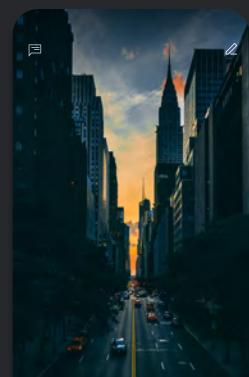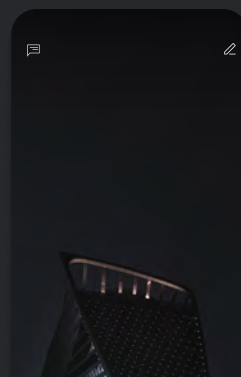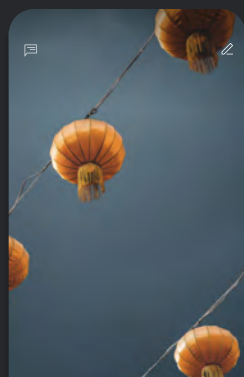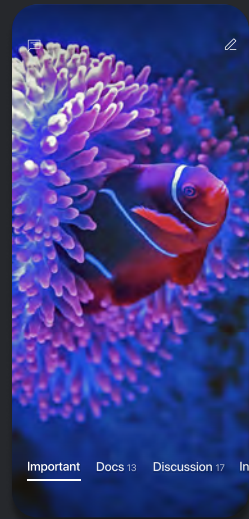# SUPERHUMAN

The Definitive Guide to Writing Emails That Inspire Action

From subject lines and intros, to sign offs, follow ups, cold outreach, and even guidelines on internal comms — here's everything you need to turn email writing into a competitive advantage.

TEMPLATES INCLUDED

THE RULES OF EMAIL HAVE CHANGED

As people become more protective of their time (and their inbox), email can be perceived as a necessary evil. That's why so much of our email communication can fall flat, or not get us the results we were expecting.

Whether it's to get a meeting with a prospect, or get feedback across different departments, we might find ourselves deep into a third desperate follow up, without progress!

Good news: you can turn your emails into action-inspiring, well crafted, and even entertaining messages. Better news: mastering the new rules of email is a business advantage — **nail it now, stand out, and turn email into a competitive asset.**

So how exactly do you write emails people actually look forward to reading (and answering)?

WRITE BETTER EMAILS, GET BETTER ANSWERS

Imagine you're sifting through your inbox. There are newsletters in there, sales pitches, team updates... Finally you excitedly open an email from that one person who always writes crisply, to the point, and puts a smile on your face — even if it's about something completely routine, like checking up on those spreadsheets from last week.

Like anything, email is a skill. Just like there are great public speakers, or people who make killer presentation decks, there are those who've gotten the art of emailing down to a science.

We've distilled email expertise from powerful communicators and combed through email best practices across nearly every category — from product updates and prospect outreach to investor pitches and even recruitment emails. Now, we're sharing tips and templates so you too can be that person in someone else's inbox — and get the results you want, no matter the use case.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SUBJECT LINES

CRAFTING SUBJECT LINES THAT SEIZE ATTENTION AND INCREASE OPEN RATES

More often than not, the subject line is the determining factor for whether your email will be opened.

> Your subject line should be clear and not overly clever. By reading the subject line, your reader should know exactly what the email is about, and be intrigued enough to open it.
>
> **Rahul Vohra**
> CEO, Superhuman

If you're tempted to write a mysterious subject line, you're not alone — many of us have made that mistake, thinking that a vague subject line increases our chances of piquing the reader's interest.

That might've worked back in 2010, when inboxes overflowed with openers like "You'll never believe what my boss said" and "This will absolutely shock you"... only to leave us completely unshocked. Audiences are much savvier now and are quick to spot ploys to get that open! The data proves it: **a group of researchers** actually found that clickbait headlines didn't perform any better than traditional ones (and sometimes they performed worse).

That being said, clickbait titles have a lot to teach us. They're usually short, intriguing, and position themselves as a question the rest of the content will answer. All good stuff when it comes to crafting email subject lines.

We've compiled a few tricks from expert marketers and copywriters to increase your open rates, and add delight to someone's day. Give them a spin!

