[Guide] Writing for Email Inboxes

Don't let your email be a victim of swipe, delete…

Essential strategies to improve email opens.

Our last article talked about the importance of brevity in marketing, this quick guide and checklist builds on that by looking at how you should write for email inbox previews taking into account email architecture, limited characters and space. Our research shows a well written subject line and preview can improve opens by 37%.

Email is still one of the most cost-effective channels to nurture your prospects if done right, but if you don't grab their attention quickly then you're one swift swipe and archive away from oblivion. They'll never see your gorgeously designed email let alone your jaw-dropping content – sad times 😢.

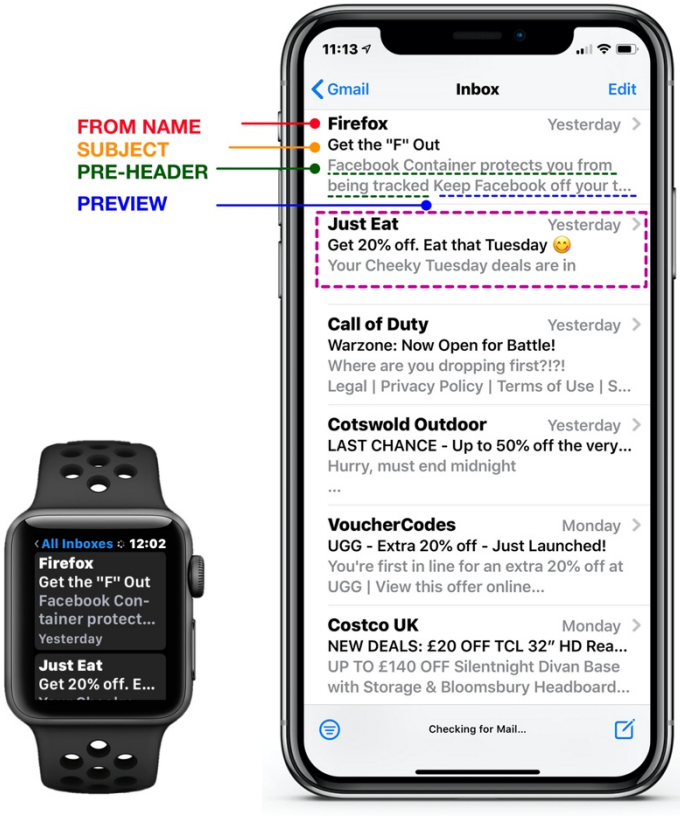
Go Grab your Phone

Or maybe you're using it anyway? Tear yourself away from this guide for a second and go look in your inbox, it will probably look something like the one yonder.

This is how the iPhone XS displays your emails with *From Name*, *Subject Line*, *Pre-Header* and a *Preview* snippet from the Body Copy.

Some devices show you more (maybe more preview space or body copy?), others may show you less – like the Apple Watch example - remember prospects can dispatch your carefully crafted emails with a mere flick of the wrist whilst on a treadmill.

