10 Tips to Optimize Your Calls to Action
The point of any marketing message is to get a response, and to get a response you need the coveted trifecta of email marketing:

- A strong subject line to entice readers to open your email.
- A solid offer to hold their interest.
- A clear call to action (CTA) to get them to click.

We’ve talked about what makes a great subject line and what kinds of offers add value, so now let’s discuss calls to action, or CTAs. Ready to make them work for you? Read on to learn how you can get more action from your calls to action.
What is a Call to Action?

A call to action (CTA) is a button or link prompting readers to click. Think back on the emails you receive from the brands you support. How do they entice you to read further? Perhaps with captivating images and compelling copy – but they also almost certainly have a killer call-to-action button or link that shows you exactly where to click for more information, or to take action.

How does a CTA prompt someone to click?

CTAs generally use bright colors and thoughtful placement, but the best ones use precise, actionable verbiage to attract attention. A few examples:

1. Read the eBook
2. Start my trial
3. Register now
4. Take 50% off
Why should I use a CTA button?

Buttons are eye catching and clean, making them a simple way to improve conversions. We recently did some testing and learned that using a button-based CTA increased our click-through rate by 28% over a link-based CTA.

How can I get more action from my Call to Action?

Glad you asked. Read on, friends. We’ve got 10 tips for you: 5 for writing your CTA text and 5 for designing your buttons. Enjoy!
1. Use action-oriented text

They’re called “calls to action”, so be sure to use striking, actionable text to draw readers in. Skip boring words (like submit, enter, and even click here) in favor of more compelling verbs (e.g. get, read, download, and try), and couple those with text relating to your specific offer. Here are some examples:

- Read the eBook
- Reserve your spot
- Download the Whitepaper
2. Make your button text large and legible

Your button text should be large enough to read easily, but not large enough to be considered obnoxious.

Users often have a distaste – conscious or subconscious – for threateningly large lettering. So be sure your button text is big enough to draw attention, but don’t go overboard.
3. Keep it short

We’ve already mentioned including large, action-oriented text, so this one seems like a no-brainer. If you’ve got large, actionable text, you’ll need to keep the copy short. Two or three words is best, but no more than five or six.
4. Try using first person

Unbounce shared a study showing that changing button text from second person (“Start your free trial”) to the first person (“Start my free trial”) resulted in a 90% increase in clicks. Those results are dependant on products and personality, but numbers like those certainly warrant a test.

So go for it: Put yourself in your customer’s shoes. Try changing your CTA button to first person – Reserve my spot! Get my eBook!
5. Create urgency

Including a sense of urgency in your call to action buttons helps garner those high click-through rates. Even just adding the word “now” builds some urgency – "Don’t just do it: do it now". Here are some examples of button text with extra urgency.

- Today only: 50% off!
- RSVP now (only 8 spots left!)
- Get it now
03 5 tips for Calls to Action design

1. Use bright colors

Button color matters. You want something that’s eye-catching without being too distracting. While green and orange buttons are said to perform best, your button colors will depend on your brand. Use a contrasting color to be sure your CTA stands out. Not sure what color to choose? Testing is your best bet.
2. Add white space

Be sure to include a healthy bit of white space around your CTA buttons. The extra white space helps create a visual break and draws the reader’s attention right where you want it. It’s a clean, simple way to make that button stand out. The extra white space works best for your mobile readers too, as it allows a clear area for fingers to click.
3. Keep it above the fold

You’ll want to make sure to have a CTA button near the top of your email so users never miss it. It increases the scannability of your emails and calls attention to your main message or offer.

Vital information – like your CTA – should always be above the fold.
4. Watch your hierarchy

Sometimes you’ll have other links, images, and buttons that are not your main call to action. Be sure those extras are not distracting.

The entire goal of your email is to get someone to click on your #1 CTA button, so any other details need to take a backseat. Try using gray-scale buttons or matching colors for any secondary CTAs.

Your main call to action should be the biggest and brightest, and less is usually more when it comes to choices.
5 tips for Calls to Action design

5. Follow a natural progression

We read top to bottom and left to right, which creates logical places for CTA buttons: buttons placed towards the bottom or to the right of content tend to outperform other placements. This makes sense from a messaging standpoint too.

For example, you’d want to put a “register now” button in a spot where a user would find it after reading about your event – not before, as it would make no sense for users to register for something they know nothing about. Besides, you never want to make users backtrack to click a button.
Bonus: test your buttons

Your calls to action are what draws people in and makes them click, so it’s vital to get them right.

If you haven’t done much in the way of A/B testing, call to action buttons are a great place to start (even small changes can have dramatic effects). After all, there’s no ultimate button that works best all the time. So go for it: Test color copy, placement, and style.

Remember, if you can question it, you can test it!
Call to action buttons are the #1 driver of click-throughs on your emails, website, and other marketing materials.

Tools like Campaign Monitor’s Bulletproof Email Buttons make it easy to create great looking buttons that work across all devices, but the copy, design, and placement of these buttons are still up to you. Keep our tips in mind as you create and test buttons to rock your upcoming campaigns.
Get started now!

Sign up for a FREE trial of Campaign Monitor. Test drive all of our features – including CTA buttons and testing – and watch your click-throughs rise.

www.campaignmonitor.com/signup