8 TIPS FOR CRAFTING EMAIL SUBJECT LINES

- Keep your subject lines up to 10 words. **Mobile clients account for 42%** of email opens, followed by webmail opens at 41% and desktop opens at 16% — so if you want to optimize your subject line for mobile, you've got even less space to work with (25-30 characters).
- Personalize it. Using the recipient's first name in the subject line can increase your open rates by 29%!
- Use the most surprising or impressive content from the body of your email as the subject.
- Convey a sense of urgency — but don't manufacture it. "For the next 24 hours" is powerful for ecommerce deals and discounts, but urgency only works when it's genuine.
- Include statistics like "Superhuman cuts email time by 50%".
- Use "FOMO" to your advantage, for example: "The best marketers are using this email guide".
- Highlight a pain point with the promise of a solution.
- Use keywords from the body of your email.

> Clickbait subject lines promise The Reader a payoff that isn't delivered in the content. This is not OK because it degrades trust and credibility. That said, there's nothing wrong with making folks curious — opening a loop that can only be closed by opening the email — and then satisfying their curiosity.

Eddie Shleyner
Founder, VeryGoodCopy

SUPERHUMAN'S FAVORITE SUBJECT LINES

COLD OUTREACH	FOLLOWING UP	MEETING REQUEST
Have you tried [solution] for [pain point]?	[Their company] and [your company] in 2022?	[First name], see you on [date]?
Struggling with [pain point]? You're not alone	Checking in on [content/ask], can I help?	Virtual meeting, real coffee on me ☕
[Their company]'s [something you admire like website/social media] is 🔥	[First name], I forgot to mention...	[First name], do you have 15 minutes this week?
X% of [counterparts in the same function] are loving [solution]	Top 10 Favorite [Your company] [features] 😍	How's your schedule on [day of the week]?
[Mutual connection] recommended I get in touch	X options to solve [pain point]	[Company name] + [company name]: [date]
Hi [name], [question]?	Here's that [resource] I promised	15 minutes this week?
X tips/ideas to [succeed with your solution]	What did you think about [last interaction]?	Talk on [day] at [1:45]?
I found you through [referral name]	I just thought about [something else]	Let's discuss [reason for meeting]

OPENING LINES

USING EACH LINE TO ENGAGE YOUR READER AND INCREASE READ RATES

If we think about emails as a gorgeous five-course meal, your subject line is the amuse-bouche, getting the reader excited about the rest of the meal. Your opening line is the appetizer (or first course). It has to connect that first little taste to what's coming next, and keep the reader engaged to read on.

Opening lines go hand in hand with your subject line, since they're the preview your reader gets before opening the email.

💡 **EMAIL MARKETING TIP:**

Pair your subject with your email preview by using your opening line to add more detail or fleshing out your subject.

EXAMPLE

Subject: I had an idea since we last spoke
Opening: I'd love to hear your take on it.

Each line of your email should make the reader want to read the next line. That starts with your opening.
A good habit is to write out your email, then delete each line that isn't serving your purpose.

> The email opening's job is just to get read, to get The Reader invested in the email. Because conventional wisdom says that if you read about 20% of anything, you'll likely finish it. So the goal of the lead is to be interesting, easy to read, and basically compelling enough to get folks into the body copy.
>
> **Eddie Shleyner**
> Founder, VeryGoodCopy

The great thing about opening lines is that they're super recyclable! Once you've got two or three that you love, you can keep using them with a few tweaks. Try these out for your intro library:

CASUAL OPENING	CASUAL OPENING	FORMAL OPENING
For Internal Comms	For External Comms	For VIPs/High Stakes Email Comms

Casual opening for internal comms	Casual opening for external comms	Formal opening for VIPs/high stakes email
Hi [first name],	Hi [first name],	Hi [first name],
Thanks for the [great meeting today/help on a specific project/ feedback]. As a follow up, [briefly summarize the action required in the email].	How's it going? I saw [insert something personal i.e: your latest post on LinkedIn about X], inspiring stuff! I'm reaching out because...	Thanks for [recent interaction]. You had asked about [question]. Great news: [answer].

INTRODUCTIONS

CREATING DELIGHTFUL CONNECTIONS WITH YOUR NETWORK VIA EMAIL

Introductions are when you connect two (or more) people who don't know each other via email. We do it all the time. Marketers often want introductions to customers to get social proof quotes, sales reps have more success in their outreach if a mutual connection introduces them to a prospect, new hires get a welcome email or need introductions to cross-functional stakeholders... the list goes on.

It might seem straightforward, until we're staring at our screen trying to come up with a clever and polite way to introduce people via email... The way you go about it entirely depends on the reason you're connecting them. Whether it's a favor, or you're introducing an Account Manager to a client, email introductions come with a few nuances.