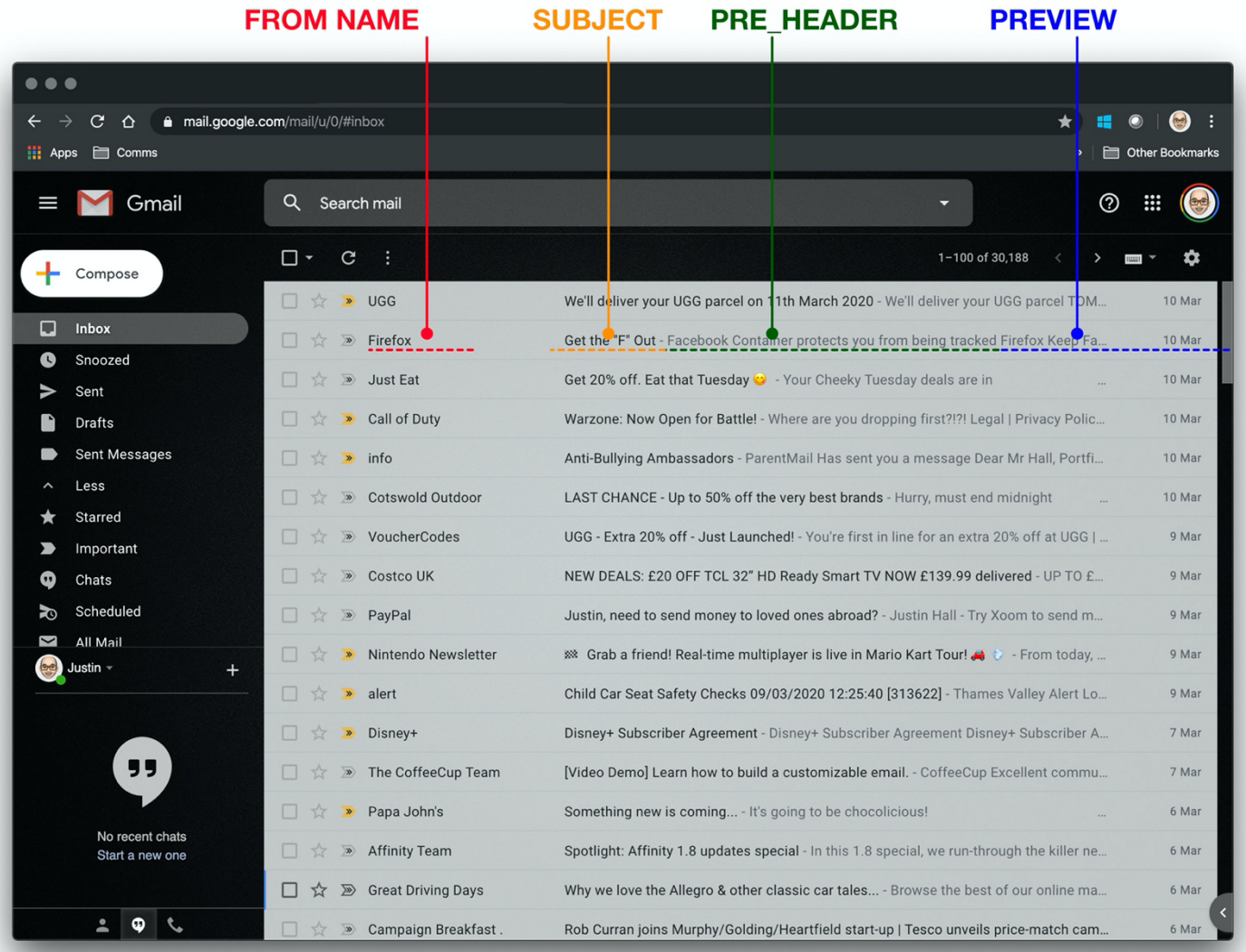
The point being we have a piddly number of characters to play with – oh and emoji's of course… 🔥



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Desktop View

Generally planning for the lowest common denominator (e.g. a mobile first strategy) is wise – if your copy works on an iPhone preview screen, it will probably work well in desktop view too (and Google Display, Facebook, LinkedIn for that matter):



Again, you can see the same components in the Gmail inbox, now just laid out horizontally rather than stacked, the importance of brevity and clarity is still the same.

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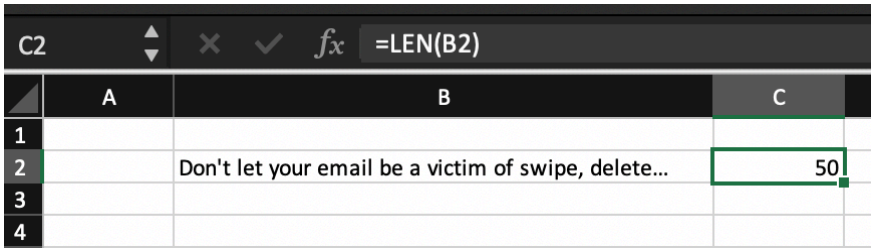
Make it Count

One of the biggest challenges with writing for email inboxes is character limits, you probably have a lot less space than you think – much less than Twitter. Less is more is generally a good mantra to live by in marketing, so working to these character limits is a no-brainer. It will help you get cut through in the inbox, distil your value proposition and can be re-used in inbound and other channels too.

Character Counts Guide

Inbox Element	Character Length	Example
From Name	25	**Justin Hall, Protocol** (22 chars)
Subject Line	45	[**Guide] Writing for Email Inboxes** (36 chars)
Pre-Header	50	**Don't let your email be a victim of swipe, delete…** (50 chars)
Hidden Preview	65	**Essential strategies to improve email opens.** (44 chars)

Life Hack: Get a quick character count by typing this into Excel,
`=LEN(B2)` , where B2 is your copy you want to count 😁



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Handling your Johnson

In the examples above you can see how the hierarchy of elements all work together, with iOS and Gmail pulling previews from the body copy as well.

We can go a step further and instead code our own preview (in the olden days we'd call that a Johnson Box), rather than pulling from the first line in the email itself by adding a 'hidden preview' which might be more concise and inbox friendly, by adding code like this to your email:

```
<div style="display:none;font-size:1px;color:#333333;line-height:1px;max-
height:0px;max-width:0px;opacity:0;overflow:hidden;">
  Essential strategies to improve email opens.
</div>
```

This will remain hidden in the actual email but will appear in the Inbox preview on most email clients in 2020 😃

5-Point Checklist

1	Make the Inbox elements work together	✅
2	Work strictly with character counts for inbox previews	✅
3	Use visual cues like [Guide] or Emoji's 💰	✅
4	Consider using Hidden Preview Code for brevity and clarity	✅
5	Send tests to both Mobile and Desktop devices	✅

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