

The Write Way:

A Copywriter's Guide to Writing Direct
Marketing Copy



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The Basics

It's always helpful to learn a few tricks of the trade before you begin writing copy for direct marketing mail packs and promotions.

Attracting Attention

The first hurdle is getting the recipient to open the envelope.

- Is there a relevant, single-minded benefit in the headline?
- Does it promote a sense of urgency?
- Is the message on the outside relevant to what's on the inside?
- Is there a case to open the envelope?

Scan Reading

The first assessment of a direct mail pack is a 'scan' through the contents; this typically takes around 30 seconds. The reader attempts to determine the following:

- Who is writing to me and why?
- What is on offer?
- Is it relevant to me?
- Do I want it/can I afford it?

Serious Consideration

A vital part of the process and common cause is the failure of packs to perform. Readers are investing their time now and they are looking for the following:

- Substantiation and assurances
- Barriers to be overcome
- Guarantees or quality commitments
- FAQ's
- Price justification (benefits stacked against price)

Closing the Sale

If readers are still here they have convinced themselves to say 'YES,' but there are still some issues for the pack to overcome, such as:

- Difficulties on the Order Form
- How to respond (ways)
- Step-by-step instructions
- Trade ups/add ons
- Clear call to actions

Copywriting Tips

Here are just a few tips for writing great copy for direct marketing packs:

- Write as if you are addressing a customer
- Use 'You' and 'Your' wherever possible
- Engage the customer as you would talk to him/her (use a conversational tone)
- Write about the product or service from your customer's point of view:
 - Why do they want the product or service?
 - What are the doubts/fears, which may drive them to use the product or service?
 - What are the benefits that he will enjoy?
- Engage the customer's emotions, and not his/her logic (The stimulus to buy is almost always driven by fear, greed, guilt, pride or love, so the impulse to buy is emotion-driven)
- Include a call to action at the end of the letter—the customer needs to know how to take advantage of the offer
- Involve the reader instantly. The first sentence should be attention grabbing, make a startling statement to spark some interest
- Present your offer on the first page
- Be clear and specific about what your reader will get by responding

House Style

Damart follows a house style for copy in terms of grammar and specific phrases that we use in our promotions.

A

Andrè De Brett Never Andrè de Brett

B

Branding Use of phrases, invented titles, etc within promotional contest for free gifts, special privilege offers and prize draws, **use single quotes**. Eg. 'Weekend Away' Travel Bag of Luxury 2-piece 'Patchwork' Luggage. For titles or headings used with free gifts or self-liquidators, **use capitals or a mixture of upper and lowercase**, never all lowercase.

Bullet points Use freely in the promotional context.

C

Capitalisation Use freely in the promotional context, especially for headlines, strap lines and slogans.

D

Descriptions May use single quotes for descriptions on offers, gifts, garments, etc that use commonly understood phraseology. E.g. 'all wear weather' garments.

Despatch Not dispatch.

Double quotation marks Do not use unless quoting speech.

E

Early Reply Bonus Use mixture of upper and lowercase, as shown, or fully capitalise if context demands.

Exclamation marks Use freely!

F

Financial For credit—use slogan Order now, send no money
For cash—use slogan Order today for a speedy delivery

Free Gifts	Within promotional mail, use FREE GIFT or FREE Gift , never use free gift. Never use the word 'Your' when referring to gifts.
H	
Headings	On promotions, use a variety of styles including capitalisation, italics, etc.
I	
Italics	Use in headings, titles, etc as required. Can use in place of single quotes. Use when quoting formal names or titles of places and publications.
It's	Use for possessive case and when something is missing. E.g. shortened form of It is.
L	
Ladies Wear	Two separate words.
Lifetime	One word.
Lifetime Guarantee	Two words. Lifetime Guarantee.
M	
Mens Wear	Two separate words.
Mail order	Two separate words.
N	
Numerals	Numerals below 10—in main copy use words rather than numerals. In highlighted copy, captions or technical descriptions, it is acceptable to use numerals, depending on the context. However, avoid use of 1 close to I, for example, and small numerals in very small text lineage. Numerals over 10—may use numerals.
O	
Online	One word.
Order Form	Within promotional mail, use Order Form or sometimes ORDER FORM, never use order form.
Orderline	One word.

Orderline Adviser Not Advisor or Orderline Advisor. Preferred use = your friendly Orderline Adviser.

Orderline numbers Sedagyl = **0871 882 1831**
Damart = **0871 882 1111**

P

Personal Account Not personal account.

Prize Draw Use either Prize Draw or PRIZE DRAW, never prize draw.

