

Author Playbook





Welcome!

There are many strategies that can help you build a community online. We find that the best way to succeed is by prioritizing the platforms that are best suited to you. It can be daunting, but we're here to help.

With our playbook you'll have all of the information you need to get started finding your community and inspiring individuals to take part in your adventure. Keep in mind that the information here is just a roadmap for your consideration not a required course of action. Some of the best practices may seem demanding so feel free to think of them as benchmarks you can work toward. At the end of the day, you know your social media boundaries best.

Best of luck—we can't wait to see what you build.



General Best Practices

Before you get started, we want to offer some universal advice to help you on your journey.

1 Know Your Platforms

Familiarizing yourself with a platform will always put you in a great position to succeed. You can get a general idea of the platform's ethos and find out more about what your target audience likes to see by exploring different feeds. Remember, the best way to start creating great content is to consume great content. Follow other creators in your space or adjacent spaces for inspiration. We also encourage you to let your editor know the correct social media channels and handles you'll be using for book promotion purposes.

2 Prep Your Profiles

Having a seamless profile can be super helpful to potential followers who want to get to know you. At a glance, a user should be able to find out who you are and what kind of content they can expect from you. Each platform has limitations on character counts for user profiles, so you can use tools like [Linktr.ee](https://linktr.ee) or [Linkin.bio](https://linkin.bio) to include links to your website, where to purchase your book, and your other socials to help followers go deeper.

3 Commit to Consistency

Standing out amid all the content on social media can be challenging. The best method to help you cut through the noise is to simply be consistent. Have a plan for how frequently you will post new content. Try setting aside a certain number of hours each week when you will work on your social channels. Save time and keep yourself accountable by creating a content calendar which allows you to plan for posts tied to key moments and generally get on a regular cadence. Consider [cross-posting](#) content to other platforms. Be mindful of your limits to avoid burnout. Whatever you do, try not to leave your audience hanging.

4 Prioritize Engagement

Follower count is not the only metric when building a community. Engagement is also crucial, oftentimes more so than raw follower numbers. Remember that building any community is a two-way street. Here are a few tips to keep in mind:

- Make sure to like, comment on, and share content from other creators. Feel free to prompt followers to do the same with your content.
- Encourage followers to save your content, which is another metric of engagement.
- Post during the week instead of on weekends, when most platforms see their lowest engagement numbers.
- Respond to comments and direct messages (DMs) from followers as you are able; this can also assure your audience that you are hearing their feedback.

5 Account For Accessibility

Making sure that all of your followers can engage with your content is incredibly important. Many social platforms have started launching accessibility features for users to implement on their posts. For example, Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram have added an optional Alt Text feature for picture descriptions. TikTok has popularized Text-to-Speech (TTS) and customizable captions. You can learn more about some of these features [here](#). Another way to stay up-to-date on accessibility features is to check out the product blog of your platform of choice. These sites are where platforms share new features and updates just for creators like you.

6 Set Proper Boundaries

Building a public online presence and connecting with readers can be really fun, but it can come with challenges. Not everyone online contributes positively to the conversation, and there is always the risk of someone overstepping boundaries or even targeting you with [harassment](#). Remember, there is absolutely no need to engage with negativity; in fact, it's often better if you don't. Also be sure to familiarize yourself with the Community Guidelines on the platforms you use. All social media platforms have a feature for reporting accounts that violate their rules of conduct. In the meantime, you can mute or block any account that is causing you stress. [Some platforms](#) even allow users to block the use of certain words in comment sections or turn comments off entirely.



The Versatile Community Building Hub

There's a reason Facebook remains one of the most popular platforms in the world for making connections: It works. Despite its controversies and many iterations, it remains the most widely used social media platform on the planet and has a variety of helpful tools to grow your audience.

It's true the algorithm can make it difficult to get your content in front of people, but you can cross-post Reels, Stories, and posts from Instagram to help draw eyes to your page. Facebook also features budget-friendly paid promotion that—while not mandatory for growing your audience—can be extremely helpful in putting your content in front of more potential followers.

