



# **FIELD GUIDE for the Substack adventure**

## **Field Guide #1 - Setting up Camp**

**by  
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# Trail Card - print for handy reference

## Substack Field Guide #1

**Lessons**

**Do Now**

**Begin**

**Make  
Friends**

**Search  
Substack**

**Your  
Strategy**

**Be  
Consistent**

**Join  
Office Hours**

**Get to  
know your  
audience**

**Look for  
Collaboration**

**Use  
Notes**

**Create  
your  
identity**

**“You need preparation, you need a purpose, and you need a content calendar.  
If you don’t have these things, you will sink to the bottom of the Substack pool.”**

**– Courtney Maum, *Before and after the book deal***

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# Why a Field Guide?

**I leaped into Substack with little idea** about how, what, when or why. Unsurprisingly, I floundered, missed a lot of turns, retraced a bunch of steps, and rewrote way too many parts of the Substack puzzle way too often.

I'm getting close to my one-year anniversary and I'm a lot wiser ... although you wouldn't particularly notice it if you just looked at my subscriber numbers. I'm still under the magic 500 number where people say it gets easier.

Somewhere along the line, though, I fell in love with Substack and the writers here. What a generous, brilliant bunch of folks to hang out with! You keep me coming back, trying to find my way through the maze.

Because my background includes a lot of entrepreneurial failures and successes and many forced marketing marches into unknown territory ... and all my do's and redo's led me down countless rabbit trails through Substack, I feel like I've gathered enough wisdom start faster and easier.

It doesn't take a thick manual to get started with Substack, but having a trail map would have been helpful. Here's my intent:

- **Deliver a Field Guide monthly ... going deeper into the outback of Substack**
- **Use as few words as practical**
- **Focus on Lessons, To Dos, and things to Begin.**
- **Collect best practice examples and lessons from experienced Substackers and guides.**
- **Post weekly about some of the more complicated features of Substack**
- **Write a bunch of Notes when I find particularly lovely and useful wild flowers.**

# It All Starts with Strategy

**Perhaps what I most wish I had done a year ago** would have been to develop a clear strategy. If I'd had a better idea of how Substack worked, it would have helped. **That's the purpose of this Field Guide.**

Substack is good at telling you **how to do things**, but not so good at telling you **why to do them** or how they might affect your future actions. So, I'm going to give you some homework and explain my strategy as an example of how I've come to this particular point.

First ... like many of you most likely, I would love to make this like one of those little neighborhood libraries where people just come and take what they want. However, I can't make that model pay bills or satisfy my desire to have people to share with and learn from.

My strategic intention is to create a friendly, supportive place for entrepreneurial writers, learn the inner workings of Substack, and offer a simple marketing model that can help anyone understand how all of the Substack elements and features fit into that model.

Here's my strategy regarding free and paid offerings:

- Weekly Wednesday posts will always be free.

Offerings for paid subscribers (our angels) include:

- Field guides including best practice examples (after this first one which serves as an example)
- Membership in the Substack Explorers' Club (more later)
- Zoom gatherings (more later)
- Special efforts made to promote Member Substacks.

Pricing is the rather typical \$6 per month with two months free with annual subscription.



## What is an entrepreneurial writer?

Somewhere along the line, people began to think of the arts as being too lofty to be tainted by business. We know that isn't true; however, we sometimes act as if it *should* be true.

Entrepreneurial writers understand that marketing and creative arts can live together harmoniously and that a writer must sustain an adequate life style in order to continue as a writer/artist.

Entrepreneurial writers learn how to blend value creation for their readers with their own creative juices in a way that makes financial sense for both of them and is facilitated by the automated payment collection system offered by Substack.

Entrepreneurial writers understand the power of collaboration, consistency, courage, creativity, and whole host of other “c-words” that we will talk more about on this adventure.

**Hey petal, you're on my list!**

**This is how Claire Venus,  
*Creatively Conscious*,  
begins her welcome letter  
to free subscribers.**

# Why Substack?

Substack is a “newsletter platform,” however, I like to think of it as more of host of letters to readers, providing writers with immediate and direct connection to readers in order to engage with them and provide information, insights, and entertainment they value ... *and to build a writing income stream based on that value.*

## Future of Substack

“In reality the new economy created by the platform just keeps getting bigger. Two years ago, fewer than 300,000 readers paid for a subscription on Substack. Now, 1.5 million do.

The Substack boom is more likely to be in its infancy than at its end, for a simple reason: it may provide the best answers to some of the perennial problems of journalism.

*Newstatesman*, January, 2023”

<https://www.newstatesman.com/politics/media/2023/05/substack-future-media>

On the evolutionary scale of speed and style, social media leaped into the bits and bytes world of the Internet to create speed, style, and a large dose of chaos. Turns out, however, that tiny bits of information, as well as disinformation, can be addictive but seldom nourishing. To soon, the happy blue bird turned X; algorithms brought more sales pitches than friends; and along with the high-dollar walls of traditional publishing, the wheels of innovation and evolution were set in motion.

**Enter Substack and Reader Letters.** These letters form the “long tail” of communication as they can be targeted to tiny interest groups and fans of individual writers. They tend to be informal and friendly and offer opportunities for experiences with authors and other readers.



# Substack FAQ

**What is Substack?** It is a friendly place where writers and readers mix and mingle, have conversations, share ideas, and find new friends.