Q

Quotations Use double quotation marks for quoting speech and no other purpose, when single quotations will suffice.

S

Sample customers Use Miss Sample or Mrs Sample

Speech Use double quotation marks

Superlatives Use freely within the promotional context. Avoid use of 'modern' phrases/words such as 'bottom-line' or 'chill out.'

T

Titles Titles of games, books, TV programmes or other well-known titles, use single quotation marks.

Thermolactyl Always use an uppercase 'T.'

U

United Kingdom Use UK

W

Wellbeing One word.

Customer Groups

Damart has a wide customer base, which are divided into six types. These customer groups will help you understand the types of Damart customers.

Female Type 1: Valerie – Damart Average Age (58)

Valerie is likely to fall into the 45-65 age bracket. She lives in semi-rural locations, often in isolated market towns, particularly in the South West. She may run her own small business or be involved in the management of the family farm. This affords her a considerable income and comfortable lifestyle, albeit a time-poor one.

She visits her local centre on a regular basis, mainly to purchase essentials and everyday clothing. Time and distance constraints limit opportunities to buy clothes in the large regional shopping centres. However, infrequent visits to these centres will usually coincide with major sales periods and may be heavy-spending affairs—she could possibly make a number of large purchases in one go and replace her entire wardrobe.

Valerie's lifestyle dictates that she is strong-minded, independent and down-to-earth in her opinions. These facets feed through to her clothing choices, which are governed more by personal choice and individuality than a perceived fashion statement. Practicality and durability are also important and she will often keep clothes until they wear out. Her wardrobe comprises of a mixture of functional daytime wear and stylish evening outfits.

Valerie uses a mix of shopping channels, ranging from department and variety stores and fashion multiples on the high street, through to the major mail order catalogues. As befits her strong-minded personality, Valerie is not susceptible to any form of advertising or marketing media.

Damart preferred section: VARIATIONS (tailored and quality driven)

Hobbies: Dinner parties, socialising, theatre, ballet

Payment option: Personal account/store cards/credit cards

Mail order competitor: Grey Osbourne

High street competitor: Wallis

Female Type 2: Maureen – Damart Average Age (59)

Maureen is likely to be in her 50s or approaching retirement age. In the twilight of her working life, she may have taken early retirement or switched to

part-time employment. She enjoys a relatively comfortable lifestyle, living on a middle-class estate of sizeable properties in affluent counties and market towns. However, she may be considering a move to a smaller property in which to enjoy a cosy retirement. A considerable proportion of her leisure time is spent shopping.

Her image is driven by a desire to look stylish, express her personality and project an air of individuality. However, these desires are underpinned by a sense of conservatism. She tends not to shop at upmarket retailers, but remains loyal to more mainstream and affordable high street chains. Quality and appropriateness outweigh fashionability and discount prices as key decision drivers. Maureen is cautious in trying new brands, preferring to purchase labels she is accustomed to. She will be more adventurous when purchasing clothing items for a special occasion.

With the notable exception of interactive television, marketing media have little influence on Maureen. Her shopping habits are seldom prompted by advertising and direct mailings. Nor is the Internet an effective medium, in that she is unlikely to be PC-literate. Instead, she enjoys browsing the shops in her own time, regarding this as a rewarding leisure activity unto itself. Maureen is content with her lifestyle and does not aspire beyond this.

Damart preferred section: LAKEVIEW (outdoor driven section)

Hobbies: Active, walking, yoga, aerobics

Payment option: Personal account/store cards/credit cards

Mail order competitor: JD Williams

High street competitor: M & S

Female Type 3: Betty – Damart Average Age (73)

Betty is enjoying the early years of her retirement. She is likely to live in a semi-detached house or bungalow in a fairly affluent coastal town. In financial terms, she is fairly comfortable, thanks to a combination of a reasonable pension and matured investments.

As a time-rich individual, Betty is likely to visit her local high street more than once a week. However, these regular visits are for leisure and social purposes as much as for shopping. Her purchasing habits are therefore characterised by frequent top-up shops and low value purchases.

Overall, Betty is relatively frugal in her clothing spending. Although she does not buy solely to replace, she would much rather buy one good quality item rather than several of lower quality. She is nevertheless interested in expressing her own personality and style through her fashion choices and is keen to look smart and presentable.

She will avoid current fads and instead buys her clothes from a selection of variety stores, multiples and discounters. Although Betty could afford to shop at more upmarket stores, she prefers the traditional high street retailers and is canny with her expenditure. She is also a keen mail order customer, opting to purchase much of her clothing through the major agency catalogues.

