By Laura Krawczyk

MailChimp

A guide to making newsletters
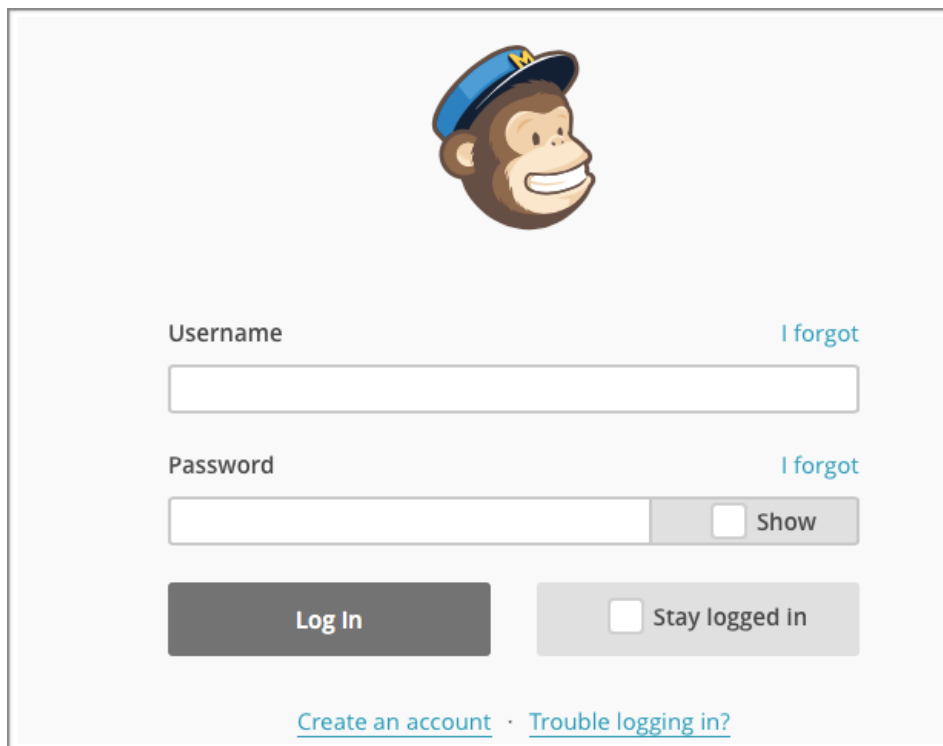

The 3 Ps:

Positivity

Patience

Practise

Introduction

MailChimp (hereafter MC) is a website through which you can create and send newsletters to your members. It can be accessed here.

The first and most important point in this guide to remember is the doctrine of the 3 Ps:
- Positivity;
- Patience;
- Practise.

Without a *positive* mindset and the voice in the back of your head telling you that "you can do it", you will be frustrated by the tiniest bumps along the way. You are not the first person to be creating a newsletter in MC, and you will not be the last. This is a journey that requires a lot of *patience;* at first this will not be as natural as writing a simple email to your members, although at the end, it will be much more satisfying (for everyone involved). This will take a few tries - keep in mind the old phrase '*practise* makes perfect'. Operating MC will get easier with every single email sent, promise.

1. Mailing list

You should only have to import your pre-MC mailing list once. After importing the bulk of the email addresses and any other information that you want to store on MC, you should only encounter small imports of data. This is true unless you connect your section's newsletter signup to directly convey the data to MC. Both methods are explained below.

