

Creating an Email Newsletter

The easiest way to reach out each month

Creating an email list:

If you are creating an email list to use for your child's school the easiest way get started is actually to reach out on paper first. Send a form home through the "back pack express" requesting their email address for your new online newsletter.

Collecting addresses this way achieves 2 things; it gives you a written "opt in" or permission to add their email address to this list (this is very important – see opt in below); and it gives you an idea of how much initial interest you have in your new form of newsletter. For a sample print opt in form please see the link on our website.

What's wrong with sending a large group e-mail using BCC?

In addition to the limits your Internet Provider likely places on your account, you will have to deal with all of the bounce-backs from bad e-mail addresses and message "undeliverable for 4 hours" reports. You have to sort all of this mail to find the real messages and delete the rest. Also most internet services will prevent emails from being delivered that have more than 5 BCC addressed listed.

Spam and Opt In requirements:

Do not SPAM. Spamming is sending emails to addresses without permission. "Opting In" is the process of giving the option to be included on an email list.

Opt in Styles ~ Written, single or double opt ins:

- Written opt in (as discussed about) is a great way to get your list started if you are servicing a specific group.
- Single opt in (or unconfirmed opt in): when signing up online, you only request an email address without asking that it be confirmed through an email request.
- Double opt in (or confirmed opt in): when signing up online, an email is sent to the address requesting confirmation that the person actually signed up for your list. This is usually done by clicking a confirmation link.

How do I set up this up?

The easiest way to set up a newsletter is to use a newsletter or email marketing service. Don't let this scare you off there are several ways to do this very inexpensively – even free.

- You can use a Yahoo Group or a Google Group if you are planning on sending only simple text based newsletters
- Email Marketing services offer you simple to use templates that require no more knowledge to use than word processing software but provide very professional look.
- Email Marketing services also let you track who has opened and read your newsletter, and what links have been clicked within your newsletter. This is valuable information.

Suggested Services:

- **Elitemail.com** - an excellent service with a large selection of templates; very easy to use; based on per email system; 1000 email credits free on sign up (send email to 1000 addresses); additional credits available for \$10 per 1000 emails; provides full detailed reports for all campaigns; guaranteed delivery of emails.
<http://www.eliteemail.com/>
- **iContact.com** - many email templates; annual subscription for service; provides full detailed reported for campaigns; guaranteed delivery of emails. <http://www.icontact.com/>
- **MailChimp.com** – free service IF your subscriber base is under 500, and you send out less than 6 emails a month. Includes templates and detailed reports for all campaigns.

- Yahoo Groups – free service; no templates; straight text emails only; does not provide reports

Creating Your Newsletter

Important Tips:

The Subject line: is probably the single most important element that convinces people to open your email.

- Subject lines should be brief and concise. Six words or less is an ideal length.
- Be creative. Fun, irreverent Subject lines can grab your subscriber's attention and encourage open rates.
- Test, test, test different subject lines over a few months and see what works best.

HTML or Text Newsletter – What does this mean? HTML in “newsletter speak” means a newsletter created in a template, using headings, columns, and graphics. (HTML is a programming language used on the internet). A Text newsletter is just that – text only – nothing there to make it pretty.

If you are using Yahoo Groups or Google Groups to send your newsletter they will be text only. If you are using a service and a template it is an HTML newsletter. Some services (like iContact) have a spot to be able to allow you to also attach your email in text only form.

When Should I Send My Newsletter? Email marketing experts say that to receive the best readership of your newsletter you should:

- ❖ Send your newsletter at the same time each month. Doing this ensures that readers know when to expect your email, and are less likely to unsubscribe.
- ❖ Don't email too frequently or your emails become annoying and people unsubscribe.
- ❖ Email marketing research shows that the very best time to send your newsletter is on a Tuesday, first thing in the morning. Test for yourself though and see when you receive the highest open rates.

Content is Important!! Make sure that the content is some that the recipient is going to want to read.

If you are responsible for the content, surf the internet and find interesting things to add, include links and pictures. Ensure that the spelling and grammar are correct, and that the newsletter is easy to read.

Send a test message! This a maybe the most important tip out there. Be creative, check your spelling and then send yourself a test message. Make sure that all your links work in the test message and that everything looks exactly the way it is suppose to. Then go back and schedule the newsletter to be sent. You never want to have to send a second message to correct the first one!!

Have Fun and Be Creative: Once you get the hang of creating a newsletter you'll realize how valuable it is. Many parent groups are switching to email newsletters only and completely doing away with the old print based ones. You save time (volunteer time copying and send out paper), money (paper and copying is expensive), your readers can more easily keep and refer to your messages, and the information can be interactive.

Looking for more tips, tricks and ideas for newsletters? Check out the EPT Tech Website - <http://www.epttech.wordpress.com> for links to some great resources.

Sample text to use for collecting email addresses through written permission form.

Sign up for our Email Newsletter

Help reduce printing and paper costs at the school and benefit from web extras and surveys for your input. Sign up on our website or submit the form on the back of this newsletter.
Online newsletters hit your inbox on the 15th of each month!!

_____ **Yes** I would like to receive the monthly School Council Newsletter and Agenda by email plus additional news and information not available in the print edition.

Name: _____

Child(ren)'s Teacher: _____

Email Address: _____

Please note: Your personal information will be held in the strictest confidence and never used for any purpose other than those agreed to above.

You may also subscribe at our website www.enterwebsitehere.com