

Understanding Gmail's Promotions Tab: Factors That Contribute to This Placement

This analysis explores the key factors that cause emails to be categorized under Gmail's Promotions tab. It breaks down how various elements contribute to this placement. The goal is to help email senders better optimize their emails for successful delivery and placement in the Primary Inbox.



About Warmy and the Research Team

Warmy is the leading email deliverability technology, helping businesses improve their inbox placement, sender reputation, and overall email performance. Powered by AI-driven strategies.

The Warmy Research Team is a dedicated group of email deliverability-certified experts focused on analyzing and optimizing email-sending practices.

Through continuous testing, data-driven insights, and innovative methodologies, they uncover factors that impact deliverability and translate findings into actionable improvements for Warmy's platform. Their expertise helps businesses navigate the complexities of email deliverability with confidence.



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Key Elements

- **Promotions:** refers to a classification applied by email services (particularly Gmail) that identifies emails as commercial or marketing content, thus placing them into the "Promotions" tab rather than the Primary Inbox.
- **Template:** the content and structure of the email template (HTML, text-to-image ratio, spam keywords, etc.).
- **IP:** the trustworthiness of the sending IP address (based on blacklists, volume, and spam complaints).
- **Email reputation:** the domain and sender reputation (based on history, user engagement, and complaints).

Factors Contributing to Promotions Tab Placement

Factor	Technical Interpretation
No personalization	<i>All emails are addressed as "Hi Guys," "Hey there" or without a name at all.</i>
Explicit phrasing of call to action or benefit	<i>Phrases like "Request Your Price Match," "I can share more," or "Let me know"</i>
Similarity in structure of template	<i>All emails inform about a benefit/opportunity and encourage a response.</i>
Use of HTML-heavy content	<i>Gmail sees this kind of layout as promotional as complex structure, styled buttons, and branded elements are common in mass marketing campaigns.</i>

Personalization in templates

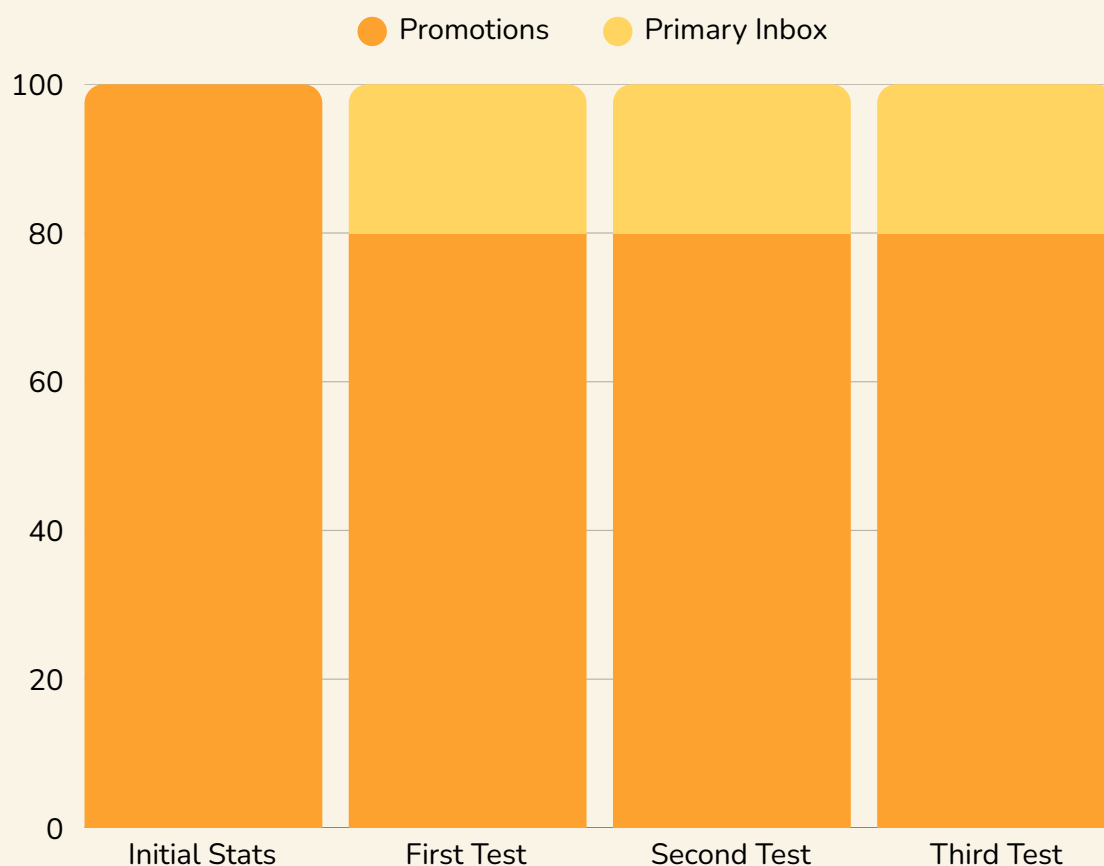
We replaced the generic “Hi Guys” greeting with more neutral, conversational alternatives such as “Hi,” “Hello,” and “Just lending a hand.”

