

Top Ten Tips on Writing Letters and Emails That Sell

There's nothing new about the art of persuasion. Two thousand years ago, the Roman politician and philosopher Cicero said, "To persuade an audience, you need to inform, to charm and to stir the emotions." A good letter will connect with the reader on an emotional level in a way that not only makes them see 'what's in it for them' but also why they **need** what you're offering them. It will also give them facts that are relevant and keep them interested. We apply over 30 'rules' to our copy. These are the key ones.

1. The headline or email subject must contain a benefit and be relevant to the reader.
2. The structure: say what you are going to say, say it, say what you said.
3. The style: write as if you are talking to a person you know (try reading it out loud).
4. Talk benefits not features (what does it mean to the reader, what's in it for the reader) and emphasise a few key phrases with bold type or colour.
5. Make an emotional connection with the reader (greed and fear stir the emotions) and use emotive language ('you'll love this new play' 'Do you want to live longer?').
6. Keep the words simple- avoid meaningless adjectives and trendy language - and keep sentences and paragraphs short.
7. Use a testimonial or a guarantee.
8. Make an offer (Think how well shops do with their Buy One get One Free offers or Get money off your next purchase).
9. Make it easy to respond and make sure the reader acts immediately.
10. End with a P.S. 4 out of 5 people read a P.S. before anything else so it should summarise the key points but also, like any P.S., it should say something new.

Two general pieces of advice and both are to do with re-reading.

Firstly, great novels, plays, film scripts all get re-written again and again before they are finally presented to the public. For example, this is one of the most famous opening sentences in English literature: "It was a bright, cold day in April, and the clocks were striking thirteen." It's from **1984** by George Orwell, but that wasn't the first version. An earlier manuscript reads: "It was a cold, blowy day in early April, and a million radios were striking thirteen." "Don't think you are better than the great writers- **find the time to revise your copy**, let disinterested parties look at it and comment. Be ruthless- don't get too attached to your first thoughts or a phrase that sounds good but doesn't work.

Secondly, **proof your work**. When it's all been finished and laid out and ready to print, check it word by word for grammar, spelling, missing words, duplicated words and all the other things that go wrong between your brain and the page.