for.

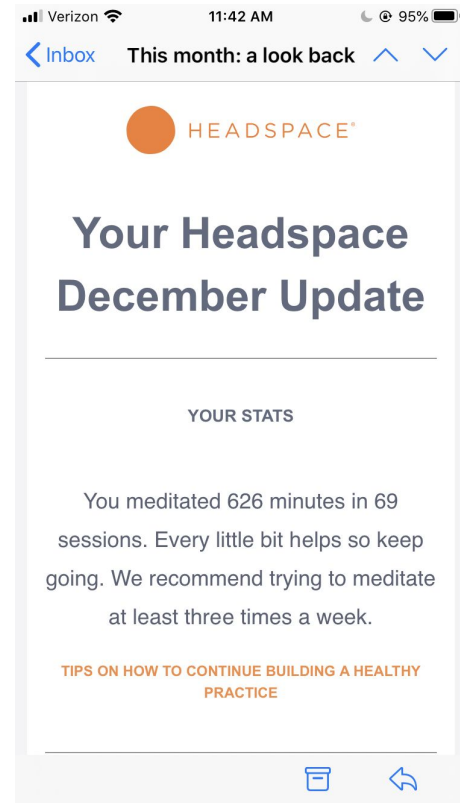
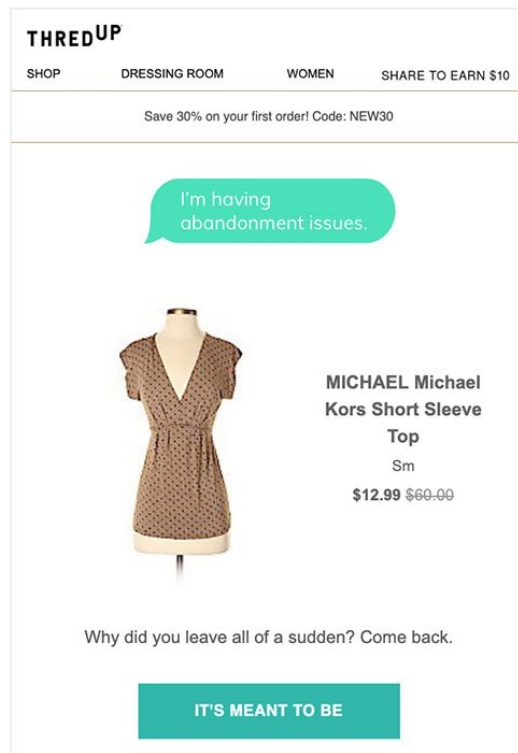


3. Reactive email

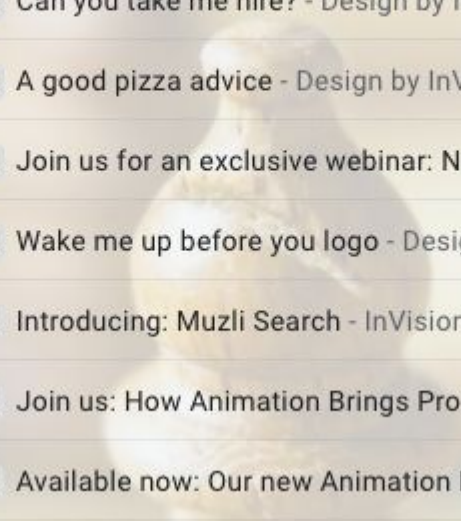
“Nobody reads ads. People read what interests them. Sometimes it’s an ad.” – Howard Gossage

People love getting info about themselves, or rewards for things they’ve done.

