

PAID TO PLAY eSCHOOL: HOW TO WRITE YOUR FIRST OFFER EMAIL TO GET YOUR FIRST TRIAL PLAYCHEQUE



1. THE OPENING

Personalisation is a big plus. That means both including people's names in the email where possible, and having a friendly, personable intro that sounds like you are talking to the recipient rather than writing a sales email.

People receive a lot of emails (much like you) and are most likely to respond when something is written for them. This doesn't mean you have to rewrite each email for each person – if they are in your niche their problems are going to all be very similar.

However try to use people's names wherever possible. If you are sending to a limited group of people (which is likely if this is your trial) then take advantage of the lower numbers by writing a little for each person prefacing the email.

Even if you have a large group of people still write a personable intro but make it the same for everyone. This is the part where you speak in real language, like you'd send in an email to a friend. You can also get someone else to write this part for you if they are sending on your behalf (see point 5).

2. THE FIRST PARAGRAPHS

Talk about your PEOPLE upfront before going into your letter. A big mistake first timers make is spending the first paragraph explaining who they are. People generally won't read through paras about you until they understand how this is relevant to *them* right now.

That means going back to the Killer Offer principles and speaking the problem.

EXAMPLE:

A simple way to start is with a list of 1-3 questions that REALLY get into their heads. ie:

- Would you like to eat more healthy food, but don't have the time?
- Do you feel guilty for grabbing a ready-meal rather than cooking fresh food?

After that you'd put one line with your solution ("I'm offering to sort that out for you. xxxx")

Take what you have learnt from the Killer Offer section and apply it here using the sort of language your people use.

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3. Optional: journey story

Now add in a SHORT summary of you related to your offer - this is a 'journey' story. It shows who you are and takes them to see how you came to want to do this for them.

This is important if you are providing a service that denotes any sort of expertise at all, or personal support from you. It is not so important if you are running a social event.

The reason for including this is to both overcome any questions about 'who do they think they are' and also raise you status and attractiveness through authentically showing that you are a real person who has a real perspective on this (even if that perspective is that you have been through what they are going through and come out the other side).

This is not a CV or full bio – to be honest, if people are asking you about that sort of thing now, then the rest of the letter isn't strong enough. Including too much irrelevant information is another big mistake people make in writing these first emails. Irrelevant information is anything that doesn't 'speak' to your niche, build up trust, or contribute to who you are in delivering this. That means that it's great to include something that makes you more human – but not to just drop in a historical point about you for the sake of it.

Consider every word you write and always keep in mind a) 'How is what I am writing relevant to the reader?' and b) 'How is this helping the reader connect with me, trust me, and as a result warm to my offer?'

4. HOW IT WORKS.

This is the part where you outline what the product or service actually is! The best system I've seen for this part is 'features, benefits, outcomes'. So the features are what you're offering (ie: how it works). Then you spell out the benefits (what they get out of it) and the outcomes (what they leave with, how their lives will be enhanced/change etc).

Watch out for spending too much time on the features (the stuff they get and what they/you do as part of this). This is the easy part as that is what is in your head, however that is not what is going to get people interested in this email.

The benefits and outcomes are key. What will they get from it and how will be different for them?

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5. MAKE IT HAPPEN!

You need a strong close otherwise this is filed in the 'nice idea, think about it later' pile. Many great ideas languish and die a sad death in this pile.

The two key rules to make this idea come to life are to make your offer both exclusive and limited (either in time or numbers), and close with a call to action.

If this is a freebie you might try saying: *"This offer free of charge to you because it is an opportunity for me to [xxxx] however as I am very busy I am limiting this to 3 people. We will be starting by [date] so if you want in let me know by [earlier date]."*

In terms of limiting the numbers, it seems counter intuitive but in reality, it's unlikely you want to deal with 1000 people for your first offer –and it's also unlikely you'll get them! So make these restrictions into an advantage and specify how many you'll take on.

ie: if you're working one to one with people as a freebie to see how your offer works, then if you're also working full time you're not going to want to take on 20 people, right? So SAY if you're only taking on 5 people. This makes it better for you, and gives them an impetus to apply ASAP.

Another way of generating scarcity is time limits. Again, these help you because you get to plan. More importantly, people are busy and have other priorities. If you don't make your offer one of those priorities by setting a (coming up very soon) time limit, then your email will get filed away to look at again later, and will most likely be forgotten no matter how much they liked what you are saying.

So to help people take the action they want to take (and to help them overcome their procrastination!) add in a date when they need to apply/join/pay/reply.

After the call to action, close with something genuine and nice about them if you've been referred to them, or just about how much you are looking forward to this.

Make your final words (literally, the end of the last sentence before you sign off) positive action words. For example "hearing from you", "having you join us".

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OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- Use real language

We will spend a lot more time on language in a later module. For now remember to use real language. Not the sort of 'business speak' you think you should use, but the language that you and your niche actually use. The more personable and real, the more enticing. To check on this, speak it out. Does it sound fake? If so, you might want to reconsider. What would you say to someone you know who was asking you about this. Now get that message across.

