

# Do Your Emails Motivate Clients to Schedule?



By Wendy S. Myers, CVJ

**P**ractice revenue is growing a modest 3.6 percent compared to last year, and visits are down 2.5 percent.<sup>1</sup> With the right recall strategy, your email marketing program can increase patient and practice health. Recalls are messages sent to clients who have patients due for care but haven't scheduled appointments.

Because emails are a primary client communication method, here's when to send recalls and what they should say:

**Send up to five scheduling recall notices.** Your goal is to get 70 percent or more of clients to book appointments after receiving recall notices for preventive care. Once pet owners schedule appointments, recall notices will be satisfied, and confirmations will be sent.

Recall notice	When sent	Method
1 <sup>st</sup> scheduling recall	60 days ahead	Text and email
2 <sup>nd</sup> scheduling recall	30 days ahead	Text and email
3 <sup>rd</sup> scheduling recall	14 days ahead	Text and email
4 <sup>th</sup> scheduling recall	On due date	Text and email
5 <sup>th</sup> scheduling recall	30 days past due	Phone call and text

**Craft engaging messages.** To grab clients' attention and get them to schedule, use action words such as:

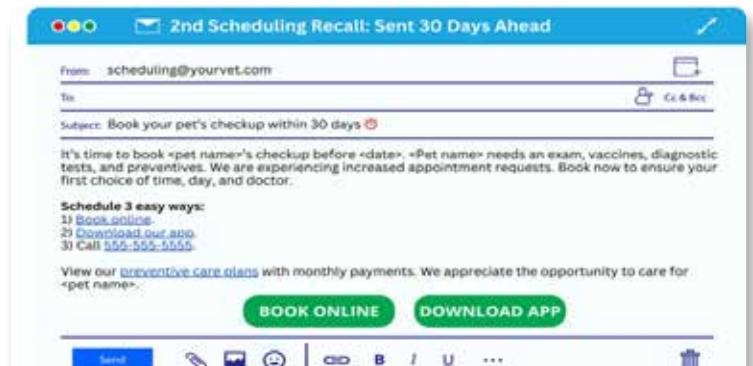
- "Needs" indicates the exam is medically necessary.
- "Book now" is a call to action.
- "XX days" is a countdown timer, letting clients know the due date is quickly approaching.
- Use ALL CAPS to increase urgency.
- Include emojis to stand out in inboxes.

**Keep messages concise.** Because 62 percent of emails are opened on mobile devices, you need short, action-oriented subject lines.<sup>2</sup> To fit the subject line on a cell phone, you have 30 to 40 characters, including spaces. Email messages between 50 and 125 words have the best response rates of 50 percent or higher.<sup>3</sup>

► **What to say in first scheduling recall, sent 60 days ahead:** In this email graphic of a first scheduling recall, I numbered six key points:

1. Put the pet's name in the subject line. Use data fields so your practice information management software (PIMS) or third-party reminder service will automatically insert the pet's name in the subject line and body of the message. If your platform doesn't support data fields in subject lines, say, "Your pet needs a checkup 🐾Book now."
2. List the due date in the subject line. This creates a sense of urgency and gives clients a deadline to respond.
3. Put one emoji in the subject line. Emojis can increase open rates by 56 percent.<sup>4</sup> This wellness recall includes a stethoscope emoji, which emphasizes the importance of a physical exam. Get free emojis at <https://getemoji.com>. Choose an emoji based on the reason for visit such as emojis of dogs, cats, mosquitoes, hearts, pawprints, pills, veterinarians, syringes, stethoscopes, a pile of poo, and more. Copy and paste emoji in your email and text templates. Use the poop emoji in confirmations that ask clients to bring pets' stool samples to appointments.
4. Have a call to action. "Book now" tells clients this email requires action—don't scroll past it. In the body of the message, use benefit statements such as, "Book now to ensure your first choice of time, day, and doctor." You will motivate clients to forward book.
5. Use bullets or numbered lists. "Schedule 3 easy ways" has a numbered list for improved readability when clients are skimming emails on cell phones. If you offer preventive care plans, include a brief description with a link that lets clients learn more such as "View our [preventive care plans](#) with monthly payments. We can answer questions during your pet's exam, or you may [enroll online](#) now."
6. Use big, obvious buttons. Colorful buttons will stand out to email skimmers who may overlook hyperlinks. Clients need to know exactly what to do next.