**Is it like social media?** No and yes.

**NO** because while you go to Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and others, Substack comes to you in your email inbox ... but only from the writers you've invited in.

**YES** because Substack has a place called Notes where you can meet other writers in brief encounters.

**Is it a publisher?** No, it's a platform for writers and a cornucopia for readers.

In the book and magazine world, editors and publishers act as a funnel, determining what readers get to read.

Substack is an open, long tail world where any writer can write what they want (within certain guidelines) and readers can wander the halls finding the writers they want to read.

**Is there a fee?** No, Substack is free to both readers and writers. Most writers offer free content while reserving some offerings for paid readers. Substack takes ten percent of the income generated from paid offerings and writers pay a small transaction fee on each payment.

Substack is somewhat like a grand bazaar where readers and writers wander, a bit lost, then wind up finding treasures never imagined.

**Additional Reading:** *Substack: rejection letters be gone!*

**Everyone's Talking About Substack – But What Actually Is It?**, Isabelle Eyman with *The Everygirl*



# The Substack Promise

*We solemnly swear:*

**Ownership.** *You will always own your mailing list, subscriber payment information, and intellectual property. If you decide to leave us, you'll take it all with you.*

**A direct relationship with readers.** *Algorithms shouldn't decide who sees your work. On Substack, you control the relationship with your readers and the community you create with them through Chat and comments.*

**Audience growth.** *More than 40% of all new free subscriptions and 20% of paid subscriptions to Substacks now come from within our network.*

**Simple, easy-to-use tools.** *Zero tech knowledge is required to write on Substack. We take care of everything except the hard part (the writing itself).*

**A better financial model.** *No one likes to see ads, and very few independent writers can earn a reasonable income from them. With the subscription model, a few hundred paid subscribers can support a livelihood and a few thousand make it lucrative. Estimate your earnings here. If you're not ready to start a Substack with paid subscriptions, you can test the waters with Pledges.*

<https://read.substack.com/p/state-of-pledges>

Click below for Substack's Start Up Guide

**Setting up your Substack for the first time**

A step-by-step guide for writers, podcasters, and video creators



## Lesson #1: Make Friends

**How do you make friends when you can't meet** at the coffee shop, run into each other in the grocery store, or pick up the phone and catch up?

- **Make everything easy, simple, and friendly.**
- **Encourage interaction and acknowledge your readers when they comment or ask a question.**

Substack makes this easy with an automated system that responds when people subscribe ... or unsubscribe. Make sure everything that goes out from you is friendly.

One of the most powerful letters in the system is the letter people receive when they subscribe to your Substack. Here's a sampling of the greetings I've received in the past few days when I subscribed to several newsletters.

- Welcome to Writer Therapy! ... Everything is fine.\*
- Ready to Break the Rules?
- You're on the list! Hey there, Igniter!
- Welcome to the Tech Writers Stack ... It's good to have you here.
- Welcome to No Failure, Only Practice ... Thanks for signing up.
- Well, it's official. You're amazing. ... You're one of the brave ones, putting your work out into the world and sharing your magic online.
- Welcome Bibliophiles! It's good to have you here!
- You're on the list! You're receiving free posts from Agents and Books.
- Welcome to the 7am Novelist! It's good to have you with us.

**Which ones sound like how you want your readers to be greeted?**

**Imagine having a great conversation** with someone one week and then not hearing from them for three or four weeks. Then they show up again and, like before, you enjoy their company. They tell a story that inspires you, one you wonder about for days. You look forward to more conversations.

Time passes and you don't hear from them. Life goes on; you're busy with other things, you gradually forget the conversations. Then someone else comes along with an interesting story and says, "I really like talking with you ... let's set a coffee date ... would once a week work for you?"

You're enjoying getting to know her, so you agree and those coffee dates turn into a friendship.

**Consistency is the glue that builds relationship.**

Karen Cherry, *PubStack*, says, "Building a relationship with your subscribers is the key to success, especially if you plan to ask them for money one day. They ain't going to pay you if they don't know you, trust you and like your emails. So aim to post and email consistently."

**So, how often should you publish?** The general recommendation is once or twice a week. If you decide to do two a week, Sarah Fay, *Writers at Work*, recommends doing one long (around 800 words) and one short (around 400 words).

**When should you post?** MailerLite did an analysis of 2.5 million campaigns and came up with a lot of data available at this link. However, their bottom line was that consistency and quality were more important than timing.

**Think about what would work for your target audience.**



## Lesson #2: Be Consistent



## Lesson #3: Look for Collaboration

### How do you collaborate on Substack?

Here is an article with great information and ideas:

#### [How Substack writers can collaborate to grow](#)

One recent collaboration that has swept through Substack however, asked readers to post about a book that “made them.” As a matter of fact the whole Substack is made up of guest posts about this subject. That bit of creativity has paid off big time ... here’s a Note posted by M.E. Rothchild:

#### **“Greetings, my fellow Bibliophiles!**

Rather remarkably, there are now over 1500 of us in this little fledgling community. We were a ‘Featured Publication’ last week which has led us to triple in size in the span of just a few days. Not bad for a Substack that is only a month old!