- Be confident

When you're referring to the reader in terms of their action and their interest, avoid words like 'maybe' and 'if'. Any uncertain words like this (with reference to the reader taking action) are enough to generate an 'out'. We are all very good at not committing – you are doing your reader a disservice if you make it any easier for them to make excuses to avoid doing something that will benefit them. So use confident (but not brash) language in your close and at any point that you refer to the reader's interest.

For example instead of saying "I'm not sure if this is the sort of thing you'd do, but if it is, then maybe you can drop me a line and we can speak further", use the example in the 'after' Makeover email below. Can you see the difference?

Remember: your own personal uncertainty about whether this will work/whether you are good enough is something *you* are feeling, and it is not even in the reader's mind when they first open that email. If you don't generate that in them, it won't ever be there.

- Find your biggest thing

What is the one thing that makes this special or enticing? This is likely to be around a problem that the reader has and that you're addressing it in a particular way.

See my notes at the bottom of the makeover email below for an example of this.

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- Be authentic

This is your first email to them – you don't have a relationship so you need to maximize trust. So don't write anything cheesy or inauthentic. Be you, but bigger.

- Show social proof

When entering into a relationship with something new, free or otherwise, we all unconsciously look for social proof. That is, proof that other people, who are like us, approve of the person or the thing we are joining.

If you don't have testimonials from previous clients, or even a website, then there are other ways to generate social proof.

One of these is referrals. You can either get people you know (who you DON'T want to make into clients for this product) to suggest others who might be interested and you then email those people. If you do this, then open with a paragraph that states who referred them and a point about the issue they've been having lately that relates to your product (ie: your friend X said you've been xx lately).

Another way is to get people you know to email out directly to people they think might be interested. This works well if you have people who are really into what you are doing and are keen to help – be careful about spamming your friends as a first timer! Having a great sales email will help you here because if it works the way it should, it will also get your friends on board to want to promote it.

The BEST way to do this is give your friends/contacts a draft intro that they can send so that they have no work to do. The Makeover before and after email example below shows a way of doing this.

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Makeover email: before and after

This email was written by a client launching her first event in an area she had never worked in before. She was doing this just to trial her idea, gauge interest and see how it played out in practice. As a result this was a very early stage email and she had no mailing list, no website, no brand – nothing but the idea!

Before

Below is the original email draft, with my comments. See if you can pick the elements I wrote about above. Also this is a nice example of how you don't have to follow every step to make this work – pick what is best for you.

Friends name,

They say we are the passive generation! I think not!

What happens when you bring fabulous creative minds together and bring back the art of discussion and conversation?

How better to do this than at a table full of bright potentials over a delicious meal each course coupled with a discussion topic set to get peoples passions ignited and sharing their thoughts and feelings. One small detail on our first dinner, all the guests just happen to be single!

Please don't cringe, It is not a dating night!
We singles are a great big melting pot of potential and sometimes it's quite simply more fun to be out with other singles!

All of this set in an atmosphere that is alive and inspiring yet comfortable and unique

Marianne Cantwell 3/11/10 14:32

Comment [1]: Your opening needs to speak to a problem – I don't think 'people think we are passive' is a real problem. How about all that great stuff you always say about us being less connected (because of social media) and missing real live connections – take the language you normally use and the things you always say and put that here instead

Marianne Cantwell 3/11/10 14:34

Comment [2]: Nice but make it stronger. Create a movement – "it's time to xxx!". "What happens when you" leaves the door wide open for a jaded response like "boredom" – rhetorical questions only work here when the answer is only likely to be in your favour!

Marianne Cantwell 3/11/10 14:31

Comment [3]: What exactly are bright potentials? Does anyone think of themselves as, or want to meet bright potentials? I see where you're getting at but there is another way of saying it – what language do you normally use, what would your people use to describe the sorts of people you are talking about?

Marianne Cantwell 3/11/10 14:34

Comment [4]: Too clichéd. Every meal is delicious, sounds like a local newspaper's restaurant reviewer.

Marianne Cantwell 3/11/10 14:31

Comment [5]: Spread this out – this is the bit that explains the WHOLE POINT of the email yet it's only in one line. Give it a little more space.

Marianne Cantwell 3/11/10 14:35

Comment [6]: I like the idea – but the articulation is too apologetic. Feels like "I want a dating night but I don't want to put you off". Which I know is not what you are saying, so let's get your words in line with your intention. Be honest – why singles? What's your motivation for singles? Something about wanting somewhere to meet new, intelligent people that isn't full of couples, or that isn't a meat market high pressure dating event?

Marianne Cantwell 3/11/10 14:31

Comment [7]: Nice, but SHOW, don't tell. Why comfortable? What is comfortable about it? Describe with word pictures.

