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Grab Reader Attention by Knowing the “Hot Spots”

Did you know that people don't read their direct mail randomly? There is a flow to where their eyes naturally go, and their eyes land on specific areas of the envelope or letter before others. These places are called “hot spots.” Once you know them, you can reap huge benefits by using that knowledge to maximize those spaces.

Here are some hot spot basics:

1. Both print and digital communications have them. This is true even for the most uncomplicated communications, such as order forms and buck slip inserts.

2. Certain hot spots exist regardless of format or design. There are certain places on an envelope or letter that are natural hot spots without you even trying. These include the return address, postage corner, front and back teaser copy, and the back flap on an envelope. They are the letterhead or masthead, greeting, first sentence, first and last paragraphs, signature and title, and postscript on a letter.

3. Create your own hot spots. Want to draw the reader's eye to non-traditional hot spots? Create your own using design and typography techniques, including adding or using the following:

- Images
- Headlines and subheads
- Unusual fonts / larger font sizes
- Background colors
- Borders and callouts

4. Create hot spots in the copy, too:

- Underline copy
- Indent copy
- Create bulleted lists
- Use boldface copy
- Add handwriting in the margins

5. Knowing where the hot spots are allows you to maximize their use. Because your reader's eye will be naturally drawn to these areas, make use of them. Print your return address in color, or add your logo for brand identification. Add one if you don't have a postscript in your fundraising letter. Because these are the only areas you can be sure people will read, make sure they tell your story.

You have three seconds or less to grab your reader's attention. Make the most of them!