

Rating the writing: how to assess an email fundraising or advocacy appeal

Rate an email on each criterion, circling the rating, with 5 = best and 0 = worst.

#	Criterion	Rating	Weight	Total
1.	Speaks to the reader, from the signer. Uses the singular personal pronouns, “you” and “I.”	0 1 2 3 4 5	x 2 =	
2.	Talks about the social benefits, not the organizational needs.	0 1 2 3 4 5	x 3 =	
3.	The call to action is unmistakably clear. What your gift will do is compelling. Asks for a specific amount of money or other explicit act.	0 1 2 3 4 5	x 5 =	
4.	Subject line is compelling, relevant, or personal without seeming cheesy.	0 1 2 3 4 5	x 2 =	
5.	Establishes urgency—i.e. makes the case to take action <i>now</i> .	0 1 2 3 4 5	x 2 =	
6.	Sender is recognizable.	0 1 2 3 4 5	x 2 =	
7.	Powerful writing style: short words, emotion, short sentences, short paragraphs, no ten-dollar words, foreign expressions, abbreviations, acronyms. Uses Anglo-Saxon, not Latin.	0 1 2 3 4 5	x 4 =	
8.	Appeal is as long (or short) as necessary to make the case. Must address all the unspoken questions a reader is likely to have.	0 1 2 3 4 5	x 1 =	
9.	Graphics used are eye-catching, compelling, understandable, and linked to the landing page. Includes a callout box. Captions are short and relevant. Buttons on the first screen.	0 1 2 3 4 5	x 4 =	
10.	Landing page follows naturally from the message and makes it easy to take action.	0 1 2 3 4 5	x 3 =	
11.	Effectively uses color, graphics, white space to emphasize essentials: benefits, deadline, call to action. Formatted and designed so that it’s easy to scan.	0 1 2 3 4 5	x 1 =	

Total the 11 ratings. (Remember 0 x 5 = 0!)
Then, to evaluate your score, turn to the next page.

How to evaluate your score

With as many as five points available for each of the eleven criteria, and weighting factors that total 29, a perfect score is 145 points. You may translate a numerical score into a letter grade as follows:

<i>Rating</i>	<i>Letter Grade</i>	<i>Meaning</i>
130 – 145	A+	No more need be said.
115 – 129	A	Give that writer a pat on the back!
90 – 114	B	Shows lots of promise.
65 - 89	C	Needs some improvement.
40 – 64	D	Requires a lot of work. Maybe better to start from scratch!
0 - 39	F	Uh oh!

Copyright © 2008 by Mal Warwick. All rights reserved.