

Your 9-Point Checklist for Writing Great After-School Emails

NOTE: Scroll down to read **5 Golden Rules to Follow When Emailing Parents**

Determine your target audience

- Who makes up the majority of your audience? What are they interested in?
- **HINT:** It's probably parents, but think about your target parent, what makes them tick?

Decide on your goal(s) for the email

- Pick a specific result you want to see from your email. It could be something measurable like 'drive camp registrations' or something ephemeral such as 'communicate the social-emotional benefits of our program'. Keep your goal in mind as you go through the rest of the steps.
- **HINT:** One goal is best, two is fine, but never three or more

Pick one primary topic to write about

- Most after-school providers write about too many different things in their emails. Fewer topics make for better emails.
- **HINT:** Scroll down to Rule #5 for guidance on choosing topic(s)

Decide what you want readers to take away from your email

- What do you want readers to understand about your topic(s) that will help you achieve your goal(s)? Try and put yourself in your audience's shoes. What information do they need?
- **HINT:** If you're trying to drive registrations, focus on more mundane information like target age, pick up and drop off, and location. The first hurdle to overcome with parents is usually, 'Does this work with my schedule or not'. See the 'Easy Email Hack' in Rule #1 for reference.

□ Write a catchy subject line that focuses on your primary topic

- The subject line of your email is the first thing your recipients will see. Make sure it grabs their attention and encourages them to open the email.
- **HINT:** Scroll down to Rule #4 for guidance on writing subject lines for parents

□ Craft your message

- Keep in mind that parents skim emails. Make sure your message is concise and focuses on the most important information. Use bullet points, headers, indents, and formatted text to make the email scannable.
- **HINT:** See Rule #1 and Rule #5 for guidance on crafting your message

□ Include a clear call-to-action

- Decide what action you want your recipients to take and make it clear in your email. Whether it's signing up for a class or making a purchase, include a button or link that makes it easy for them to do so.
- **HINT:** Think carefully about whether to send parents to your website or directly to your HiSawyer booking link

□ Test your email

- Before you schedule your email, test it to make sure it looks good on different devices.
- **HINT:** Mailchimp offers a preview mode that allows you to see how your email will look before you send it.

□ Schedule your email

- Send emails when parents are most likely to see them.
- **HINT:** Scroll down to Rule #4 for guidance around scheduling emails

5 Golden Rules to Follow When Emailing Parents

Rule #1: Parents don't read, they skim

How many times have you told a parent 'that information is on our website'?

Probably too many times! Or maybe you didn't tell them, you just thought it frustratedly to yourself.

"Parents don't read" is a statement I've heard from after-school program operators more times than I can count.

And that is absolutely true!

Parents don't read, they skim.

Parents live busy and chaotic lives. They don't have time to read your carefully crafted information. They're on the lookout for information that they can use, right now, to solve the following problems:

- I need to keep my kid busy during XX hours of the day, XX days of the week
- I need my kid's schedule to align with my schedule
- I need activities that my kid will benefit from and enjoy
- I need to stay within my childcare budget

So when you're writing your emails, make sure to include information parents need and use lots of formatting like headlines, bolded text, emojis, and paragraph breaks to make sure the important information stands out.

EASY EMAIL HACK:

The next time you announce a class or camp, build your email around the following **'who, what, when, where, why, how'** format:

NAME OF CLASS OR CAMP:

- Who is this class or camp for
 - Kids ages X-Y
- What kind of class or camp is it
 - Description of camp
- When is it
 - Dates and times
- Where is it
 - Include pick up and drop off locations
- Why sign up
 - Write about the benefits of participating in your camp
- How to sign up
 - Include registration link

Rule #2: Send More Emails

Parents want to hear from you way more often than they do.

Every time you update the schedule, make changes to an existing program, or launch a new initiative you should send out multiple* (yes, you read that right, multiple) emails to your audience about it.

