

QUICK INSIGHTS

The ABCs of A/B testing emails

Learn everything you need to start testing your emails.

Although it's been around longer than many other marketing technologies, email marketing still remains a tried and true powerhouse. As of 2020, 19.8 percent of all purchases could be attributed to email marketing, with only paid search (19.9 percent) and organic traffic (21.8 percent)¹ generating more transactions.

Compared to other marketing campaigns, emails are easy to create and send and incredibly cost-efficient, especially if you have a high-quality marketing automation system. But despite all these perks, finding the best email marketing strategy for your goals can be tricky to get right. Nearly 300 billion emails are sent every day,² making competition in inboxes fierce—so fierce, in fact, that the average email conversion rate dipped to 15.11 percent in 2020 from a high of 18.49 percent in 2018.³

Fortunately, A/B testing can ensure you're crafting emails that get opened and inspire action. This short brief provides an overview of how and why to start A/B testing your emails.

A/B testing defined.

A/B testing proves that changing a single element of your emails can affect key metrics and improve conversions. Your "A" version is the control, and your "B" version is the experiment.

In a successful A/B test, each version must be sent to a big enough audience to ensure statistically significant results—i.e., both test audiences must be large enough to make it clear that any difference in performance between A and B is attributable to the test element, not to random chance.

A quick online search will uncover many easy-to-use calculators to help you estimate the statistical significance of your test results.

What should you test?

Email is deceptively simple. A marketing email is made up of a subject line, body copy, sometimes an image, and a call-to-action button. However, you can A/B test more individual elements than you might imagine, often in incredibly nuanced ways. Examples include:

- Subject line
 - Number of words in subject line
 - Personalized vs. non-personalized
 - Brackets
- Call-to-action button
 - Size
 - Color
 - Font
 - Italics vs. bold
- Preheader copy
- Tone of voice
- HTML vs. text email
- Day of week
- Time of day
- Length of email
- "From" name



Tip #1: Test only one element at a time.

Marketers are always trying to do more with less, which can make it tempting to test multiple variables at once. Doing so, however, can muddy the results—you'll never know how much each change contributed to any resulting performance improvement. Testing only one element at a time will ensure clarity.

Tip #2: Keep test conditions consistent.

To get the most accurate results, you must keep your testing environments consistent. For example, you must send both your A and B emails on the same day of the week, at the same time, and to the same audience (unless one of those factors is the test element, of course). Otherwise, you'll inadvertently test multiple variables at once.

Tip #3: Capture the right metrics.

Each A/B test can provide a wealth of data as long as you track the right metrics. We suggest capturing the metrics below to see how each change can impact overall performance:

- Number of emails sent
- Number of emails delivered
- Number of opens
- Open rates (delivered/opened)
- Number of clicks
- Click-through rates (delivered/clicked)
- Click to open rate (opened/clicked)
- Number of unsubscribes

Tip #4: Document and share your findings.

Once you've completed your test, be sure to document your results and share them with your team. You can also compile the results of multiple A/B tests to spotlight a variety of ways your team could improve email performance.

Take the next step.

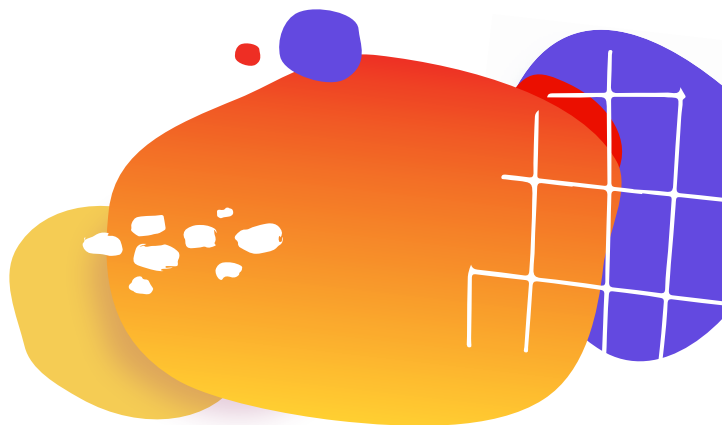
We hope you'll make A/B testing a regular part of your email marketing program. Once you've conducted one successful A/B, keep going. You could test more variants of the first element you tested, move on to something else, or even repeat the same A/B test for different audiences.

Want to learn more about email marketing and A/B testing?

[The Definitive Guide to Engaging Email Marketing](#)

[Acing the A/B Test on-demand webinar](#)

[Automate Your Email Strategy on-demand webinar](#)



¹<https://www.custora.com/pulse>

²<https://www.campaignmonitor.com/blog/email-marketing/2019/05/shocking-truth-about-how-many-emails-sent/>

³[https://www.barilliance.com/email-marketing-statistics/#:~:text=Average%20Email%20Conversion%20Rates%20\(CR\)%20Statistics%20Over%20Time,-The%20first%20thing&text=The%20average%20conversion%20rate%20peaked,respectable%2015.11%25%20conversion%20in%202020.](https://www.barilliance.com/email-marketing-statistics/#:~:text=Average%20Email%20Conversion%20Rates%20(CR)%20Statistics%20Over%20Time,-The%20first%20thing&text=The%20average%20conversion%20rate%20peaked,respectable%2015.11%25%20conversion%20in%202020.)