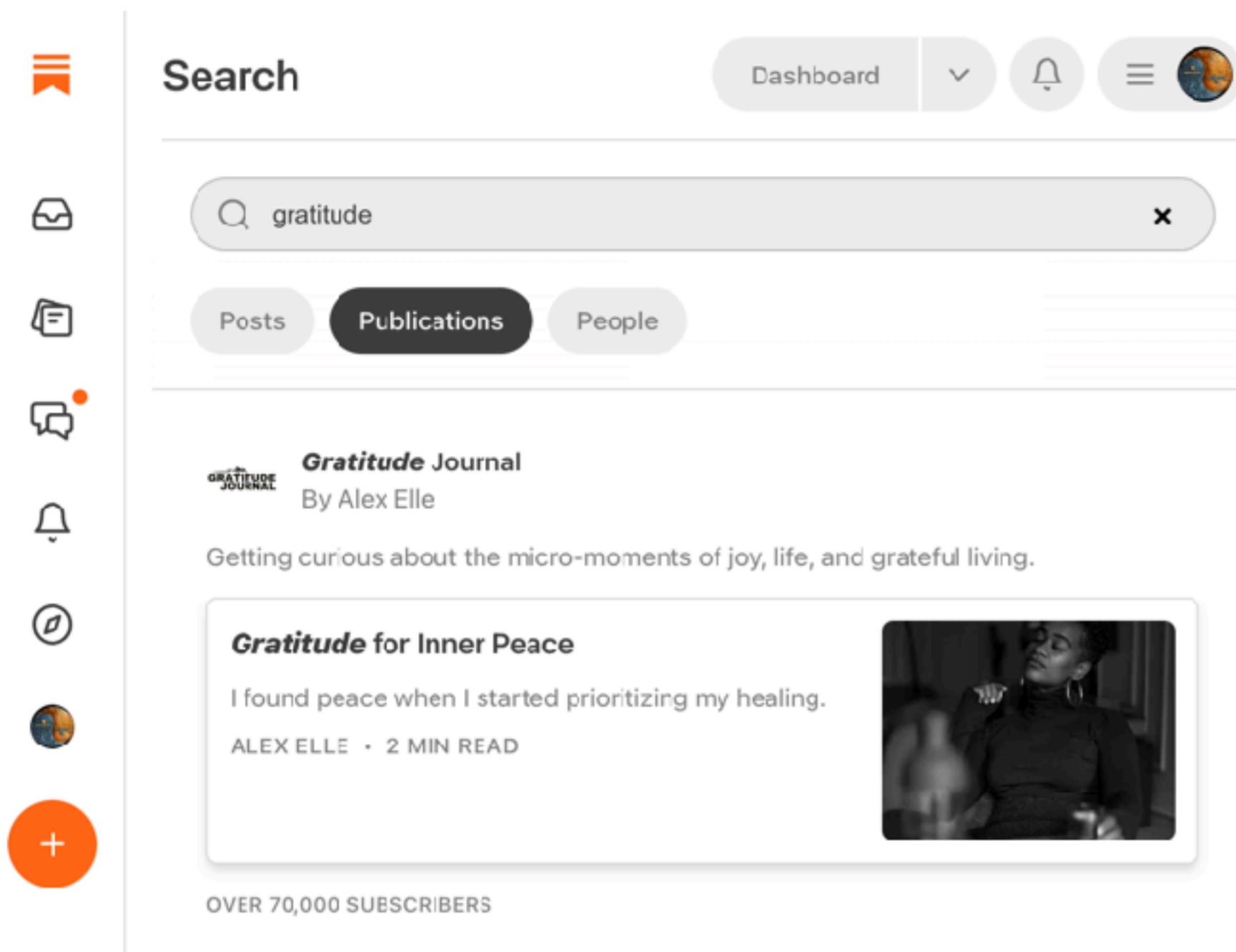
“To the newbies, I’d like to extend a warm welcome. Though our primary focus is on books, this newsletter is really about two things: (1) the transformative power of literature, and (2) celebrating the great writers to be found here on Substack.

“To give you an idea of schedule, we have a discussion thread every Monday, and every Thursday we feature a different guest writer, each discussing a book that played a pivotal role in their life. I have big plans in the works for some new community features too. My goal is provide more opportunities for the many brilliant writers among us to get their writing in front of a wider audience, but I’ll save that announcement for next week!

“So far we’ve featured three excellent guest posts, and if you missed last week’s I can recommend going back and reading “An Ordinary Man” from the excellent @Peter Nayland Kust. A brilliant example of how a book can become a lodestar despite not being the best, or a favourite, read.”

**BTW** ... if you’re interested in posting about a favorite book, [click here](#).

**The Substack search function can be** a critical part of developing your strategy. Here's an example ... when I searched "gratitude," my newsletter was the fourth to come up, while the one below was first. I immediately set off to find out why this newsletter on gratitude earned 70,000 subscribers.



**Suggestion:** make a list of key words related to your newsletter or post and search on each one. Read through each listing to see who's writing in the same area you are and what their focus is. Is there an opportunity for collaboration? Who are the people writing? What can you learn from them and from their Substacks?

**Make searching a habit.**

**Do Now #1:  
Search  
Substack**



**Do Now #2:  
Join  
Office Hours**

## From On Substack:

**“By shifting from “writing for an audience” to having a conversation with readers, writers can unlock inspiration, motivation, and new growth opportunities.”**



Substack’s success depends on your success. It’s a positive loop that keeps them motivated to keep making the system better for all writers and readers. To make this system work, they need to hear from us, so they created the somewhat weekly Office Hours, a place where we gather to ask questions, brag about accomplishments, meet each other, and generally share our experiences.