## a. How to import email addresses

I. Go to LISTS
II. Go to CREATE LIST
a. Fill out the necessary details for your section
= You have created a list

III. Go to ADD SUBSCRIBERS
a. IMPORT SUBSCRIBERS
= You can now chose the destination of the email addresses that you have. You will most likely have them in a CSV file, excel document, or on google drive. You can choose where to import from by using the following platforms:
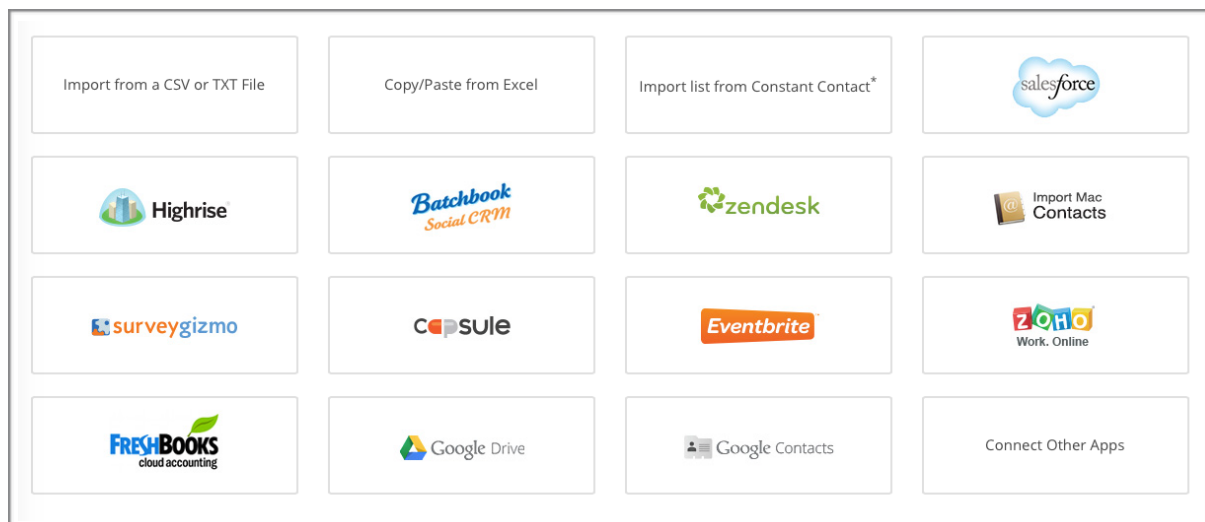
IV. After you have imported the list, you will have to name the columns if MC has not already detected what they are
a. Select the information that is in the column (such as email address, name, surname, etc.)

b. If there is any information that MC imported from your membership list that you don't want it to have, you can deselect that information and delete it from MC
= Import completed

Repeat steps III and IV for regular imports of data to the same list.

b. Newsletter signup form

I. Go to LISTS
a. Choose the list that you want subscribers to be added to
II. Click on the form type you want (general is recommended)
III. You can design the form as well as build it
a. Add the necessary blocks to the form
b. Add any design you want on the form
c. It's possible for the form to automatically be translated to the audience depending on their language - just remember to set a default language, and you can leave the rest up to MC
= You have created a direct signup form for your members for MC

This means that there is no need for you to import data regularly unless you have not synced the newsletter signup with MC. Every time someone subscribers, you'll get an email with their details.

2. Template

Template building will take the longest, although once you've created the ideal template for the first time, you can just keep recycling it and improving it, instead of starting from scratch with every issue of the newsletter.

a. How to create a template

I. Go to TEMPLATES
II. Go to CREATE TEMPLATE
III. Chose the template that you like

a. Basic - the most basic design possible, ideal for notifying members and for original newsletters
b. Themes - pre-made design with the layout already formatted
c. Coding your own design - you would need some knowledge of coding prior to choosing this option.

I would recommend choosing the basic theme and adding content blocks to it, because it does not require you to fidget with the pre-made (b.) layout which has its pre-designed colour scheme and format. Coding an entire template is not very feasible without knowledge of how to code; you can always put in chunks of code into the basic (a.) and theme (b.) template.

