

15 Days To Start An Email Newsletter

I wrote this guide for myself. It is how I went through building an email newsletter in 15 days. - Dr. Sandip Roy, [The Happiness Blog](#)

Day 1: Pick Your Platform

Choose an email platform before anything else. Your platform determines what you can do.

Free tiers that work:

- Brevo (up to 300 emails/day, unlimited contacts)
- Mailchimp (up to 500 contacts, 1,000 emails/month)
- MailerLite (up to 1,000 contacts, 12,000 emails/month)
- Avoid Substack if you want full control of your list. They own your subscribers.

Set up your account. Add your sending domain. Most platforms need you to verify DNS records (SPF, DKIM). This takes 24-48 hours. Start now.

Day 2: Define Your Angle

Most newsletters fail because they lack focus. Pick one thing you know better than most people.

Write for one type of person.

Write down:

- What specific knowledge do I have?
- Who needs this information?
- What problem does this solve?

Bad example: "Marketing tips for businesses."

Good example: "Cold email tactics for B2B SaaS founders under 50 employees."

Narrow niche wins. You can expand later.

Day 3: Create Signup Forms

Build two signup forms:

- Simple inline form (for your website footer or sidebar)
- Landing page (for social media links and promotions)

Skip popup forms. People hate them. Browsers block them. Conversion rates dropped 40% since 2020 [research from Baymard Institute].

Your signup copy needs one sentence: what subscribers get and how often. "Weekly breakdowns of failed startups. Every Monday."

Add legal compliance (required in US, EU, Canada):

- Privacy policy link
- Physical mailing address in footer
- Clear unsubscribe option

Your platform handles most of this automatically.

Day 4: Write Your Welcome Email

This is your most important email. Open rates hit 50-80% (vs 20-30% for regular emails).

Include:

- Thank them for subscribing
- Confirm what they will receive and when
- Share your best past content (if you have any)
- Ask them to reply with questions or interests

Keep it under 200 words. Send immediately after signup.

Day 5: Plan Your Content Calendar

Decide your sending schedule. Once a week is the sweet spot for most topics. More than twice weekly increases unsubscribes.

List 8-10 potential topics. You need depth. Surface-level coverage gets ignored.

Good topics share these traits:

- Specific enough to be useful
- Timeless enough to stay relevant
- Connected to your core angle

Test: Can you write 500 words on this without generic filler? If not, skip it.

Day 6: Build Your First Real Newsletter

Write your first full newsletter. Not a test. The actual thing.

Structure that works:

- Subject line (7 words max, no clickbait)
- Opening hook (one sentence that states the topic)
- Main content (400-700 words)
- Clear takeaway or action

Mobile design is a must. 60% of emails now open on phones [Litmus Email Analytics, 2024]. Use single-column layouts. Test on your phone before sending.

Skip images unless they add information. They load slowly and break in some email clients.

Day 7: Set Up Your Automation Sequence

Create 3-5 automated emails that new subscribers receive over their first two weeks.

- Email 1 (Day 0): Welcome message (you already wrote this)
- Email 2 (Day 3): Your best piece of content or core insight
- Email 3 (Day 7): Something actionable they can use today
- Email 4 (Day 10): Optional - case study or example
- Email 5 (Day 14): Optional - resource roundup or tool recommendation

This sequence runs automatically. New subscribers get value while you work on other things.

Day 8: Build a Simple Lead Magnet

A lead magnet gives people a reason to subscribe now instead of later.

Effective formats:

- Checklist (one-page PDF)
- Template (spreadsheet or document they can copy)
- Resource list (tools or links you actually use)
- Mini-guide (5-10 pages on one specific problem)

Skip: ebooks over 20 pages, video courses, anything requiring weeks of work.
Simple wins.

Link this to your signup form. Deliver it in the welcome email.

Day 9: Test Everything

Send test emails to yourself. Test in multiple email clients if possible: Gmail, Outlook, Apple Mail.

