

BGA CLUB MANAGEMENT GUIDES

About Newsletters

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An effective club newsletter is informative, engaging, and personalised, encouraging readers to stay connected and involved with the club.

Being able to email newsletters direct to people who are interested in your club has many advantages, not least that unlike a social media account, the information held on your club's email list is owned by the club. Here is where you will find the club's friends, everyone from members to members of the wider community. Past members should be encouraged to sign up too, as well as people who take introductory flights.

This is a broad group of people, so whatever is put in the newsletter should be appropriate – the club should assume that it is speaking in public.

'Newsletters' is an extensive marketing and communications topic. There is no need to embark on extensive study, but there are some key factors to consider when creating a great club newsletter. These are covered below.

Creating an effective club newsletter

Firstly, establish the purpose of your newsletter. What is it for? Why is the club using a newsletter as a form of communication?

Secondly, what are the principles? Colours. Font. Headings styles. Having a guide to hand will help when drafting the next newsletter.

After that, there are some key elements to newsletters:

1. **Content:** The content of the newsletter should be interesting and relevant to your audience. This can include:
 - news about upcoming flying days and events
 - interviews with instructors and club volunteers
 - profiles of people e.g., committee members, competition pilots and Inter Club League team members
 - updates on the club's achievements or successes
 - notable flights
 - information about what the club is doing, and why
2. **Design:** The design of the newsletter should be visually appealing and easy to read. Use a layout that is organised and easy to follow and include plenty of images and graphics to break up the text. Space around paragraphs is as important as content.
3. **Frequency:** The newsletter should be sent out on a regular basis, whether that's weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly. Consistency is key to building a loyal readership.
4. **Personalisation:** Try to personalise the newsletter by addressing your readers by name and including information that is relevant to their interests. This can help to build a stronger connection between your club and its members.
5. **Call to Action:** Encourage readers to engage with your club by including a clear call to action, such as inviting them to attend a flying day or event, respond to a request for new volunteers, or asking for feedback or suggestions.

Try to avoid:

1. **Being inappropriate:** do not include information that is not appropriate for shouting at the top of the club's voice in a public place, especially if it might result in questions from, for example, the CAA or potential new members.
2. **Overwhelming readers with too much information:** not too much, not too little and keep it relevant. Make sure content is organised in a way that makes it easy to understand.
3. **Focusing too much on the past:** whilst it is important to celebrate past achievements and successes, also include information about future events and plans. It's a question of balance, and considering the purpose of a newsletter, part of which is usually to encourage greater participation in club activities.
4. **Ignoring feedback:** Encourage readers to provide feedback on your newsletter and take their suggestions into account when creating future issues. Ignoring feedback can lead to a decline in readership and engagement.
5. **Using poor design or formatting:** A poorly designed newsletter can be difficult to read and may turn off readers. Be aware that people reading the newsletter may have a range of additional needs including colour blindness, dyslexia and ADHD. Use a clean and organised layout with easy-to-read fonts and colours that complement the club's branding. Using colours with different depths of tone will help people to distinguish between shades if their colour perception is low.
6. **Sending too many or too few newsletters:** Finding the right frequency for newsletters is important. Sending too many emails can be overwhelming, while sending too few can lead to a lack of engagement. Find a balance that works for your club and its members.

Technical tips

With as little effort as possible, it is desirable for the club newsletter to be technically sound and compliant with best practices, as well as engaging and informative.

Using a newsletter provider will help manage the creation and sending of newsletters. These providers have features for monitoring delivery, open rates and click rates on links included in newsletters. Paid for services are usually easier to use, (there are reports of free versions being glitchy and slow in a bid to encourage people to upgrade) but keep this bill low – your gliding club is not a large marketing organisation.

1. **Email formatting:** the newsletter should be formatted correctly for email. This means using a responsive design that will adjust to different screen sizes, and avoiding large images or attachments that may be blocked by some email clients when the email arrives.
2. **Spam filters:** To ensure that your newsletter reaches your readers' inboxes, avoid using spam trigger words in your subject line or content. Also, be sure to include a clear and easy-to-find unsubscribe link, as failing to do so can trigger spam filters.
3. **Subject line:** help your email to stand out in the inbox by writing something attractive and interesting in the subject line.
4. **Email list management:** Keep the email list up to date by regularly removing inactive or bounced email addresses. This will help to improve your deliverability rates and ensure that your newsletter is reaching the right people. NB Bouncing emails – before deleting them, it is worth contacting the person direct to let them

know that they aren't receiving the emails. Sometimes signing up again can cure the problem.

5. **Email list management:** label, tag or keep sub-lists according to the type of contact e.g. active club members; previous club members; stakeholders; introductory flights; friends of the club etc so that if necessary, an email with a specific message or call to action can be sent to a specific group.
6. **Set up a template:** to save time, have a template that can be used as a starting point for each newsletter. This will help create a uniform feel and make the club's newsletter stand out in people's inboxes.
7. **Graphic design:** there are some free to use online resources which are a great way of creating graphics for newsletters.

Some notes on GDPR

The personal data on your email list is subject to GDPR regulations, which is a large topic and one that needs to be reviewed on a regular basis. Long story short, here are the basic principles:

1. If in the club's newsletter you are going to provide opportunities for people to join in with paid social events in addition to the normal club activities, everyone you email needs to have opted in to receive the newsletter. Invitations to social events are classed as marketing activities by the ICO.
2. Include an unsubscribe option on all newsletters, to enable people to opt out.
3. The biggest cause of data breach is accidental leakage so:
 - Keep databases stored in password protected areas, preferably in the cloud
 - Do not download databases onto your own computer, external hard drives, USB sticks, or print them onto paper, or re-create the database in any other format that could be lost or stolen.
 - Do not accidentally publish the email addresses e.g. by copying and pasting email addresses into to the 'to' or 'cc' boxes of an email.
4. The club should NOT have a role called 'Data Protection Officer' as this infers a different, more complex type of organisation than a not-for-profit, volunteers run, sports club and this will cross the threshold into the more stringent bracket of GDPR compliance. Call them 'Data Protection Lead' or 'Data Protection Manager'.

More guidance on GDPR for gliding clubs is available on the [BGA website](#).

GDPR information is available from the [Information Commissioner's Office](#), but take care not to extrapolate information intended for profit making organisation to your not-for-profit, volunteer run gliding club.