

Component Documentation

Skipton Building Society Email Design System

Buttons & Hyperlinks

Buttons are the primary driver of action in email. Every button decision — size, variant, surface treatment — should serve a single goal: making the next step obvious and frictionless for the reader.

Anatomy

A button consists of four parts:

- Container — the filled or outlined shape that defines the clickable area. Controlled by background and border tokens.
- Icon — a visual signifier that reinforces the type of action. Positioned to the left of the label. Required in all buttons as a secondary signifier, compensating for email clients that strip or ignore border-radius rendering.
- Label — the action text. Always sentence case, concise, and action-led. Controlled by text and scale tokens.
- Border — present on all button variants. On primary buttons it matches the background in default state. On secondary buttons it defines the button boundary against a transparent background.

Variants

Primary Button

The most important action in the email. Use once per email where possible. If the same action is repeated — for example across multiple product panels — a standard primary button is appropriate. Primary buttons use a filled container. The background, border and text colours are governed by surface context.

Secondary Button

Supporting actions that are helpful but non-essential. Use when you need to offer an alternative without competing with the primary CTA. Secondary buttons use a transparent background. The border and text colours shift on hover. The background never changes — hover state is communicated through border colour change only, by design.

Sizes

Large — use when the email has a single-minded CTA and maximum visual prominence is required. The large button is a deliberate design statement — it should not be used alongside a standard primary button.

Standard — the default button size. Use for most CTAs including repeated actions across multiple components.

Note: Button padding values are intentionally outside the spacing scale. They have been fine-tuned for optical balance and should not be adjusted without visual regression testing across email clients.

Surface Treatment

Buttons have two treatments that respond to the surface they sit on:

- Default — used on light and neutral surfaces (white, stone, pale rider, arctic). Primary button uses a marine filled background with white text. Secondary uses a marine border with dark text.
- Alt — used on brand and dark surfaces (marine, cyan, midnight, meridian). Primary uses a white filled background with dark text. Secondary uses a white border with white text.

Note: In dark mode, default and alt treatments are unified. The default/alt split is a light mode concern only.

Icons

Icons serve as a second signifier of interactivity, compensating for email clients that do not render border-radius on buttons. Every button must include an icon.

- Link — use when directing the reader to a webpage.
- Download — use when asking the reader to download a file.
- Call/Callback — use when the action involves a phone call or callback request form.
- Document — use when directing the reader to view a document online.

States

Default — the resting state of the button. All colour tokens reference the default state.

Hover — communicates interactivity on supported email clients. On primary buttons, the background and border darken. On secondary buttons, only the border colour changes — text remains static.

Note: Hover states are not supported in Outlook desktop. Button design must communicate affordance through form alone, not hover behaviour.

Note: Focus and disabled states are intentionally omitted. Focus state implementation is on the backlog. Disabled states have no use case in email — where an action is required, the reader is directed to a web journey.

Hyperlinks

Hyperlinks are used for secondary or inline actions where a button would carry too much visual weight.

Two treatments exist following the same surface logic as buttons:

- Default — used on light surfaces. Underline uses marine-500. Text follows the surface text token.
- Alt — used on brand and dark surfaces. Underline uses white-100. Text follows the surface text token.

Note: Hyperlink hover states are intentionally omitted. Email client support is inconsistent — Outlook desktop ignores them entirely. The underline provides the primary affordance signifier. This decision may be revisited in a future iteration.

Typography

Typography in this system carries the structural hierarchy of every email. Getting it right reduces cognitive load, guides the reader through the content, and ensures accessibility compliance across a diverse audience.

Typefaces

Turret 1853 Bold — used exclusively for H1. The brand display face. Distinctive and ownable, it anchors the hero section and establishes visual identity immediately.

Roboto Condensed Black — used exclusively for H1 Alt. An alternative display style for layouts where Turret 1853 would be too decorative. Same scale as H1.

Roboto Regular / Black — used for all other headings and body copy. Roboto Black governs H2-H5. Roboto Regular governs body copy.

Note: All headline weights are defined as bold in CSS despite being visually black weight. This is an intentional email rendering decision — some clients fail to render weights above bold correctly.

Type Scale

The scale is built on three size options — Large, Medium, Small — giving layout flexibility while maintaining hierarchy. Not all heading levels use all three sizes.