Betty is unlikely to be influenced by any form of media. She is content with her current propensities and thus virtually impervious to external advertising and marketing media.

Damart preferred section: WEEKENDER (comfort & style driven section)

Hobbies: Socialising, lunching, charity work

Payment option: Personal account/debit card/cash/cheque

Mail order competitor: JD Williams

High street competitor: BHS

Female Type 4: Constance – Damart Average Age (77)

Constance has retired and lives in a detached or semi-detached property in suburban London. She is likely to live on her own and in relative comfort, thanks to a reasonable pension and maturing investments.

She is more free spending than others her age. The way she looks is important to her, but she is nevertheless more likely to buy garments for their quality than as a fashion statement. Although she is able to afford the stylish end of retailers' ranges, she will only trade up if she feels assured that a garment represents good value for money. She does not subscribe to the cachet of designer labels and trendy brands.

Constance has firmly established her repertoire of retailers and regularly uses their store cards. In her mind, store cards represent more than a mere method of payment—they provide an air of identity and sense of belonging to a club. She is extremely loyal to the retailers that have served her needs well in the past and is unlikely to embrace new or up-and-coming retailers. Her favoured retailers are a combination of traditional high street players (particularly Marks & Spencer) and the major department store multiples.

Constance is not easily influenced by the media. She has little time for new phenomena such as the Internet and interactive television, nor is she a reactive recipient of direct mailings that she receives through her trusted store cards. Although effectively preaching to the converted, such mailings reinforce her loyalty to the retailers concerned.

Damart preferred section: COLLECTION (classic quality & style driven section)

Hobbies: Volunteer work, gardening, coffee mornings

Payment option: Personal account/debit card/cash/cheque

Mail order competitor: Heather Valley

High Street competitor: John Lewis

Female Type 5: Lily – Damart Average Age (78)

Lily is a pensioner, living in a flat or bungalow in a seaside resort. She is likely to live on her own, either as a widow or a spinster. Although independent, she is likely to be part of a circle of similar people within the local community.

Her modest pension covers her basic needs. Her expenditure on clothing is low. The little disposable income she does have is devoted to enjoying her social life with her circle of friends. In her eyes, clothes shopping does not qualify as an enjoyable leisure pursuit and fashion is the preserve of the young.

Lily's tastes in clothing are conservative. Most of her purchases are needs-driven as opposed to wants-driven. Items in her wardrobe are only replaced when they wear out—their replacements usually have similar styles, patterns and colours. Her loyalty to retailers is a function of her reticence to be adventurous and aversion to try anything new. Price is also a key factor and the retail outlets she is likely to favour are variety stores and discounters. Market stalls also feature regularly on her shopping trips.

Lily is highly unresponsive to all forms of media and advertising. Modern channels such as interactive T.V. and the Internet pass her by, whilst more traditional means, such as television, radio and newspaper adverts likewise fail to strike a chord with her needs and aspirations.

Damart preferred section: CLASSICS (traditional & comfort driven)

Hobbies: TV, bingo, puzzles, coffee mornings

Payment options: Cash/cheque

Mail order competitor: JD Williams/Daxon

High street competitor: Littlewoods

Female Type 6: Joyce – Damart Average Age (75)

Joyce is a pensioner. She lives with her husband in a bungalow or semi-detached property, possibly in one of the coastal or former mining towns of the North and Scotland.

Her pension is adequate, but leaves her with little disposable income. Of all the female pensioner groups, Joyce has the lowest expenditure on fashion. She does not feel the need to purchase clothing as a fashion statement, nor does she strive to be experimental or adventurous. She is not confident in trying a new look and will only adopt a new style once it is accepted on the high street. This lack of fashion ambition leaves her immune to all forms of advertising or marketing media.

Joyce's clothes reflect her modest and conservative attitudes. She does not buy inspirational clothes or sportswear, but sticks to staple items such as cardigans and blouses. Her wardrobe is built up of purchases from variety stores and discounters to which she retains a relatively strong sense of loyalty. Her other main shopping channel is mail order catalogues. These are not a new discovery, but more a continuation of shopping propensities going back some decades. Joyce also determines what her husband wears. He is likely to have a similarly ambivalent attitude towards fashion and his purchases will also err on the side of conservatism.

Damart preferred section: ESSENTIALS (traditional & value driven section)

Hobbies: Gardening, reading, cooking

Payment options: Cash/cheque

Mail order competitor: Daxon

High street competitor: Bon Marche

Promotional Names

It may be helpful to be aware of our promotional names or brands. The tone of your writing may change and the types of products that each brand promotes do vary.