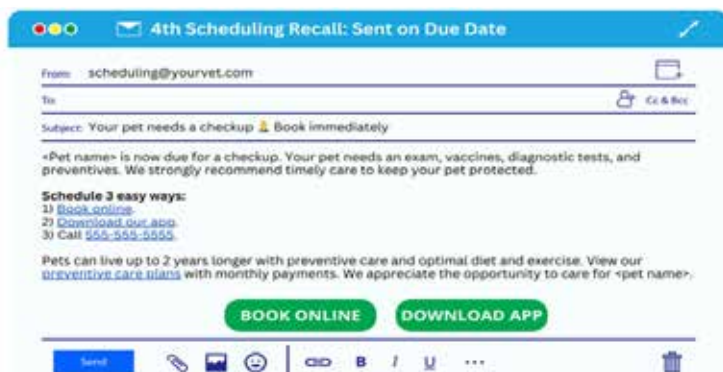
► **What to say in second scheduling recall, sent 30 days ahead:**



► **What to say in third scheduling recall, sent 14 days ahead:**



► **What to say in fourth scheduling recall, sent on due date:**



► **What to say in fifth scheduling recall,**

**30 days past due:** Call clients when patients become 30 days overdue. Run a daily lapsed patient report and have client service representatives (CSRs) call clients to schedule appointments. A word of caution: Do not run a report that lists thousands of overdue patients. You will freak out your CSRs, and they won't start the overwhelming task. The report should be a small, manageable list of clients to call that day. On October 1, run a report of patients that were due for care on September 1 but didn't make appointments (now 30 days overdue). If you have 12 clients on the report and four CSRs, they each will call three clients. Your team will have the greatest success when calling clients with patients that are newly overdue—within 30 days—because you've recently sent multiple notices. You also want CSRs to experience the success of getting many clients to book and keep the momentum going.

**If you get the client's voicemail, leave this message:**

*"This is <name> calling for the doctors at <Your Veterinary Hospital>. We are worried that <pet name> is past due for an exam, vaccines, diagnostic tests, and preventives and may now be unprotected. Please call us this week at 555-555-5555 to schedule an appointment. I also will text you a link to book online."*

**Because 67 percent of people don't listen to voicemails, send texts as backup communication.**<sup>5</sup> Send this text: <Pet name> is now OVERDUE for a checkup. An exam, vaccines 📄, diagnostic tests, and flea/tick and heartworm

preventives are medically necessary. View our [preventive care plans](#) with monthly payments. [BOOK ONLINE](#) or call [555-555-5555](tel:555-555-5555).

**If you talk with the client, say:** *"This is <name> calling for the doctors at <Your Veterinary Hospital>. <Pet name> is now overdue for an exam, vaccines, diagnostic tests, and preventives. We're worried about his/her health. Our next available appointments are <date, time 1> or <date, time 2>. Which do you prefer?"*

The phrase "calling for the doctors" communicates that your veterinarians are aware of the pet's overdue status and are genuinely concerned. The warning of "may now be unprotected" is a call to action. Known as the two-yes-options technique, present the next two available appointments. This phrasing significantly increases the chance you'll schedule an appointment and is stronger than "Do you want to make an appointment?"

When you strengthen your hospital's recall strategy, clients will feel more engaged, patients will get more care, and you will have a healthier practice. Get scheduling recalls, confirmations, and refill reminders in my **free eBook on Everything You Need to Know About Reminders** at <https://cvsfets.com/reminders/>.



**About the Author**

Best known as the "Queen of Scripts," Wendy Myers knows the right words will lead clients to accept your medical advice, driving patient and practice health. As founder of Communication Solutions for Veterinarians, she teaches practical skills through online courses, conferences, and onsite consulting. Wendy's experience as a partner in a specialty and emergency hospital helped her understand issues that owners and managers face. Learn how Wendy can train your team at [cvsfetscourses.com](https://cvsfets.com).

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