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# *Use These 11 Easy Tips To Make Your Direct Mail Letter More Readable ...And You'll See An Increase In Response*

By Hugh Chewning

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When we write a successful direct mail letter, we're creating a conversation between the letter signer and the recipient. A conversation that persuades the reader to take a certain action.

But to persuade the reader, you must first get them to read your letter.

Here are 11 easy formatting tips that will make your letter more "inviting," easier to read, and generate greater response.

1. Make the letter look like a letter. In most cases, you'll want to print the letter on the organization or company's letterhead. Practically everyone will recognize the letter as a "mass mailing" but create the perception of a personal letter.
2. Include a salutation. You wouldn't start a conversation without a greeting so include a salutation with your letter. And assign title codes. There is nothing more *impersonal* than "Dear Mr. Tom Jones." (Even if you only have title codes for half your prospects,



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use them. Addressing half of your letters by name is better than not properly addressing 100% of the names.)

3. Use wide margins and double space between paragraphs. And don't justify your right margins. Flush left, ragged to the right.
4. Use a serif type for your letter copy – Georgia, Courier and Times Roman are examples. (Serif type has the little “feet” at the bottom and is proven to enhance reading flow and reduce eye strain.) Check your newspaper or any book on your bookshelf. They all use a serif font enhance readability.
5. Keep your paragraphs short. You want to vary your paragraph length to keep your copy interesting and flowing. But as a rule of thumb, limit each paragraph to no more than five lines.
6. Always indent your paragraphs. Eye-camera studies show that indented paragraphs “catch” the eye moving down the page and make the letter more readable.
7. Single space the letter. Double space between paragraphs.
8. Don't end a page with a complete sentence. Look at your newspaper. To finish practically any article, you must turn the page and that's exactly what you want the reader to do with your letter – keep reading toward the final call to action.
9. When using abbreviations, always spell the word out when first used. For example, rather than beginning a letter with "ACLU." you would write, "American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). You'll lose momentum if the reader must turn back to the start of the letter to search for the abbreviation's meaning.
10. When using "handwritten" notes in the margin and/or underlining, be sure the letter signer uses the same pen used to sign the letter. This is one letter, written by one person, to one other person. Make it believable.
11. Use nothing smaller than 12-point type (except for disclaimers). This isn't an eye exam.

Formatting your letter correctly isn't enough to guarantee a successful mailing. But it will make a measurable improvement in results. And when you're

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writing, remember that you're trying to communicate, not impress. Write in a conversational style as if you were speaking to the recipient face-to-face.

You're writing one letter to one person. Good direct mail is an "I" to "you" medium. Not "us" and "we's." And don't be afraid to use incomplete sentences, contractions, or a preposition at the end of a sentence. You're going to be judged by results – not grammar.

As direct mail copywriters, we can't close the sale without getting the prospect to read our letter. Use each of these proven tips to make your letter easier to read and you'll see a positive impact with your response.

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