Office Hours operates as a long thread and can feel chaotic, however, it’s a great place to meet people and can be a life saver if you have questions ... which will mainly be answered by other writers. I have found great writers there and almost always wind up with a few new subscribers and a few new writers to follow.

Office Hours is where you’ll hear great success stories and how other writers have dealt with their challenges.

**Don’t miss it!**

## NOTES - The official word from Substack:

“Notes helps the work of writers and creators travel through the Substack network for new readers to discover.

“You can share links, images, quick thoughts, and snippets from Substack posts. As well as being lightweight and fun, we hope that Notes will help writers grow their audience and revenue.

“Notes lives in a tab beside Inbox at [substack.com](https://substack.com) and in Substack’s mobile apps. **Unlike an Inbox post, a Notes post does not get sent to subscribers by email.**”

**I initially resisted Notes** because I had missed that last highlighted sentence. Now I think of Notes as being the communication channel that runs between writers and readers. Somewhat like our own social media channel.


It’s a great place to ask questions. When I asked people where they were getting help about Substack and writing in general, people sent their recommendations that resulted in the list mentioned on page 30.

It’s also a place to announce a new post (although be wise with this ... it’s not a billboard space ... it’s a conversation space.) Also, the notes you make show up on your own home page and you can choose to have them show on your navigation bar or not. I choose to show them. Here’s my nav bar.



It’s okay to ask for support ... and also be supportive and make friends.

**Do Now #3:  
Use Notes**



[Click here](#)  
to see the  
entire  
Substack  
Strategy  
Series.

Begin #1:  
Develop  
Your  
Strategy

## Strategy comes from questions ... lots of questions:

**Questions of yourself ...** What do I want to write about?  
How much time do I have to invest? Who would be my audience?  
What value could I bring to them? How much would they pay for that value?

**Questions of your audience ...** What do they want/need to read or understand? How much time do they have to invest in reading and learning? How would what I write fit into their day or work life or social life?

Perhaps the most important and least often asked question comes from Melanie Newfield who writes *The Turnstone* and says, “I believe that the science behind important issues should be accessible to everyone.”

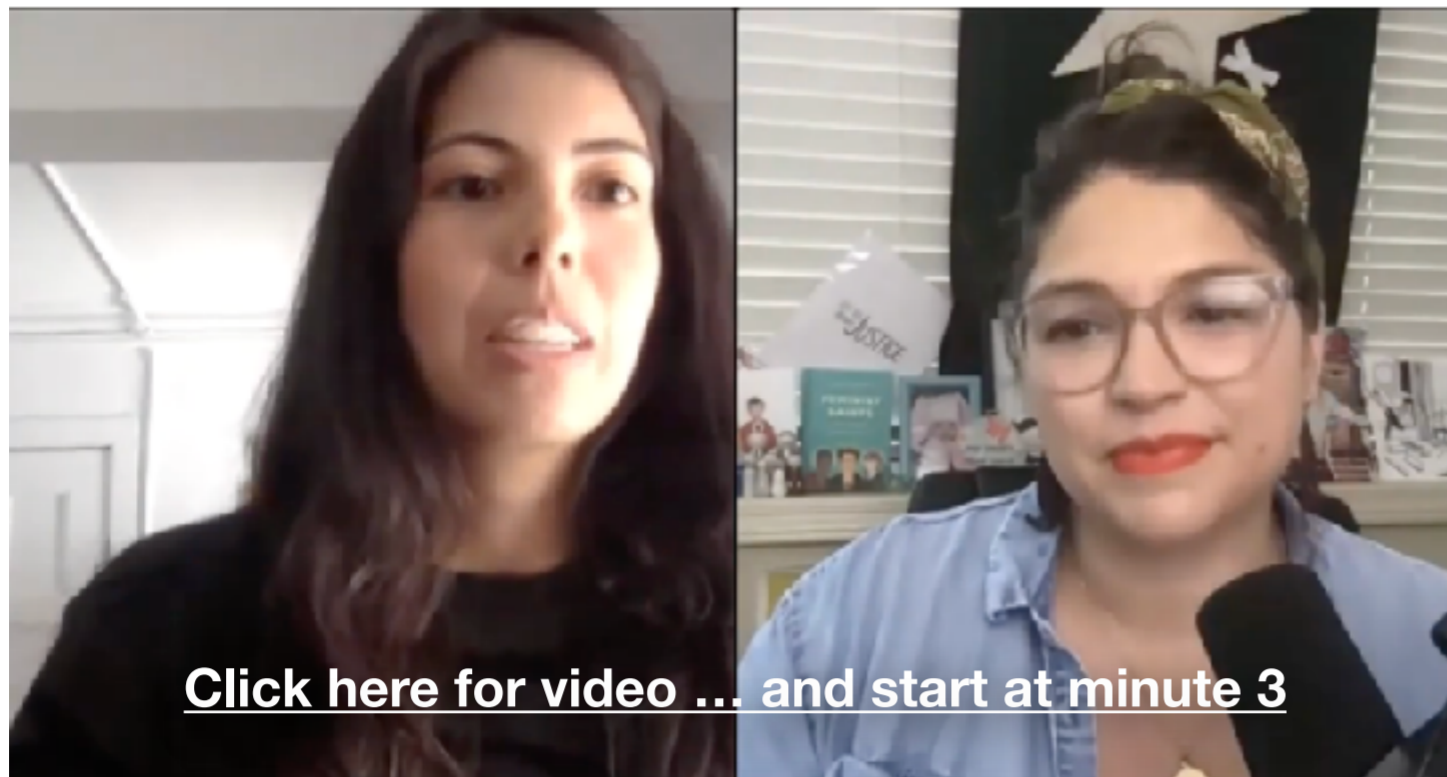
She commented on a series Substack published on strategy: “One thing I learned writing for work in the public service is to ask yourself the question **"how does this make my readers feel?"** and **"what do you want your readers to feel?"**”

