



Mailchimp next steps

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Writing tips, using some of the audience segmentation, grouping, tagging and using merge tags that will help you be able to send those tailored and personalised messages and navigating common Mailchimp challenges.

Mailchimp next steps

Mailchimp allows you to be much more creative with your emails. You can create beautiful emails that are tailored for specific audiences, that are personalised, and you get loads of information about how people engage with them.

The [Mailchimp Basics training](#) was really practical. This guide will give you some best practice, hints and tips to really level up in terms of sending out emails that are going to have higher or better engagement, and that are going to be really useful for your readers.

We'll have a look at:

- writing tips
- using some of the audience segmentation, grouping, tagging and using merge tags that will help you be able to send those tailored and personalised messages
- navigating spam filters and other common Mailchimp challenges.

Writing

Think about the last email that made you take an action. Think about what made you take the action, how it was written, the tone that was used. That gives you an insight into what makes a great email.

Top tips for writing

- Be clear - know what you want to say and how you want to say it. Communicate your message rather than entertain. Focus on clarity and what you want to say
- Be concise - use short and easy to understand sentences. Avoid fluffy language that doesn't carry a lot of weight. Don't try to say too much at once. It makes it hard for people to take in the information. Don't overwhelm the reader.
- Think about who will be reading your email. Give them the information they need.
- Be human. Write how you speak, people like to receive emails from real people.
- Be accessible. Meaningful links are important for those who are sight-impaired and those who are skimming; never use click here. Think about how someone who may be listening with a screen reader will take in the information. Don't use click here or read more. For example, Tim Berners-Lee, in Style Guide for Online Hypertext he recommended: "Try to avoid references in the text to online aspects. 'See the section on device independence' is better than 'For more on device independence click here.' In fact, we are talking about a form of device independence."

Practically it may help to create a plan of what you want to say. And you can use a calendar to

identify when you should be making something the most important thing to say.

Writing the email elements

The content, all of it, should clearly add up to the main message you want to communicate.

1. Subject line

This is the invitation to open their email, it's got to be compelling and entice people to click on your email. To do this you tell what's inside, be descriptive. You can also make it local (town name) and personal (reader's name). Try to aim for fewer than 50 characters and use emojis sparingly - they can lend a bit of fun. Do not use all caps, it will come across as shouting, and similarly don't use exclamations, they don't add anything. You can test subject lines with each email you send out, to see what works well.

2. Preheader

This is the first thing people will see after the subject line. It is a teaser and summary of the email, it should be different but compliment the subject line.

3. Headline

This is the first thing people will see in the email and tells the reader what is the most important message.

4. Body of the email

This should help you accomplish your goals and communicate whatever message you want to get across. Use the design of the email to help guide people through email; things like headers and visual breaks are really helpful. Remember that people will scan and skim your email, so be mindful of that and give those visual cues to help people find the right information.

5. Call to action

This is in your body copy and it's asking people to do something; either clicking a link, downloading something or replying. You can use buttons or links, but make sure that it is obvious you are asking them to do something.

6. Footer

Most of this is business information and GDPR stuff, but you can add something fun; such as an image or a link to something fun to read or watch.

Types of email

There are a couple of different types of email and it's worth thinking about how people consume different information. Remember, before you send out something you must make sure that it is part of what people signed up to receive.

1. Newsletter

These are a great place to begin if you are fairly new to Mailchimp and will give you some useful data in the reports.

- Make sure your email has a regular cadence, so people know when to expect it.
- You can fill it with all sorts of news, not just one message. But make sure you know exactly what you are trying to communicate.
- Be friendly, this is part of setting the tone of the relationship your reader has with the church.
- Make sure that the top thing is the most important thing that you want to communicate.
- Make the subject line the content of the email, not the name of the newsletter itself; so church reopening rather than Christ Church newsletter 212.

2. Welcome email

You can automate this. As soon as someone signs up to your newsletter you can set up Mailchimp to send out a welcome email.

It's a great idea to email people when you're still fresh on their minds. It's an opportunity to get people up to speed, to give them the basic information that you want them to know and to answer some common questions; perhaps who the vicar is, how do they access the online Sunday service. You could also use it to invite them to join the next event, small group, private Facebook group etc. Again, this is part of the way you can establish a relationship between the reader and the church.

3. Invite email

This is something we can all fall down in. It's vitally important to include the important information so people can join the Zoom hangout or find the right the right address. And the call to action needs to be really clear, if you want someone to sign up to come make, then do that before you give them all the information. The actual email can be really short and visuals are always good.

Editing

The final, but essential, point for writing an excellent email is editing.

- The single best way to ensure that your email is going to communicate the right message

and pick up on spelling errors or half finished sentences is to find someone to read over your email before you send it out. It is hard to catch your own typos. Make sure the person you ask to do this has the time and space to read the email.