For the sake of this guide, I will go step-by-step on how to make a basic template, because once you get the hang of it, you will have enough experience and knowledge of MC to create a theme.
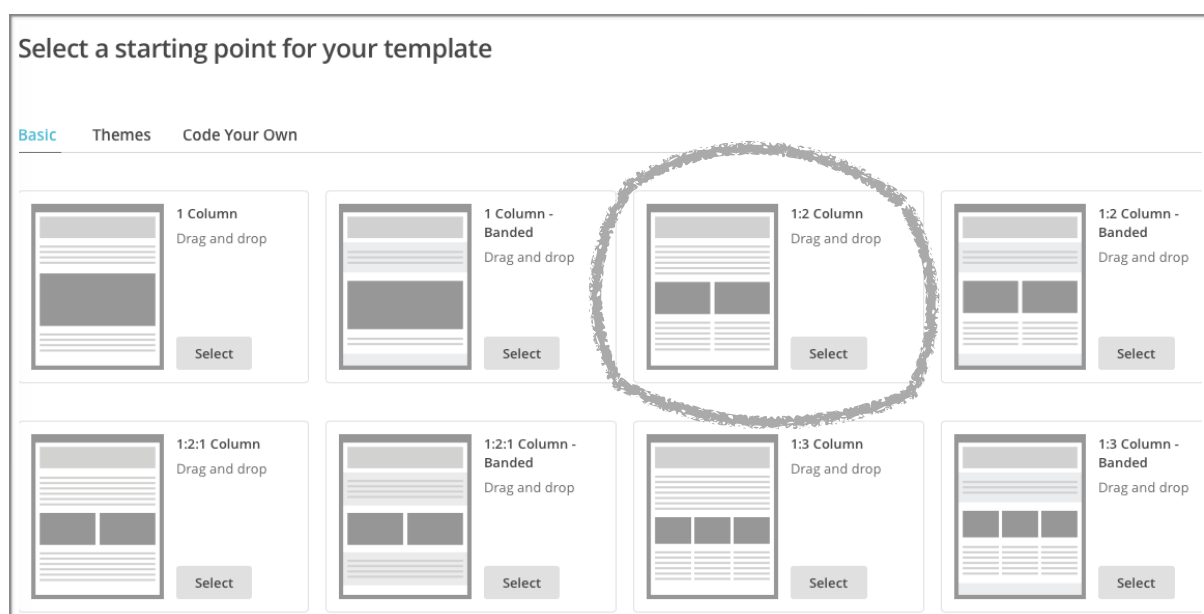
Banded vs non-banded templates:
Non-banded have a single solid colour along with a defined boarder.
Banded have a band of colour across the newsletter.

The guide will be based on the '1:2 column' template from basic (a.).
Remember that everything you will be doing will be on the right-hand side of the screen, whereas the end result will show up on the left-hand side.

b. Adding content blocks

There are various content blocks that you can choose from. They depend on the structure that you want to apply. Here is your current screen:
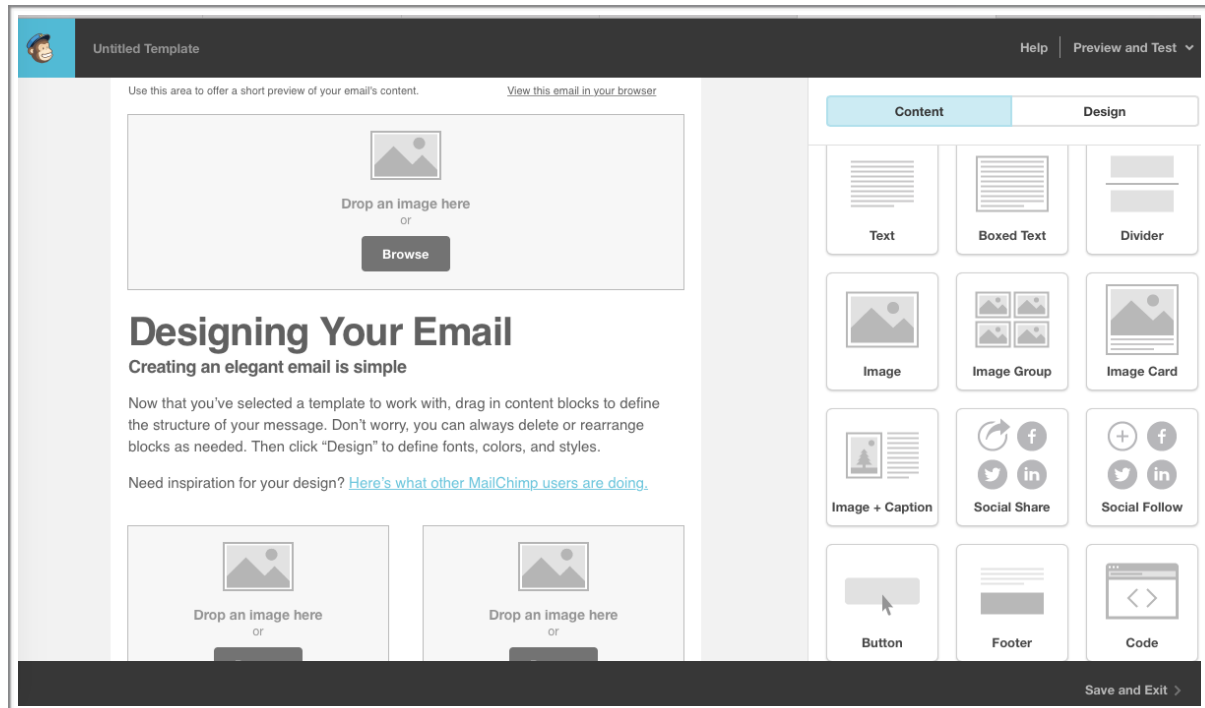

Notice the 'save and exit' button in the bottom right hand corner?
Press this button before you leave the template in order to save everything. There is no need for you to press that button every 5 minutes, because MC autosaves everything when you press 'save' on individual content blocks.