We've found that across the board, the best email introductions are:

- Short
- Explain who's being introduced and why
- Leave room for the recipients to then interact with each other, without your input

If you find yourself doing these on a regular basis, it's helpful to have a few examples on deck. All you need to do is customize a few key things and you're good to go! On the next page you'll find some templates to get started.

> " The higher the stakes, and the more VIP the reader, the shorter I usually go.
>
> **Rahul Vohra**
> CEO, Superhuman

PRO TIP
With "Snippets" in Superhuman you can save your favorite templates and quickly insert them into your email intros.

LEARN MORE

COMMON INTRO TYPES	WHAT'S IT FOR	EMAIL COPY
External	Connecting team members with customers or prospects	Hi [first name], Meet [colleague name], ccd in this email. They're the expert in [role/function] and will be your point of contact for anything [your company]. You're in great hands! [Your name]
Internal	Welcoming someone new to the team or introducing people from different departments	Hi [first name], I'm so excited to virtually introduce [team member] from [department]. [Insert one or two fun facts about them]. You'll have tons to discuss on [work focus]. Welcome [colleague name]!
Networking	Linking a professional connection with another to exchange ideas	Hi [first name], Just making a quick intro to [colleague name], since you're both in [industry/function]. We're both so impressed by the work you're doing at [their company], I figured let's get those two brains chatting! Thanks, [Your name]

✨
PRO TIP

Use "Snippets" in Superhuman to quickly insert saved templates into any section of your emails.

LEARN MORE

FOLLOW UPS

STRATEGICALLY FOLLOWING UP TO INCREASE CONVERSIONS

Following up can be stressful. Especially if you're concerned about seeming pushy. We get it. But, here's the thing: follow ups are absolutely necessary: they boost your reply rates.

Studies show that the **sweet spot for cold outreach is 6 email touchpoints.**

The probability of getting an answer goes way up from 18% on that first email, to 27% if you persevere until that 6th email!

Now, let's talk frequency.

If the recipient is going to reply to an email, there's a 90% chance that it will happen within 2 days of the email being sent (Forbes). This is important because it helps us establish a timeline for following up. The first one should be around the 2-3 day mark.

IDEAL FOLLOW UP TIMELINE WITH RESPONSE PROBABILITIES

EMAIL 1	EMAIL 2	EMAIL 3	EMAIL 4	EMAIL 5	EMAIL 6
	2 days later	3 days later	3 days later	1 week later	1 week later
18% CHANCE OF RESPONSE	14% CHANCE OF RESPONSE	12% CHANCE OF RESPONSE	13% CHANCE OF RESPONSE	10% CHANCE OF RESPONSE	27% CHANCE OF RESPONSE

Persistence is key! Aim to send 5-6 follow ups during a one month span. Start with 2 follow ups a week, then change to once a week during the last two.

Now that all the logistics are out of the way, it's time we talk about the actual content of your follow ups.

Follow ups are an opportunity to have fun and create delight. A little creativity goes a long way. Effective follow ups should:

- Be short and to the point
- Reiterate the desired action
- Make it easy for your reader to follow through by making your CTA identifiable

"Circling back"...
"Touching base"...

Don't make the cut.

Try these delightful templates next time you follow up:

BOOKING A MEETING

Re: Booking a Meeting

Hi there [first name],

I'd love to chat with you about [their company] and [your company], [brief explainer of your company]!

The goal of the 30 minute conversation is to understand your team's needs in relation to [pain point your company solves] and discuss different ways that we can support you. 🚀

Would [time and date] or [time and date] work for you?

Looking forward to catching up,

[Your name]

WAITING ON FEEDBACK

Re: Waiting on Feedback

Hey there [first name],

I wanted to check in to see how you're liking [content pending review] so far — have you reached [special section/most surprising part]? Send me a quick note when you do so we can discuss! 💡

FOLLOWING UP ON PROGRESS OF A PENDING TASK

Re: Following up on Progress of a Pending Task

Hi [first name],

How's [task] going? I wanted to check in and see if there are any blockers or questions. I'll be available today during [timeframe] in case you want to go over any details.

I'm excited to see how it's shaping up! 🙌

[Your name]

" I think even calling follow ups "follow ups" is part of the problem. The goal is not to "check in," it's to move the deal forward. Are you following up to check a box or to move a deal forward? Mindset matters.

Camille Trent
Head of Content, Dooly

SIGN OFFS

REFOCUSING YOUR READER'S ATTENTION TO THE DESIRED ACTION

Are you a "Cheers!", "Sincerely", or "All the best" type of person?

