

Start an email list without the **headache.**

A no-nonsense, step-by-step walkthrough: build a list you own, get people onto it, deliver value on autopilot, and actually land in the inbox. No funnels, no jargon, no ten-tool stack.

Unbury · unbury.co · Read it in 10 minutes, set it up in a week

Most people overcomplicate this. You don't need a fancy funnel, ten tools, or a marketing degree. You need a list you own, a simple reason for people to join, and the discipline to show up. That's the whole thing. This guide is start to finish, in plain language. Follow it in order and don't skip ahead.

STEP ONE

1

Pick one platform and **move on.**

Your email platform (people call it an “ESP”) stores your list and sends your emails. Every popular one does the job well. Do not spend a week comparing them.

- **MailerLite** — free to start, genuinely easy. The best default for most people.
- **Kit** (formerly ConvertKit) — a little more powerful on automation, built for creators.
- **Beehiiv** — best if you want a media-style newsletter with built-in growth tools.

Pick one and start today. You can move your list later if you outgrow it. The tool is not what makes this work.

IGNORE FOR NOW

Dedicated IPs, complex funnels, five upsell sequences, A/B testing your button colour. None of that is your problem yet.

STEP TWO

2

The 10-minute setup that keeps you **out of spam.**

Before you send a single email, prove to the inbox providers that you're really you. Two things:

- **Send from your own domain** (you@yourbusiness.com), not a free gmail or outlook address. Your platform has an “add a sending domain” option.
- **Add the authentication records.** Three small settings called SPF, DKIM and DMARC. Sounds scary, it isn't. Your platform generates the exact records, and you (or your web person) paste them into your domain's DNS once. Ten minutes, done forever.

Why it matters: without these, inbox providers can't verify you, so they filter you to spam no matter how good your emails are.

QUICK CHECK

Send one email to a Gmail address, open it, hit the three dots → “Show original”. You want SPF, DKIM and DMARC to all say **PASS**.

STEP THREE

3

Give people a reason to join: the **lead magnet**.

Nobody signs up for a “newsletter”. They sign up for something they actually want. A lead magnet is a small, useful thing you give away in exchange for an email address.

The good ones are small and solve one specific problem fast:

- A checklist or cheat sheet
- A short guide or a ready-to-use template
- A swipe file or a set of real examples
- A mini email course (one short lesson a day for five days)
- A useful spreadsheet or calculator

Three rules: make it **small** (people actually finish it), make it **specific** (one clear win), and make the title **promise that win plainly**. “The 1-page launch checklist” beats “My thoughts on marketing” every time.

DON'T OVERBUILD

You can make a solid lead magnet in an afternoon. Skip the 40-page ebook nobody reads.

STEP FOUR

4

Put up one simple **signup page**.

You need one place people can enter their email. Your platform has built-in forms and landing pages, use one, don't build a website.

Keep it to three things: **one promise** (what they get), **one field** (email), **one button** (“Send it to me”). Every extra field and link loses people.

Then put the link everywhere: your social bios, the end of your posts and videos, your website, your email signature.

STEP FIVE

5

The welcome automation: value on **autopilot**.

This is the part that runs while you sleep. Set up an automation (your platform calls it an “automation” or “sequence”) that fires the moment someone joins:

- **Email 1, instant:** deliver the thing you promised. A warm hello, the link, done.
- **Email 2, next day:** a quick story or your single best tip, and a genuine question at the end so they reply.
- **Email 3, a few days later:** point them to your best free content, or if you sell something, a soft first mention.

That's a complete welcome. Three emails, written once, and every new subscriber gets them automatically.

WHY THE QUESTION MATTERS

The reply you ask for in email 2 does more than it looks. Replies tell Gmail you're a real person people want to hear from, which quietly keeps you out of spam.

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STEP SIX

Send regularly: the habit that builds **trust**.

A list you never email dies. Pick a rhythm you can actually keep, weekly is plenty, and stick to it. Consistency does two things at once: it keeps your audience warm, and it tells the inbox you're a normal, steady sender rather than a random blaster.

Every send, keep it human:

- Send from a real address people can reply to.
- Write like you're emailing one person, not broadcasting.
- Go easy on links and images, and cut click-tracking links where you can.
- End with a question now and then, so people reply.

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STEP SEVEN

Warm up before you **blast**.

If your domain or list is brand new, don't email 5,000 people on day one. Inbox providers get suspicious of senders who appear from nowhere at full volume.

Ramp up slowly:

- Start with your **most engaged people first**, recent signups and past openers.
- Increase your volume gradually over a couple of weeks.
- Watch that your opens stay healthy as you scale up.

Same idea if you ever switch platforms or domains: start small and grow into it.

THE SINGLE BIGGEST LEVER

Sending to engaged people first is the number one thing that keeps you out of spam. When Gmail sees your emails getting opened, it trusts the next ones more.

The stay-out-of-spam checklist

Print this. If all seven are true, you're doing the important 90%.

- ☐ Sending from your own domain, not a free gmail/outlook address
- ☐ SPF, DKIM and DMARC all show PASS
- ☐ A real reply-to address that a human actually checks
- ☐ Few links, minimal tracking, not image-heavy
- ☐ Emailing engaged people first, and ramping volume slowly
- ☐ A consistent sending rhythm you can keep
- ☐ Asking for a reply every now and then

Common mistakes to avoid

- **Buying or scraping a list.** Never. It torches your reputation instantly and it's not fixable.
- **Blasting everyone at once from a cold domain.** Warm up first.
- **Going silent for months, then dropping a huge campaign.** The inbox reads that as a stranger.
- **Stuffing emails with tracking links and heavy graphics.** It looks like an ad, so it gets treated like one.
- **Obsessing over the "perfect" tool** instead of just starting.

Your first **week**

The whole thing, one small step a day.

- DAY 1** Pick a platform. Add your sending domain and paste the SPF, DKIM and DMARC records.
- DAY 2** Make one small lead magnet. A checklist or template you could write in an afternoon.
- DAY 3** Build one simple signup page. Put the link in your bio.
- DAY 4** Write your three welcome emails and switch the automation on.
- DAY 5** Tell your existing audience it exists. Share the link a couple of times.
- DAY 6–7** Write your first real email. Send it to your most engaged people first.

That's a working, owned email list in a week. Everything after this is just showing up.

One last thing: owning a list is only **half** the battle.

The other half is making sure your emails actually get **seen**, and not quietly buried in spam or the Promotions tab, where most of your audience never looks. That part is what we do at Unbury.

Want to know where your emails are landing right now? Take the free Inbox Scorecard: 10 quick questions, a score out of 100, and your biggest leaks.

Take the free Inbox Scorecard → unbury.co