

Your Ezine 13 Formatting Checklist

By Alexandria K. Brown

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While sending out a text e-zine may seem like a piece of cake, there's more to it than you may think. *Good formatting* is the name of the game. Here's a handy checklist I use to make sure each of my issues is in great shape BEFORE I send it out. Please be my guest and use it for yourself!

1. Are all lines 65 characters or less?

More than that and your missive may come through looking messy to many subscribers. End each line with a hard return by pressing the 'enter' key.

2. Have you made sure there's no auto-formatting, such as bolding, italics, or underlining?

These features don't translate well in e-mail and can come out looking mighty strange on the other end. Instead, emphasize words or phrases with *asterisks,* 'quotation marks,' or ALL CAPS ... sparingly.

3. Are all sections neatly separated?

Use underscores (____), asterisks (*****), another nifty symbol (\$\$\$\$\$, %%%%, @@@@), or a combination thereof (==) to help define each area and help your readers skim your issue more easily.

4. Do all Web links include 'http://' before them?

Some e-mail programs won't automatically hyperlink a URL in your text without this prefix. So don't take a chance -- make it easy for your readers to click and link, especially to YOUR site!

5. Do all e-mail links include 'mailto:' before them?

Same idea here: Some e-mail programs won't automatically hyperlink an e-mail address in your text without it. Be sure to leave no space between the colon and the first character of the address.

6. Is your masthead at the very top?

The masthead, or 'nameplate,' typically features your e-zine name, your name, your e-mail address, your Web address, and the correct date, volume number, and issue number. Make it the FIRST

thing your readers see.

7. Have you reminded your readers right away that this is a *subscription* publication?

Don't let them forget that they *asked* to receive this! Something like this right under your masthead will do: 'You've received this e-zine because you subscribed to it! If you wish to unsubscribe, please scroll to the end for more information.'

8. If you have a table of contents (TOC), do its listings match this issue's articles and features?

For example, if your TOC says your second feature in this issue is an article on Web site marketing, make sure it's right!

9. Have you included a copyright notice?

At the end of your content, before your contact info, post '(c)' immediately followed by the year and your name or your company's name. You should know that a copyright notice does not protect your ideas - instead, it protects the way you express them.

10. Are the correct advertisements in place?

Keep track of all your ad swaps and purchases in one main document to make this easy to look up each time. I use an Excel spreadsheet, which works great for me.

11. Do you give clear subscribe and unsubscribe instructions at the bottom?

Include subscribe instructions, because your e-zine will likely get passed on to others who'd like to sign up. The unsubscribe instructions are just BECAUSE - it's plain courtesy, and the law of the land. :)

12. Does your subject line include both the name of your e-zine and the issue topic?

By seeing your e-zine title, your recipients will know the e-mail is not spam. And by seeing the issue topic, they will know what's in store for this issue. Example: 'Sara's Cash Flow Tips: Increase Your Income Today!'

13. Have you sent a test of the issue to yourself or an associate?

Make sure it comes through reading well and looking great! (Check for any strange symbols that magically appear, odd breaks in the copy, inactive links, etc.) And this is a GREAT time to give it a final proofread.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Alexandria K. Brown, 'The E-zine Queen,' is author of the award-winning manual, 'Boost Business With Your Own E-zine.' To learn more about her book and sign up for more FREE tips like these, visit her site at <http://www.ezinequeen.com/>

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