This subtle change reduced the appearance of mass outreach and made the message feel more personal—a known factor in improving primary inbox placement and avoiding the Promotions tab.

All other variables (content, structure, tone, unsubscribe method) were held constant to isolate the impact of the greeting alone.

Note: Full personalization (e.g., use of recipient names) was not possible due to limited access to user data.

Test results: No personalization vs. Personalization



Results:

- Baseline: 100% of emails landed in Promotions.
- Tests 1–3 (minimal personalization): ~20% reached the Primary tab

****All other variables (sending domain, content, ESP) were held constant to isolate the effect.***

Conclusion:

- Reducing personalization in subject and body led to a 20% lift in inbox placement
- This suggests that overly personalized or templated emails may trigger Promotions tab filtering.

Explicit Call to Action (CTA) Phrasing

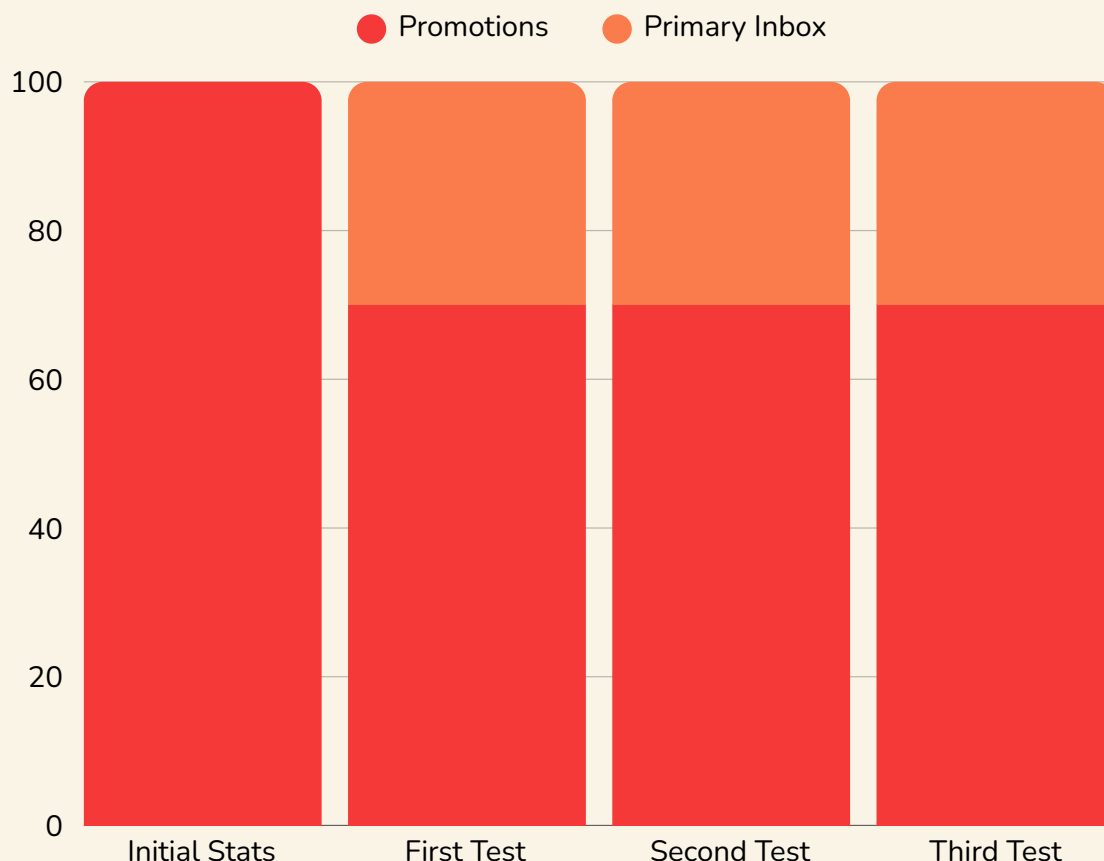
We tested the impact of CTA phrasing on Gmail classification by replacing **vague or aggressive language** (“Click here,” “Buy now,” etc.) with **clear, benefit-focused alternatives** (“Download your free checklist,” “See how it works”).