Population

The US has approximately 239 million active Facebook users, a figure that is projected to increase to 260 million by 2027.

Age

Even though Facebook's users have a reputation for skewing older, in the US, Facebook users ages 25-34 comprise the single largest age group using the platform, followed by 18- to 24-year-olds.

Gender Identity

The majority of Facebook users worldwide (56%) self-identify as male.

Behavior

Facebook beats out Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube for daily site visits. 70% of Facebook users visit the site daily, while 49% check the platform multiple times a day. Users in the US spend an average of 33 minutes per day on the platform.

Interests

Many users choose to connect over varied interests through [Facebook Groups](#). Additionally, despite the many partisan conversations happening online, Facebook also has the lowest partisan gap of all social media platforms, with an equal number of Republicans and Democrats on the platform.

Quick Tips

Make your Facebook page a destination for connections. Content is still king—especially engaging content—but it's equally important to converse with your audience. As we've said before, don't leave them hanging. Respond to any comments or direct messages at your discretion to keep the conversation going. Experiment with [Facebook Lives](#) and collaborate with bookstores on [Events](#) for those exciting moments when you are featured.



Audience

A look at who's on the platform





Best Practices

Helpful hints to bear in mind



Content Types

- Short videos (60 seconds or less)
- Episodic videos (approx. 3 mins.)
- Images and graphics
- Text posts and link previews

Cadence

- 5-7 posts per week
- 3-5 Stories per week
- Optimal posting times: Mon & Fri, 8am-12pm ET; Tues-Thurs, 10am-4pm ET

Engagement

- Like and respond to comments
- Engage with other Facebook Pages
- Respond to and send DMs

Tools

- [Capcut/InShot](#) (short video editing)
- [Animoto](#) (long video editing)
- [Loomly/Later/Tailwind](#) (scheduling posts)
- [Linktr.ee/Linkin.bio](#) (to add links to your bio)
- [Canva](#) (graphics)



The Ever-Evolving Storytelling Platform

What started as a photo-sharing app has evolved into an incredibly versatile platform with the latest viral trends. Instagram is home to a variety of content types, from short-form videos to livestreams. With all the new features, it can be hard to keep up. Playing the [IG algorithm's game](#) is helpful—and that means [creating and publishing Reels](#) regularly, in addition to communicating with your audience via the platform's traditional content types.

Bookstagram is also a rich community on the platform, full of authors, reviewers, and fans. It's a great opportunity to follow and engage with influencers and readers of all genres and promote your upcoming projects.

Population

The US has approximately 160 million Instagram users, and that number has been increasing by 16% quarterly.

Age

The dominant demographic on Instagram (32% of total users worldwide) is ages 25-34, followed closely by 18- to 24-year-olds (30%).

Gender Identity

A slight majority of Instagram users worldwide (51%) self-identify as male.

Behavior

Instagram users worldwide spend an average of 28 minutes per day on the platform, and an average of 11.2 hours monthly total.

Interests

Top interests on the platform include travel, music, and food/drink, among others. Of course, the vibrant [#Bookstagram](#) community is full of users specifically interested in books and authors.

Quick Tips

[Reels](#) [Stories](#), and even static posts give you an opportunity to reach audiences with trending hashtags and, for Reels, with sounds. Once users start interacting with you, it is important to respond to them early and often; an engaged follower is a happy follower. In addition to creating content on your own channel, you will want to collaborate with others to grow your audience. Some ideas for this include tagging an author or influencer if you read their book, co-hosting an [Instagram Live](#) or inviting a [collaborator on a post](#). Keep in mind that Instagram doesn't allow links in your posts, so remember to put any relevant links you want followers to click on in your bio and point to your bio in the post so they know to find the link there.