Level	Typeface	Sizes L/M/S	Line Height	Notes
H1	Turret 1853	40 / 36 / 32px	1.1em	Responsive override: 33px mobile
H1 Alt	Roboto Condensed	40 / 36 / 32px	1.1em	Responsive override: 33px mobile
H2	Roboto	28 / 24px	1.15em	No large — hierarchy conflict with H1
H3	Roboto	28 / 24 / 20px	1.3em	
H4	Roboto	24 / 20 / 16px	1.4em	
H5	Roboto	20 / 16px	1.5em	No medium — no defined use case
Body	Roboto Regular	16px	1.5em	Minimum 16px — accessibility requirement
Body Leading	Roboto Regular	20px	1.5em	Leading paragraph use only

Usage Rules

- One H1 per email. The display typeface is a strong visual statement. Using it more than once dilutes its impact and creates hierarchy confusion.
- Heading levels should follow document order. Do not skip levels for visual effect — use the size scale within each level instead. This preserves semantic structure for screen readers.
- Never go below 16px for body copy. This is an accessibility requirement, not a stylistic preference.
- Leading paragraphs at 20px should be used intentionally — to introduce a section, add visual breathing room, or balance a layout. Do not use as a default body size.
- Line heights are fixed per heading level. They should not be overridden.

- H2-H5 headlines default to color-headline-onLight-5 (midnight-500). Alternative headline colours are available for intentional creative emphasis but are not substitutes for the default.

Colour

Headline colour is a design decision within a constrained accessible range. Six options are available on light surfaces, one on dark. Before selecting any headline colour, cross-reference the contrast grid. Not all options pass WCAG AA on all surfaces.

Body copy colour follows the surface text tokens — color-text-onLight-strong for primary copy, color-text-onLight-subtle for secondary copy on dark or brand surfaces.

Colour & Surfaces

Colour in this system operates across three layers. Primitives define the raw values. Semantic tokens assign intent. Surface tokens govern how every component responds to its background context. Understanding this hierarchy is what separates a colour palette from a design system.

Primitive Colour Palette

The palette is organised into named families, each representing a distinct colour range within the Skipton brand.

Family	Description
Marine	The primary brand blue. Three stops for gradient and interaction use.
Cyan	A bright secondary blue. Two stops for hero gradients and headline options.
Arctic	A light ice blue. Three stops. Used for dark mode headlines, button treatments and gradient starts.
Pale Rider	A cool off-white blue. Three stops for subtle surfaces and hover states.
Midnight	A near-black with a cool undertone. Two stops for dark surfaces and default headline colour.
Meridian	A single deep navy. Standalone accent. Used as a surface and in gradient combinations.
Stone	A warm off-white. Single value as a subtle light surface alternative to white.
White	Two stops. White-100 is email white (#FFFFFFE). White-200 is off-white for dark mode body text.
Fjord	A seven-stop dark teal-blue scale. The dark mode backbone. Each stop maps to a light mode surface.

Surface System

Every content block in an email sits on a surface. The surface choice is the root design decision — it determines which text, headline and button tokens are valid in that context.

Fixed surfaces are set at template level and never change: color-email-body, color-email-wrapper, color-email-footer.

Content surfaces are the available background options for content blocks. Each has a defined light mode and dark mode value — see the Token Reference document for the full mapping.

Note: color-surface-meridian-onDark intentionally shares the same value as color-surface-midnight-onDark. Due to their tonal similarity, Meridian and Midnight should never be used as adjacent surface colours within the same layout. In dark mode, a shared value maintains visual consistency without requiring a distinct primitive.

OnLight / OnDark Logic

Every token that responds to surface context uses the onLight/onDark pattern. This is the single rule that governs the entire system:

Identify the surface. Apply the corresponding tokens.

Light surfaces — white, stone, pale rider, arctic — use onLight tokens. Dark and brand surfaces — cyan, marine, midnight, meridian — use onDark tokens. This applies consistently to text, headlines, buttons and hyperlinks. Learning one rule unlocks the entire system.

Surface Usage Guidance

Surface colour selection should create a calm, structured layout — not a series of competing visual statements.

- Marine is the default surface for panels containing a primary contact CTA. Its brand authority gives the call to action appropriate weight and signals importance to the reader.
- Use saturated surfaces sparingly. Cyan, arctic and marine carry strong visual presence. When multiple panels appear in the same email, default to lighter surfaces — white, stone, pale rider.
- Avoid an abundance of bright pullout panels. Multiple saturated panels in sequence compete with each other and dilute the impact of the primary CTA.
- A well-structured email uses surface colour the same way typography uses scale — sparingly, with intention, to guide attention rather than demand it.

Text Colour

- color-text-onLight-strong (color-midnight-500) — default for all body copy on light surfaces.
- color-text-onLight-subtle (color-white-100) — dark/brand surfaces only. Cross-reference contrast grid before use.
- color-text-onDark-strong (color-fjord-100) — limited to primary button fill in dark mode where arctic background provides sufficient contrast. Do not use on fjord or midnight surfaces.
- color-text-onDark-subtle (color-white-200) — default body copy in dark mode.

