



phrasee

Artificial intelligence.
Human language.
Awesome.

Email subject lines that sell



"Brevity is the soul of wit" ...

That wise dude was right! Saying something in a small space is difficult.

The email subject line is one of the most important elements of any email marketing campaign.

In many cases, the success or failure of a campaign hinges in large part upon the quality of the subject line attached to it.

There are a few reasons for this:

- With industry-wide open rates hovering well below the 30% mark (and in most cases, far below it), the email subject line is the only part of many email marketing campaigns that most subscribers will ever see.
- The email subject line is often the most important factor in making the crucial decision of whether or not to open an email.
- Modern inboxes are crowded places. Many brands are vying for the same subscriber attention, and a well-crafted email subject line is often your best chance to stand out from the crowd and drive engagement.
- Do the math: Better subject line language + effective split testing = more opens, clicks, conversions and revenue.

...or so said some old English guy who never wrote an email subject line.

A lot of effort goes into creating an email marketing campaign, from the design of the body copy to the landing page and offers. However, all of this effort is for nothing if an email remains in an inbox unopened. Through tracking millions of human interactions with email subject lines, Phrasee has found that using high-quality, diverse subject line language can significantly boost the revenues generated from an email campaign.

The ways in which consumers interact with marketing emails and their subject lines seem to change with the weather, making it difficult for brands to keep up with the trends. Marketers often put their hope in trusting a copywriter... and pray their gut instinct gets it right. But those old ways of thinking just don't cut it anymore.

This report contains nuggets of information about the best practices that brands should be putting in place to create email subject lines that sell.

Happy reading!

The final word on **subject line length**

When it comes to building a good email subject line that generates results, there are much more important things to worry about than length.

People love to focus on email subject line length as an important factor in email subject line performance. There are plenty of blog posts out there on the subject. Why? Because unlike many other of the elements that make up an email subject line, email subject line length is easy to measure!

Having analyzed the performance of millions of subject lines, Phrasee has found that subject line length has a smaller impact on email marketing performance than people realize.

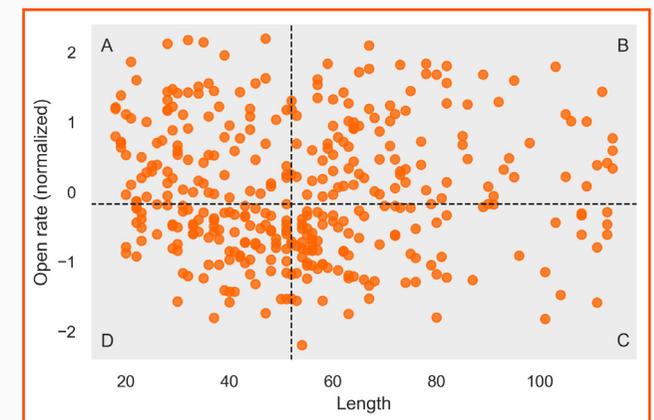
This scatterplot shows subject line length on the X axis, and performance on the Y axis.

There are short subject lines that perform well (quadrant A), and long subject lines that perform well (quadrant B).

Conversely, sometimes long ones don't do well (quadrant C) — and also, sometimes short ones are poor as well (quadrant D).

In short, there are effective short email subject lines and effective long email subject lines, and everything in between.

Relationship between subject line length and email open rate



The important takeaway is this: length is one feature of a subject line, but length in itself doesn't determine if subject lines are good or bad.

Treats, not tricks

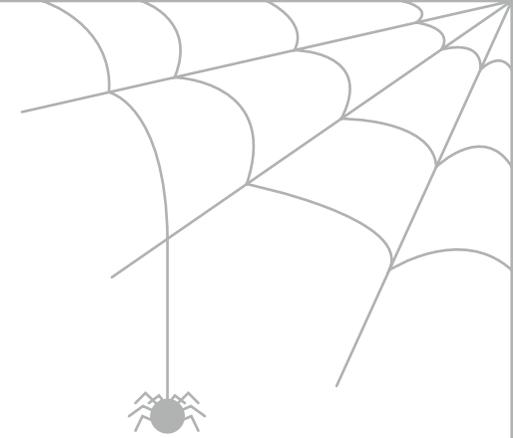
Nobody likes being tricked.