“That might seem like a strange question for a bureaucrat, but it's actually so important. A lot of people in my area - technical experts - stuffed their writing with words that they felt made them look smarter, but confused their readers - effectively making them feel stupid.

“So I set myself the goal that anyone reading my writing would feel smart. This has carried through to my Substack. I've asked one of the people who reviews my articles before publication to tell me if there's any sentence that she has to read twice - because you don't feel smart if you have to re-read something to understand it.”

**Effective communication is understandable.**





[Click here for video ... and start at minute 3](#)



**The *Swipe Up* : A Newsletter from Your Internet Friend**

By Erin H Moon

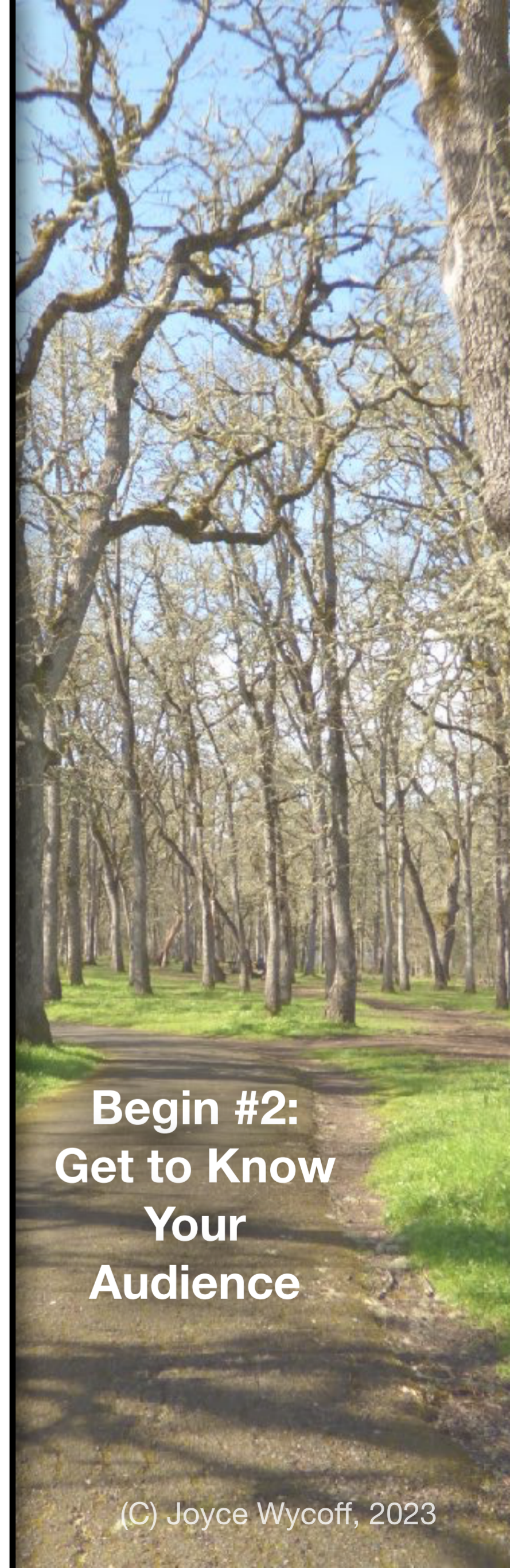
Over 17,000 subscribers

The world wide web, handcrafted with love.

We (Substack) invited Erin Moon, author of The Swipe Up, to host a workshop about how she got to know her subscribers and built a community around her newsletter. Erin originally created The Swipe Up, which she describes as “a newsletter from your internet friend,” as an easy way to share links. Read on for Erin’s insights.

### Takeaways:

- **Survey your audience.** *If you don’t know who your readers are, reach out to them and ask!*
- **Encourage conversation.** *Start discussions with your readers and keep the conversation going.*
- **Let your community shine.** *Step back and let your readers take center stage.*
- **Be vulnerable with your readers.** *Show authenticity, even when you make mistakes.*



**Begin #2:  
Get to Know  
Your  
Audience**



## Begin #3: Create Your Identity

**Substack letters are personal, from you,** the writer, delivered into the inbox of your readers. Every element that the reader sees helps build their mindset of who you are and what you bring to them.

You should know what identity you want to project ... friendly, funny, curious, scientific, spiritual, political, worldly, academic, artistic, generous, grateful, approachable, sophisticated, imaginative, fact-based, adventurous, confident, aesthetic ... or ... ?

