



Answers for Effective Direct Mail

Who are you asking?	Effective direct mail is <i>one person writing to one person</i> . Keep your letter or mail piece addressing that one person that you want to reach.
What are you asking the person to do?	Make sure that you <i>have a specific action</i> for the reader to do. "Give \$50." "Volunteer an hour." "Buy a ticket."
How will that person read your letter?	Typically, regardless of the letter's length, <i>readers look at...</i> ✓ a heading above the salutation, if any ✓ the salutation ✓ the signature ✓ the "P.S." ✓ any headings If the reader sees something interesting in one of these areas of the letter, then he or she will skim the body of the letter. Make sure one of these elements will grab the reader!
Are you consistent in what you're asking?	Pick <i>one primary action</i> that you want the reader to do and stick to it! Repeat this in the letter, the "P.S.," the reply piece, and possibly on the envelope(s), too!
Do you write like you talk?	<i>Read your letter out loud.</i> If you have sentences that you can't comfortably speak, you can't comfortably read them either. Avoid long paragraphs as well.
Does the design distract from or enhance the ask?	Does the overall package design say, " <i>open this letter,</i> " or "throw me away, I'm junk mail"? Is the level of design appropriate for what you're asking?
Who's asking?	Remember, this is one person asking one person to do something. Is the signer the <i>appropriate person to ask?</i>



Direct Mail Must Do's

You must get your package mailed.

And it must be mailed when you want to the people you want. Well before the printing stage, get your mail package design checked by your local post office. Make sure your package will actually hit the mail!

You must get the package opened.

The outer envelope is key, but doesn't necessarily need a lot of design. If "teaser" copy on the envelope gets it opened, great! But sometimes a plain white envelope works, too. Try out your envelope on some unsuspecting friends or colleagues. Would they open your envelope if it showed up in their mailbox?

You must think like the recipient.

Don't assume that your company or organization's need is important to the recipient. What's in it for the reader?

Also, what do you do with mail you receive? Do you put the reply card in the "bills to pay" stack? Repeat the ask on the reply card so your reader doesn't forget the "deal."

You must ask for action!

Ever been faced with an enormous menu at a restaurant and feel unable to make a decision? That can happen with direct mail! Give the reader some guidance: ask for something specific, and keep the choices to a minimum.