

YMCA EMAIL COMMUNICATIONS

Email is more than a communication tool for the YMCA. It's a vital bridge that connects the YMCA to its diverse audiences and ensures that our mission to strengthen communities is consistent. The YMCA of Metropolitan Dallas uses Constant Contact for mass email communication and Outlook for internal communications. Each branch/program must have between 2-4 (minimum-maximum) trained staff supporting email creation in Constant Contact.

OBJECTIVES OF EMAIL MARKETING

YMCA email campaigns serve multiple purposes:

- **Engage:** Build interest and enthusiasm around programs, events, and community offerings.
- **Inform:** Disseminate timely and essential updates, promoting transparency and awareness.
- **Transform:** Encourage action—be it signing up, donating, or attending an event.
- **Retain:** Foster strong, long-term relationships through ongoing, meaningful communication.

Your emails should sound like the Y: approachable and mission-focused.

- **Welcoming:** Make everyone feel they belong.
- **Genuine:** Use honest and clear language.
- **Nurturing:** Offer support and encouragement.
- **Hopeful:** Inspire optimism and positive action.
- **Determined:** Showcase commitment to community well-being.

WRITING AND DESIGNING EMAILS

When writing emails, clarity and focus are key:

- **Keep It Simple:** Deliver clear messaging with supporting content.
- **Visuals Matter:** Use real images from your Y to build trust and relatability.
- **Action-Oriented:** Use verbs and direct language in your calls-to-action (CTAs).
- **Person-First Language:** Reflect dignity and avoid assumptions.
- **Maintain Brand:** Use provided template or create brand compliant emails layouts.

Structure your emails for ease and engagement:

- **Subject Line:** Make it compelling and relevant; avoid jargon.
- **Preheader Text:** Expand on your subject to tease the content inside.
- **Header Image:** Reinforce branding with consistent logos and color palettes.
- **Body Text:** Use headers, short paragraphs, and bullet points for easy scanning.
- **Footer:** Include essential links, contact information, and clear unsubscribe options according to CAN-SPAM regulations. Constant Contact requires these and all accounts are up to date.

Inclusivity extends to email design:

- Add alt text for images.
- Maintain font sizes of at least 14–16pt.
- Text color should be significantly lighter or darker than the background color to improve readability
- Ensure compliance with CAN-SPAM regulations (e.g., accurate sender info, opt-out mechanisms, avoid using all caps, too many exclamation points, and gimmicky

words/phrases) like “Free”, 50% off, etc..

TIMING, SCHEDULING, AND TESTING

Timing is crucial for engagement:

- **Newsletters:** Monthly or biweekly, sent consistently.
- **Event and Program Promotions:** Start 6 weeks out; leveraging newsletters first and then sending targeted emails 4 weeks out, 2 weeks out, and the week of the event or program registration date. For events, send a thank you email to attendees after the event’s conclusion.
 - There may be contingencies to this, but if you haven’t met your goal 3 weeks out, consult with the marketing team for additional ideas to encourage attendance.
- **Urgent Notices:** Send as needed but sparingly.
- **Respect Inbox Space:** Avoid frequent emails that could lead to fatigue or unsubscribes. Sending more than 4-5 emails a month is too many (across all program and facility communications)
- **Preview emails:** Send a test email to your department head/Executive Director prior to sending it to your audience to ensure accuracy and appropriate grammar.
- **Always use segmented lists.** Avoid emailing entire database, 3rd party list, list from other branches, or sending email from centralized departments (ex: Sports and Aquatics), unless directed by those departments with a broad message. Very few messages qualify for this wide an audience.
- **Constant Contact is not our CRM.** Lists should **not** stay in the account for more than a month. Deleting lists and contacts keep costs low and reduce sending to the wrong audience. (Mark “Delete List and Contacts” when cleaning up your account)

A/B test and experiment to discover what resonates:

- Subject lines with and without personalization
- Button vs. text CTAs
- Image-heavy vs. text-heavy layouts
- Optimal send times and days of the week

TIP: Only test one of the above elements at a time to make it simple to identify the aspect that boosted your email’s performance.