There are **four major identity elements** on Substack that need to hold the core values of your newsletter:

- **Your title** ... a key to your identity and the purpose of your newsletter. (Best practices are part of the exercise on page 22.)
- **Your Bio-profile** ... Your name and a brief overview of who you are in 1 or 2 sentences. This is not a resume nor a biography. It is a glimpse to help readers know who you are.
- **The brief description of your newsletter** ... brief is the key word and it should give a sense of the value you bring to your readers.
- **Your Home page** ... your “look” ... primarily images and post titles that might draw readers into reading more of what you have written.

The categories you choose when you set up your newsletter could be considered a part of your identity; however, we’re leaving them for the future.

Each of these four elements will be featured on a **Best Practices** page.

A photograph of a forest with many trees, some with moss on their branches, and a path leading through them. The trees are mostly bare, suggesting late autumn or winter. The path is paved and leads into the distance. The sky is blue.

# Next stop: 5 Es & Best Practices

## Entice - Enter - Engage - Exit - Extend

Every Substack element and feature can be related to this model to help you understand why you are doing it and how it will help you reach your goals.

**Entice ...** Before someone can get excited about your newsletter, they have to know you exist. This first step is about helping them find you. **Main elements:** Categories, Title, Bio profile, Brief description, Search Tags. Think inside Substack as well as externally.

**Enter ...** Once someone has found you, you have about 20 seconds to invite them in. Your front door has to telegraph who and what you are ... and, most importantly, what you are offering THEM. **Main elements:** Navigation bar, About page, Bio profile, services promised, photos.

**Engage ...** Your reader has tip-toed into your space. Make them feel at home and welcomed. Treat them like a friend. Invite them to look around. Offer them wonders and refreshments. **Main elements:** Welcome email, Email Header/Reminder, question, service delivered, index pages, headlines/skimmability, graphics/photos, email schedule, Free/Paid, Home page.

**Exit ...** When it's time for them to leave, thank them for coming, send them home with a lagniappe, an unexpected gift which expresses your generosity. Invite them to come again. **Main elements:** calls to action, Buttons, Likes, Comments, wrap up.

**Extend ...** Send them off with a "by the way," as if to a friend, gently offer them more benefits, possible enhancements if they become paid subscribers or share with their friends. **Main elements:** Recommendations, Sharing.



### 5 E's Marketing Model

## From On Substack:

Your welcome page helps turn new visitors into free and paid subscribers. After investigating, we determined that showing the number of subscribers on a publication's welcome page can drive a +10% lift in free and paid subscriptions.

We also know this is a sensitive topic for writers, so we've made this text customizable. For any publication with more than 1,000 total subscribers, we've updated the Welcome page to include your total number of subscribers.

You can always adjust or hide your subscriber number in your Settings.

**NOTE:** You can see your Welcome Page by adding /welcome at the end of your address. Example: EverythingIsAmazing.substack.com/welcome.



## Everything Is Amazing

A newsletter about seeing more, feeling more, and asking better questions. Curiosity makes everything better - but can it be \*learned\*? Let's find out.

By Mike Sowden  · Over 18,000 subscribers

Let me read it first! >



Entice:  
Welcome Page

## Good titles are memorable and sticky.

The world is filled with titles ... books, magazines, newsletters, songs, movies ... wouldn't it be nice if your title were as sticky, as memorable ... as *The Wizard of Oz* ... *Lord of the Rings* ... *To Kill a Mockingbird* ... *The Color Purple*. Think about your favorite books or movies and see if they give you a clue for a title.

Good titles also help readers understand the purpose of your newsletter and know what to expect.

For a fascinating story about how author Jeff Goins chose the name for his Substack ... ***The Ghost*** ... [read it here](#). (As a matter of fact, read a lot of his stuff; he is powerfully thought provoking about writing and life.)

Try out your possible new names on friends ... especially if you have one who is marketing oriented.

Think about how one of your typical readers might respond to the possible names.

Domain name. It's not mandatory but it's always a good idea to see if the title is available. I also like to run it through amazon, google, and Substack to make sure it's not already in use.

Convertkit, a competitor of Substack [offers ideas here](#) including some useful formulas:

**Formula #1: The [adjective] [noun].**

**Formula #2: Puns and play-on-words ... could be cutesy.**

**Formula #3: Your perspective ... might be limiting.**

**Formula #4: Phrases with a twist ... challenging to do well.**

**Formula #5: Your name ... if known or a brand.**

Live with your possible titles for a few days if possible. Often they will collapse on their own ... or begin to shine even brighter.



**Best Practice:  
Titles**

**With all the ideas from the previous page**, look at the following list of actual Substacks (some big and some small.) Pick 5 that sound interesting and see if they suggest revisions. Then try to guess the title with the most subscribers. (The answer is at the bottom, upside down. Don't peek.)