Note: Strong and subtle refer to colour darkness, not contrast level. Darker colours are strong, lighter colours are subtle — consistently across both modes.

Hero Gradients

Gradients are a progressive enhancement. Support is limited across email clients — always define a fallback colour. Gradients are used in hero sections only. Do not use as content block backgrounds.

Note: Every gradient stop has been deliberately chosen to maintain the same accessible text and headline colour options as its fallback. Colour contrast has been validated at every stop, not just start and end points.

Accessibility

All surface and text combinations in this system have been validated against WCAG AA standards. The contrast grid is the governing reference for any combination not explicitly defined in the token system. WCAG AA requires a minimum contrast ratio of 4.5:1 for body copy and 3:1 for large text. These thresholds are the floor, not the target.

Spacing & Layout

Spacing in this system is not decorative — it is structural. Consistent spacing creates the rhythm that makes an email feel considered rather than assembled. Every spacing decision references the scale rather than introducing arbitrary values.

Base Unit

The entire spacing system derives from a single base unit: 1em = 16px. This ties spacing directly to the minimum body copy size, creating an intrinsic relationship between text and layout.

Rolling Hill Radius System

The Rolling Hill radius system gives the layout its distinctive soft geometric quality. Radius values are applied consistently by context — not interchangeably. The exaggerated bottom-right curve is a direct expression of the Skipton Rolling Hill brand code. This is not a decorative choice — it is a brand requirement. Maintain this radius exactly as defined. Reducing or removing it breaks brand consistency.

Layout Principles

- One base unit governs everything. If a spacing value cannot be expressed as a token from the scale, question whether it should exist.
- Vertical rhythm comes from consistent gap values. The panel-gap-vertical token is the primary driver of layout breathing room. Resist ad-hoc spacing between components.
- Responsive behaviour is minimal by design. Only H1 typography and image border radius have defined responsive overrides. This is intentional — additional media queries create risk when email clients strip them.
- The grid is built on multiples of 4. Every spacing decision in the system satisfies this constraint. When introducing new spacing values, apply the same rule.

Hero

The hero is the first thing a reader sees. Its job is to establish context, reinforce brand, and create enough visual interest to pull the reader into the email. Every decision in the hero — gradient, image, typography, radius — should serve that single purpose.

Structure

The hero consists of three layers working together:

- Background — a gradient or solid colour surface that establishes the visual tone. The gradient is a progressive enhancement; a solid fallback colour is always defined.
- Image — an optional visual that sits within or alongside the background. Images use the Rolling Hill radius system to integrate with the curved hero wrapper.
- Content — headline, supporting copy and primary CTA positioned within the hero container.

Hero Wrapper Radius

The hero uses an asymmetric border radius that defines the Rolling Hill visual language: 0 0 radius-hero radius-050. Large curve bottom-right, subtle curve bottom-left. The exaggerated bottom-right curve is a direct expression of the Skipton Rolling Hill brand code. This is not a decorative choice — it is a brand requirement.

This radius is applied to both the wrapper and the hero image to ensure consistent rendering across email clients that handle overflow differently.

Gradient Usage

Six gradient options are available, each built from a colour family. Gradients run at 45 degrees by default. Every gradient stop has been validated for colour contrast — the text and headline options valid on the fallback surface are safe across the full gradient.

Note: Gradients are used in hero sections only. Do not use as content block backgrounds.

Note: Gradient support is limited across email clients. Always define the fallback colour token.

Usage Rules

- One hero per email. The hero wrapper radius and gradient treatment are designed as a single opening statement, not a repeating pattern.
- Gradient choice should reflect the email tone. Marine and Meridian carry authority — appropriate for product announcements. Arctic and Pale Rider are lighter — appropriate for softer content.
- Never use text in the hero image. Email clients scale and crop images unpredictably. Text in imagery cannot be resized, translated, or read by screen readers. The only exception is the Skipton logo.
- Max hero image size: 1mb. Hard limit. Large images impact load time and deliverability.
- All hero images require descriptive alt text. The hero image often carries the primary visual message.
- The hero CTA should always be a large primary button.

Header

The header establishes brand presence and — when included — provides navigational context. Every header decision should be made in service of the email's objective, not as a default template inclusion.

Anatomy

- Brand Logo — the Skipton Building Society wordmark. Always present. Full wordmark on desktop (max 180px), compact mark on mobile (max 52px).
- Proposition Logo — optional secondary logo for campaigns, events or sub-brands. Positioned right. Max 180px. Use only when the email has a clear sub-brand association.
- Navigation Bar — optional links to key website sections. Inclusion requires deliberate consideration.