This user-centric shift made the intent more transparent and reduced promotional tone.

All other elements remained constant to isolate the effect.

Note: We deliberately avoided urgency-based and sales-heavy CTAs, as these are known to correlate with higher classification into Gmail’s Promotions tab.

Test results: Explicit CTA vs. Benefit-driven CTA



Results:

- Baseline: 100% of emails landed in Promotions.
- Post-change (3 rounds): ~30% reached the Primary Inbox.

****All other variables (sender, domain, content, tone, unsubscribe) remained constant to isolate CTA impact.***

Conclusion:

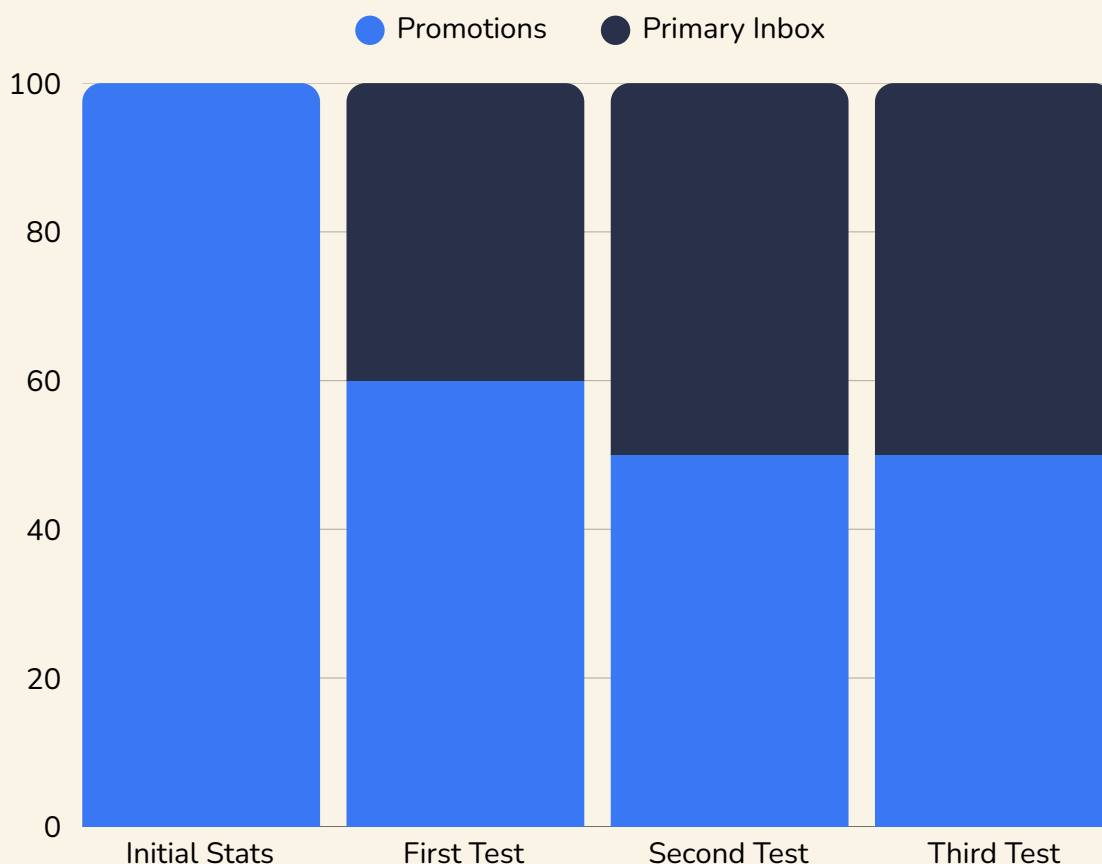
- Replacing aggressive or sales-heavy CTAs with benefit-driven language led to a 30% improvement in inbox placement, confirming CTA phrasing as a key deliverability factor

Similarity in Structure of Template

We evaluated how **repeated use of identical email structures across campaigns** affects deliverability.