**Unschool for Writers**  
**Creative Fuel**  
**Non-Boring History**  
**Brent and Michael Are Going Places**  
**The Hungry Artist**

**The Art of Unintended Consequences**  
**Words of the world**  
**Raising Gen Alpha**  
**The Curiosity Cabinet**  
**Unfixed**

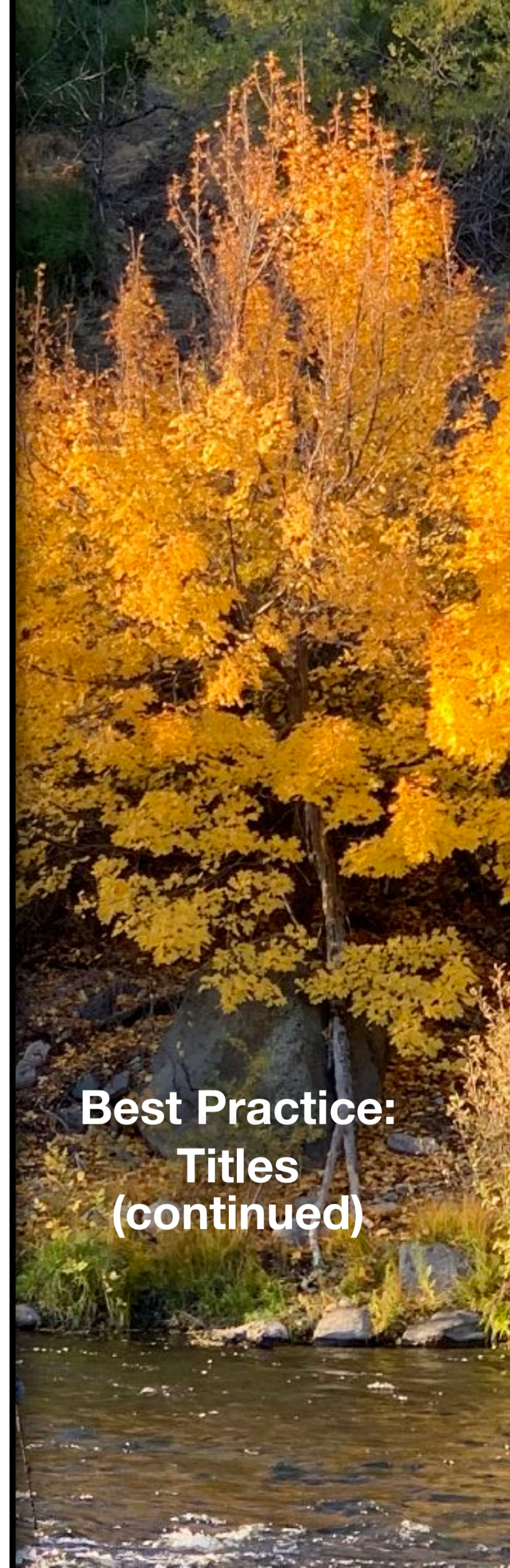
**Never Stop Learning**  
**AI Supremacy**  
**Eat Like a Farmer**  
**Everything is Amazing**  
**Stunning Sentences**

**Art of Noticing**  
**The Author Stack**  
**The Isolation Journals**  
**Enchanted in America**  
**Oldster**

Revise your possible titles and then practice saying them out loud as if you were introducing each to a friend::

I write \_\_\_\_\_(title);  
it's about \_\_\_\_\_.

The Isolation Journals  
125,000 subscribers



**Best Practice:  
Titles  
(continued)**



# Best Practice: Titles & Brief Descriptions

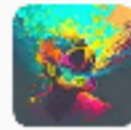
Readers can search Substack by newsletter title and see the brief description.. These examples can help you see how other writers handle this element.



**Kindness Magnet** 

By Heather Brebaugh

The #1 newsletter with science-based kindness habits you can use. Join us to improve your health, relationships, opportunities, and happiness. Now in 57 countries.



**Deplatformable Newsletter**

By **PAUL MACKO**

Subscribe to get actionable small business marketing lessons that will get you new subscribers, customers and supporters. Not the worst way to spend a couple of minutes today.



**Sarah Bessey's Field Notes**

By Sarah Bessey

The popular newsletter from writer Sarah Bessey with exclusive essays, the books worth reading, good things, special devotional series, theology deep dives, community conversations, and so much more.



**Gratitude Journal**

By *Alex Elle*

Getting curious about the micro-moments of joy, life, and grateful living.



**Noted**

By Jillian Hess

tips & tricks from the world's best *note* takers



**The House of Beasts & Vines**

By *Martin Shaw*

Fresh writing and audio from one of the great contemporary storytellers



**The Isolation Journals** with Suleika Jaouad

By Suleika Jaouad

A newsletter for people seeking to transform life's interruptions into creative grist



**Readers can search Substack by author name** or the name of the newsletter. These examples can help you see how other writers handle this element.



**George Saunders**

@georgesaunder1 • Writes Story Club with George Saunders  
Writer, Teacher.



**Sue Ferrera**

@waywardyogini • Writes Tales of a Wayward Yogini  
Here you will read about life and aging---accepting the inevitable while still holding onto joy ---with tools and inspiration for your journey.



**Tom Asacker**

@iamkeats  
Creator of "I am Keats" and author of "Your Brain on Story" and "The Business of Belief."



**Anita Perez Ferguson**

@anitaperezferguson • Writes Diverse Voices - Bravo!  
From the classroom to the White House, my focus is diversity. My fiction speaks to Latinos who, like me, long to see their faces and stories in history.



**Austin Kleon**

@austinkleon • Writes Austin Kleon  
I'm a writer who draws. Author of STEAL LIKE AN ARTIST and other bestsellers.



**Heather Cox Richardson**

@heathercoxrichardson • Writes Letters from an American and 1 other publication  
I'm a history professor interested in the contrast between image and reality in American politics. I believe in American democracy, despite its frequent failures.