Parents are constantly trying to figure out their schedules and their kids' schedules. You have ready-made solutions for how their kids can spend time in enriching ways and parents want to know about them.

You are not bothering them by sending them emails, I promise. If they don't want your emails they will unsubscribe, everyone else will be grateful for your prompt and timely communication.

Fun Fact: We send out over 10,000 emails every week for our clients and consistently see open rates around or above 50%.

***Why send out multiple emails?**

Parents need to be reminded to take action, especially if you have a time-sensitive deadline coming up. Parents will have every intention to sign up, get distracted, and simply forget (their lives are chaotic, remember?). Send out multiple emails to remind them of what's going on!

Rule #3: Write Descriptive Subject Lines

Parents don't read, they skim!

This is also true when they're looking through their inbox. They're skimming subject lines with one simple question in mind, 'Is this relevant to me right now?'

Your subject line should answer that question.

Here are a few real examples of subject lines we've seen that parent's probably won't click on:

- Child Care & Early Learning with [Name of School]
- We're so excited!
- See what we have coming up!
- Spring Camp
- You're invited!

Here are a few real examples of subject lines we've sent that have gotten open rates of 60% or higher:

- [Reminder] Early Bird Summer Camp Pricing Ends Tomorrow
- [Spots Open] Winter Birthday Party Packages Are Now Available
- [Updates] New Classes Starting In March
- Last Chance to Sign Up for Camp Next Week
- [Coming Up] Try Classes for Free During Our Demo Week

The difference between the two groups of subject lines is that the second set all tell parents what their respective emails are about and why they're relevant.

All our subject lines include the program the email is about (Summer camp, birthday party, new classes) and a time-sensitive reason to open the email (Ends Tomorrow, Now Available, Next Week, Coming Up).

Of course, not every email you send will have a time-sensitive trigger. But most of the time you've got something new coming up (next semester, next camp, summer camp, your next event) and including a 'time' element in the subject line is a great way to increase open rates.

What's with the brackets?

We like to use brackets [] in a lot of our subject lines because they make them more 'skimmable'. They're not necessary for a good subject line but they can be helpful.

Rule #4: Send Emails When Parents Will See Them

Here's the truth, there's no 'best time' to send emails. If you spend any time on the internet looking for an answer you'll come across a bunch of different opinions.

We have found that there is largely no difference in results, with a few notable exceptions:

- Don't send emails on Mondays or Fridays
- Don't send emails in the evening or at night (especially on weekends)

Our favorite time to send emails is on Thursday mornings.

Why? Because after sending tens of thousands of emails, Thursday mornings emerged as a time when we consistently see high open rates and levels of engagement.

Our second favorite time to send emails is Saturday or Sunday mornings.

NOTE: It's important to stay consistent with when you're sending your emails. That way, interested parents know when to expect your updates.

Rule #5: Keep your emails focused on a single topic

We're all guilty of trying to cram too much into one email.

- Sign up for Summer Camp
- Check out this new class next week
- Here's a cool event coming up
- Don't forget we're clearing out the lost and found
- Look at what one of our students made
- Oh and by the way, follow us on Instagram

Remember that we're writing for busy parents and keep your emails targeted and focused. If you want to talk about 4-5 different things, great, write several different emails.

Yes, you CAN get away with secondary topics!

In a perfect world, we'd stick to one topic per email and be done with it, but the reality is that after-school programs have so much going on that sticking to just one topic per email is really hard to do.

You should choose one primary topic to be the focus of the email and mention in the subject line. If you're announcing a new class or program, for example, that should be the primary focus of the email.

But let's say you also have a holiday camp coming up that you'd like to remind parents about. In that case, it's ok to mention it briefly at the top or bottom of your email. As long as you're using headlines and formatting so parents can skim your email and look for content that's relevant to them, secondary topics are ok.

Once you start going over 2 topics (3 MAX) you should consider breaking your email up into multiple emails to be sent out over the course of a week or two.