Note: We did not rotate layouts or HTML blocks in this test, as the goal was to evaluate pure structure uniformity without external variables.

Test results: Uniform Templates vs. Refined Templates



Results:

- Inbox placement **improved from 0% to 40–50%**, indicating a strong correlation between template refinements and deliverability gains.
- Structural consistency (layout, sentence length, paragraph flow, and CTA positioning) increased the likelihood of Promotions tab placement.
- Key contributing factors included reduced structural uniformity, more natural greetings, and improved perceived personalization.

Conclusion:

- Even minor adjustments to layout and tone can measurably influence primary inbox placement rates.
- Ongoing testing of structural and linguistic elements is essential for sustained optimization.

Use of HTML-heavy Content

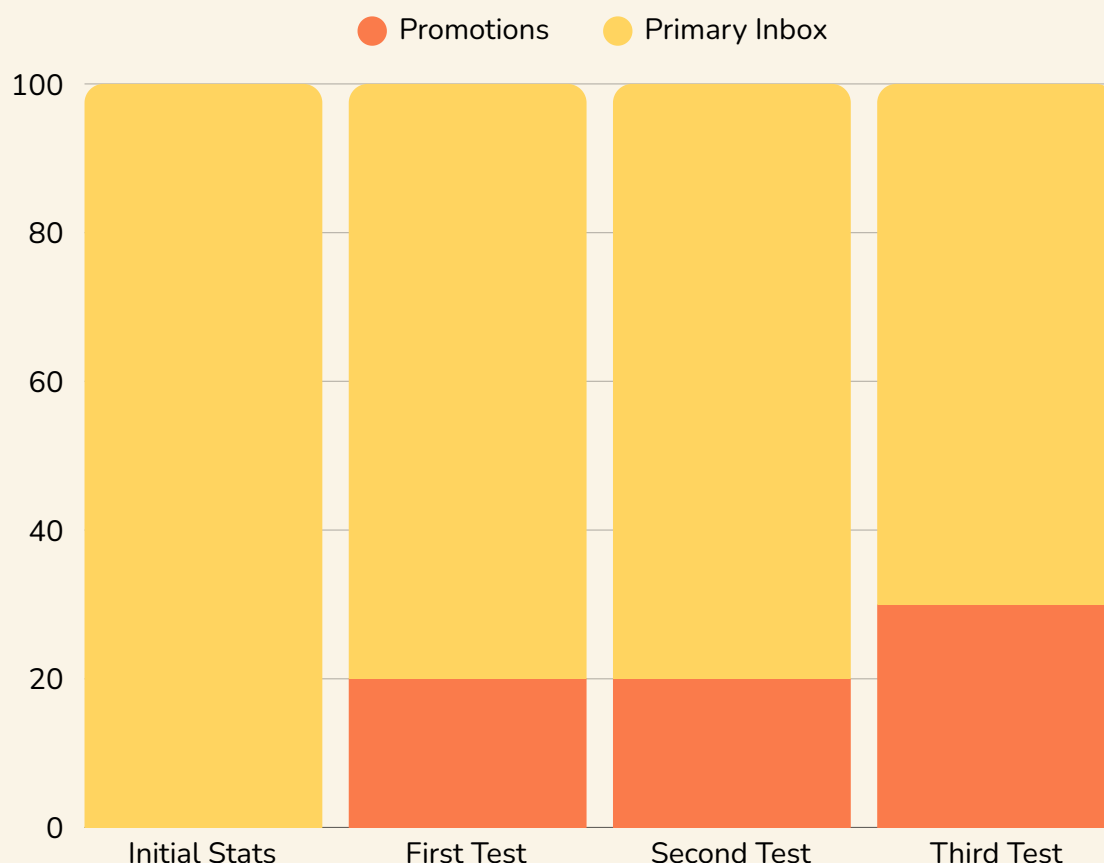
We tested whether the level of HTML complexity affects inbox placement by adding nested tables, inline styles, and extra layout blocks to a known inbox-performing template. Subject line, sender, and visible content remained unchanged.

The test isolated HTML “heaviness” as the sole variable to assess its role in triggering Promotions tab filtering.

We tested the effect of heavy HTML on deliverability by progressively increasing structural complexity in a previously inbox-performing template.

Note: We didn’t add any salesy language or change the message. We only made the HTML more complex to test that one thing.