Damart

Damart is a leading international brand and a well-established household name in the UK, best known for its quality range of goods and services in the 50s+ market. The Damart name is also a leader in France, Belgium, Switzerland and Japan.

Damart's products range from casual to elegant ladies and menswear, footwear, household items, thermals and much more. Damart is proud of the quality, style, value and choice of its products. Visit www.damart.co.uk for more information.

The tone of the copy is quite traditional, but we use the words 'stylish' and 'fashionable' frequently.

Sedagyl

Sedagyl is supported by Damart. It's a leading brand in France and is developing into an established household name in the UK. Sedagyl focuses on making life easier and more comfortable at home.

Sedagyl's products include home and living aid solutions, supplements and clothing designed to make life's daily activities easier. Visit www.sedagyl.co.uk for more information.

The tone of the copy is more traditional than Damart as the audience is older than Damart customers. The style of writing is more direct and the active voice is always used.

Andrè De Brett

Andrè De Brett used to be a separate brand from Damart, but it is now part of Damart. Customers can still access their account and make a payment at www.andredebrett.co.uk

Briefs

As a Direct Marketing Copywriter, you will be involved in all of the promotional briefs, including the relevant Artworker or Designer. Andy Beadle, Tim Clough or Louise Mason, who are all a part of the Sales Promotion Team, will chair all the briefs for both the standard and creative promotions.

NOTE: Only Louise Mason briefs Sedagyl promotions.

The brief is used to discuss the promotion in detail, and includes the following elements:

- Catalogue Working Title
- Season
- Mailing Week
- Promotion Name
- Critical Path Dates (the **1st Visual** date is the one you'll need to work towards i.e. your deadline)
- Objectives
- The Offer
- Background Information
- Technical Information
- Pack Elements
- Copy Specifics

After the brief, you should have a clear idea of what is expected of you in terms of the copy and the theme/objective of the promotions. Everyone in the brief will get a copy of the brief for their own reference.

If you have any questions, it's best to contact the Sales Promotion team who is responsible for the particular promotion.

Meetings

As with most organisations, you will have to attend meetings. The Direct Marketing team and the Sales Promotion team will be involved in the Monday morning meetings that occur at 10:00 a.m. and the Wednesday afternoon meetings at 4:30 p.m. Each attendee will have a copy of the meeting minutes, which will be updated and distributed after each meeting. Usually one person will print out the meeting minutes and distribute them to everyone.

The purpose of these meetings is to get an idea of how the team is progressing with each promotion. The key people involved in working on a particular promotion will communicate the progression stage that the promotion is at to the team. Phil Shaw or Ian Hopper will usually chair these meetings. It is also important that each member of the team is aware of what stage each promotion is at, especially the ones that they are responsible for.

Damart also has a meeting every Tuesday morning at 9:15 a.m., which involves the entire Marketing team. The Marketing team includes the following teams:

- Direct Marketing
- Sales Promotion
- Catalogue Creative

The managers of each team will chair the meetings and a member of each team will 'read out' every Tuesday. The purpose of the Tuesday morning meetings is to get an idea of how the company is progressing in terms of budgets, forecasts and the recruitment of new customers. It also involves the discussion of other important business matters, such as any new members of staff.

Standard Promotions vs. Creative Tests

As a Direct Marketing Copywriter, you will be writing the copy for both standard promotions and creative tests.

What?

Standard Promotions are the main direct mail packs that we send to a wide number of customers marketing our promotions every season. We test our creative tests against the standards.

Creative Tests are sent to a smaller group of Damart customers (approximately 20,000) to measure how they respond. Our goal is to get a higher percentage of our customers to respond to our creative tests than to the standard promotions. When they are successful the creative test becomes our future standard promotion.

After two seasons, our standard promotions need to be updated with new and fresh ideas to keep our customers interested—this is where creative tests come into play.

Who?

Within the Direct Marketing team Angela Crossley, Lolly Tebbs and Dan Martin work on standard promotions only. Once you have completed the copy, you will send it to Angela, Lolly or Dan.

Patricia O'Connor and Polly Whitaker work on creative tests only. You will usually go through a longer process with creative tests, which will include a brainstorm of ideas, a rough scamp stage and then copywriting.

How?