PERFORMANCE AND METRICS

All branches are expected to evaluate effectiveness of each email and conduct a monthly analytics review using these benchmarks:

- **Open Rate:** 20% or higher is a strong result for most emails; but your newsletter should have a much higher open rate, around 40+%
- **Click-Through Rate (CTR):** 2–5% is the typical goal.
- **Conversion Rate:** Depends on CTA—track sign-ups, donations, registrations.
- **Unsubscribe Rate:** Keep below 1% to maintain list health.
 - 26% of respondents unsubscribe due to receiving too many emails.
- **Bounced email:** Branch staff should remove bounced emails from CORE

Use these monthly reviews to set actionable goals, adjust your content, and reach your engagement goals.

ENHANCEMENT TIPS

Storytelling and Personalization

- Feature real quotes and imagery from members, volunteers, or staff
- Use first names when possible to personalize messages. (Dear ____,)
- Share testimonials and impact stories to humanize the message.

Quality Control Checklist

- Proofread thoroughly.
- Double-check links and CTA functionality.
- Preview across devices and email clients.
- Get a second set of eyes before sending mass emails.

RESOURCES

- [Y-USA Inclusive Language Style Guide](#): Ensure respectful, affirming language.
- [YMCA Brand Guide](#): Maintain brand integrity across platforms.
- Email Tools: [Constant Contact Blog](#)
- MailChimp: [Best Practices for Mailchimp Emails](#), [Requirements and Best Practices for Audiences](#), [The Right Email Cadence For Your Business](#)

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

How often should I send emails? Generally, about 1-4 times a month but at least once a month to stay relevant. This is across all departments, your facility, including your newsletter.

How often does the AO send emails? AO Newsletter is sent the first Friday of every month and branches are expected to send their newsletter on the 2nd, 3rd, or 4th week following the AO newsletter. Marketing sends promotional emails once a week to segmented program audiences.

What happens when I see a lot of unsubscribes? 1% is considered a bad unsubscribe rate. Evaluate how many emails are being sent to your audience. Consider how relevant your email content has been for the audience (e.g. are members without children receiving youth sports emails?)

How far back should directors be allowed to go to pull emails for an advertising blast? 18 months is recommended. Pulling lists from further back can increase the chance that your content is irrelevant and encourage unsubscribes.

Is pulling participants from another branch's program allowed? No, but if you think you need to make an exception, reach out to our team.

Is it fair to expect targeted list pulling? Yes, it is expected that you pull a targeted list 48 hours or less from sending email. A successfully targeted list considers your audience's engagement type (members, participants, donors, etc.), activity (event attendee, volunteer involvement, last times they used the facility, when they last engaged in a program), their age and the age of those in their household – anything that will help you correlate the relevance of your email to them.

How often should we send our e-newsletter? E-newsletter should be sent at least once a month. We recommend your monthly newsletter anchor any email campaigns. Branch staff should collaborate to put things into the newsletter to avoid dedicated emails unless it is a reminder. Branches can determine audience but be cognizant of additional emails that are going out.

What if my Sport and Swim registration are low. Can we send an email? Sports and Aquatics marketing are centralized. No branch account should be sending dedicated sports or aquatics emails, unless directed by those departments. Emails about other programs should leverage the event/program promotion tips.

Is there a desired frequency for the best outcome? 2 or 3 a month? For upcoming events and program registration (outside of swim and sports), start 6 weeks out; leveraging newsletters first and then sending targeted emails 4 weeks out, 2 weeks out, and the week of the event or program registration date. Send a thank you email to attendees after the event's conclusion. Consults with the centralized sports or aquatics team on support for email support.

Should the local branch executives have the final say over the Constant Contact email schedule to be the "50,000 ft view" reviewer? It is great practice to test emails and review them before sending them. We advise send a test email to department head/Executive Director prior to sending to your audience to ensure accuracy and appropriate grammar.

YMCA EMAIL PLANNING TEMPLATE

Week	Focus	Audience	Owner	Notes
Week 1	AO Monthly Newsletter	All members and program participants	AO Communications Team	Branch template will be placed into the account following this email.
Week 2	Non-Aquatics or Sports Program/Event Push	Targeting List	Branch lead	If necessary
Week 3	Branch Monthly Newsletter	Members	Branch lead	Include facility reminders, testimonials, and upcoming events in the bottom section
Week 4	Non-Aquatics or Sports Program/Event Reminder	Targeting List	Branch lead	If necessary
Variable	Centralized Program	Targeting List	Centralized	Coordinate with centralized program team

