

# DAY 1: THIS BASIC “HOW TO” GUIDE

This is one of the core patterns for emails you’ll see used time and time again. And the reason is that it works. Your readers will always value practical information that helps them solve a problem or achieve a goal.

Later on in the course you’ll learn how to spice up the format to ramp up the interest and entertainment angle. But for now we’re going to focus on the basics - just like you would learn the basic strokes in tennis and build from there, or the basic swing in golf.

**The goal** of a “how to” email is twofold.

Firstly you’re aiming to give valuable information to your readers by giving them a practical solution to a problem they have or a goal they want to achieve.

Obviously in the space of an email it’s not going to be an in-depth guide of the sort you might give them in a training course or that they would get if they worked with you personally. But the information you share must help them make progress. It can’t be so high level that they’re no further forward.

Ideally you want to leave them thinking “I can see how that would work..I could maybe try to figure out more of the details myself...or I could speed things up by hiring them to work with me” (or similar).

The second goal of a “how to” email is to establish your expertise. To show readers that you have practical solutions to the sorts of problems they have. So even if they don’t need to hire you or buy something from you to help with this particular problem, it positions you as someone who they might want to call on to help for other challenges in related areas.

**The topic** of a “how to” email - the problem you show them how to solve - should be a common problem that your readers are likely to have. So that even if not every reader has that specific problem right now, they’ll all recognise it and appreciate the solution.

Ideally you want it to be a problem that you get asked about a lot by clients and contacts as that gives you an easy introduction to the email that further enhances your credibility.

Next, you want the problem to be big enough to be worth providing a solution for, but not so big and complex that you can’t fit the solution into an email of a few hundred words. For example, looking at two recent emails I received, “How to reduce stress” is too big a topic and so the steps in the email were very generic and impractical. “How to create a lead magnet that grows your list” is ambitious but more achievable and the steps in the email were helpful.

Finally, you want the problem to be in an area where you can provide further help. Ideally you have products or services that help directly. But if not, then at minimum you want to be in a position where the credibility you establish in the topic area of the email “rubs off” and enhances your credibility in the areas where you have do products and services.

**Subject Line:** “How to [fix problem/achieve goal]” or “How to [fix problem/achieve goal] without [undesirable side effect]” or “How to [fix problem/achieve goal] in [ambitious amount of time]”

For example: “How to get brilliant testimonials for your services” or “How to get brilliant testimonials without feeling like you’re begging” or “How to get a dozen brilliant testimonials in less than an hour”.

The “without” variation works really well if you often hear clients saying “Yeah...I understand how I could do it, but I don’t want...”. In other words they know the steps to solve a problem or achieve a goal but there’s a barrier holding them back. Often that barrier is psychological: “How to sell without feeling sleazy”, “How to get what you want without upsetting others”.

The quantification element of adding a timeframe works well to both elevate the achievement of the goal and make it seem concrete. And using these different options adds variety to your subject lines.

If your subject line is very long, you can put the qualifier into the email pre-header/preview text. Check your own email system for detail on how to do that - on Substack it looks like this:

Edit email header and footer >

## How to get a dozen brilliant testimonials

...in less than an hour!

Ian Brodie X



### Hook:

A simple and effective hook for a “how to” email is to tell your readers that this is a question you get asked a lot. This implies it’s an important subject they should be paying attention to, and it also subtly raises your credibility because if people regularly ask you questions on this topic you must be an expert on it. You can reinforce the importance of the question to add more

For example:

“A question I get asked a lot is “How do I come up with ideas for interesting emails?”. And it’s a really important question, because one of the main reasons people give up on email marketing is that awful moment when you stare at a blank screen and just can’t come up with anything.

Have that happen a few times running and it’s just a natural reaction to quit.”

Of course, the above needs to be true - you really do need to get asked about the topic. But I find there will always be a handful of topics you regularly get asked about by clients or contacts or email subscribers (especially if you email them and offer to answer their questions).

An alternative hook that works well here is the Problem-Agitate-Solution hook.

This is where you state the problem, highlight that in fact things are probably worse than they think, and then hint at the solution - enticing your subscribers to read on.

For example:

“One of the biggest problems email marketers face is getting their emails to land in the inbox, rather than in the promotions tab or spam folder.

And these days it’s becoming harder than ever. All the big email providers like Microsoft, Yahoo and Gmail (who also run a majority of corporate emails behind the scenes) are tightening up their algorithms in the face of waves of AI generated email.”

### **Transition:**

In the hook you highlighted a problem your readers are likely to be facing. In the transition you’re going to promise the solution. And that usually takes just a simple sentence.

For example “Luckily there are a few simple techniques you can use to help you reliably generate a rush of great ideas for your emails...”.