No matter which one is your go-to, the trick with sign offs is not to overthink it. Stick to the basics, but when possible tie it in with something in the body of your email. If you're hoping to inspire action, your sign off is another opportunity to make it that much easier! Remind the reader what you're hoping they'll do and a clear way for them to follow through.

ps. are you reading this before the rest of the section?

💡 **SUPERHUMAN TIP:**

Co-founder Vivek Sodera gets the most out of his sign-off real estate with a **ps.** at the bottom of his cold and recruitment emails. Turns out a **ps.** at the end increases engagement and replies: **studies have proved** that most people read the **ps.** first! (And sometimes it could be the only thing they read.)

More sign off examples to incorporate into your emails:

- Hope Tuesday at 3 works, let me know if we need to reschedule! Talk soon,

- Let me know if you need to push back the deadline. Looking forward to your feedback,

- Excited to get your take on this!

- Thanks so much for taking the time to read through. Let me know what you think,

- Does that shed light on things? 😊🌟

> I tend to use "Cheers" or "Thank you." "Thank you" is the best signoff in that it's most likely to get a reponse. That said, "cheers" just feels very friendly and casual to me. I've always liked it.
>
> **Camille Trent**
> Head of Content, Dooly

COLD OUTREACH

CRAFTING SUCCESSFUL MESSAGES FOR THOSE WHO DON'T KNOW YOU YET

Whether you're in sales, recruiting, or a bootstrapped CEO emailing prospects, saying cold outreach is tricky might be the understatement of the year.

Pitchfunnel's email usage statistics indicate that 91.5% of outreach emails are ignored.

There's a silver lining. Most cold outreach leaves a lot to be desired. With these tips you can differentiate yourself and be part of the 9.5% that does get engagement.

✏️ KEEP IT SHORT

Emails between 50 and 125 words get the highest response rates [Campaign Monitor].

👨🏻 MAKE IT PERSONAL

The degree of hyper-personalization can seem difficult to nail — but if you do your homework, it doesn't have to be. A recent product launch or rebrand, a tweet they posted that went viral, or an award they recently received, are just a few Google clicks away.

👑 BE AUTHENTIC

A well placed joke goes a long way! But humor isn't the only way to show authenticity. Our advice? Just write like you talk. Easier said than done, though. A few tips that'll help: read your email aloud, pretend you're writing to your mom, and keep the language simple (no jargon).

👀 HIGHLIGHT THE SELFISH BENEFIT

Instead of talking about what makes your solution or product so great, focus instead on what your prospect will get out of it. What's in it for them?

▪️ INCLUDE A SIMPLE AND SINGULAR CTA

Don't ask them to do more than one thing, and make it easy for them to do that thing. Anything more — or worse, no call to action at all — and the recipient won't know what to do.

❓ ASK QUESTIONS

A Boomerang analysis shows that emails with 1- 3 questions get 50% more replies than those without any. Although anything more than 3 can have the opposite effect. Asking (a few) questions works for a simple reason: it shows people you care and are trying to send them relevant information. Use their answers to get insights about your audience and tailor your follow ups, or simply to keep the conversation going.
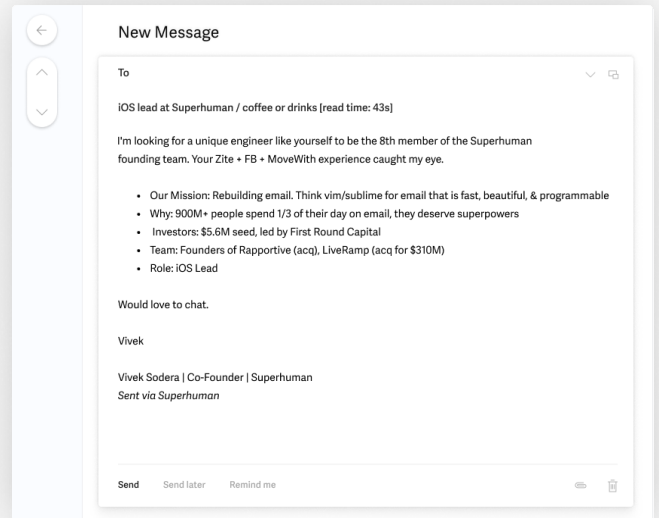
🚗 STEER CLEAR OF ROI

Sounds kind of counterproductive right? But, according to Gong Labs, ROI language in cold emails decreases success by 15%! The reasoning is, you'd be jumping into the end result without context. Cold outreach is all about context and generating positive feels, so you can eventually get into that middle of the funnel ROI goodness.