- Read your email out loud, it makes all the difference and you can better pick up on weird stuff you've written because you know what you mean.
- Check spelling
- Check links. There's a link checker feature in Mailchimp.
- Send yourself a test email. You can see what it will actually look like. Great to check it on your phone too. It's a great reminder of how much scrolling you are asking the reader to do.

Audiences

In a free account you can only have one audience. But even if you have a paid for account there are benefits for using one master audience that you then organise with tags, groups and segments.

By using these features you are actually likely to keep your bill down on a paid account as it won't count a subscriber twice for being in different lists. It should also be easier to manage one audience and keep it clean.

The more information you know, the more you can tailor the content to them. Segmentation, groups and tags allow you to manage your audience.

Groups

If you want people to self select the type of content they wish to receive, ie their interests and preferences, you will want to use the group function. They can self select at the point they subscribe to receive your emails.

Have a think about what kind of category you might want. For us we have options depending on what area of work we do that people are interested in.

After the subscriber chooses which group they want to be in, or you manually add subscribers to a group, you can send email to one our more of these groups.

Tags

Tags are labels for your subscribers that help you stay organised and categorise them. You can use tags however you need them, but you might want to think about what will work best for you before you start.

Once you've created tags and added them to your subscribers, you can send emails directly to subscribers with specific tags, or use them to build segments.

Segments

These allow you to target your emails to reach a specific audience. You can get really granular, for example; you might target people in a certain town or postcode, with children of a certain age group, that joined your church in 2012.

You can create segments using shared data from groups and tags. You set the conditions to filter the contacts based on the information available.

Once you've created a segment you can save it so you can continue to use it. As new subscribers join your audience they will automatically be pulled into your segment if they meet the conditions of that segment.

Personalisation merge tags

Everyone likes to be remembered. Personalising the email does this, you're saying we know who you are and what you are interested in (in a non threatening but friendly sort of way)

The most common way to personalise your email is to use a merge tag to insert the name of the reader. (example)

Remember to add default merge tag values so that if you don't have someone's details you don't end up with odd emails. So for example if you don't add someone's first name and you are using a first name merge tag to say "Hi name", you can set it to "Hi there".

Mailchimp problems

A number of people have contacted us regarding their emails going into spam. Or having a low open rate. There are a number of things to consider here. The first is that if you previously sent your emails through outlook or another email host you will not have been seeing the open rate. Open rates tend to not be 100%, whether they're in Mailchimp, Outlook or other email clients.

Think about how many unopened emails you have, probably in your personal email. You may delete lots without even opening them. Likewise, not everyone will open your email, for all sorts of reasons; they may be on holiday, they may be at work when they've received your email and then forgot about it, they may have notifications turned off and then only read emails that are super important (such as bills) - there are all sorts of things that you are competing with for their attention and you won't be able to win all the time for everyone.

In addition, if someone is reading your email in a preview panel, rather than fully opening the email, it is likely to not count towards your open rate.

[According to Mailchimp](#), in October 2019 the average open rate in the religion industry for emails sent to at least 1,000 subscribers was 27.62%. The average click rate was 3.16%.

I would suggest that if you are sending specific information to a really engaged group of people, such as a congregation or community group, you should expect your open and click rates to be higher.

There are a few things to do to make sure that you are getting the right information to the right people - which is really what it's all about.

Make sure the right people are signing up

Consider your opt in method. Although double opt in may seem like a pain there are big benefits to it. Double opt in requires people to confirm they wish to sign up by clicking on a link emailed to them before they are added to the audience list. It can help ensure your subscribed contacts are actually interested in receiving the content and it also keeps invalid email addresses out of your audience.

Another way of preventing fake signups is to use the reCAPTCHA in the sign up forms. It means that spambots can't sign up to be in the audience.

Send at a time when your audience is likely to read your email

Timing is another factor that will have impact on how your email is read. If you send your emails at 6pm and most of your audience are busy feeding their children your email might get lost in their inbox. Have a think about your audience and their lifestyle and choose a time that is most likely to suit them. Then have a look at the reports from your emails to see when people are actually reading them. Test another time and check the reports for that. Once you have found a good time you will want to be consistent so people know when to expect it; for example every

Friday.

Let the email client know your email isn't spam

Spam filters are a bit of a tricky one. They are individual to the mailing technology. However there are a few things to consider:

- The from name – make it clear it's from you/your church
- The reply to address – give a real email address, ideally the one that you would like people to reply to
- The subject line and headers – make these as least spammy as possibly

There are a few other things that are more technical that will help in the long run:

- Using merge tags allow you to personalise the content to your recipient
- Using a template or working with a designer to ensure the content coding isn't a red flag to the spam filters
- If readers do see the email in their spam folder, to mark it as not spam.

Resources

[Mailchimp's article on spam](#) is a bit technical but covers a lot of questions you might have about spam and Mailchimp.

Campaign Monitor article on [the call to end click here links](#).

Integration with website – sign up for or other?

[Integration with ChurchSuite](#)

Other things mailchimp can do – survey, landing page etc