If you want to add a content block, drag it to the area of the template where you want it to be, from the right to the left of the screen.

The current template above already has some content blocks in order to make your life easier. You can (1.) move, (2.) edit, (3.) duplicate, or (4.) delete them.
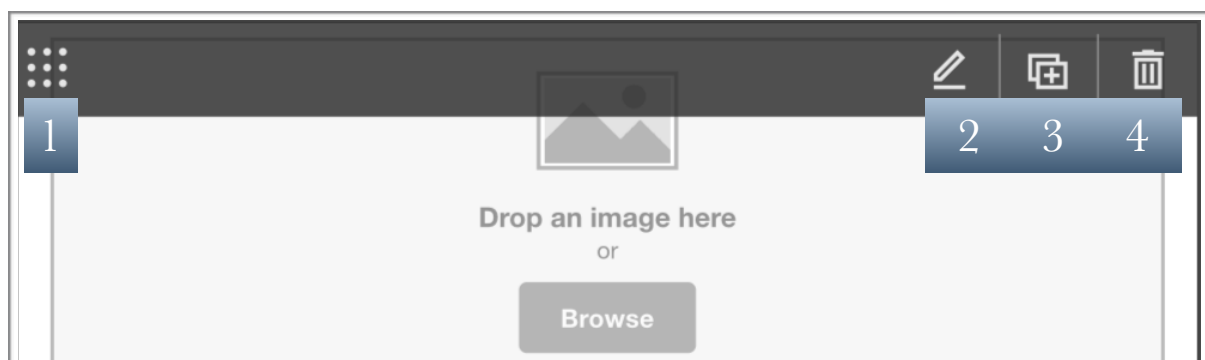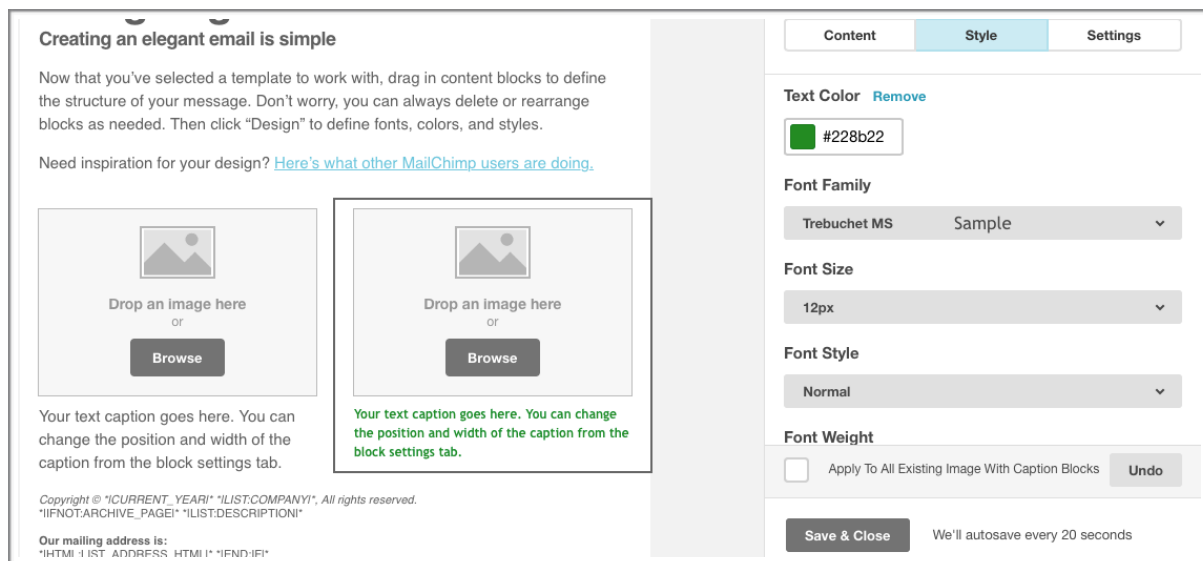
Photos:

You can drag and drop the photos into the content block or you can browse your computer for the photo you want.

