

Appeal Checklist

Characteristic	Example	Why it's important	Review	Notes for this appeal
ALWAYS				
First name salutation	Dear Jaquita,	Feels much more personal than, "Dear friend"		
Asks at least three times in your letter	"We'd like to ask you to join us." "Will you become part of the team?" "We have work to do and we need all of you."	Most organizations will ask 16 times in different ways in two-page letter		
Limit use of 1st and 2nd person pronouns	"I know you've helped before...", "You helped us to..."	A donor's contributions can be recognized and celebrated and important to make sure we are not centering them		
Use 3rd person pronouns	"We can all achieve this together..." "We are stronger together..." "We did it! And we thank you."	Encourage donors to think of the collective impact of their gift. Us vs. You. We vs You.		
Story builds on collective impact of the work	Connect reader as part of the collective story being told.	Keeping the story centered on collective impact creates a direct link in their mind of being part of something larger. It also creates an emotional response for the reader. Does not perpetuate or center stereotypes or bias.		
Tells them what you'd like them to do, why they should give, and when in the first three paragraphs	"Please join our monthly sustainers today. It is the best way you can help these orcas that are struggling to survive. If you can't make a sustaining gift right now, please know that any gift at all means the world to us and is deeply appreciated."	Most people don't read the full letter, so it's important to put it in early.		
Illicits emotion from the donor	"When we all saw this mother orca carrying her dead baby for 17 days, our hearts wept for her. Your support can help stop the starvation of these magnificent animals."	The best way to connect with our reader is to reach their heart and illicit an emotional reaction. We need to build a personal connection.		
Thanks them at least twice, with one in the first two paragraphs	"Thank you for your generous support and all you've done for wild Oregon. Your passion is inspiring."	Makes the donor feel special—that's all they want. Again limit the focus/use of 1st and 2nd person pronouns.		
Uses contractions	"I've always lived in and felt a deep connection with..."	Adds fluence to discourse		
Written at 6 th grade level	Start sentences with "And," "But," or "So." Use fragments. Repeat yourself. Sentences & paragraphs are SHORT	Forget what your high school English teacher taught you! What you learned in English class doesn't work because it needs to be personal, conversational.		
Uses P.S. to make specific ask	"P.S. Please take a moment to consider if you could join us as a monthly sustaining member today. Our monthly donors are the backbone of our support. Your monthly gift allows you to make the greatest impact and us to do more work to protect the Sky Islands and our home."	Second thing people look at after who signed it		
Hangs together if you just read the bolded sections	" The people in this province loved their wild spaces so much, they worked together to establish over 800 parks. 20 million people visited the provincial parks each year. But today these parks (our parks!) are under attack. Make no mistake; B.C.'s tremendous natural legacy is now at risk. In just ten years what we've worked over a century to create has been pushed to the brink. Park budgets have been slashed, the environmental ministry abolished, over 400 park and protection jobs cut and policies changed to allow oil and gas development within the boundaries of our beloved parks. Before the attack on BC's parks began over 300 park rangers cared for the 14 million hectares of provincial parks and protected areas. Today, BC employs only 10 park rangers year round for the entire province. Poaching and logging in parks has skyrocketed as opportunists realize nobody is keeping watch in BC's parks. Dozens of our parks are closing, reducing their seasons and leaving their infrastructure to decay. "	People look at a letter on average for 11 seconds. That's how long we have to get our message across. Typical order of how a reader experiences letter: see who signed it, read the P.S., go back and read opening lines, then scan the letter for underlined or bold text, indented quotations, or captions under photos.		
Tells a story	I remember the first time I took my son to the ocean...	Draws reader in. Human brains are designed to look for and remember stories.		
Serif font	Times	It's easier to read in print		

USUALLY

Deletes "that"	"She could tell [that] her 10-year old daughter..."	Sounds conversational		
Private verb	"I felt my heart break..."	Expresses mental thoughts and feelings		
Uses amplifier	"For the wolves, every monthly gift is precious."	Magnification of verbal force		
14 pt font	"For the wolves, every monthly gift is precious."	Tested best with people over 60, good customer service		
First paragraph is one line	"Thank you for your wonderful support and passion."	Easy to read and draws reader in		
Gray font, using black for emphasis	"With your kind gift before December 17th you will be the hope to a deserving family to lift them out of poverty forever."	Highlights key messages and phrases, increases readability and allows people to scan and still get the meaning.		

SECONDARY CHARACTERISTICS

What is your SMIT=Single Most Important Thing	People commit monthly support for the wildlife camera program.	Focusing on one key thing is more compelling to the reader/donor than multiple asks and stories.		
Put it in black and center for emphasis	" With your kind gift before December 17th you will be the hope to a deserving family to lift them out of poverty forever. "	Highlights key messages and phrases, increases readability and allows people to scan and still get the meaning.		
Outside envelope "teaser"	"We can save more pets...together!"	Makes mail stand out from other pieces, higher open rate, piques curiosity to know what you have to say in the letter.		