Audience

A look at who's on the platform





Best Practices

Helpful hints to bear in mind



Content Types

- IG Reels videos (90 seconds or less)
- IG Stories (images/videos, 60 seconds or less)
- Photos and/or Carousels (for multiple images)
- IG Lives

Cadence

- 3-5 in-feed posts per week
- 2-3 Reels per week
- 5-7 Stories per week
- Approx. 1 Live per month
- Optimal posting times: Mon-Fri, 11am-2pm ET

Engagement

- Like and respond to comments
- Respond to and send DMs
- Follow other accounts
- [Product tag](#) your book in posts
- Include 10-15 hashtags per post

Tools

- [Instagram Live Producer](#) (live videos)
- [Lightroom/VSCO](#) (photo editing)
- [Capcut/InShot](#) (short video editing)
- [Loomly/Later/Tailwind](#) (scheduling posts)
- [Linktr.ee/Linkin.bio](#) (to add links to your bio)
- [Canva](#) (graphics)
- [Social Auditor](#) (engagement tracker)



The World's Virtual Watercooler

While increasingly controversial, Twitter remains a good place for sharing links, headlines, short videos, memes, and opinions. It has a robust political community, with many journalists and politicians congregating on the site. It is also home to many celebrities, public figures, and comedians. Book Twitter is a thriving community and publishing space for authors, librarians, and booksellers to follow the latest industry news.

Twitter's future is still being written, however, and some authors are choosing to use the platform for updates only or to lean into other social media altogether. So be sure to monitor the platform's evolution and assess its utility to you personally along the way.

Population

The US is home to the most Twitter users at 77 million.

Age

38% of Twitter users worldwide are ages 25-34. They are the largest age group using the platform, followed by 35- to 49-year-olds.

Gender Identity

The majority of Twitter users worldwide (56.4%) self-identify as male.

Behavior

US users spend an average of 34.8 minutes per day on Twitter.

Interests

While the topic of content moderation and misinformation on Twitter continues to be hotly debated, 55% of adult US users get their news from the platform, and 46% say that Twitter has increased their understanding of current events.

Quick Tips

Twitter users are looking more for content curation, rather than straight content creation, and that means embracing [Twitter Lists](#), [Twitter Spaces](#), and other features that can connect you to your community more often. The limited word count can be a bit restrictive, but [Tweet threads](#) are a great way to get around this.

We want to remind you, in light of recent changes at Twitter, to keep your account safe and identity protected if you are already using the platform. Enabling an [Authentication App or Security Key](#) can help with this. If you decide to no longer post content on the platform, consider tweeting a farewell - including what channels your followers can find you on - and keeping the account handle active to avoid imitation accounts pretending to be you.



Audience

A look at who's on the platform





Best Practices

Helpful hints to bear in mind



Content Types

- Text-only posts
- Short videos (2 minutes and 20 seconds or less)
- Images and graphics
- Link previews
- [Twitter Polls](#)

Cadence

- 1-3 posts per day
- Optimal posting times: Mon & Fri, 8am-12pm ET; Tue & Thurs, 10am-12pm ET; Wed, 10am-4pm ET

Engagement

- [Retweet](#) (or Quote tweet to add your own context)
- Like and respond to comments
- Follow thought leaders and organizations
- Respond to and send DMs

Tools

- [Linktr.ee/Linkin.bio](#) (to add links to your bio)
- [Loomly/Later](#) (scheduling posts)



The Trendsetting Content- Creation Tool

TikTok is the latest home for viral hits. It's a great platform for anyone who loves creating videos and following trends, and, it bears mentioning, there is no dancing required! Also of note: The subcommunity #BookTok has single-handedly changed book discovery (particularly for younger readers), but it is only one of countless interest-based communities that make up the platform.

The main challenge with TikTok is that it requires frequent posting from creators in order to cut through the noise. However, your videos do not need to be highly produced, and there are many great tools to help you stay on top of it all and avoid burnout.

Population

The US has approximately 138 million monthly active TikTok users.

Age

43% of TikTok's global audience are ages 18-24. This is the biggest age group, followed by 25- to 34-year-olds at 32%.

