

# 9 Powerful Ways to Encourage People to Open Your Envelopes

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After all, it's just a container for the important items inside, right? Not quite.

When a person receives a direct mail package, the envelope is the first thing they see. And its appearance determines whether the recipient opens the envelope and reads your carefully crafted sales literature or throws the package into the trash.

Given that many people literally stand over the trash basket as they scan their mail, the envelope may be the single most important element of every direct mail package.

Here are a few ways to improve the odds of your envelopes grabbing attention and getting opened.

- **Write strong teaser copy.** Teasers are a form of headline. They just happen to be printed on an envelope. Good teasers generate interest with a provocative

statement, provoke curiosity with a question, or suggest a solution to a problem.

Example: "Do your feet hurt? Here's how to get instant relief without medicine or doctor visits. Look inside."

- **Select your audience.** This is a proven teaser tactic. By using key words or phrases related to your prospect's interests or identity, you can grab attention instantly. This generally appears directly above your main teaser.

Example: "Exclusive offer for golfers inside" or "For serious investors only."

- **Reveal the envelope contents.** Tell your prospect that there is a free, valuable, new, or exclusive item inside the envelope: a dollars-off coupon, voucher, product sample, booklet, or whatever you choose. People don't like to throw away anything with tangible value.
- **Use the power of "directive language."** People are more likely

to do what you want if you give them direct, clear instructions. If you want your prospect to open the envelope, use teaser copy that directs them to do so, such as “Open now” or “Look inside.” You can combine this directive language with a benefit teaser for a more powerful effect.

Example: “Discover how to grow a more beautiful garden with less work. Look inside for your free Super Grow flower seeds.”

- **Try plain envelopes.** People have “ad radar” and sometimes ignore anything that looks like a sales pitch, so sometimes you don't want your direct mail piece to look like advertising. The easiest way to do this is to use a plain envelope with no teaser copy or graphics.

A totally plain envelope may show nothing more than the outgoing address, return address, and postage. This “blank slate” envelope is almost certain to get opened because the contents are a mystery.

- **Sell the sizzle.** If you have a unique or highly desirable product, you can use your envelope to create instant excitement. Show a photo of the product, list benefits and features, or highlight your special price. While with a plain envelope you hide the message, with a “sizzle” envelope you spill the beans instantly.



This idea works best with items that require little explanation or for products and services offered to loyal customers who know your company. It's also effective to show premiums, gifts, or bonuses.

A picture of a book with the words “FREE Bonus” instantly communicates an appealing offer.

- **Experiment with involvement devices.** This includes stickers, tokens, stamps, coins, scratch-offs, lift-up tabs, attached notes, seals, and other techniques. These can be expensive, but they are proven response boosters that often offset the extra cost.

Example: Use a window to show a lift-up tab inside with teaser copy that reads, “Lift the tab inside and see how much you can save on your next purchase.”

- **Print the deadline on the envelope.** People don't like to miss out on an opportunity. So when you give a specific response deadline, you encourage people to take immediate action.

This can work on an otherwise plain envelope as well as a teaser-filled envelope that reveals the offer. If you can't use a specific date, use a faux deadline, such as “Reply within 30 days” or “Offer good for the next 2 weeks.”

- **Test “urgent” envelopes.** When you receive a FedEx<sup>®</sup> package or USPS Priority delivery, you can't help but open it. That's because the enclosed items are almost always personal and relevant. For low quantity mailings to highly-targeted individuals, you can use these services, but they're too expensive for ordinary direct mail.

However, you can achieve a similar effect by designing a “speedy delivery” envelope. You must be careful not to violate any postal regulations, but when done right this tactic can assure a high envelope open rate. Just be sure

that the contents are truly urgent  
and relevant to your recipients;  
otherwise you risk making your

prospect feel tricked into looking at  
your message.

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