

Tips for Email Accessibility

Font Size and Color

Fonts should be 15px at a minimum

Smaller fonts are difficult to read, especially on mobile devices.

Be aware of color contrast

For text to be readable it needs to have sufficient contrast with the background. In addition to color vision deficiency in some users, screens vary widely in size, resolution and contrast and may be viewed in a variety of lighting conditions. For ideal readability and accessibility, use black text on white background.

Make Your Email Scannable

Users rarely read emails (or anything digital) word by word. Rather, they scan the page for words, headlines, keywords, etc. This is done the same through assistive technology, which allows the user to tab through headers quickly to give context before they read in more detail.

- **Use paragraph returns and/or subheadings**
 - Chunk your text into topics and short paragraphs
- **Use bulleted lists where appropriate**
 - Bulleted lists break up and/or shorten large blocks of text, make complex information more understandable and highlight key points
- **Avoid center-aligned or justified paragraphs**
 - Most users scan top to bottom and left to right. Left-aligned paragraphs are easiest for all to read, while center-aligned or justified text/buttons can often be difficult for people with dyslexia to read.
- **Use bolding to highlight important words or phrases**
 - Call out important words or phrases so that users scanning can identify context quickly.

Links and Buttons

Clearly indicate what is a link

- **Links should always be indicated by a color different from the body text,** and with high enough contrast so that it stands out from the body text. (Simmons standard is blue or hex value: #0a60b0)
- **In addition** - links should be indicated by a secondary indicator: bold, underline or symbol (>).

Link text should be meaningful

Write link text so that it describes the content of the link target. Avoid using ambiguous link text, such as “here”, “click here”, “website”, “form”, etc.:

✗ To sign an image waiver, visit University Communications [here](#).

✓ Visit University Communications to complete an [image waiver form](#).

When linking to email addresses, indicate who/where the email is going:

✗ If you have questions, please contact University Communications [via email](#) or at 617-521-2110.

✓ If you have questions, please [email University Communications](#) or call 617-521-2110.

Social media handles should be live links

When referencing a person’s social media profile, make the profile name a live link to the profile page.

✗ Follow us @SimmonsUniv

✓ Follow us [@SimmonsUniv](#)

Button link text

Avoid using “click here for” in your button link text. The action is implicit.

✗ Not Recommended:

CLICK HERE FOR ZOOM LINK

✓ Good:

ZOOM LINK

✓ Better:

OPEN HOUSE ZOOM LINK

Headings

Avoid using link colors or underline to denote headings

If your heading is NOT a link, don't use your link color or underlining to show headings as these may be confused for links.

✗ [Academics](#)

For more than a century, Simmons University has offered pioneering undergraduate and graduate programs that combine theory, practice, and real-world experience that will challenge you to see more broadly, think more deeply, and prepare you for leadership in the world.

✗ [The journey starts here](#)

Located in the heart of Boston, Simmons is home to a respected women's undergraduate program, as well as coeducational graduate programs in nursing and health sciences, liberal arts, business, communications, social work, public health, and library and information science.

Images

Alt Text

Use an ALT attribute for all images. The ALT attribute attached to an image displays when the image doesn't load to help the user "see" the email if they have images off or if they are using a screen reader to read the email.

To correctly use the ALT attribute, the context of the image must be fully understood in relation to the content surrounding it:

- Describe the image as specifically as possible.
- Keep it short - under 125 characters.
- Don't include "image of", "picture of", etc.

✗ Not Recommended: "lab classroom"

✗ Not Recommended: "picture of lab instruction"

✓ Okay: "Student and faculty member working together in a scientific lab"

✓ Good: "Simmons student and faculty member working together in a scientific lab on campus"



Don't use images of text

Unless it is the use of a logo or wordmark.

Images of text for the sake of design (e.g., text overlaying a photo or stylized section headings) are not recommended. Users with images turned off or who are using assistive technology may miss some of the content/messaging.

Infographics, Data Tables and Event Flyers

Images with lots of information (e.g., infographics, event flyers or tables/graphs) should be fully explained in the body of the email.

- Infographics should be linked to an accessible or plain text version.
- For tables/graphs, provide an explanation of what the data set is meant to communicate to the user.
- Event flyers can be included, but should be presented as a thumbnail-style image to accompany the full event information. Another option is to include graphic elements from the flyer to create a look/feel similar to the flyer.
 - The ALT text for a flyer should be “flyer of event/program/etc” since the content of should be included in the email itself