Gender Identity

The majority of TikTok users worldwide (57%) self-identify as female. In the US, 61% of TikTok users self-identify as female.

Behavior

TikTok users in the US spend an average of 45.8 minutes per day on the app. 167 million videos are watched per minute on TikTok! It has also been reported that TikTok is fast becoming Gen Z's preferred search engine.

Interests

The most common reason that people give for using TikTok is to find funny/entertaining content. However, that content can cover a range of interests, from cooking to #WitchTok to YA, romance, and more.

Quick Tips

Producing a wide variety of videos—such as sharing your daily life, quick anecdotes, or how-tos—and posting multiple times a day can help you reach people who are looking to hear your unique message. Batch-recording your videos can streamline your efforts, and [Stitches](#) and [Duets](#) are great methods for connecting with existing creators and hopping on trends. It can also be helpful to watch TikTok content frequently for ideas. There are many trends that are relatively easy to recreate with your own spin on them. You can also get a sense of what sounds are currently trending and utilize those in your videos for potential additional exposure. Finally, you can tap TikTok's [Creator Portal](#) for more resources on how to maximize your success.



Audience

A look at who's on the platform



Best Practices

Helpful hints to bear in mind



Content Types

- Short videos (60 seconds or less)
- Long videos (approx. 3 mins.)
- [TikTok Stories](#) (15 seconds or less)
- TikTok Lives (with 1K followers or more)
- TikTok Now

Cadence

- 1-4 videos per day
- 1-3 Stories per day
- 1-2 Lives per Month
- [Posting Times Vary Greatly](#)

Engagement

- Use 3-5 hashtags per post
- Like and respond to comments
- Cross-post to IG (remember to remove the TikTok watermark!)
- Use native subtitles for accessibility and to improve SEO
- Add background music at 10-20% volume

Tools

- [Capcut/InShot](#) (short video editing)
- [Linktr.ee/Linkin.bio](#) (to add links to your bio)
- [Loomly/Later](#) (scheduling posts)
- [TikMate.app](#) (watermark removal)
- [Social Auditor](#) (engagement tracker)



The Video Mainstage

YouTube has an ever-growing arsenal of video-sharing tools and a highly sophisticated algorithm. It also allows for both short-form and long-form video formats. Due to its versatility and longevity as a video-hosting website, it is home to many genres of content and has very loyal fanbases for each.

It can be daunting, however, to build a channel and grow subscribers when starting out on the platform. Be patient, and study some of the tactics that help make YouTube's search engine do the work for you. And remember to spread the word on your other social channels about the content you worked so hard to create on YouTube.

Population

The US has approximately 240 million active YouTube users.

Age

YouTube is a universally popular app. A whopping 95% of 18- to 29-year-olds in the US use YouTube, as well as 49% of those ages 65 and older.

Gender Identity

The majority of users worldwide on YouTube (54%) self-identify as male.

Behavior

62% of YouTube users in the US log on to the platform daily and spend an average of 19 minutes on the site. YouTube is also the second-most visited website in the world and accounts for more than 25% of worldwide mobile traffic.

Interests

YouTube is home to a wide spectrum of content. Tutorials and how-to videos are a popular format, with one-third of internet users watching this type of content weekly. While YouTube allows for in-depth and longer videos, short-form videos are also growing since the launch of [YouTube Shorts](#) on the mobile app in 2020. Like TikTok Shorts, these videos are 60 seconds or less.

Quick Tips

Subscribers to a YouTube channel want to know what type of content to expect, so try planning your videos thematically or episodically to help draw views to your other videos. You'll also want to use keywords to help YouTube's algorithm surface your videos when someone searches for the topic. The [YouTube Creator Page](#) is an excellent place to learn how to optimize your channel. We recommend checking out these [playlists](#) as well. If you have the resources, posting Shorts along with long-form content can increase channel watch time and subscriber growth. To help your visibility on the platform, make a custom thumbnail for each video and write a clear title of what your video is about. And don't forget to add a description and keywords on the backend to improve discoverability.