Fwd: Your Cart Is Expiring Inbox x



4. Newsletter, content, email blast, etc.



Clark from InVision	Inbox	Unwrite my heart - Design by InVision (https://get.invisionapp.com/e2t/sc)
Clark from InVision	Inbox	Can you take me hire? - Design by InVision (https://get.invisionapp.com/e2t/sc)
Clark from InVision	Inbox	A good pizza advice - Design by InVision (https://get.invisionapp.com/e2t/sc)
Annie from InVision	Inbox	Join us for an exclusive webinar: New Analysis About the State of Design -
Clark from InVision	Inbox	Wake me up before you logo - Design by InVision (https://get.invisionapp.com/e2t/sc)
Clark from InVision	Inbox	Introducing: Muzli Search - InVision is bringing Design+ Drinks back to Chi
InVision Webinars	Inbox	Join us: How Animation Brings Products to Life - InVision is bringing Desig
Clark from InVision	Inbox	Available now: Our new Animation Handbook - Design by InVision (https://)

**The biggest email subject line mistake
is...**

Summarizing benefits (no curiosity)

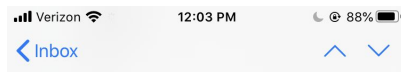
“We have become so accustomed to hearing everyone claim that his product is the best in the world, or the cheapest, that we take all such statements with a grain of salt.” – Robert Collier

What makes this promise believable?

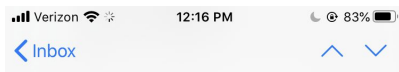
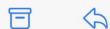
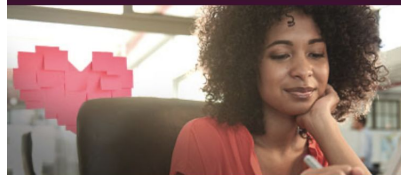
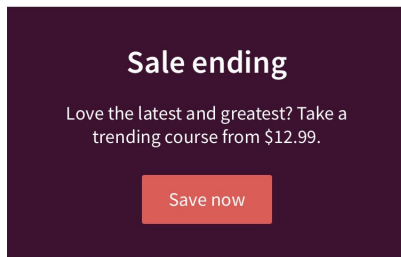


**The 2nd biggest email subject line
mistake is...**

Making everything a discount



 **SALE ENDS TONIGHT —
courses from \$12.99**

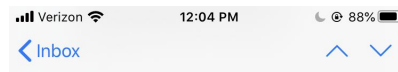
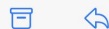


The Biggest Little Deal Ever

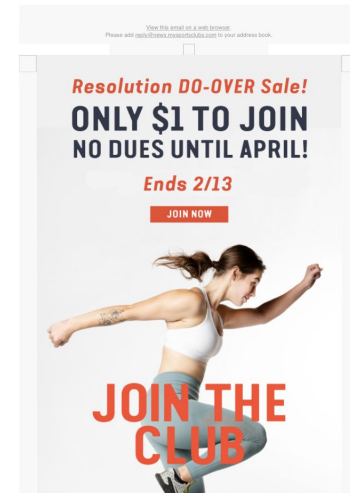
[Click to view this email online](#)

Free shipping on every U.S. order, every day.

BOLL & BRANCH



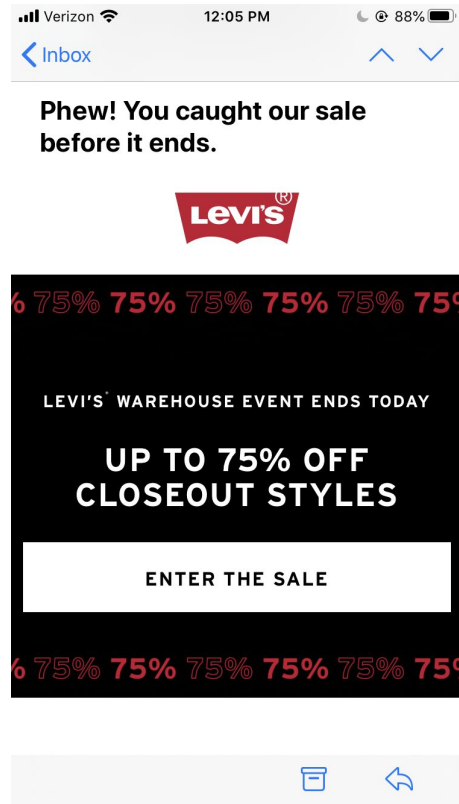
**SALE: \$1 to join, no dues until
April!**



Making everything a discount

“A big reason so many businesses compete on price is because they can’t prove what value they offer, so they’re stuck with the one selling point that’s a breeze to communicate: cheapness.” – Mish Slade

Why would I ever buy full price?



