

## Some testing “don’ts”

### *Don’t*

mail to individuals who’ve received your test in the final rollout.

### *Don’t*

make major decisions based on minor results. If there’s no clear “cause and effect,” don’t assume one exists.

### *Don’t*

read non-tested factors into the results. If you didn’t test a variable, don’t assume it contributed to the final result.

*For example, if you didn’t test the copy, and results were disappointing, don’t blame the copy. Stick with the results and make improvements where necessary depending on tested variables and results.*

### *Don’t*

forget to follow up quickly. Timing may affect response, so roll out your offer quickly after the results are analyzed.

### *Don’t*

forget to keep tabs on your program.

You should see, fairly quickly, how much response your offer will generate. A rule of thumb is that within one week, you’ll receive about **25%** of your total responses; within two weeks, **50%**; and within four weeks, **75%**.

The last 25% will trickle in over the next few weeks.

## Some typical *format* tests

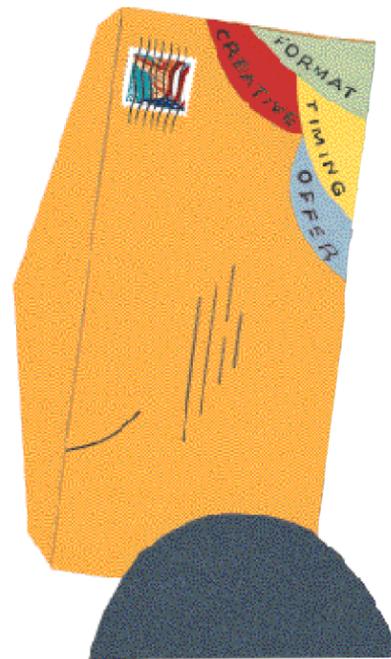
- Postcard vs. self-mailer
- Standard envelope vs. smaller monarch envelope
- “Live” postage vs. printed indicia or metering
- Window vs. closed-face envelope
- Lift note vs. no lift note
- Pre- or post-mailing postcard to boost response vs. mailing without one

## Ideas for *copy* tests

- Decide who signs the letter
- Headlines in brochure/ad
- Personalized vs. non-personalized
- Envelope teaser copy vs. blind envelope
- Handwriting in letter margins vs. no handwriting
- Testimonials or not
- Product photography with callouts

## Ideas for *offer* tests

- Free sample
- Quantity discount
- Request for referrals
- Method of payment: credit card/check/purchase order
- “Buy one, get one free,” “2 for the price of 1”
- Method of response: phone/mail/fax/e-mail



*After testing, you'll have a better indication of what works and what doesn't. Testing gives you valuable insight that will help you create even better and more successful Direct Mail campaigns.*

—DIRECT MAIL BY THE NUMBERS

Testing is a very common—and successful—way to determine your best format/offer/creative. And it's especially important if you decide to test price points. That's because, if you're testing \$100 versus \$80, the difference could make you \$20 richer. While you're at it, you could also compare methods of payment, e.g., check/C.O.D./credit cards, etc.

If you're going to test your list, it's important that you select the names randomly so you can maintain your control of the variables and get valid results. It's pretty easy to select random samples for tests because list brokers and ad managers of publications already have systems set up to help you. To conduct a reliable test, you need to rent a "test panel," a fair number of names that will represent your entire mailing. These names are selected randomly by the computer. The best idea is to consult with your broker. Together, the two of you will be able to create the list that's right for your company and your objectives.

**To be valid, you need to test a statistically significant number based on the size of the overall mailing you have planned.**

## Identifying your variables

It is crucial that you carefully identify the variable in each test. Some oft-cited rules include:

- *Using "key codes," numbers and/or letters to help identify your mail piece*
- *Testing only ONE variable at a time*
- *Keeping track of the names used*
- *Using sufficient test quantities*
- *"Dropping" or mailing your tests at the same time*
- *Not accepting test results blindly*
- *Continuing to test and improve your results*

Since it's impossible to control all the variables, it's crucial that you keep your testing and tracking methods as simple as possible. By testing only one element at a time, you'll make things much easier for yourself (and you'll get more reliable results.) Naturally, the larger your test sample, the more reliable the results.

# 50

### A basic rule of thumb:

in order for your test to be "analyzable," you should receive a minimum of **50** responses to the mailing. On a 5,000-piece mailing, this represents a 1% response rate, which is very respectable.

to mailing lists to offers/prices can give you valuable test results. Make sure you have a good reason for the test. And, to make sure that you have clear results, be sure to test only one variable at a time.

Perhaps you've been mailing a postcard and then decide to run a small test with an offer and a letter. If you find that you get a huge response, how do you figure out which was the responsible factor? Was it the letter? Or the offer?

Test one element at a time and you'll always know.

## When to test?

### Some basic tips on when you should test:

- *When you want to fine-tune a successful mailing for even greater results*
- *When your cost-per-order isn't quite what you'd hoped*
- *When you have new creative that you think could do well, but need further justification to "roll out"*
- *When you're interested in expanding your market with a wider list*
- *When something in your marketing mix changes, like price or offer*
- *When you're introducing a new product*



—DIRECT MAIL BY THE NUMBERS

What sets Direct Mail apart from more “traditional” media is its ability to be “tested.” When you test a mailing (whether it be the offer, the list or the “creative,” which is the mail package itself), you have a golden opportunity. Because, before you spend your Direct Mail budget, you can determine, in a relatively short time frame, whether your mail piece will be a winner.

Let’s say that you’ve been mailing out postcards to customers from time to time and they’ve done pretty well for your business. What would happen if you sent out a brochure instead? With Direct Mail, you can test them both and find out. Do a small sample mailing and send half your customers the postcard and the other half the new brochure. By testing on a small group now, you can avoid costly mistakes later.

In this example, your postcard is the “control.” The control refers to the mail piece that’s been the most successful for you. If you find that the brochure brings in even greater results, then that becomes the new control, the

benchmark against which all your other Direct Mail pieces will be measured.

## Why test?

Basically, to save you from making a costly mistake. When you do a small test mailing and it does well, you can “roll it out” and mail it in greater quantities, on a larger scale and you’ll know, roughly, how it will do. One of the characteristics that makes Direct Mail especially attractive in today’s fragmented marketplace is the direct marketer’s ability to “predict” how a mail effort will do. This is powerful knowledge that makes a significant difference.

## What to test?

Remember that if something can be mailed, it can also be tested. The best factors to test are those elements that will have the greatest impact on your response rate. A variety of things, from creative format (letter, brochure, postcard) to copy (long vs. short)

### 6 key things to test are:

- Offer
- Price
- Product
- Creative
- Mail package format
- Seasonality/timing