Test results: Impact of Increasing HTML Weight on Inbox Placement



Results:

While sender, subject, and visible content remained constant, inbox rates declined as HTML weight increased:

- **Test 1–2:** 80% Inbox / 20% Promotions
- **Test 3:** 70% Inbox / 30% Promotions

Conclusion:

- Excessive or overly complex HTML can significantly impact Gmail classification
- It acts as an independent trigger for Promotions tab filtering even when core message elements remain unchanged.

Examples of Promotion vs Improved Templates

Promotion Template

Hello Guys,¹
 Have you considered how to make your meetings more effective?
 Many people find meetings can be a waste of time.
 Setting clear agendas and goals can really help keep things on track.
 There are also tools that can help manage time better.³
 If you're interested, I can share some great resources.²
 Take care,
 Samer Zein
 Guys, if you're not interested, please reply³ with a quick "Not a fit" or "No" and I'll stop emailing you.

Improved Template

Hi there,¹
 I hope your week is going well.
 I recently came across a few insights that might be relevant to how teams handle internal collaboration.
 Some of the methods we've seen being used are quite effective in reducing unnecessary back-and-forth.³
 Just thought it could be useful to share in case it's something you're exploring.
 Let me know if you'd be open to exchanging a few ideas.²
 All the best,
 Samer Zein
 P.S. If now's not the right time, feel free to ignore this message — no pressure at all.³

Optimizations made to reduce promotional triggers in Gmail:

- Replaced “Hi Guys” with neutral “Hi there” to sound more natural and less generic and mass-sent, lowering promo classification risk.
- **Removed predictable pitch format:** Instead of the standard “benefit + CTA,” we used a more reflective tone with no direct asks. This mimics typical personal emails to boost likelihood of landing in the Primary tab.
- **Conversational flow over templated logic:** Replaced formulaic copy with a soft opener and open-ended question (“Do you notice the same trend?”). This created a dialogue feel and reduced promotional signals.

Conclusion:

Subtle shifts in tone and structure, especially avoiding CTA-heavy or template-style formats, meaningfully increase the likelihood of Primary Inbox placement.

Examples of Promotion vs Improved Templates

Heavy html version



Summer Glow Essentials Are Here!

Up to 30% off all skincare products this week only

Discover our best-selling natural skincare collection made for the summer season — hydrate, protect, and glow with plant-based ingredients. 🌿

- ✓ Free shipping on all orders
- ♥️ Cruelty-free & vegan
- 🌸 For all skin types

Hurry, offer ends **this Sunday at midnight!**

Shop the Sale Now

Conclusion:

Heavy HTML templates can negatively impact inbox placement. We recommend simplifying templates by reducing blocks, styles, and format complexity.

Email Warmup Roadmap

Steps		What you need to do
1	<i>Start warming up</i>	<p><i>Use our default warmup templates.</i></p> <p><i>Don't send old templates.</i></p>
2	<i>Get into the inbox.</i>	<p><i>Wait 4-6 days.</i></p> <p><i>Monitor inbox rates daily.</i></p>
3	<i>Update template.</i>	<p><i>Use the new template we provide based on performance.</i></p>
4	<i>Start sending an updated template.</i>	<p><i>Send in small batches. If inbox placement % is stable, increase volume.</i></p>

Conclusion

The results from our tests provide valuable insights into the factors that influence Gmail's decision to place emails in the Promotions tab. Here's a summary of the key findings:

- Reducing personalization in both the subject line and body of the email resulted in a 20% improvement in inbox placement, suggesting that overly personalized or templated emails may trigger Gmail's Promotions tab filtering.
- Replacing aggressive or sales-heavy CTAs like “Click here” with benefit-driven language, such as “See how it works” or “Download your free guide,” led to a 30% improvement in inbox placement.
- Structural consistency in email templates (including layout, sentence length, and CTA positioning) increased the likelihood of landing in the Promotions tab. Minor adjustments to the layout, tone, and use of more natural language can improve inbox placement.
- Excessive or overly complex HTML significantly affects Gmail classification. Our tests showed a clear correlation between increasing HTML weight and declining inbox placement. Complex HTML structures, even when core message elements remain unchanged.



Auto All-In-One Tool For Email Deliverability To Make Your Email Channel Reliable

We are passionate about solving email deliverability challenges and making email a reliable channel for every business

325+

Years Of Combined Email Deliverability Expertise

9 countries

Home To Our Talented Team

95+

Countries Have Daily Active Users In Warmy