Two ingredients to an effective subject line



Relevance

How does your subject line connect to what your reader wants, or something they've done?



Curiosity

How can your subject line tease your email content, without giving everything away?

The 5 ways to make people curious

You can use these as a checklist:

1. Questions
2. Unfinished stories
3. Unexpected
4. Imply you have info they don't
5. Imply they have info they've forgotten

Psychological Bulletin
1994, Vol. 116, No. 1, 75-98

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0033-2909/94/\$3.00

The Psychology of Curiosity: A Review and Reinterpretation

George Loewenstein

Research on curiosity has undergone 2 waves of intense activity. The 1st, in the 1960s, focused mainly on curiosity's psychological underpinnings. The 2nd, in the 1970s and 1980s, was characterized by attempts to measure curiosity and assess its dimensionality. This article reviews these contributions with a concentration on the 1st wave. It is argued that theoretical accounts of curiosity proposed during the 1st period fell short in 2 areas: They did not offer an adequate explanation for why people voluntarily seek out curiosity, and they failed to delineate situational determinants of curiosity. Furthermore, these accounts did not draw attention to, and thus did not explain, certain salient characteristics of curiosity: its intensity, transience, association with impulsivity, and tendency to disappoint when satisfied. A new account of curiosity is offered that attempts to address these shortcomings. The new account interprets curiosity as a form of cognitively induced deprivation that arises from the perception of a gap in knowledge or understanding.

Curiosity is the most superficial of all the affections; it changes its object perpetually; it has an appetite which is very sharp, but very easily satisfied; and it has always an appearance of giddiness, restlessness and anxiety. (Edmund Burke, 1757/1958, p. 31)

Curiosity has been consistently recognized as a critical motive that influences human behavior in both positive and negative

practical significance alone. Curiosity poses an anomaly for rational-choice analyses of behavior that assume that the value of information stems solely from its ability to promote goals more basic than the satisfaction of curiosity. Such analyses assume that "the utility of information to the agents . . . is indirect and not direct like the utility derived from consuming goods" (Loewenstein, 1980, p. 64). Moreover, there is considerable research

What makes ideas interesting?

“All interesting theories...constitute an attack on the taken-for-granted world of their audience”

To be unexpected — and interesting — challenge a “medium-strong” belief of your audience.

Phil. Soc. Sci. 1 (1971), 309–344 Printed in Great Britain

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That's Interesting!

Towards a Phenomenology of Sociology
and a Sociology of Phenomenology

MURRAY S. DAVIS

SUMMARY

QUESTION: How do theories which are generally considered *interesting* differ from theories which are generally considered *non-interesting*? ANSWER: Interesting theories are those which *deny* certain assumptions of their audience, while non-interesting theories are those which *affirm* certain assumptions of their audience. This answer was arrived at through the examination of a number of famous social, and especially sociological, theories. That examination also generated a systematic index of the variety of propositional forms which interesting and non-interesting theories may take. The fertility of this approach suggested a new field be established called the *Sociology of the Interesting*, which is intended to supplement the Sociology of Knowledge. This new field will be *phenomenologically* oriented in so far as it will focus on the movement of the audience's mind from one accepted theory to another. It will be *sociologically* oriented in so far as it will focus on the dissimilar base-line theories of the various sociological categories which comprise

Add curiosity to your hooks

“How to earn half a million dollars a year”



“How can you earn half a million dollars a year?”



...

Add curiosity to your hooks

“How to earn half a million dollars a year”



“How can you earn half a million dollars a year?”



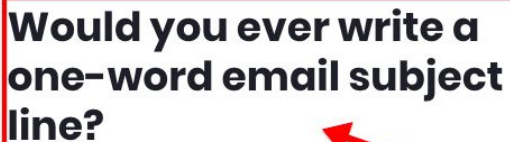
“Do you have the courage to earn half a million dollars a year?”

