

Best Practices for Club Emails

Updated October 1, 2025

Background

Since 2024, club emails and event registration have been managed by Northwestern Alumni Relations and Development's Email and Event Support Team. Club volunteers can submit a request for a new email at least four business days in advance of the planned send date. The Email and Event Support Team will build the email in Salesforce Marketing Cloud, our email marketing tool, and then send a preview/test to the club volunteer who submitted the request as well as the club president.

This process was created to assist club volunteers with email creation, improve email performance, and maintain consistent branding for Northwestern emails. Access the [email and event registration support](#) page to learn more.

The following guide is intended to advise club volunteers on email best practices for our system, how to use our email templates, and common mistakes to avoid when drafting a new email.

Email Requests

New email requests are made through the [content request form](#). When filling out this form, we recommend including as much content as you currently have for the email, including email copy/text (in Word document) and images/photos (in separate JPEG files). This approach helps minimize multiple form submissions for the same email.

Subject Lines

When you submit a new email request, be sure to include a subject line and preheader for your email. Subject lines should be no more than 50 characters (including spaces) and written in title case ("Join Us at an Upcoming Watch Party"). Preheaders, or the short snippet of text that appears in your inbox or alert, are another opportunity to encourage people to open the email. Preheaders should not exceed 75 characters and should be written in sentence case, ending with a period.

Audience

You also can identify whether the email should go to the full club or whether you want to segment your audience. We have the ability to segment in several ways, such as recent graduates or only dues-paying members. If you have any questions about segmentation, please reach out to the email and event support team.

Images

If you're including images in your email:

- Please submit photo files as separate files, not embedded in a Word document. Word will often compress files and reduce image resolution.
- Be sure to include alternative (alt) text with the image. Alt text is a brief description of what the image is and can help users to know what is featured in the image if it fails to load properly or the recipient is using a screen reader. An example of alternative text is "Recent alumni at our happy hour."
- Avoid using QR codes in emails, as it's difficult to scan unless a recipient has a secondary device.
- Images must be owned by either the club or Northwestern University. Please do not use images saved or downloaded from the internet. It is important to protect the University from copyright infringement for using unlicensed photos. If you are having trouble finding an appropriate photo, you can select one from our [stock image library](#). We also welcome suggestions on other kinds of photos to add to the library.
- If a photo is AI-generated, please make a note of that when you submit it. AI-generated images need to be identified as such for recipients.
- Avoid text embedded in an image as the sole means to communicate information (e.g., a flyer with text on it). Because screen sizes can affect the size of the image, text can become very hard to read. If there is text in an image, make sure the information is repeated in the body of the email.

Content Blocks

Every email consists of four required content blocks and additional optional content blocks as needed.

They include:

- Club banner (required)
- Main content block (required)
- Additional Upcoming Events (optional)
- Wrapped text (optional)
- Secondary content links (optional)
- Support our club (required)
- Footer (required)

Club Banner



Every club email includes a banner with the Northwestern Alumni logo, the name of the club, and, in most cases, an image that is 600x130px. This banner helps promote your specific club and differentiates your email from other Northwestern

emails. If your club would like a different banner image than your current one, please submit that request to the [Email and Event Support Team](#).

Main Content Block

September Social Breakfast



Please join us for our monthly social breakfast! Whether you are new in town or have lived here forever, come and enjoy a casual meal and conversation with a small group of fellow alums.

The primary purpose of these events is socializing rather than intense networking. Of course, we fully expect that in the course of normal interactions at our gatherings, people will talk about their professions and that networking will occur, and we think that's perfect.

Wednesday, September 10
7:30 a.m.
Morning Story Café
560 South Holly Street
City Name

Host: Lorem Ipsum (lorem@msn.com)

Please register by **Tuesday morning, September 10**, via the button below so we can adjust our restaurant reservations accordingly. Each attendee will order off the menu and pay their own bill.


[Register](#)

The main content block is composed of several elements:

- **Headline:** This should be 30 characters or fewer and written in title case, where the first letter of each major word is capitalized.
- **Photo:** If you have a relevant photo to include, be sure to submit it as a separate file. This photo should be at least 500px wide and ideally not exceed 1 MB. Large files can result in delivery issues and slow loading time.
- **Paragraph text:** This is 18px font and 1.5 line height for legibility purposes.
- **Event details:** This is your opportunity to call out the important details of your event: date, time, and location. You do not need to include a time zone for a regional event, and you do not need to include a zip code for the location.
- **Registration button:** This takes users to the event registration page.

Additional Upcoming Events


Additional Upcoming Events



City Name All-Ivy+ End of Summer Garden Party
Thursday, September 12
Home of Lorem and Lorem Ipsum
[Event Venue](#)
City Name
Dinner and cocktails

Join us for an end of summer evening with chilled prosecco, margaritas, and a Colorado wine or two from our own Palisade. Network with your latest "Elevator Pitch" as you meet new friends. Learn more and RSVP via the [Denver All-Ivy+ Facebook group page](#). Note that this is a private group, so you may need to request to join.

[Register](#)



Northwestern Football Game Watches
Saturday, September 14
Saturday, September 21
[Event Venue](#)
City Name
No registration required

Cheer on the Wildcats with your fellow alumni! Tom's will still feature our game with screens and audio. Check your email and [our Facebook page](#) for more updates.

If you would like to provide other upcoming events in the email, here is guidance:

- Photos are optional. If you do want to include a photo, please make sure it's around 160px wide.
- Include the date, time, and location of the event. You can also include a short description with additional information, but you do not need to repeat the date or location in this description. The description should be under 350 characters, or about 75 words.
- You can have up to three events listed in the additional events section.

Secondary Content Links

More Opportunities

[NU Club of City Volunteers at the Greater City Name Food Bank](#)

[Behind the Scenes at Ball Arena: Exclusive Tour of City Team's Basketball Facilities](#)

[November Network Happy Hour](#)

[WEBINAR! Crafting 101: Navigating this City Name's Local Scene](#)

If you have more content to promote but have already hit the limit on additional events, you can utilize the secondary content links option. This is best for events that do not need a description or that you have previously promoted but would like to remind folks about.

Support Our Club

Support Our Club

All NUMBALUMS are welcome to attend events. To support club programming, please consider becoming a [dues-paying member](#), or [making a donation](#) to the club.

This section goes at the end of the email and is your opportunity to highlight any other ways in which club members can engage further with your club. This can include reminders to pay dues, calls for volunteers, or

promotion of your social media accounts.

Footer



The footer is included in all club emails and contains important information for the Northwestern Alumni Association (NAA). This includes links to our social media properties, our website, and, most importantly, links to manage preferences and unsubscribe from future emails.

These are included to comply with the CAN-SPAM Act, a federal law that requires commercial emails to include a way

for recipients to opt out from future communications.

Other Best Practices to Keep in Mind

- Calls to action (CTA), such as links or buttons, should use clear and inclusive language and be written in title case. Some examples include, “Register,” “Discover,” “Explore,” and “Learn.” CTAs in buttons should be three words or fewer.
- Degree designations, meaning the year an alum graduated (Willie Wildcat ’24), can be included if the individual wants to share their designation, but it is not necessary to include.
- Event-specific details, such as parking or transit options, should live on the event webpage or in a “know before you go” email to reduce the amount of copy that goes into an initial invitation.
- Utilize the serial (Oxford) comma in lists (e.g., “We ate, laughed, and danced”).
- Wildcats is plural when used as an adjective (“Wildcats pride”).