

HTML Email Mastery - Build Responsive Email Templates 2026

Create responsive, dark mode HTML emails tested on 86+ clients including Outlook. For developers and designers in 2026.

Web & Mobile Design

Instructor: Cameron Brooks • 5 sections • 45 lessons • 14.25h total

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About this course

Email coding in 2026 is challenging. With over 86 email clients rendering HTML differently, and Outlook using Word's engine, building consistent, dark mode friendly emails often leads to frustration and wasted time. This course addresses these pain points head-on. You'll learn to code responsive, dark mode ready HTML email templates from the ground up. We'll cover table-based layouts, CSS workarounds, and client-specific fixes through step-by-step videos, real case studies, and hands-on projects.

Course curriculum

Foundations of HTML Email Development

- **Understanding Email HTML vs Web HTML (15m)**
Learn why email HTML requires tables and inline styles, and how it differs from web standards. Includes examples from common client behaviors.
- **Anatomy of an Email: DOCTYPE and Head (20m)**
Step-by-step guide to setting up the DOCTYPE, head styles, and meta tags for reliable email rendering.
- **Exploring the 2026 Email Client Landscape (18m)**
Overview of 86+ email clients and their rendering engines, with focus on Outlook and modern mobile apps.
- **Setting Up Your Email Dev Environment (12m)**
Choose and configure code editors, preview tools, and testing platforms for efficient email development.
- **Structuring Email Body with Tables (25m)**
How to use tables for layout in emails, with practical tips for Outlook and legacy client support.
- **Inline Styles and Limited CSS in Email (15m)**
Practical session on applying inline styles and understanding CSS support variations across clients.
- **Building Your First Simple Email Template (30m)**
Hands-on project: create a basic email template from scratch, applying the foundational concepts covered.

Building Responsive Email Layouts

- **Mobile-First Design Principles for Email (20m)**
Learn how to design emails that prioritize mobile devices, with strategies for different screen sizes.
- **Introduction to Fluid Hybrid Coding (18m)**
Combine fluid, fluid-hybrid, and media query approaches for flexible responsive layouts.
- **Mastering Table-Based Layouts for Outlook (25m)**
Deep dive into table structures that ensure compatibility with Outlook and legacy clients.
- **Creating Stacking Columns for Mobile (22m)**
Technique for making columns stack on smaller screens using CSS and table hacks.
- **Fluid Images and Percentage-Based Widths (15m)**
How to make images and containers responsive with percentage widths and max-width properties.
- **Using Media Queries in Email Design (20m)**
When and how to use media queries for responsive adjustments in supported email clients.
- **Testing Responsiveness Across Major Clients (18m)**
Verify your responsive design works on Gmail, Apple Mail, Yahoo, and Outlook 2026.
- **Handling Email Client Inconsistencies (15m)**
Problem-solving session for common issues encountered in responsive email layouts.

- Building a Responsive Two-Column Layout (25m)

Project: create a responsive two-column email that adapts cleanly to different screen sizes.

Dark Mode Email Design & Implementation

- How Dark Mode Rendering Works in Email Clients (20m)

Understand the mechanisms behind dark mode in Apple Mail, Gmail, Outlook, and mobile clients.

- Using CSS for Dark Mode: Color-Scheme and Media Queries (18m)

Implement dark mode with meta tags and @media (prefers-color-scheme: dark) directives.

- Targeting Outlook Dark Mode with Conditionals (22m)

Use <!--[if mso]> and [data-ogsc] selectors to handle dark mode specifically in Outlook.

- Designing Adaptive Logos and Images (15m)

Techniques for logos and images that maintain clarity and appeal in both light and dark modes.

- Ensuring Text Readability in Dark Mode (12m)

Best practices for text color choices and contrast ratios to keep emails readable.

- Testing Dark Mode Across All Major Clients (20m)

Use testing tools to debug and validate dark mode rendering on over 86 clients.

- Common Dark Mode Pitfalls and Fixes (18m)

Identify and solve frequent issues like color inversion or missing adaptations.

Cross-Client Compatibility & Testing

- Handling Outlook's Word Rendering Engine (25m)

Work with VML and conditional comments to overcome Outlook's unique limitations.

- Gmail's CSS Stripping Rules in 2026 (18m)

Understand what CSS Gmail removes and how to design effective workarounds.

- Creating Bulletproof Buttons for All Clients (20m)

Code buttons that render correctly in Outlook, Gmail, and other email clients.

- Background Images and Fallback Strategies (22m)

Use VML for background images in Outlook and provide solid fallbacks for others.

- Using Testing Tools for 86+ Client Validation (15m)

Leverage Litmus, Email on Acid, and Parcel to test email across a wide client range.

- Accessibility Best Practices in Email (18m)

Implement semantic HTML, alt text, and screen reader support for accessible emails.

- Debugging Cross-Client Rendering Issues (20m)

Step-by-step debugging process for email client compatibility problems.

- Email Client-Specific CSS Hacks (15m)

Targeted CSS techniques for clients like Yahoo and Apple Mail to fix quirks.

- Ensuring Consistent Typography Across Clients (12m)

How to manage fonts and text sizing for uniform appearance everywhere.

- Testing and Fixing Common Outlook Issues (25m)

Hands-on session to resolve frequent Outlook rendering bugs and inconsistencies.

Advanced Techniques & Production Workflow

- **Building Modular Email Component Systems (22m)**
Create reusable components like headers, footers, and buttons for efficient development.
- **Templating with MJML for Scalable Emails (20m)**
Use MJML to write responsive email templates with less code and better maintainability.
- **Alternative Templating: Maizzle and Handlebars (18m)**
Explore other templating tools that can streamline your email development workflow.
- **Dark Mode QA Automation (15m)**
Automate dark mode testing in your development pipeline for faster feedback.
- **Integrating Email Builds into CI/CD Pipelines (20m)**
Set up continuous integration and deployment for email templates to reduce errors.
- **Deliverability Considerations: Clean Code (18m)**
Write code that avoids spam triggers and meets file size limits for better delivery.
- **Avoiding Spam Triggers in Email Code (15m)**
Identify and remove elements like excessive links or suspicious styles that could flag emails.
- **Optimizing Email File Size and Load Times (12m)**
Techniques to reduce email size for faster loading and improved deliverability.
- **Building a Complete Responsive Email Template (30m)**
Project: create a full email template that is responsive, dark mode ready, and multi-client tested.
- **Final QA and Cross-Client Testing (25m)**
Test your complete template across all major clients and fix any remaining issues.
- **Deploying and Monitoring Email Campaigns (18m)**
Best practices for sending emails, tracking performance, and iterating based on data.
- **Staying Updated with Email Client Changes (15m)**
How to keep up with evolving email standards and client updates throughout 2026.

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