Using spammy, dishonest messaging in your email subject lines is bad for business. While including overly generous offers in email subject lines may generate a short-term uplift in opens, consumers catch on to such spurious tactics quickly.

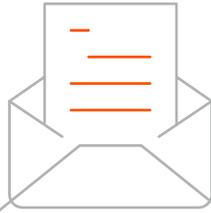
If the value promised in your email subject lines isn't matched by the value delivered in your email's body copy, all you'll succeed in doing is annoying your subscribers and making it less likely that they'll open your emails in the future. Worse still, such tactics can land your emails in the spam folder, resulting in increased unsubscribes.

The biggest risk is using misleading subject lines. As an example, consider a subject line that says "Hi [Name]: regarding your recent order" and the email body contains "We'd love for you to place another one!". The open rate for this email would probably be very high since people are likely to think that the company is trying to get in touch with them specifically. However, a lot of recipients would unsubscribe after they realize it was just a cheap trick. In order to keep unsubscribes to a minimum, make sure that the body of an email follows naturally from the subject line.

Protecting your sender reputation and your long-term relationships with subscribers is worth a lot more than any short-term uplift in performance that dishonest subject line language could ever offer.

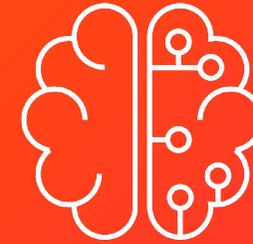


Avoid spam



Fact: nobody likes spam. That's why constructing your brand's email subject lines to look as un-spammy as possible is crucial to email marketing success. To do this you must write in your brand's tone of voice and remember that there is a human being on the other end of this message.

While "spamminess" as a quality of language is difficult to quantify, we all know it when we see it. Subject lines in all CAPS, excessive use of punctuation, and other lazy, attention-grabbing tricks are generally a bad idea. However, every audience is different, and it is only through experimenting and ongoing multivariate testing that you'll learn where your audience's spam boundaries lie.



EMOTIONS MATTER.

Emotions matter when it comes to marketing.

Read about our study on unethical marketing practices and why brands should swap pressure for positivity for long-term success.

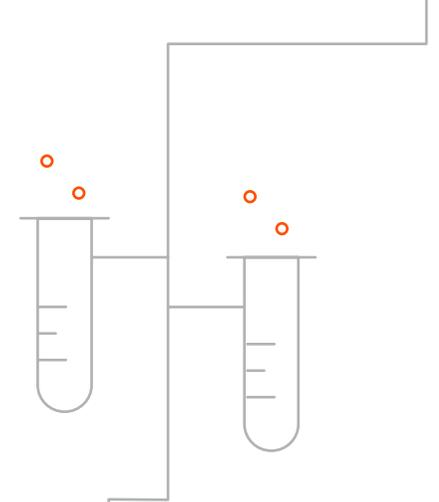
phrasee.co/emotions-matter

Multivariate testing

If you aren't already running multivariate tests on your email subject lines, you should be.

While there is some value in traditional "A/B" split testing two subject line variants to determine which one is most effective on an audience, more robust multivariate testing models involving several subject line variants yield much more useful data. Phrasee, for example, typically run tests on 10 subject line variants for every campaign to produce rigorous results.

Ongoing multivariate testing is the most effective strategy for determining what kind of subject lines work best on your brand's unique audience. Just remember to make sure that you have a robust system in place to learn from the results of your tests so that you can apply those learnings to your future subject lines.



You can read more about multivariate testing with Phrasee's ultimate guide:

phrasee.co/mvt-guide

Which performance metric matters most?

Is it opens, clicks, or conversions?

Email subject line split testing best practice is to always optimize towards higher open rates, rather than further-down-the-funnel metrics like clicks or conversions. The ultimate goal is to increase revenue. There is no doubt about that. However, there is a practical reason why open rates are so important.

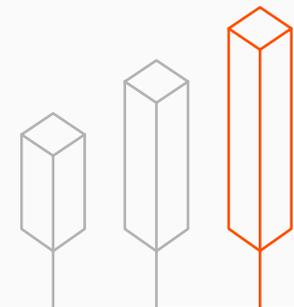
Conversions are relatively rare events, making them more susceptible to being swayed by randomness and noise. Perhaps there is someone on the list who places a single large order every year. They are randomly assigned a test group, making that whole segment look artificially strong.