Since you will be writing copy for many different types of promotions, it's quite easy to get confused. So it's best to name the jobs you are working on using the names on the brief or the names that Ian Hopper uses on the job board:

ST (standard promotion) – Promotion name
CT (creative test) – Promotion name

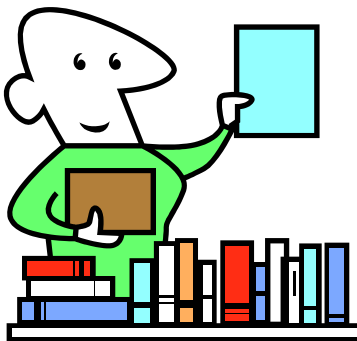
Versions

Damart standard promotions usually involve writing many different versions of the direct mail letters to suit all of our customer groups, which are the following:

1) ACTIVE

This is the 'standard' version. Active customers have shopped with Damart for some time (over a year) and have made orders in recent seasons. We can talk about how loyal they are and mention (where relevant) information, including the date of their last/first order and total number of orders. The database team are looking at extra criteria that we can include in personalisation.

When first visuals are required, this is the only version they need initially. Once this version has been approved by the Sales Promotion Team, the other versions can be completed, otherwise all versions will usually need changing if there are amends to be made to this one.



Example:

As a valued Damart customer, I am happy to offer you our best gift of 2008 absolutely FREE as a thank you for your loyalty...

2) NURSERY

These customers have been shopping with Damart for under a year and may have only placed one order. The only personal information we have for Nursery customers are their names, account numbers and addresses.



The tone is welcoming and we often thank them for choosing to shop with us. Nursery letters are often similar to an active version, the only difference in the introduction. For example, instead of rewarding them for their loyalty, we are offering them a free gift as a welcome to Damart. Mention within the promotion that they are a new customer.

NOTE: Crossmail customers are the same as Nursery customers.

Example:

As new customer, I am happy to offer you our best gift absolutely FREE as a warm welcome to Damart.

3) XMAIL

These customers may have shopped with AdeB in the past, but we treat them as brand new customers so they are similar to Outside Lists. We talk about how they have been 'exceptionally recommended' to Damart and we need to welcome the customer.

Examples:

*I am pleased to confirm that you have been exceptionally recommended to Damart.
As a welcome to Damart, I wanted you to be one of the first to see a copy of our new Catalogue.*

4) RECRUITMENT: OUTSIDE LISTS

These customers are brand new and may never have heard of Damart. Instead of loyalty, we talk about how they have been 'exceptionally recommended' to Damart and have been awarded some fantastic offers! We need to welcome the customer and make them aware of the key benefits of Damart where possible. The only personal information we have is their name, address and account number. We can talk about them in the letter as new customers, even though they haven't yet ordered.

Examples:

As a result of your exceptional recommendation to Damart, you have been chosen to receive this superb FREE Gift.

I have personally looked at your recommendation file and as a potential new customer, I would like to offer this fabulous Free Gift as a warm welcome to Damart.

5) RECRUITMENT: OLD FILE

Old File customers have shopped with Damart a long time ago, but we're trying to entice them to shop with Damart again with an offer of a Free Gift/Prize Draw entry as a reward for the loyalty they have previously shown us.

They're referred to as valued customers (not 'new') and we mention information such as date of last/first order and total number of orders, as with Active customers. They'll be familiar with Damart, but it's worth reminding them of the great things we have to offer.

Example:

As a long-standing Damart customer, you have been selected for entry into our £50,000 Free Grand Prize Draw as a thank you for your loyalty.

6) NON-ORDERERS: FREE P&P

Free Postage & Packing is mainly offered to customers who haven't ordered for a while; we call these customers Non-Orderers. We mention FREE P & P as a sentence or often in the 'P.S.' or 'Catalogue' paragraph. P&P is usually £2.

NOTE: FREE P&P is the only difference for Non-Orderers. All other copy stays the same.

Example:

Plus, save £2.00 with FREE Postage & Packing!



7) MODERATE

The differences between Moderate and Traditional are usually only one paragraph. This paragraph or section makes reference to specific sections of the catalogue that are geared towards younger customers (ages 65 and under). The catalogue sections that need mentioning should be specified in the brief. It's worth looking in the actual catalogue for the general content of the catalogue sections (e.g. 'Accents, 'Textures', The Collection'). The tone is usually friendlier and less formal, and often an extra flyer is included in the pack showing products from these ranges.

8) TRADITIONAL

Same as Moderate, but geared towards customers over 65 years of age, and obviously with different catalogue sections. The tone is a little more formal and makes more reference to quality and classics, rather than fashion and style.

9) CAT IN PARCELS

Some customers have placed only one order with Damart, and have done so through answering an advert from a magazine or newspaper. With their order, a catalogue and promotion is sent. However, the promotion is not personalised, and so it needs amending. They are referred to as new customers and need to be 'warmly welcomed' to Damart.