Audience

A look at who's on the platform



Best Practices

Helpful hints to bear in mind



Content Types

- Long videos
- YouTube Shorts (60 seconds or less)
- Live videos
- Community posts

Cadence

- 1 long video per week
- 1-3 Shorts per week

Engagement

- The optimal length for the algorithm is 7+ minutes, but videos of any length can be successful
- Like and respond to comments
- Subscribe to other channels

Tools

- [Animoto/iMovie](#) (long video editing)
- [Capcut/InShot](#) (short video editing)
- [Social Auditor](#) (engagement tracker)
- [Vid IQ](#) (YouTube channel growth and insights)



The Professional Playground For Experts

LinkedIn’s community is reimagining what “professional” means, one discussion at a time. It is now a great platform for sharing news, career developments, and thought leadership of all kinds. What’s more, every piece of content you share and every interaction you take part in has the potential to generate [valuable business outcomes](#), from speaking invitations to bulk book sales, and more.

It might surprise you to know that LinkedIn has more than 200 writers on its editorial team, so rest assured this is a platform that appreciates the power of good content to inform and inspire. Discoverability can be an issue, but LinkedIn features some helpful creator tools to assist you in your journey.

Population

LinkedIn has more than 875 million members worldwide, with 194+ million in the US.

Age

59% of LinkedIn users worldwide are ages 25-34, followed distantly by 18- to 24-year-olds at 20%. That said, in the US, the age demographic breakdown skews older. 37% of US users are ages 46-55, followed by 34% ages 36-45, and 27% ages 26-35.

Gender Identity

The majority of LinkedIn users worldwide (57%) self-identify as male.

Behavior

LinkedIn users spend an average of 7 minutes, 38 seconds on the platform per visit. They also visit approximately 7 pages per visit.

Interests

The most followed hashtags on LinkedIn are #innovation, #management, #humanresources, and #digitalmarketing.

Quick Tips

The best way to find community and grow organically is by posting regularly, commenting and responding to other accounts, and using hashtags strategically. Similar to Facebook, [LinkedIn Groups](#) is a great tool for connecting with like-minded professionals. Beyond sharing your accomplishments and responding to others, consider posting original content to help boost your engagement. LinkedIn is also great for posing questions or sharing insights from your area of expertise. You can prompt your connections to share their perspectives as well to increase engagement. [Here are even more tips to help you get started.](#)



Audience

A look at who's on the platform





Best Practices

Helpful hints to bear in mind



Content Types

- Short videos (60 seconds or less)
- Episodic videos (approx. 3 mins.)
- Written posts, including articles, advice/prompts, and questions for your audience
- Images and graphics
- Link previews

Cadence

- 3-5 posts per week
- Optimal posting times: Tues-Thurs, 10am-1pm ET, 5pm-6pm ET

Engagement

- Change the “Connect” button on your profile page to “[Follow](#)”
- Follow and/or comment on [LinkedIn News](#) or the [Daily Rundown](#) for daily trends and news
- Follow other thought leaders in your space and comment on their posts
- Use 3-5 hashtags per post
- Respond to comments and DMs

Tools

- [Loomly/Later](#) (scheduling posts)
- [Grammarly](#) (spelling and grammar)
- [Iconosquare](#) (engagement tracker)
- [Linked Helper](#) (network growth)



The Visual Discovery Engine for Instruction and Inspiration

Pinterest is a [virtual bulletin board](#) that allows users to explore subjects and ideas they're interested in by pinning and saving images and videos. It's the perfect platform to reach a community of like-minded people that share your passions —and do so with the most visually stimulating content.

The platform is home to short videos, photos, and graphics, and it has rich communities for cooking content, fashion, design, life hacks, gardening, art, and much more. It also features a lot of opportunities to [share your writing inspiration](#) with your followers.