Text:

You can type in the content blocks that have lines with scribbles on them. If you want to change anything with the font, go to STYLE once you've selected the content block. This will change the style for the entire content block.


Changing the layout of a content block:

You can change the layout of the content block in order to make it best represent your needs. You can do this by going to SETTINGS.
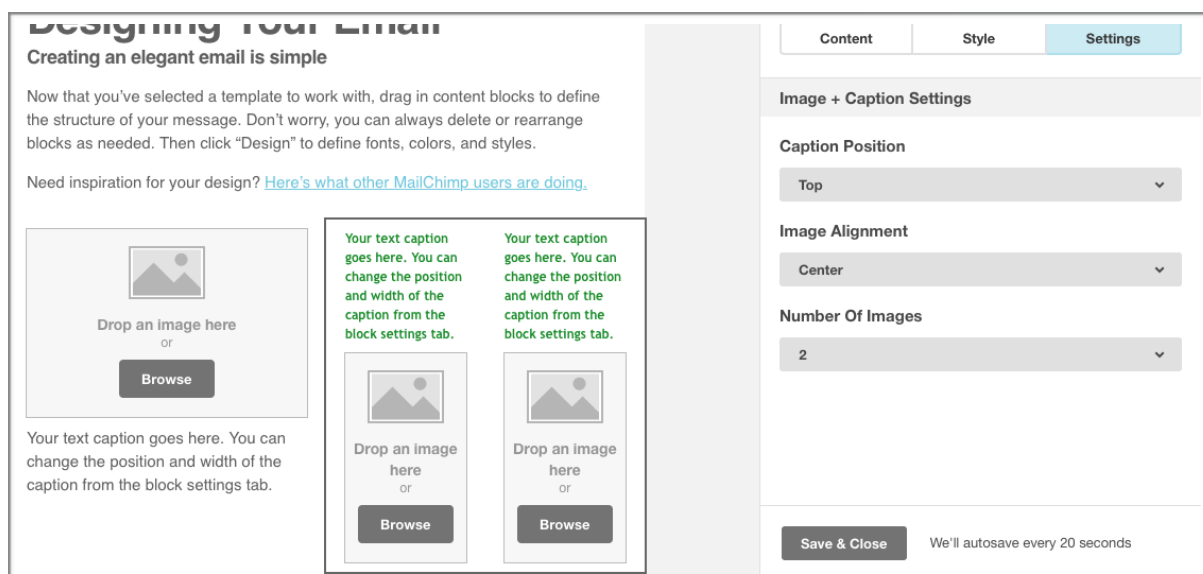
If you decide to make two columns in a single content block, then you will have two captions. On the image below, caption 2 is the one with the blue text, whereas you will have to click 'caption 1' in order to go to the green box.
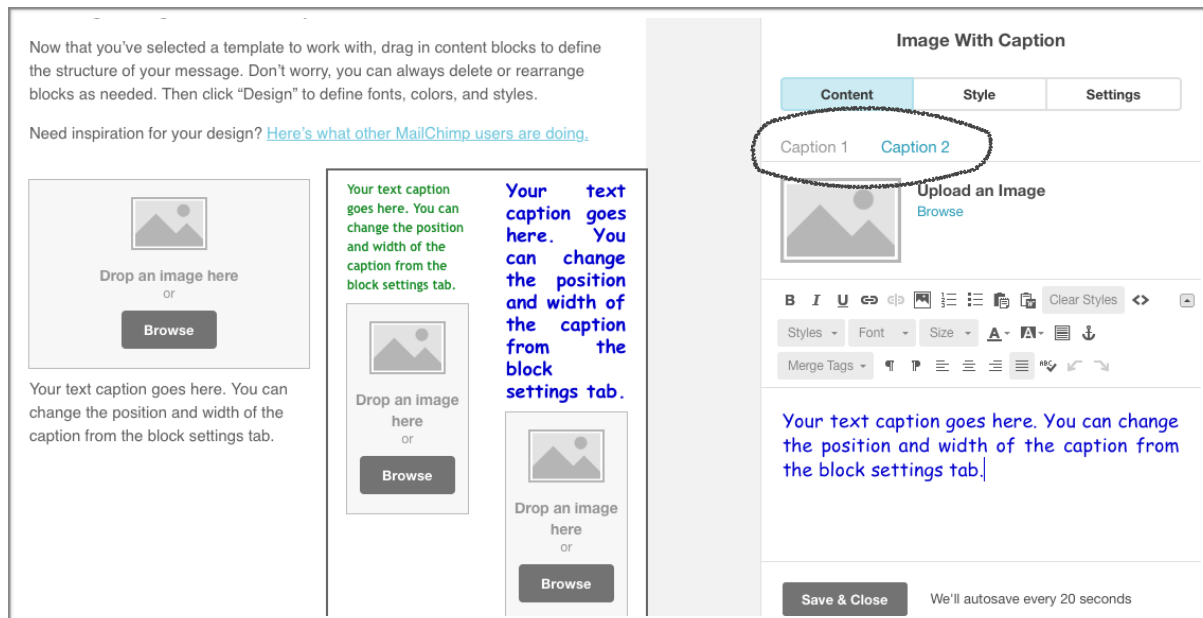
The toolbar includes bold, italic, underline, hyperlink, font (colour, size, style) etc. and is the same as in Microsoft Word or Macintosh Pages.