Add curiosity to your hooks

ActiveCampaign >

SUBJECT LINES THAT GET YOUR EMAILS OPENED

**Would you ever write a
one-word email subject
line?**



A one-word subject line breaks all the rules. But what are the rules? How can you write subject lines that consistently get opens and win A/B tests? Why do some subject lines perform better — and how can you write subject lines that work?

Sometimes the best subject lines break the rules — or seem to.

Full Name

Joe Shmoe

Email Address

joe@yourwebsite.com

Organization

ACME inc.

ActiveCampaign >

Headlines give you a good chunk of space



They Laughed When I Sat Down At the Piano But When I Started to Play!—

ARTHUR had just played "The Dancer. It seemed as if the master musician... "When the course arrived I found it was just as

Headlines give you a good chunk of space

Have You Ever Wondered What You Would Look Like With A "Million Dollar Smile"?

Did you know the quality of your smile has a more direct effect on your personal (and business) relationships than any other part of your appearance?

In fact, 88% of all people in North America say they *always* remember someone with an especially attractive smile. Not only that, 75% agree an unat-

teeth look. I'm going to set up a little table here that shows how dentists rank teeth from worst to best, worst being grade 1 and best being grade 16. Here we go:

Dentist's	
Grade Code	My Description
1 C4	Dingy brown. Looks like the tooth of a person who has

like C-4's, the dingiest looking teeth of all. And, the next person behind you wanted to have the best smile possible (all her teeth would look like B-1's). Who would have to pay the dentist the most? The answer may surprise you. You see...

**You Both Would
Pay The Same Price!**

from start to finish, in as little as ten days!

But maybe you're one of those people who are afraid of pain. This was a big one for me. I personally have a very low tolerance for pain. I don't want to hear, "This will only hurt a little." No, that's not good enough for me. As far as I'm concerned...

whatsoever and, the dental work was perfect.

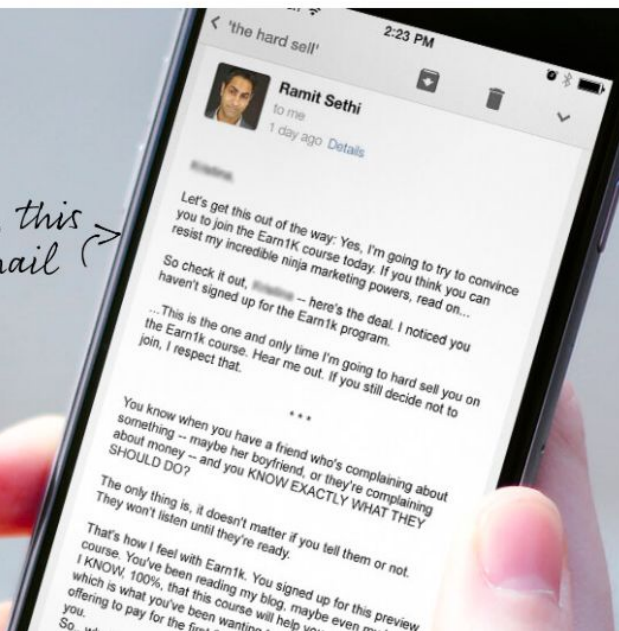
And, that's why, when I decided to get a "million dollar smile" I travelled all the way to Colleyville, Texas to have the work done by a dentist named Dr. Tom Gleghorn. Here's what it's like if you go to him for the same reason I did: On the

Headlines give you a good chunk of space



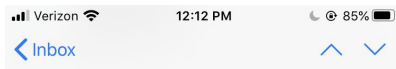
Let Me Show You
Why **This Email**
Generates Millions
Of Dollars

*Yes, this
email* →



**Subject lines are more limited — so
you've gotta get creative**

Examples of subject lines that work



So you wrote a novel... now what?

The "Now What?" Months are here!



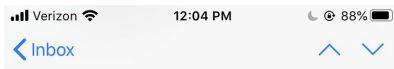
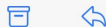
National Novel Writing Month



The "Now What?" Months

Every new year comes with new opportunities. Maybe you wrote a first draft of a novel last year... well, now it's time to whip that draft into shape!