Open rates are a more robust measurement since the sample size (the number of people involved) is orders of magnitude higher than the number of people who click or place an order. However, open rates are a good proxy for clicks and orders, since opens are a necessary step in the sales funnel.

To make a long story short, under most circumstances, the split test open rate is the strongest indicator of an email campaign's revenue potential.

Statistically, optimizing towards clicks or conversions rather than open rates reduces long-term expected profit, so stick to open rates as your subject line performance metric of choice.

Read more: [→ phrasee.co/metrics-matter](https://phrasee.co/metrics-matter)



Emoji or eNOji?!

Emojis are but one form of language used in a subject line. You could also ask: should brands be using imperative verb tenses? Should they be using second-person personalization? What about discounts? Or multi-clausal phrase structures? The answer to all of these questions is yes... and no. No one linguistic feature is the secret sauce. Much like anything else, emojis exist within the context of a larger piece of language, so isolating it as a simple “emoji or eNOji” question is a fool’s errand.

Read more about the impact of emojis on email marketing performance here:

phrasee.co/emoji-or-enoji



To determine how extensive emoji use is in the email marketing field, and more specifically in marketing email subject lines, Phrasee analyzed 2 million unique English language email subject lines sent worldwide in the past 12 months.

The top 20 emojis are:

1		2		3		4	
5		6		7		8	
9		10		11		12	
13		14		15		16	
17		17		19		20	

Language diversity

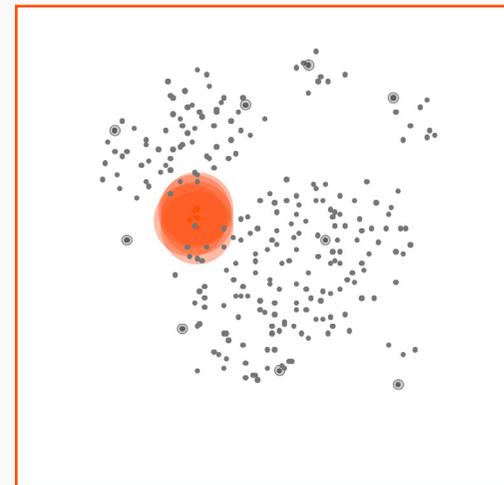


Linguistic diversity + effective multivariate testing = email open rate uplift

Re-using the same words, phrases and syntax, or targeting the same sentiments in your email subject lines will offer diminishing email marketing performance returns over time. Experimenting with new language elements and testing out new ways to deliver your brand's messages through diverse email subject line language is a smart approach to email marketing.

Phrasee's data has shown that multivariate testing email subject lines using a diverse set of subject line language will, on average, lead to an open rate uptick of 5% - 10%.

Phrasee's tool calculates your language diversity score



Your coverage* score is:



Want to see how your copywriting stacks up in today's modern inbox?
Try out Phrasee's subject line language check tool:

phrasee.co/language-calculator

The AI effect



The ongoing writing, multivariate testing, and optimization of email subject lines is time-consuming and difficult. Luckily, artificial intelligence has made doing so more practical and effective than ever before.

Phrasee is the world's most effective AI-powered copywriting tool. It was designed to apply data science and evidence-based reasoning to the problem of writing email subject lines that drive consumer engagement and generate the opens, clicks, and conversions that make modern email marketing successful.

People put a lot of thought into their subject lines – but more often than not, it's not thinking and time well spent. People rarely follow a structured process to come up with new subject lines, and when they do, their internal heuristics are over-run with pre-existing bias. There are machines that are more suited to the task than humans. The humans who realize this will free up their time and thought processes for other tasks, and will let the machines take care of the subject line.

Some of the world's biggest brands like Virgin Atlantic, eBay and Groupon have already implemented AI-driven solutions into their email subject line strategies and are generating millions of dollars in incremental revenue as a result.

Wish your brand had results like these?

Well, this one belongs to JOANN:

↑ 10%
email open uplift

Phrasee helped Domino's achieve this:

↑ 57%
email click uplift

And this impressive result belongs to Virgin Holidays:

\$Millions
in incremental revenue

...and your results can be awesome too!

Discover how Phrasee is empowering customers with AI-powered copywriting:

➔ phrasee.co/case-studies

Empower your marketing with AI-powered copywriting.

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Awesome.**

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