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By.

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Ask Emma

From Twitter Tips to Writer Help

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All my research for building an author platform has always come up with one common denominator: start an author newsletter.

If you're not quite ready to create a newsletter yet, at least have an email capture form on your website where folks can drop their email so that they can receive any potential updates from you, as suggested by Janet Reid (literary agent and [Query Shark](#)) in her [Rules for Writers](#).

Getting Started

Author newsletters are not a new concept. Why sweat it and try to recreate the wheel, when there is an absolute goldmine of info out there to be used?

Here's a fabulous resource for starting a newsletter from scratch by Jane Friedman, [Email Newsletters for Authors: Get Started Guide](#).

Rallying the Troops

This is where having a social media presence (and a healthy dose of bravery) can be handy. When I first announced I was starting an author newsletter on my Twitter feed, I gave myself a goal: **if I got three new subscribers in my first month, I would consider it a win**. I got fifty-three! I had no lead magnet (the tempting little offer you give away for free when your subscribers sign up), no book to promote, and no one to vouch that I wrote a halfway decent newsletter. Folks won't know to subscribe if you don't tell them you have a newsletter. I now also announce it once a week on my author Facebook page and Instagram account.

What to Write About

What can you write about in that all important first issue that won't scare away those precious new subscribers? I scoured dozens of author websites to see if they had archived newsletters that I could look at. I subscribed to a dozen best-selling author's newsletters to see how they were doing it. One thing I learned from this is: make it easy for folks to find and subscribe to your newsletter. Sheesh! On some sites, I felt like Indiana Jones hunting for the holy grail! And of course, I researched. I was quite surprised at how boring and spammy some of the newsletters were from best-seller authors (to the point that I unsubscribed), but it was a great lesson in what NOT to do with my own newsletter.

These are some of the resources I used to compile my first newsletter:

[Ultimate Guide: Establishing an Author Newsletter](#) – Claire Bradshaw

[20 Email Tips & Tricks for Author Newsletters](#) – Shayla Raquel

[14 Content Ideas for Author Newsletters](#) – Nate Hoffelder

And here is what my first ever [author newsletter](#) looked like back in September 2019. Compare this to my [current newsletter](#) in July 2020, and you'll see how it has evolved as I've learned new things along the way, and begun including content that has actually got my subscribers to respond and email me in return.

Ditch the Deadweight

Now, this might sound like it contradicts the purpose of gaining subscribers, but don't keep subscribers on your email list if they don't open or read your newsletter, especially if you're on a platform where you have to pay once you reach a certain number of subscribers. Also, email service providers like Outlook, Yahoo, and Gmail screen subscriber activity, and sending emails to subscribers who don't open your newsletter can damage your deliverability with these providers—they [potentially prevent your emails from being delivered to everyone on your list](#).

A Cautionary Tale

I completely trusted my Wix email platform to give me the correct data about my subscribers. I've subsequently found out that even the big hitters like MailerLite and Mailchimp can glitch and not give accurate info (it is technology after all). I took it as gospel that several of my subscribers were not opening my newsletter. When my data showed me a subscriber hadn't opened my newsletter three months in a row, I unsubscribed them. It was only when I started getting some messages from folks asking where my newsletter was that I realised the inaccuracy of the data. Doh! I dropped to the floor sobbing (slight exaggeration) at the thought that I'd unsubscribed 150 potentially active newsletter readers without first sending a re-engagement email to see if they wanted to stay subscribed. **I will always send a re-engagement letter from now on.**

I also make sure that I export my subscriber emails each month and save them in an Excel document. If ever my email provider or newsletter platform glitches or disappears, I will still have that valuable list of folks who entrusted me with their email details. I won't have to start from scratch.

Make Your Newsletter Easy to Find

You may have noticed how I've repeatedly said to make it easy for your readers to find your newsletter subscription? You can find mine on my [Home](#) page, [About](#) page, [Contact](#) page, as well as my dedicated [By the Book Newsletter](#) page. As you will see from this last page, I also have an archive of the last few newsletters so that potential subscribers can have a sneak peek at my product before handing over their email.

Before You Go ...

More Excellent Newsletter Resources

- Newsletter Ninja: [How to Become an Author Mailing List Expert](#) – Tammi Labrecque
- [The 10 Commandments of Author Branding: Embrace Authenticity, Gain Book Ambassadors, and Create Your Tribe](#) – Shayla Raquel
- [Building Your Author Newsletter List](#) – Sam Missingham, The Empowered Author

Happy writing!
– Emma

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**By the Book
Newsletter**

SIGN-UP BONUS

- ✓ Author resource checklist
- ✓ Query tracking spreadsheet
- ✓ Manuscript template

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