

MyEmma: Best Practices

Background

Vanderbilt University has an account with myEmma, an email marketing platform. Emma can be used for large-scale communications, including newsletters and informational/promotional emails. The information below is designed to help College of Arts and Science departments, programs, and centers use Emma to create effective communications.

Considerations

Newsletters can be an effective communications tool but take significant effort, both to start and maintain. Before taking on this new communication channel, identify your goals, audiences, communication frequency, and content of the newsletter, and ensure that you have the bandwidth to create and maintain it.

Getting Started

To create a subaccount under the Vanderbilt account, you will first need to make a request through Oracle. In Oracle, navigate to “My Knowledge” and then click “Create a Service Request.” The category will be “Emma.”

Audience Management

Once you have an Emma account, you can create your audience under the Audience tab. Import your contacts to a group of your designation via a spreadsheet. See [this tutorial from Emma](#) for instructions on how to import contacts. You must import an email address for each contact; you [cannot send to a listserv](#).

Familiarize yourself with the [CAN-SPAM Act](#), a commercial email law put into place in 2003. An opt-out link should always be enabled in anything you send from Emma.

It’s important to remember that when a subscriber opts out in Emma, they will not be included in any future emails you send through Emma unless they manually opt back in. This includes any student who opts out of an email you send them through Emma. If the information you’re sending to students is critical, Emma may not be the best channel. Consider Outlook instead for emails about deadlines, policies, and critical items that require action.

Brand

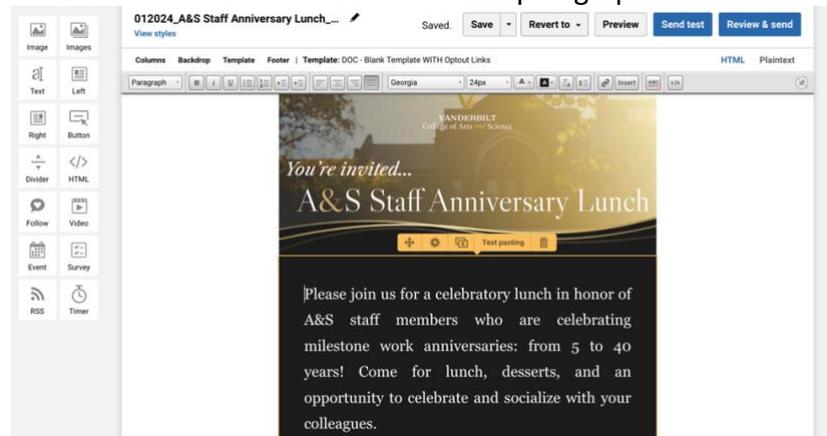
You represent the overall Vanderbilt brand in all aspects of your communications. When designing your email in Emma:

- Follow the [Vanderbilt Brand Style Guide](#), specifically for [Typography](#) and [Color](#), for brand consistency.
- Include your Vanderbilt department lockup in the email header (this is required). You can find your department lockup [here](#).
- In your Emma account, you will see various email templates available to you (for newsletters, event promotion, general informational email, etc.). If you need a design outside of the provided templates, please [contact the A&S Communications Team](#).

Accessibility

Good design keeps everyone in mind. Accessibility compliance is a **legal requirement**, so keep the following in mind when designing emails in Emma:

- All images/graphics **must have an alt-text description**. Alt-text, or alternative-text, is the text that appears if an image does not load and the text that screen readers will read aloud. [Learn more about using alt-text](#).
- Use high-contrast color combinations, especially for text, to increase readability. For example, in the VU color palette, don't use the "Highlight" or "Sky Blue" color text on a white background, as this will be difficult to read. [Please read the color section of the VU Brand Guide](#) carefully, as it specifies the color contrasts and ratios that should and should not be used.
- Use a font size between 16-24 pt for body text.
- Use reader-friendly "live text" in lieu of a flattened image of the text. This not only aids with accessibility, but also translates to mobile, or in case an image doesn't load. When necessary, limit images of text to short sections (i.e. headers with specific font-styling/design), and always include the alt-text when doing so.
 - Example: Note how the header is a designed flattened image (with alt-text), combined with a live text "Text Block" for the paragraph.



- Learn more about [Vanderbilt best practices in accessibility](#).
- Learn more about [creating accessibility friendly designs in MyEmma](#).

Images

Imagery can bring your email to life! Audiences tend to respond more positively to eye-catching images and are more likely to click your links. When using images:

- Make sure you have the appropriate permissions to use or alter your selected images.
- Use smaller file images (less than 1MB) for more efficient emails.
- Refer to Vanderbilt's [Imagery Guide](#) for what types of images to look for and use.

Technical Notes

- Your sender email address must include the suffix "@message.vu.edu" or it will get caught in spam. For example, use departmentofpsychology@message.vu.edu or departmentofmath@message.vu.edu. Reach out to [VUIT](#) if you have questions.
- Create a checks and balances system to avoid embarrassing errors. Before sending to your audience, make sure to use the Test function in Emma to send a preview of the newsletter to multiple proofreaders.
- Make sure your newsletter is mobile-friendly. Use the Preview tool in Emma to view your design and make sure you review it on desktop, tablet, and phone.

Content

- Use an engaging subject line that immediately tells the reader what they'll be opening.
- Make sure the content you're sending is applicable to your audience. Create separate emails for different audience groups and different content.
- Be sure that any item you share in your newsletter is approved to be announced. Respect embargoes and do not share news that has not yet been released by its owner.
- It's best that all items you share link to the fuller event description, news article, or award announcement.
- Use a mix of images and text in your design.
- Do not inundate your audience. Make sure your messages are concise, important, and spaced out appropriately.
- Regularly analyze your newsletter analytics via the Response and Insights tabs in Emma. Use your findings to optimize future newsletters.

Resources

- [Emma Support Hub](#)
- [Vanderbilt Brand Guide](#)
- [College of Arts and Science Communications Team](#)