Check:

- Subject line displays correctly
- Content renders on mobile (use your actual phone)
- Links work
- Images load (if you used any)
- Unsubscribe link appears

Fix anything broken. This matters more than perfect copy.

Day 10: Start Building Your List

You need subscribers. Growth tactics that work:

- Share signup link in social bios
- Post valuable content on LinkedIn or X with signup CTA
- Comment on relevant discussions and mention your newsletter when appropriate
- Guest post on blogs your audience reads
- Partner with adjacent newsletters for cross-promotion
- Avoid buying lists (illegal in many places and kills deliverability), spam tactics, misleading signup incentives.

Your first 100 subscribers come from direct outreach. Accept this.

Day 11: Send Your First Newsletter

Send the newsletter you wrote on Day 6, even if you only have 10 subscribers.

Best sending times (analysis of 1 billion emails by Campaign Monitor):

- Tuesday-Thursday, 10 AM in your audience's timezone
- Avoid: Monday mornings (inbox overload), Friday afternoons (people check out)

Your platform shows real-time metrics. Watch them. Learn what works.

Day 12: Review Your Metrics

Check your dashboard. Focus on three numbers:

- Open rate (percentage who opened): 20-30% is average, 40%+ is excellent
- Click rate (percentage who clicked links): 2-5% is typical, 10%+ is great
- Unsubscribe rate: under 0.5% per send is normal; over 2% needs check

Low opens? Your subject line failed.

Low clicks? Your content lacked clear value or calls to action.

High unsubscribes? You attracted the wrong people or sent too frequently.

Small lists exaggerate these numbers. Need 100+ subscribers before patterns mean anything.

Day 13: Set Up Basic A/B Tests

Most platforms let you test subject lines automatically. Send version A to 10% of your list, version B to another 10%, then send the winner to everyone else.

Test one variable at a time:

- Week 1: Question vs statement in subject line
- Week 2: Short subject (4 words) vs longer (7 words)
- Week 3: Different opening hooks

Results vary by audience. Your data matters more than general advice.

Day 14: Plan Next Month's Content

Map out your next 4-6 newsletters. You need a pipeline.

Create a simple spreadsheet:

- Column 1: Send date
- Column 2: Topic
- Column 3: Key point or angle
- Column 4: Status (idea, drafted, scheduled)

Write 2-3 newsletters ahead of schedule. Life interrupts. Buffer saves you.

Day 15: Review and Optimize

Look at everything you built:

- Platform setup complete?
- Signup forms live?
- Automation sequence running?
- First newsletter sent?
- Lead magnet available?

Document what works and what failed. Note your subscriber count. Track growth weekly.

Commit to your sending schedule for 12 weeks minimum. Most newsletters quit before they find their rhythm.

What Actually Matters

After running this 15-day process, focus on three things:

- Consistency beats perfection. Send on schedule.
- Specific beats general. Narrow your topic until you own it.
- Value beats promotion. Give more than you ask.

Growth comes from doing these basics well, repeatedly, for months.

Platform Recommendations

Based on current features and pricing:

- Best free tier: MailerLite (generous limits, clean interface)
- Best for automation: ConvertKit (worth paying for advanced sequences)
- Best for simplicity: Buttdown (minimal features, no distractions)
- Best for analytics: Mailchimp (detailed reporting, though pricier)

Avoid Substack unless you want their network effects. You sacrifice list ownership and migration flexibility.

Common Mistakes to Skip

Things I learned by doing them wrong:

- Sending without a clear schedule (kills trust and momentum)
- Writing too broad (trying to appeal to everyone reaches no one)
- Obsessing over design (readable text beats fancy templates)
- Ignoring mobile view (most readers use phones)
- Waiting for the perfect first issue (done beats perfect)
- Not building an email buffer (life happens, buffer prevents gaps)
- Promoting too much, too soon (give value first, ask later)

Start simple. Improve as you go. Your 50th newsletter will crush your first.

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