This January and February, during NaNoWriMo's "Now What?" Months, we're focusing on revision and publishing.



How top comedians prepare

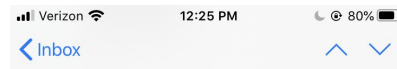
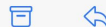
Hi Benyamin,

When I come across a comedian I really like, I geek out. I don't just eat up all of their material, I also read everything I can about *HOW* they got to be so funny.



Jerry Seinfeld, master comedian (Image by [slgckgc](#))

So I was reading some [articles](#) about Jerry Seinfeld and saw this...

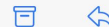


Last call for turkeys

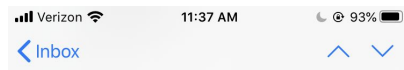


THREE OAKS | MICHIGAN

GRANOR FARM



Examples of subject lines that work



"Is anybody even hiring now?"

To view this email as a web page, [click here](#)

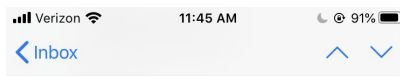
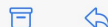
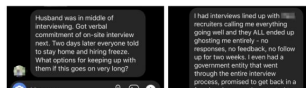
Benjamin,

Millions more join jobless ranks

[A record 6.6 million people filed new unemployment claims](#) in the U.S. last week, the Labor Department reported today, putting the two-week total close to 10 million, as the coronavirus pandemic upends the economy.

10 MILLION people filing for unemployment in 2 weeks. And I believe these numbers will get much, much worse.

Many readers told me they were suddenly ghosted in the middle of interviewing for a new job:



5 chickens and 2000 rounds of ammo

Hey Benjamin,

I almost bought 5 chickens yesterday.

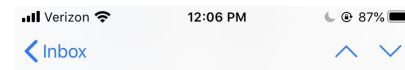
Turns out, even someone like me, who makes a living studying human behavior is not immune to the instinctual responses we all have.

Early last week, I was firmly in the "laugh at the crazies" camp.

Until I walked into the grocery store.

I felt like I didn't know how to shop any more. I saw the meat section and almost filled up my cart. ([Actual footage of me in the grocery store](#)).

My partner KC laughed at me, but then, when he got home he brought 2 000



Your chance to be publicly humiliated — for FREE 😞

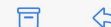
I'll make this quick...

My pal Todd Jones has started a YouTube channel and asked if I would be one of his early guests.

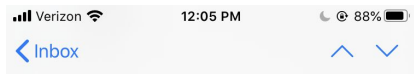
The topic?

Unique Value Propositions, Unique Selling Propositions, and positioning.

And instead of making this abstract and theoretical, I would love to take a look at real homepages and landing pages — *your* pages...



Examples of subject lines that work



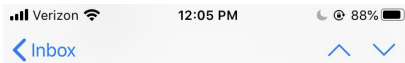
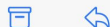
Season 7 of 'Brooklyn Nine-Nine' Is Here

hulu



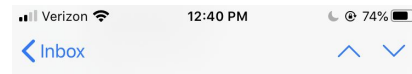
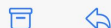
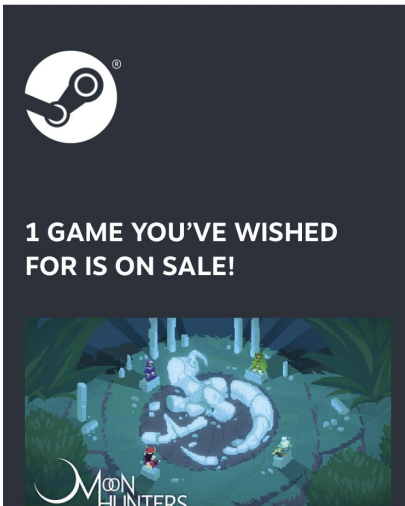
NEW SEASON. NEW CASES.
NOW STREAMING

Jake, Captain Holt, and the rest of the Nine-Nine detectives are back for Season 7. There may be some big shake-ups heading into the precinct. They'll handle it like professionals. Actually, no they won't. Rewatch past seasons and don't miss new episodes on Hulu.



