Email Marketing

Getting Traffic · https://sitecrafter.uk/docs/email-marketing/

Email marketing is one of the most cost-effective things a small business can do. Unlike social media — where your posts are at the mercy of an algorithm — email lands directly in your subscriber's inbox. You own your list, you control what you send, and the people on it have actively chosen to hear from you. This guide walks you through everything you need to get started.

Why email marketing still works

It's easy to assume that email is old-fashioned compared to Instagram or TikTok, but the numbers tell a different story. Email consistently delivers a higher return on investment than any other marketing channel — research regularly puts it at around £36 back for every £1 spent. More importantly for a small business, it lets you stay in front of customers who already know and trust you, which is far easier than trying to win over cold prospects.

An email list is also an asset you own. If a social platform changes its algorithm, restricts your reach, or disappears entirely, your followers go with it. Your email list stays with you.

Choosing your email marketing tool

There are many email marketing platforms available, and the right one depends on your budget, how technical you want to get, and how closely you want it to integrate with your website.

On this website, you have **MailPoet** installed — a plugin that runs directly inside WordPress, which means your subscriber list, sign-up forms, and email campaigns are all managed from your existing dashboard. For most small businesses sending a regular newsletter, it's an excellent starting point with a generous free tier.

If you ever outgrow it or need features like advanced automation, deep e-commerce integration, or more detailed analytics, popular alternatives include Mailchimp, Brevo (formerly Sendinblue), Kit (formerly ConvertKit), and ActiveCampaign. The principles covered in this guide apply to all of them — the buttons are in different places, but the concepts are the same.

What to think about before you send anything

Before you start collecting email addresses or sending campaigns, it's worth being clear on a few things.

Who are you writing to? Think about your typical customer. What do they care about? What questions do they regularly ask you? What would genuinely be useful or interesting to them? The more clearly you can picture that person, the easier it is to write emails they'll actually open.

What's the point of your emails? A newsletter, a promotional email, and a welcome email all serve different purposes. Decide what role email plays in your business — keeping existing customers engaged, driving repeat purchases, sharing expertise to build trust, or a mix of all three.

How often will you send? Consistency matters more than frequency. Sending once a month and sticking to it is far better than sending three times in a week and then going quiet for three months. Start with something sustainable, even if that's just one email a month.

Legal basics: what you need to know about GDPR

In the UK, email marketing is governed by GDPR and the Privacy and Electronic Communications Regulations (PECR). The key rule is straightforward: you need a valid reason to email someone, and in most cases that means they've given you clear, informed consent.

In practice, this means:

- People must actively opt in to your mailing list — a pre-ticked checkbox doesn't count
- You must tell them what they're signing up for at the point of sign-up
- Every email you send must include an easy way to unsubscribe
- You must honour unsubscribe requests promptly
- You should keep a record of when and how someone gave their consent

MailPoet and other reputable platforms handle the unsubscribe link and consent recording automatically, but you're responsible for making sure your sign-up forms are honest and clear. If you're in any doubt about your obligations, the ICO (Information Commissioner's Office) website has plain-English guidance at ico.org.uk.

Setting up your sign-up form

Your sign-up form is how people join your mailing list. MailPoet lets you create forms directly within WordPress and embed them anywhere on your site — in a page, a sidebar widget, or as a pop-up. Other platforms provide either an embed code or a hosted form page you can link to.

A good sign-up form is short and honest. You don't need to ask for much — a first name and email address is usually enough. More important is the copy around it: tell people exactly what they're signing up for and roughly how often you'll be in touch. "Join our newsletter for monthly tips on home maintenance" is far more compelling than just a box that says "Subscribe".

Think about where you place it too. The footer of every page is a reliable spot. A dedicated section on your homepage, near the end of blog posts, and on your contact page are all worth considering. Pop-ups can work well but use them carefully — a pop-up that fires the moment someone lands on your site is more likely to annoy than convert.

Building your list the right way

Growing an email list takes time, and it should. A smaller list of people who genuinely want to hear from you will always outperform a large list of people who barely remember signing up.

Start with the people who already know you. Let your existing customers know you have a newsletter and why they should sign up. If you have a physical premises, a simple sign-up sheet or a QR code that links to your form works well. For online businesses, a well-placed sign-up form and a clear reason to subscribe are usually enough to get started.

A common way to encourage sign-ups is to offer something in return — a discount code, a free guide, a checklist, or early access to offers. This is called a lead magnet, and when it's genuinely useful to your audience it can significantly increase sign-up rates. Just make sure what you're offering is relevant — attracting people with the promise of a prize draw tends to build a list of prize-seekers rather than potential customers.

One thing to avoid: importing lists of people who haven't consented to hear from you, or buying email lists. Beyond being illegal under GDPR, it will damage your sender reputation — the score that email providers use to decide whether your messages land in the inbox or the spam folder — and that's very difficult to recover from.

Writing your first email

The most common reason people put off starting email marketing is not knowing what to write. The good news is that your first email doesn't need to be polished or clever — it just needs to be useful and human.

Most email marketing tools, including MailPoet, provide templates to get you started. Choose something clean and simple — heavily designed emails can feel impersonal, and they often don't render well on mobile. A straightforward layout with your logo, a clear heading, a few short paragraphs, and a single call to action is all you need.

Write in the same tone you'd use to talk to a customer face to face. Use "you" and "your". Keep paragraphs short. Have one clear point per email rather than trying to cram in everything at once. And always end with a specific action you want the reader to take — whether that's reading a blog post, booking a call, or simply replying to tell you what they think.

The welcome email

The first email someone receives after signing up is the most important one you'll ever send them. Open rates on welcome emails are significantly higher than regular newsletters, simply because the sign-up is fresh in the subscriber's mind.

Use it to introduce yourself properly, remind them what to expect from your emails, and if you promised something at sign-up (a discount code, a free download), deliver it here. MailPoet lets you set up an automatic welcome email that sends the moment someone subscribes — most platforms call this an automation or a sequence. Getting this in place before you start actively promoting your list is worth doing early.

Sending and what to look at afterwards

Before you send to your full list, most platforms let you send a test email to yourself. Always do this — check how it looks on both desktop and mobile, read it fresh as if you're the recipient, and make sure every link works.

After sending, give it 48 hours and then look at your stats. The two most important numbers to start with are your **open rate** (the percentage of recipients who opened the email) and your **click rate** (the percentage who clicked a link). Industry averages vary by sector, but as a rough benchmark, an open rate above 25-30% is healthy for a small business list, and a click rate of 2-

5% is reasonable.

Don't obsess over the numbers in the early days when your list is small — a few unsubscribes after your first send is completely normal and nothing to worry about. Use the data directionally: if open rates drop over time, your subject lines might need work. If nobody's clicking, your call to action might not be compelling enough.

A realistic plan for getting started

Rather than aiming for a perfect setup from day one, here's a simple sequence to follow:

1. Set up your sign-up form and add it to your website
2. Write and activate a welcome email
3. Tell your existing customers and contacts that you have a newsletter
4. Commit to a sending schedule you can actually keep — once a month is fine
5. Send your first proper newsletter, review the stats, and adjust from there

That's it. Email marketing doesn't need to be complicated to be effective. The businesses that do it well aren't necessarily the ones with the most sophisticated tools — they're the ones that show up consistently and write emails worth reading.

If you'd like help setting up MailPoet, creating your first sign-up form, or configuring a welcome email, get in touch and we'll get it sorted for you.