Population

The US has the largest number of Pinterest users at approximately 86 million, which comprises close to half of the platform's traffic.

Age

Close to 40% of Pinterest users worldwide are ages 25-34, followed by 18- to 24-year-olds who make up 21% of the user base. In the US, the largest demographic is users ages 50-64 (38% of US users).

Gender Identity

The majority of Pinterest users worldwide (76.7%) self-identify as female. In the US, 60% of users self-identify as female.

Behavior

Pinterest users spend an average of 14 minutes per day on the platform.

Interests

Users watch nearly 1 billion videos per day on Pinterest. When searching for new pins, 97% of users are looking for non-branded content, meaning they're looking open to finding new ideas, inspiration, and products.

Quick Tips

Much like Google or YouTube, discoverability on Pinterest relies heavily on keywords and what terms people are searching for. This means that, in order to build a community, you'll need to start with a deep dive into what topics your audience is interested in. Once you know that, and how it correlates to your content, you can post relevant pins across different boards on your own account and then further spread your message by participating in Group Boards. [Group Boards](#) allow many different Pinterest accounts to post to the board, usually about one specific topic. They often have buttons so you can request to join and/or you can contact the owner of the board to see if they would be interested in taking on another contributor.



Audience

A look at who's on the platform





Best Practices

Helpful hints to bear in mind



Content Types

- [Idea pins](#)
- Static pins
- Video pins

Cadence

- 5-15 pins per day
- Posting times vary greatly, so feel free to experiment!

Engagement

- Repost pins
- Respond to comments on pins
- Participate in Group Boards
- Install the [Pinterest Save Button](#) to your browser (Chrome and Android users only)

Tools

- [Canva](#) (graphics)
- [Loomly/Later/Tailwind](#) (scheduling posts)
- [Lightroom](#) (photo editing)



The Most Personal Messaging Tool in Marketing

Newsletters are a fantastic way to connect with your community on a more personal level. They offer far more space to share messages with your audience, and there's no need to worry about algorithms holding you back. They are also great places to experiment with new types of content.

Newsletters do involve some planning, so it's good to investigate a variety of newsletter creation platforms to see which works best for your needs. There are also newsletter tools built into some social platforms you may already be using, like [LinkedIn](#). Though a newsletter is often a writing-heavy job, once you land on a repeatable format and cadence, it can be incredibly rewarding for you and your followers.

Population

4 billion people use email every day, and this number is expected to grow to 4.6 billion by 2025. 99% of users check their email daily—some log into their inbox as much as 20 times per day.

Preferences

52% of people worldwide prefer email as their main communication tool, and 90% of Americans subscribe to at least one newsletter, with 75% receiving between 1-10 newsletters.

Age

Email subscribers skew slightly younger with 95% of Gen Zers, Millennials, and Gen Xers receiving newsletters compared with 84% of Baby Boomers.

Behavior

A shift toward private conversations and supporting your favorite creators on platforms like Slack, Patreon, Discord, Twitch and others in the past few years has led to an explosion of what is known as the creator economy. Newsletter platforms have tapped into this trend and offer the ability to charge for your content. Writers can choose whether their newsletter subscriptions are free or paid (or both), with paid options typically starting at \$5/month on Substack (as just one example).

Quick Tips

There are many ways to foster a deeper level of connection with newsletter subscribers, including sharing news and bonus content exclusively with them. Once you have hooked your audience, you can add a call to action (CTA) encouraging your most loyal followers to share your newsletter with their families, friends, and colleagues, which will further propel subscriber growth. Also, keep in mind that 41% of email views come from mobile devices, so be sure to check your newsletter format on both desktop and phone to ensure it's displaying correctly. And remember to promote your newsletter via all your other existing channels so people know it exists and sign up!