Footer:

In the footer, include the name of your section next to the copyright, along with the email address. Some countries oblige their citizens by law to have the unsubscribe button present at the bottom of the email, therefore don't forget to have it in the footer. The unsubscribe button will already be formatted by MC, thus when someone will press the unsubscribe button, MC will automatically remove them from the list, whilst sending you an email that they've unsubscribed.

Remember that it's not your fault when a member unsubscribes, although try and avoid sending too many emails so that they don't have a reason to. However, if you communicate with your members less than once a month, you might lose a lot of potential from them, because they might be very eager to be more involved and not hearing from your section might make them doubt their participation. Balance is key. You'll win some and you'll lose some, such is life.

Header:
The header should include a 'view in your browser' button, which should already be formatted. If it's not formatted:
I. Go to CONTENT
II. Go to LINK
a. A command box will pop up
b. In the 'link to' box, choose 'web address'
c. In the 'web address' box, type in *|ARCHIVE|*
d. Press INSERT
= You have successfully created a 'view in your browser' button which makes sharing the email on social media possible, as well as viewing the entire message in case it gets clipped due to being too long
In the header, I always also include the date in column 1.
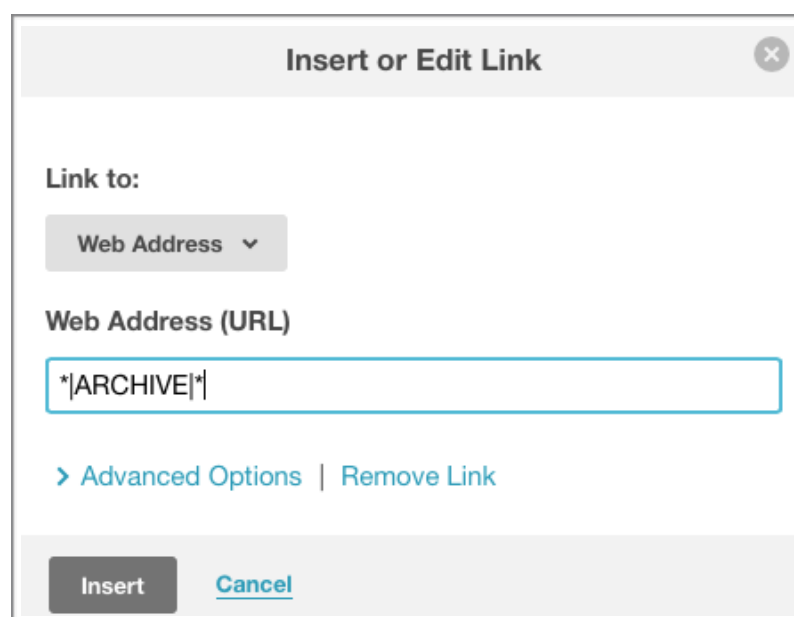
3. Sending

Once you're done creating your reusable template, which you can edit every time you need to send another issue of the newsletter, and you've named your template, you are ready to send it.