Note: Legacy alignment variants (sbsLogoC, sbsLogoLC, sbsLogoR etc.) exist in the codebase from the previous brand but are not part of the current design system and should not be used.

Navigation Bar Usage Rules

- The nav bar should be a considered inclusion, not a default. Its presence gives the reader an immediate exit route from the email journey.
- Suppress the nav bar when the email has a single-minded CTA. The nav bar creates competing destinations that risk premature journey abandonment.
- Each navigation label has a maximum character count of 19 characters.
- Ask before including: does this email have one job, or does it benefit from giving the reader broader access to the website?

Background & Dark Mode

The header background is white in light mode. In dark mode it switches to marine-500, maintaining brand presence against the dark email body. This uses the light mode marine value deliberately — it is a brand surface, not a dark mode surface swap. This maintains the Skipton blue header regardless of the reader's display preference.

Email Structure

The email structure defines the fixed architectural layer that every email is built within. Unlike content components — which are chosen and arranged per email — the structural components are constant. They are never redesigned, only populated.

Architecture Overview

Every email is built across three full-width wrappers, each containing an inner container that constrains content to the readable width (36em / 576px):

- Body — outermost container. Sets background colour visible outside the content area.
- Hero Wrapper — full-width band housing the hero section. Background extends edge to edge creating the full-bleed colour statement at the top of the email.
- Content Wrapper — full-width white band housing all content modules between hero and footer.
- Footer Wrapper — full-width band housing footer contents. Dark background creates visual closure at the base of the email.

Each wrapper contains an Inner Container — the 36em maximum width content column that centres content and constrains it to the readable width.

Hero Wrapper Dark Mode

The hero wrapper follows the same surface token logic as content blocks. Every light mode surface has a fjord-scale dark mode counterpart:

Gradient	Light Mode	Dark Mode
gradient-1 (Marine)	color-marine-500	color-fjord-600
gradient-2 (Cyan)	color-cyan-500	color-fjord-500
gradient-3 (Arctic)	color-arctic-500	color-fjord-400
gradient-4 (Pale Rider)	color-paleRider-500	color-fjord-300
gradient-5 (Midnight)	color-midnight-500	color-fjord-700
gradient-6 (Meridian)	color-meridian-500	color-fjord-700

Footer Contents

- View in browser — always first. Alt secondary button treatment on dark footer surface.
- Brand logo — Skipton wordmark centred. Provides brand closure.
- Navigation links — always present in footer regardless of email objective. Reader has consumed the email content by this point.
- Social and app links — present in all emails.
- Legal copy — privacy notice and unsubscribe link. Required in all marketing emails. Not required for service or transactional communications.
- Analytics pixel legal wording — required when a tracking pixel is present. Legal requirement.

Note: Always include a functional unsubscribe link in marketing emails — its absence is a legal and deliverability risk.

Analytics & Tracking

- Adobe Personalisation Pixel — personalises web journeys post-click. Required in all emails from Adobe Campaign. Tag: `<%@ include view='skp_aamPixel' %>`
- Adobe ESP Pixel — Adobe Campaign native analytics. Added automatically by the platform.
- Email on Acid Pixel — added to analyse email client usage for development and testing strategy.

UTM Structure

All links follow a defined UTM structure for consistent analytics attribution:

Parameter	Value
utm_source	crm or ops
utm_medium	email
utm_content	[version]-[link number]-[link type]
utm_term	Audience code — dynamically populated by Adobe. Default to np if unavailable.
utm_campaign	Campaign name — lowercase, spaces as %20

Link types: logo, nav, link, button.

Dark Mode Implementation

- prefers-color-scheme media query — handles iOS Mail, Apple Mail and standards-compliant clients.
- [data-ogsb] attribute selector — handles Outlook on iOS and Android.
- Yahoo Mail — handled through a separate selector due to non-standard dark mode implementation.

Dos and Don'ts

Do

- Ensure all emails are WCAG AA compliant
- Use a minimum text size of 16px
- Apply the correct UTM structure to every link
- Include alt text on all appropriate images
- Use the bulletproof button technique for all CTAs
- Encode special characters using HTML entities (& £ “ ”)
- Set role="presentation" on all layout tables
- Think mobile first (with the exception of B2B)
- Always include a functional unsubscribe link in marketing emails

Don't

- Use emojis in subject lines, copy or development
- Link directly to a login page
- Use text in imagery (logos excepted)
- Use dark patterns
- Centre text that spans more than three lines
- Use break tags to split body copy