Audience

A look at who's subscribing



Best Practices

Helpful hints to bear in mind



Content Types

- Announcements, essays, prompts/advice, and other resources
- Personal and professional updates
- Sweepstakes and giveaways
- Curated links and recommendations

Cadence

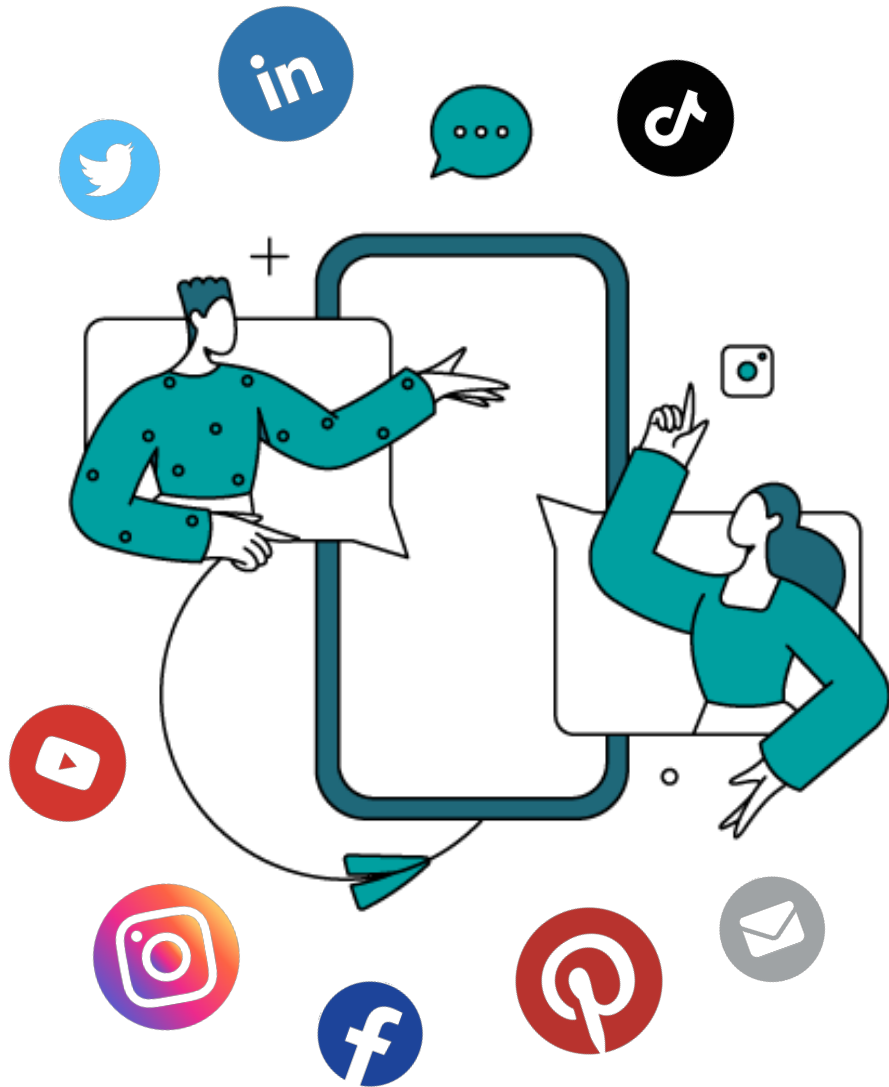
- 1-2x per month
- Be consistent: Try sending on the same day of the week at the same time of day so your subscribers know when to expect to hear from you.

Engagement

- Respond to comments
- Poll subscribers about what content they want to see
- Post content from and/or do swaps with other creators in your network
- Offer an exclusive downloadable asset to incentivize new subscribers to sign up

Tools

- Newsletter Platforms:
[ConvertKit](#)
[Mailchimp](#)
[MailerLite](#)
[TinyLetter](#)
[Substack](#)
[Ghost](#)
- [Grammarly](#) (spelling and grammar)



Thank You

For additional resources, check out our [Author Newsletter](#) and our library of videos from [Author University](#).

For general questions, contact: portaladmin@penguinrandomhouse.com



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