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within a circle of friends. (Guests are invited on recommendation basis).
That's where you come in...nudge, nudge! And we are all part of a Club. Stay tuned
for futureevents

It's all a little old school and some might find it all a bit much but we think it's a fabulous
way of inspiring, living and loving life.

Marianne Cantwell 3/11/10 14:35

Comment [8]: Wow! This is HUGE! I feel this needs to go upfront or at least with its own para – showing you're being specially invited as someone I've handpicked. Everyone being picked by you or a direct invitee is a big drawcard.

Marianne Cantwell 3/11/10 14:31

Comment [9]: You need to be clear – what exactly do they need to do and by when.

Marianne Cantwell 3/11/10 14:31

Comment [10]: Too much upfront, delete that. You want to focus your reader on ONE ACTION and one offering right now.

Marianne Cantwell 3/11/10 17:02

Comment [11]: Don't play it down honey! If you want to filter people do it boldly: This is NOT for you if you think social interaction is best done in 140 characters or less and think real conversations are a waste of time. This IS for you if xxx

Marianne Cantwell 3/11/10 14:31

Comment [12]: Nice! Add one more thing – not sure what but I feel there's an extra line to round out your vision

.... And after

Here is the makeover version – the final email that was sent out after several rounds of edits.

This is written in my client's own language and if I were writing I'd make a few changes. I am including it as is so you can get the feel of someone else's style and how she uses the principles above but puts her own stamp on it.

You will notice that that final email opens with a short message from someone else – as in the Social Proof section above, this is an example of the sort of referral email you can give to friends if they are willing to send it out for you.

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Hi x

My friend is organising this evening for singles - interested?

It's not a regular dating evening, it's a dinner with a menu of 'interesting topics' that people talk about at each course. Plus it's only people who are invited by recommendation so they'll all be intelligent, nice professional types!

Love the idea! I know there are going to be some great people there (and I will show up too to help her out :).

Drop her a line if you're interested in joining,

Natalie x

**Conversation Dinner
Thursday 4th May @ 7pm
Top Secret Pop Up Venue
W11 London**

**Are you a singleton crowded by coupledness, feeling the need for some fresh air?
Or you're simply up for meeting some new and interesting single friends?
We've devised the perfect solution!**

This is an opportunity to overcome the barriers of city life and branch out from your usual social circles. We'll gather handpicked almost-strangers, to dine on some of the finest cuisine in Notting Hill at our Top Secret, Pop Up Venue! Details to be revealed....

To keep the conversation flowing there is a specially designed 'Conversation Menu' with a range of topics per course, set to inspire lively discussion!
So no more talking about the congestion charge or (cringe)...the weather. And forget that "Eeer...Ummm what to talk about next" feeling!

If your idea of meaningful conversation is wired to 140 characters, alone in front of your PC, **then this event is NOT for you.**

If you're intrigued and inspired by the above, enjoy dining out with great company and would love to meet some new single friends **then this is most definitely for you! And we'd love to have you with us!**

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All of our guests are about 2 degrees of separation from me. So just like you, everyone invited has been highly recommended to me by someone I trust, for being a sociable, fun and interesting person that we'd love to spend more time with.

The cost is £40 including a 3 course meal, conversation menu, bubbly to start and some wine.

Spaces are limited, as this is an intimate event! So if you are interested in being included on Thursday 4th of May simply email alice@email.com and I will get back to you ASAP with details of how to join us.

Your hostess
Alice

PS: This particular Conversation Dinner is a Couple Free Zone! Apologies to all the coupled up conversationalists out there, but **for this event only singles need apply.** Stay tuned future events updates will be coming your way shortly!

OUTCOME

As a result of the final email this (first time) event completely booked out, with a waiting list for women! This is fantastic for a first time event where people have to pay (men were not as keen which gave my client an opportunity to rethink her proposition – that's what playing it out is all about at this stage!

WHY THIS EMAIL WORKS

There are a lot of reason why this email works. I will only focus on one of those elements here, and that is how well it addresses the 'problem' faced by (female!) readers.

The problem addressed is not being easily able to meet sane, intelligent singles in a relaxed setting where you feel comfortable (rather than fake and tongue tied). This event's biggest 'thing' was overcoming these two problems of people and setting.

The hostess addressed this issue by tackling the two issues head on and showing that she empathized with the problem and that her event was the solution.

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For example in response to the problem of meeting the right people, she made it clear that the people you will meet are 'safe' because they are intelligent – filtered by the style of the conversation dinner – they are 'vouched for' – only 2 degrees of separation away from the hostess – and they are 'personable and intelligent' – because they choose to come to an event which is about talking and exchanging views.

The issues of setting (comfortable and tongue tied) are addressed both with the relaxed language the hostess uses (making it clear this is not a high pressure dating event) and in the practicalities of having the evening revolve around a 'conversation menu'.

Your task

Create your intro email for your play-it-out project.

**Check it against the points above – and most of all check it yourself for sanity!
Run it past people who are in your niche and who like what you have to offer to see what they think.**

And now send it.