

The College Alumni Programs Office (CAP) of the Harvard Alumni Association offers alumni broadcast email services to classes and student organizations. This document outlines the information CAP needs in order to create and send your email and the guidelines that govern the process.

Key Takeaways

- Expect at least a **4-business day turnaround time for reunion emails and two weeks for non-reunion emails** from when you request an email send to when it's sent out.
- Ensure your email serves a distinct purpose for your audience with no more than **one to two clear calls to action**.
- Email content should always be **concise, scannable, accessible, and properly edited**.

Benefits of HAA Email Marketing

Unlike personal email services (which limit the number of recipients you can email at once and put your email at greater risk to be classified as spam), the HAA can send a message to hundreds of alumni at once. Your email will be delivered in a way that prevents the recipients from seeing who else has received the same email, keeping email information private and avoiding 'reply-all' mistakes.

Getting Started and Value Proposition

Your first step should be to ask and answer the following questions:

- What is the email purpose and value proposition?
- What do you want readers to know and what action should they take?
- Who is your audience?
- What is your timeline?
- How many emails are you sending?

By determining a value proposition prior to generating your content, you will be well positioned to keep the email clear, concise, and appealing. You may also identify that an email isn't the right path forward depending on your goals. Save email communications for when they are to be the most impactful.

Audience

By identifying your audience in advance, you can determine ways to personalize email content to optimize engagement. Knowing your audience and catering to their needs will increase open rates and engagement. If it is unclear why a recipient is receiving an email, then you risk losing your ability to engage them in the future.

When people do not engage with emails or receive too many that are not of interest, it can cause a spam tag or unsubscribe to occur. When this happens, it not only opts the individual out from seeing our communications, but it also leaves a possible inability to reach that person's inbox in the future. Being strategic about what hits inboxes when will help keep our audience engaged in the long term.

HAA Broadcast Email Service

Timeline

The process of creating, testing, and proofreading your email takes time. Please make sure that content of your email is finalized before sending it to CAP. If you are in a non-reunion year, we ask that you reach out to us at least two weeks before you would like your email sent. If you are in a reunion year, we need four business days from the time we receive your finalized content to the time we can send to your classmates. Once the required information is received, CAP will build your email.

Content and Required Information

Content should be personal, meaningful, and accessible. It should be easy to engage with and scannable. Most importantly, you want to limit your number of calls to action to one or two. **The HAA has found that best performing emails are short, concise, and have one clear call to action.** Another consideration when it comes to content is the subject line, pre-header, and sender profile. The combination of these is what will entice recipients to open your email. Some quick pro-tips:

Sender profile

- Only use one name
- The more identifiable, the better
- Vary your senders

Subject line

- Keep it concise
- Works with the email content
- Deliver on its promise
- No longer than 25 to 30 characters

Pre-header

- Should complement your subject line
- Use it to tease additional information
- Keep under 100 characters

We'll need this information from you. See the sample emails on the following pages for reference.

- **Recipients:** The population you'd like to receive the email
- **Sender Profile:** The sender(s) of the email (e.g. Harvard College Class of '76, Sharon Smith AB '98).
- **Reply-to Email Address:** A personal email address or a class or group email address.
- **Subject Line:** The subject line. Should be 50 characters or fewer.
- **Pre-header:** This short line appears at the very top of the email and in the preview section on a mobile device; if the subject line is the email's title, think of the pre-header as the subtitle.
- **Header:** This optional line appears at the top of the email body before the salutation or image.
- **Salutation and To:** how you wish to address your recipients (e.g. Dear Tom, Hello Classmates)
- **Text:** The body of the email.

The HAA reserves the right to reject email content in accordance with University policies and best practices.

Number of Emails

Depending on your overall goals, you may be thinking about sending more than one email. Thinking through the number of sends and their cadence in advance will help you stay organized and communicate efficiently. Below is an example the number of sends the HAA typically suggests for individual class-based events.

1. General invite
2. Reminder
3. Confirmation

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Sender Profile → From: John Harvard, Class Secretary
Reply-to Email Address → Reply to: johnharvard36@gmail.com
Subject: Class of 1636 Summer Reunion ← **Subject Line**

Pre-header → Reconnect with friends on July 5th



SUMMER REUNION ← **Header**



Salutation and To → Dear Drew,

→ The next gathering of the Harvard Class of 1636 will take place at Charlie's Kitchen on Monday, July 5th, beginning at noon. Come join your fellow classmates as we eat burgers and discuss plans for our 50th reunion. Please see [this document](#) for the current agenda. ← **A linked PDF document**

Text → Thank you to those who sent me pictures of your winter mini-reunions. I have compiled them and posted them on the [reunions section](#) of our class website. Be sure to check them out! ← **Link to more photos**

→ If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to me. Thanks, and I look forward to seeing you in July.
Sincerely,
John Harvard '36, Class Secretary ← **Name, year, position**

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Reunion Email Example

From: 2001 20th Reunion Committee
Reply to: 20threunion_haa@harvard.edu
Subject: Share a greeting for our 20th Reunion!

[View this email in your browser.](#)



Hi Anthony,

← Reunion year banner

We are making a class video montage for the Harvard '01 virtual 20th Reunion June 4–6 and need your help. Please add your own short video below (it's quick and easy) through the platform VidHug and you'll be part of this memorable effort.

[SHARE YOUR VIDEO](#)

← A "call to action" button with a link

Options include: a shout out to your blocking group or sports team, an introduction of your family, or just a quick hello to let us all know what you're up to. Of course, this can also be a time to spotlight your talent like a video of you reading from your latest novel or children's story, a shot of you preparing for your next triathlon, or a video of you in action at work. The sky's the limit!

So we can include more classmates, please try to keep the video under two minutes if you can! **The deadline is June 2, 2021.**

← Using bold to note a deadline

I look forward to seeing your videos and to celebrating with all of you online soon.

Cheers,

Kevin El-Hayek '01

General Rules of Thumb

To close out, email communications are strategic platforms for communicating information to large groups of people. However, there are a lot of factors that can contribute to the success of an email campaign. Here are some simple rules to always keep top of mind. Emails should:

- ✓ Be recipient-focused
- ✓ Be relevant
- ✓ Include one or two calls to action
- ✓ Be accessible and easily scannable
- ✓ Be easy to engage with
- ✓ Deliver what you promise
- ✓ Be planned ahead for contact frequency
- ✓ Be a shared resource and an asset to be preserved