

The Newsletter Launch Checklist

A platform-neutral checklist for starting an email newsletter: choose a platform, set it up properly, write your first issues, and grow your list.

Disclosure: Links to Kit, beehiiv, and HubSpot in this checklist are affiliate links. If you sign up through them, we may earn a commission at no cost to you. It doesn't change what we recommend. [How we make money.](#)

1 Choose a platform

- ☐ **Decide what the newsletter is for.** A hobby publication, a creator business (products, sponsors, paid subscriptions), and a small-business list tied to customer records point to different tools.
- ☐ **Price it at the size you expect in 12 months**, not just today. Most platforms charge by subscriber count, and free plans have ceilings.
- ☐ **Check what each free plan really includes** (limits, branding, sends). Starting points, from official pricing pages:

Platform	Free option (per official pricing page)	Often a good fit for
Kit	Free plan for up to 10,000 subscribers	Creators who want forms, landing pages, automations
beehiiv	Free plan: \$0, up to 2,500 subscribers	Newsletter-first publishers who want a hosted site
HubSpot	Free: 2,000 email sends/month, with HubSpot branding	Businesses that want email connected to a CRM
Mailchimp	Free: up to 250 contacts and 500 sends/month	Very small lists, or teams already on Mailchimp
Substack	Free to publish; 10% of paid-subscription revenue + Stripe fees	Writers who want the simplest hosted start

Checked October 7, 2026. Prices and limits change; confirm on each vendor's pricing page before you sign up. Full comparison: audiencebench.com/articles/best-newsletter-platform-for-beginners

- ☐ **Planning paid subscriptions?** Compare platform fees as well as plan prices. Payment processing (for example Stripe) usually applies on top.
- ☐ **Confirm you can export your subscriber list** as a CSV file (check the platform's help docs). Your list should never be locked in.

2 Set it up before your first send

- ☐ **Write a one-sentence promise:** who it's for, what they get, and how often.
- ☐ **Send from your own domain** (like `hello@yourname.com`) instead of a free Gmail or Yahoo address.
- ☐ **Authenticate your domain.** Follow your platform's guide to add SPF, DKIM, and DMARC records. Google requires all senders to use SPF or DKIM; senders of 5,000+ messages a day to Gmail need all three plus one-click unsubscribe.
- ☐ **Add a physical mailing address and an unsubscribe link** to your email footer. The U.S. CAN-SPAM Act requires both, and opt-outs must be honored within 10 business days.
- ☐ **Choose single or double opt-in.** Double opt-in (readers confirm by email) keeps the list cleaner; single opt-in grows a little faster.
- ☐ **Set up an automatic welcome email:** what's coming, how often, and an invitation to reply.
- ☐ **Add a short privacy note** by your signup form (what you'll send, how to unsubscribe), then **test the signup flow** yourself on phone and desktop.
- ☐ **Importing a list?** Only import people who opted in. Never buy a list; most platforms prohibit it.

3 Your first issues

- ☐ **Pick a schedule you can keep for three months.**
Consistency matters more than frequency; weekly or every two weeks is manageable for most solo writers.
- ☐ **Write two or three issues before launch** so a busy week doesn't break your streak.
- ☐ **Use a repeatable format**, for example one main piece, a few useful links, and one question for readers.
- ☐ **Write a clear subject line and preview text.** Say what's inside; skip clickbait.
- ☐ **Give each issue one main call to action** (reply, read, share, or buy), not five.
- ☐ **Send yourself a test.** Read it on your phone, click every link, and add alt text to images.
- ☐ **Judge results by clicks and replies more than opens.** Privacy features such as Apple Mail Privacy Protection can make open rates look higher than they are.
- ☐ **Keep a public archive or web version** (many platforms include one) so issues can be found and shared.

4 Growth basics

- ☐ **Put a signup link where your readers already are:** your website, link-in-bio, email signature, and social profiles.
- ☐ **Offer something useful for free**, like a checklist or template, or simply a clear promise of what they'll get.
- ☐ **Cross-promote with similar newsletters.** [Kit](#) and [beehiiv](#) both list built-in Recommendations features, and a friendly swap with a peer works on any platform.
- ☐ **Add a referral program once readers are engaged.** beehiiv lists a built-in referral program, and Kit's Pro plan includes a SparkLoop referral plan. Check which plan includes what.
- ☐ **Review monthly:** new subscribers, unsubscribes, clicks, and where signups came from. Do more of what works.
- ☐ **Clean your list every few months.** Send a re-engagement email to long-inactive readers, then remove those who don't respond.
- ☐ **Revisit your platform at pricing thresholds** (for example, beehiiv's Free plan tops out at 2,500 subscribers and Kit's free plan at 10,000).
- ☐ **Switching later?** Step-by-step guides: [Mailchimp to Kit](#) and [Substack to beehiiv](#).

Keep it simple: a clear promise, a steady schedule, an authenticated domain, and a signup link in every place people meet you cover the essentials for a new newsletter. Advanced features can wait until you need them.

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Sources (pricing pages re-checked October 7, 2026; other sources checked September 27–29, 2026)

Kit pricing: kit.com/pricing · beehiiv pricing: beehiiv.com/pricing · HubSpot Marketing Hub pricing: hubspot.com/pricing/marketing · Mailchimp pricing: mailchimp.com/pricing/marketing · Substack fees: support.substack.com · Google email sender guidelines: support.google.com/a/answer/81126 · FTC CAN-SPAM compliance guide: ftc.gov

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