🪧 USE WHITE SPACE TO YOUR ADVANTAGE

By optimizing your emails for F-shaped scanning, you're making your emails much easier to read (and probably a lot shorter). A study revealed that humans most commonly consume digital content following this pattern: two horizontal lines at the top, followed by a vertical stripe.

Superhuman success story: Landing a dream hire through email outreach

In the early days of Superhuman, this is the email that landed us our first Head of Engineering...

New Message

To

iOS lead at Superhuman / coffee or drinks [read time: 43s]

I'm looking for a unique engineer like yourself to be the 8th member of the Superhuman founding team. Your Zite + FB + MoveWith experience caught my eye.

- Our Mission: Rebuilding email. Think vim/sublime for email that is fast, beautiful, & programmable
- Why: 900M+ people spend 1/3 of their day on email, they deserve superpowers
- Investors: $5.6M seed, led by First Round Capital
- Team: Founders of Rapportive (acq), LiveRamp (acq for $310M)
- Role: iOS Lead

Would love to chat.

Vivek

Vivek Sodera | Co-Founder | Superhuman
Sent via Superhuman

Send   Send later   Remind me

SUBJECT LINE

The content of the email is clear and gives it an authentic touch with coffee or drinks.

iOS lead at Superhuman / coffee or drinks

Opening line expands on the subject (the job offer) and makes it personal by letting her know we're fans of her career.

I'm looking for a unique engineer like yourself to be the 8th member of the Superhuman founding team. Your Zite + FB + MoveWith experience caught my eye.

Optimized for F-shaped scanning — short bullet points with the most important info she needs to know — no extra fluff.

- Why: 900M+ people spend 1/3 of their day on email, they deserve superpowers
- Team: Founders of Rapportive (acq), LiveRamp (acq for $310M)
- Role: iOS Lead

SIGN OFF

Keeps it light, reiterates the action.

Would love to chat.
Vivek

Why did this email work? We followed 3 key rules... Response to our outreach more than doubled when:

| We opened with our mission | Optimized for F-shaped scanning | Cut our email length in half! |

A FEW MORE COLD OUTREACH TEMPLATES

1ST COLD OUTREACH INTRODUCING YOUR SOLUTION

Hi [first name],

X% of [function/industry counterparts] are experiencing [problem]. If you happen to be in the same boat, I wanted to reach out to introduce you to [your company].

[two lines on your company's solution to the problem].

To visualize, here's [link to case study/social proof section of your website]. You'll find some different use cases for the tool.

Do you have a few minutes next week to learn more?

[Your name]

COLD OUTREACH ANGLING FOR A DEMO/ MEETING

Hi [first name],

First up, congrats on [something positive and recent about their company, like a new feature, or an eye catching campaign].

I was wondering if you'd be open to a 20-30 minute chat? I'm [your name, company, and job title] and I'd love to get a better sense of how [their company does what you solve for].

[Insert a few lines of how your company makes the process easier/more efficient, focusing on applied examples and the user experience.]

Let me know if you're interested and we'll get something on the calendar!

[Your name]

COLD OUTREACH INVITING TO AN EVENT

[First name], you're invited!

Have you adopted [method/lesson from event] approach? With [outline pain points/challenges that will be discussed in the event], now more than ever it is critical to [take one actionable insight that will be delivered at the event]. [Function e.g. "marketers"] who adopt [specific method] are more agile, budget-efficient, and successful.

[Link to event registration with: title, date, and time.]

[Event name] is [your company's event for [target persona]. You will hear the latest from thought leaders on [topics of discussion], see examples from world-class practitioners, and learn what's new from [your company and other companies participating].

Here's what's in store at [Event Name]
[Include event agenda as bullet points]

You'll leave this event equipped with actionable tips and best practices to [execute on pain point].

Save your seat!

[Button: Register Now]

Hope to see you there,

[Your name]

QUICK DOS AND DON'TS OF EMAIL ETIQUETTE

Email is a huge part of our everyday lives, but most of the time we don't really think about it.

Until we *really* think about it. How do I address the person being introduced to me, how do I make an intro via email, is a joke here appropriate? What about a smiley face emoji?

All social interactions rely on agreed-upon expectations, including email! With one important caveat: we've been shifting from formal to more casual and authentic messaging. For example, it was once standard practice to start emails with formal greetings — now we're on a first name basis with almost anyone, and too much formality can make emails seem stuffy.