An item on your Steam wishlist
is on sale!

Trouble viewing this message? Click here..

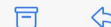
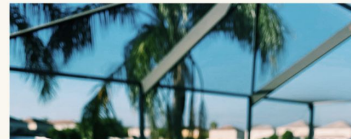


☕️ the internet's best coffee
inside 🥤🥤

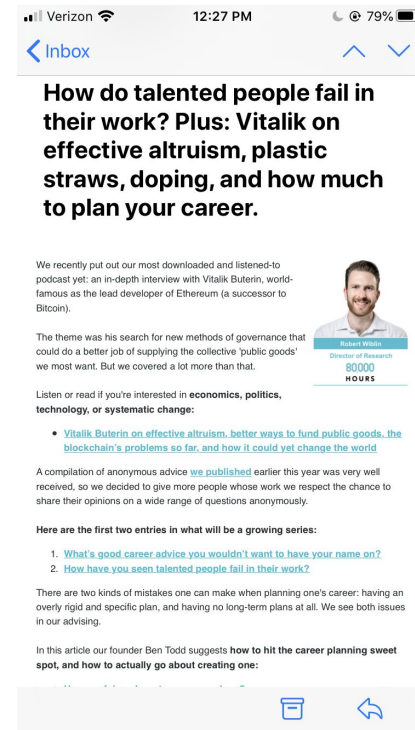
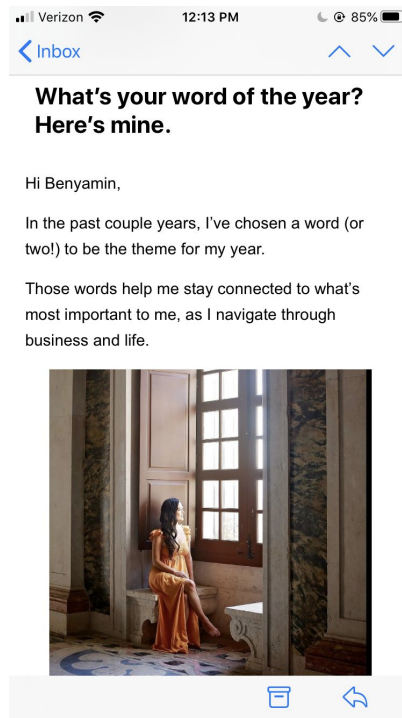
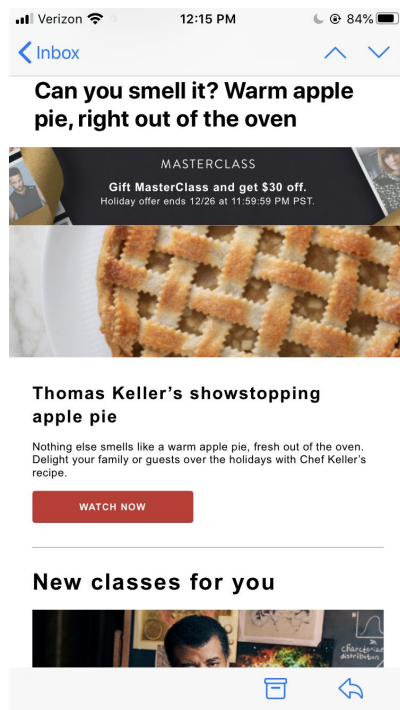
FOUR SIGMATIC®
EVERYDAY MAGIC™

Who doesn't need
Coffee + Chocolate
right now?

The Internet Celeb:
Dalgona Coffee



Examples of subject lines that work



Free tool for you

Email Subject Line Generator

Choose a keyword category (*Benefit, Topic, or Pain-Point*), then enter your keyword. Then click "generate subject lines" to get a list of ideas for your next great subject line!

Keyword category *

Keyword *

Choose keyword category ▼

Reset

Generate subject lines ▶

<https://www.activecampaign.com/free-marketing-tools/subject-line-generator>