Recycling a template for future use:
I. Go to TEMPLATES
a. Press the arrow key next to your template
b. Click REPLICATE
= You've created a duplicate for this issue of the newsletter whilst still preserving the previous issue

a. Send a test email

Before you send the newsletter to your entire mailing list, remember to send a test email to yourself.

I. Go to TEMPLATES
a. Open the template that you wish to send
II. Go to PREVIEW AND TEST in the upper right hand corner
a. Press 'send a test email'
b. Type in your email address
= You've sent a test email which will help you assess whether everything is in the right place before the big send-off

b. How to send the newsletter

I. Go to TEMPLATES
a. Press the arrow key next to your template
b. Click SEND CAMPAIGN
II. Choose the mailing list that you wish your newsletter to be send to
III. Fill out the technical details of your campaign, such as the title of the email and the 'from' box

IV. Preview the newsletter you wish to send now

V. Check whether all the technical fields that you've filled out are correct

VI. Press SEND

= Good job, you can now play high five with Frederick von Chimpenheimer IV (press the hand and see what happens, you're welcome)

High Fives!

Your mail is in the send queue and will go out shortly.
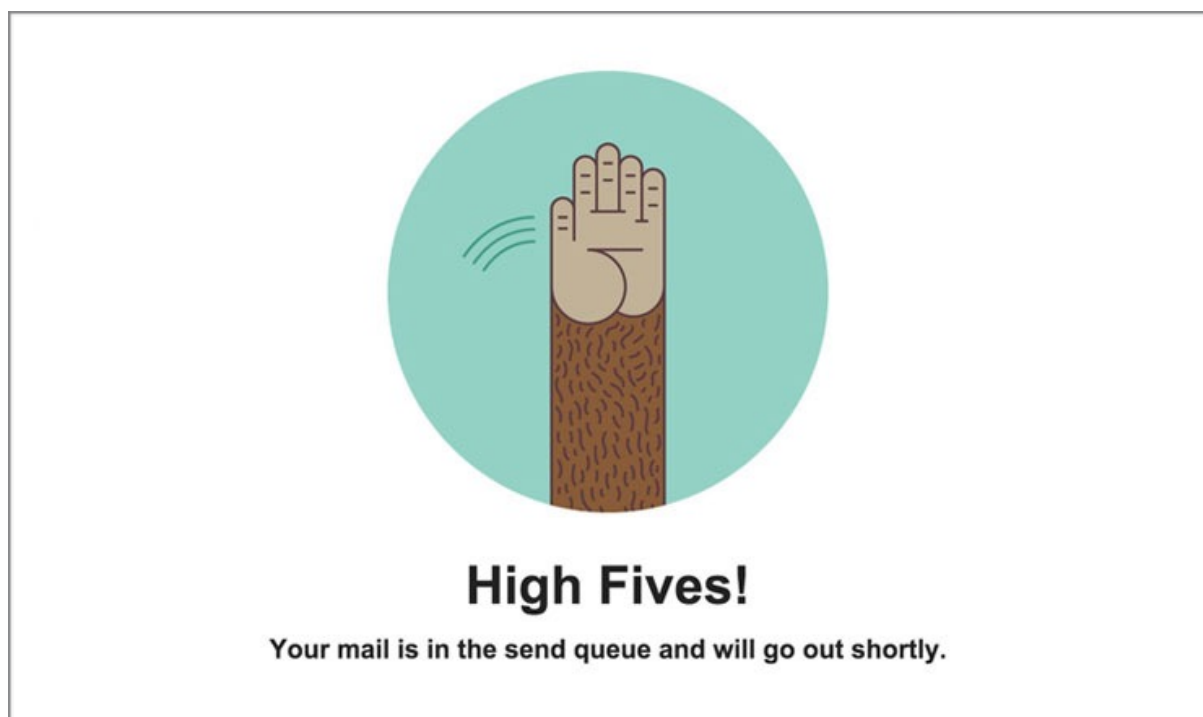
4. Examples of newsletters

Below are two examples of the newsletters that I've done. You can view them, because I've clicked the 'view in your browser' link.
JEF Poland's March 2015 newsletter & YEM UK's November 2014 newsletter.

The information in this guide is up to date as of 08 April 2015.