Which gets us to a frequent dilemma in email: how casual should my tone be in professional messages?

> "
> **If your ultimate goal is to write emails that inspire action, your first step is making it a joy to read.**

Context and culture matter

The answer here can get a little complicated if we're sending cross-cultural emails. Hierarchical cultures require formality when addressing higher ups, while it's OK to be more informal with someone further down the org chart. If you're on the same level, then Forbes advises to pay extra close attention to how you phrase requests, or anything that could be interpreted as exerting power over the recipient.

In high context cultures like China or Brazil, there's a lot to be understood from what's not being said. Low context cultures like the US or Australia rely on the words and ideas that are explicitly said. To be successful when communicating across cultural lines, you need to be a great listener and a respectful student of different communication styles. When in doubt about the best approach, Forbes' advice is to "over-communicate": to ensure that your message is clear to readers from both low and high context standpoints.

In North America, it depends. Our advice is to err on the side of casual! If your ultimate goal is to write emails that inspire action, your first step is making it a joy to read.

EMOJIS?

Absolutely, as long as they're tastefully chosen and not overused.

Here's an example from our Delight team reaching out to a customer:

"Have you reached Inbox Zero yet? Send me a quick note the next time you do so we can celebrate! 🥳"

JOKES?

Sure, but keep it at the end, or at the very beginning, so you don't distract from the core message. Don't feel pressured to insert humor though. Be yourself.

Here's a great example from a cold email from **Ceros:**
"I know you must get hundreds of emails a day, but... how many haikus do you get?

I've been on your site,
Let's talk about the content...
Is Tuesday alright?"

PERSONAL ANECDOTES?

Maybe not on the email about the spreadsheets, but if you have something relevant to share, or something that will add a human touch to better illustrate your point, go for it!

Marketer and author Dave Gerhardt is the former CMO of Drift and Privy. He's also the founder of **DGMG**, a B2B marketing community. Check out how he casually inserts a relatable glimpse of his life along with a CTA to share his newsletter:

"PS. I'm really trying to grow my newsletter audience now that my flaws have been exposed. **Can you send a tweet about my newsletter?** You can edit this. My copy is weak here. I'm rushing tbh my kids are yelling at me from the other room."

When to follow up

When it comes to appropriate response times and follow ups, everyone has their own formulas, but we did some digging to give you a few benchmarks you can rely on.

SCENARIOS	WHEN TO FOLLOW UP
Sales pitch	2-3 days
Freelance writing pitches	1-2 weeks (although most publications have guidelines on when you should expect to hear back).
Job seeker	Send a follow up "thank you" email right away. Wait at least a week before you inquire about next steps.
Recruiter	Communicate once a week, even if it's just an update. Candidates will definitely appreciate speed, and in high volume environments, 24 hours is enough for a candidate to take another offer.
Anything else	24 hours for internal comms, 2-3 days for external comms.

BONUS: SUPERHUMAN'S INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR PRODUCTIVITY AND WELLNESS

Pssst... we're sharing our secrets!

After switching from in-office to a hybrid and distributed model, we spent time carefully designing a communication framework that worked for all Superhumans, no matter where they were working from. We hope it serves as inspiration for your team.

> We set out to be intentional about the way we communicate with each other, being inclusive of time zones, mindful of notifications, and how email and Slack are perceived in our organization.
>
> **Kristen Hayward**
> Head of People, Superhuman

Should I Slack, email, or request a meeting?

USE SLACK IF ANY OF THE FOLLOWING HOLD:

- Your message is quick (e.g. only takes 30 seconds for the reader to read and reply)
- You're not sure exactly who to ask, but you know which general channel or group of people to ask
- You want a response within ~3 hours

MOVE TO EMAIL IF ANY OF THE FOLLOWING HOLD:

- You're asking someone else to do something that will take them >30 seconds
- You're sharing information that you expect others to read
- You're writing a thoughtful message that will benefit from structure (e.g. bullets, in-line images, etc)
- You're okay with a response time of around ~1 day

IF YOU NEED A RESPONSE MORE URGENTLY, CALL OR SPEAK IN PERSON

" Writing a good email is like telling a story. With the right story, you can close investors, captivate customers, and inspire your team toward your next big milestone.

Rahul Vohra
CEO, Superhuman

Armed with these templates and tips, see your email effectiveness go way up!
Whenever you're ready to take it to the next level, check out **Superhuman for Business.**