Or if you want to emphasise your own experience: “This is a challenge I’ve faced too - and over the years I’ve developed a series of steps you can follow to significantly increase the chances of your emails landing in the primary inbox. Follow these steps and you should see a big uptick in your email open rates...”

### **Valuable Content:**

This is where you share your “how to” guide to solving the problem or achieving the goal.

My preferred format for this is a bulleted list of steps with the name of the step written in bold so it stands out for skim readers. I would then Write a couple of sentences on each of the “how to” steps. If you find yourself writing a mini-essay for each step then that’s a clue that perhaps this topic is too big for a single email and might be better treated as a series of emails or a bigger article to point people at.

### **Call to Action:**

If you have products and services that provide direct help in the area of your “how to” guide then obviously you want to mention them. The key here is not to undermine the advice you’ve given but instead to position your services as the next step or a way of getting more in-depth help or to accelerate their progress.

For example “Using these techniques, and with practice, you’ll be able to generate brilliant ideas for emails whenever needed. And if you want more in-depth guides to idea generation for emails along with specific prompts and templates and examples you can use straight away, you’ll find them all in my Email Genius online training program. [Click here for details](#)”.

Or if you offer coaching or other more personal support: “Using these techniques, and with practice, you’ll be able to generate brilliant ideas for emails whenever needed. And if you want my personal

support to help you through the process and make sure your ideas work in the real world, that's something I do with clients as part of my Email Coaching program. [Click here](#) for details of what we cover."

If your products and services don't directly cover this area you can use a more generic call to action like asking for feedback or asking people to share your email with others who might benefit. Or you can mention your other products as next steps if they fit, for example ""Using these techniques, and with practice, you'll be able to generate brilliant ideas for emails whenever needed. The next step, of course, is to learn how to write those emails in ways which engage your readers and actually lead to sales. That's something we cover in detail in my Email Genius online training program. [Click here for details](#)".

### Example:

Subj: How to get brilliant testimonials without feeling like you're begging

It's no secret that testimonials are one of the most powerful drivers of sales for your products and services. But how many of us have as many genuinely great testimonials as we'd like?

Not many.

One of the biggest challenges is that it just feels a bit creepy contacting your old clients and asking them to say lovely things about you. As a result, we don't do it as often as we should and when we do, we often do it badly and end up with wishy-washy testimonials that don't really help.

Luckily, a few years ago I stumbled into an idea from Lincoln Murphy that I've turned into a little process that makes asking for testimonials exponentially easier - and it doesn't feel creepy at all.

Here's the process: feel free to steal it (in fact, I insist you do!)...

All this happens a little while after a client or customer has experienced your product or service - long enough for them to have seen results:

- **Step 1: Ask how things are going.** This is the real secret - you don't begin by asking for a testimonials (which benefits only you and is why you feel a bit creepy doing it). Instead you ask your ex-client or customer how things are going now. Make this as specific as possible. If your work with them ended as they were about to start implementing your recommendations, ask how that's been going. If they anticipated a couple of challenging areas, ask about those. Most importantly, ask about the results they've seen so far.
- **Step 2a: If they've had problems, offer help and advice.** If implementation didn't go as well as they'd hoped, offer to hop on a call and give some advice. Share some tips if they're still struggling to complete your online course. Just be helpful. It might even turn into further work for you but your main goal is to help here.
- **Step 2b: If it went well, ask them for more details** Congratulate them and ask them what results they've seen. Again, use your knowledge of the situation to ask something specific. "That's brilliant - did you manage to get lead times down by 50% as you'd hoped for?" Etc.
- **Step 3: Review their response to see if it could be turned into a testimonial.** Now you've got the details of how the work went and the results they got from it in their own words. If it feels

like it's missing something, ask another question (but only one more - don't keep nagging). But normally you'll have enough.

- **Step 4: Reply to them to congratulate them again and ask if you can turn what they've said into a testimonial.** "That's brilliant to hear - thanks for letting me know. Would you mind if I summarised what you've told me and turned it into a bit of a testimonial? Something along the lines of..." - and send them a paragraph or so of summary of what they told you.
- **Step 5: Update the testimonial if needed.** If they say no, so be it. Thank them anyway. If they say yes you've now got a testimonial. And sometimes they'll suggest changes.

The beauty of this method is that you get a testimonial without it sounding like you're begging and without giving your client a bunch of work to do by asking them to write it themselves. You just have a brief email conversation and take what they said to make the testimonial for them.

It's simple, and it works.

It's one of the 3 primary methods I use myself for getting client testimonials, and it's included (along with the others) in the Client Retention Mastery program - including the specific email templates I use and how I then put the testimonials to work to win more clients. [You can find more details of the program here.](#)

- Ian