**Mark VanLaeys**

@markvanlaeys • Writes Us AND Them  
We humans are filled with quirks and nuance - but we are way more alike than different. Dispelling the MYTH that it's "US against Them" may well be our Saving Grace.



**Best Practice:  
Bio Profiles -  
names**

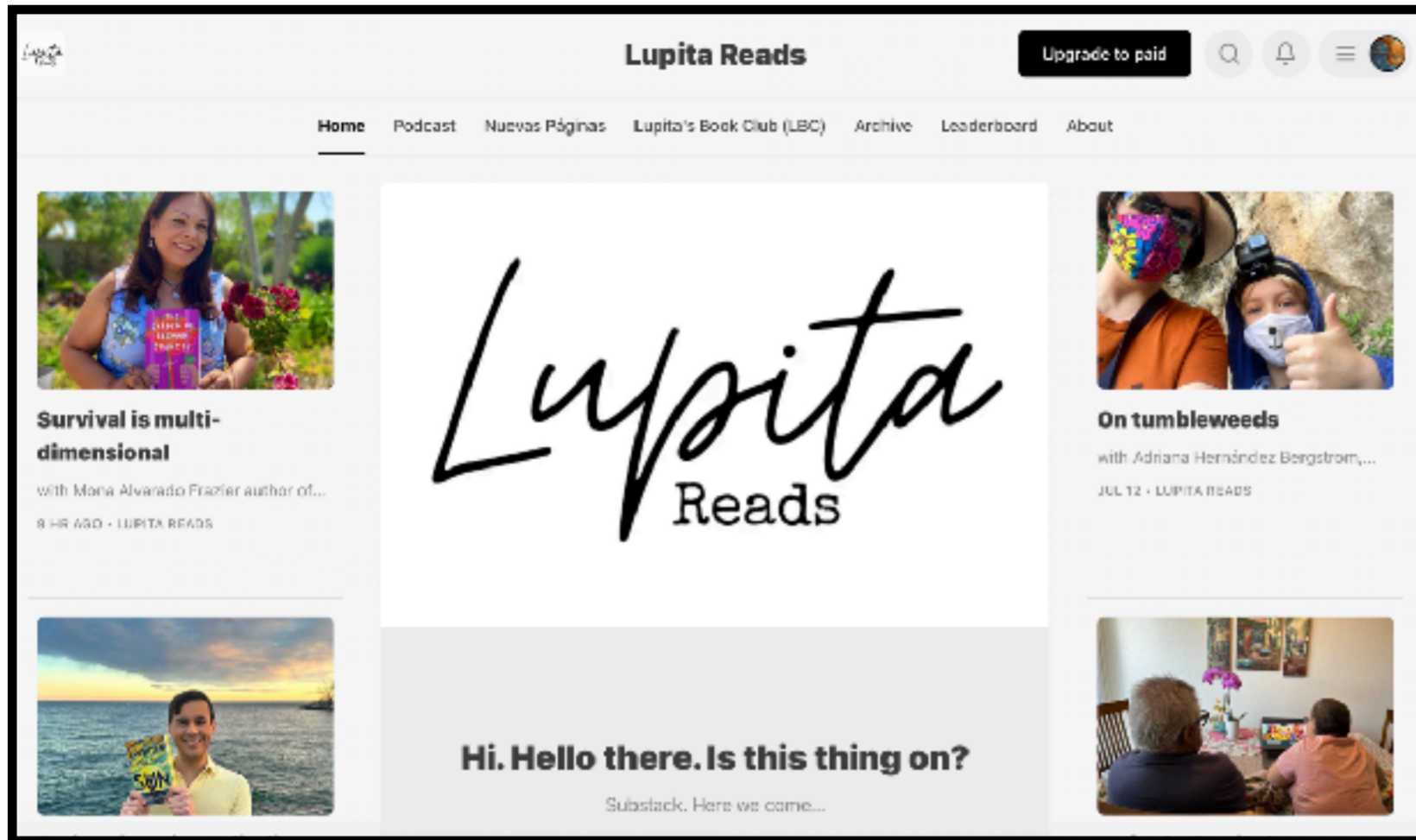


**Substack provides a variety** of ways to customize home pages. You might want to check out ***The Substack Soiree***, which will offer graphic workshops and resources.

The screenshot shows the home page of a Substack publication. At the top, the title "Marissa Rothkopf-Bakes: The Secret Life of Cookies" is displayed in a bold, black font, with a red "Upgrade to paid" button to its right. Below the title is a navigation bar with links for "Home", "Chat", "Archive", and "About". The main content area features a large article titled "Buckeye Brownies" with a photo of the brownies. The article text reads: "Everything's better in brownie form, even Ohio's famous peanut butter and chocolate treat". Below the article is a date "MAY 26 - MARISSA ROTHKOPF" and social sharing icons. At the bottom of the page, there are tabs for "New", "Top", and "Community". A search icon and a profile picture are also visible. Below the main article, there is a section for "Double Ginger and Honey Chocolate Chip Cookies" with a photo of a cookie and the text "These aren't for Keith. But everyone else will enjoy them." and "MAY 23 - MARISSA ROTHKOPF". To the right, there is a profile card for "Marissa Rothkopf-Bakes: The Secret Life of Cookies" with a description: "The online space for The Secret Life of Cookies podcast, cookie, cake, pie and savory recipes, all things chocolate chip cookie, kitchen history and lore, kitchen gadget and tech reviews. Extra super-".

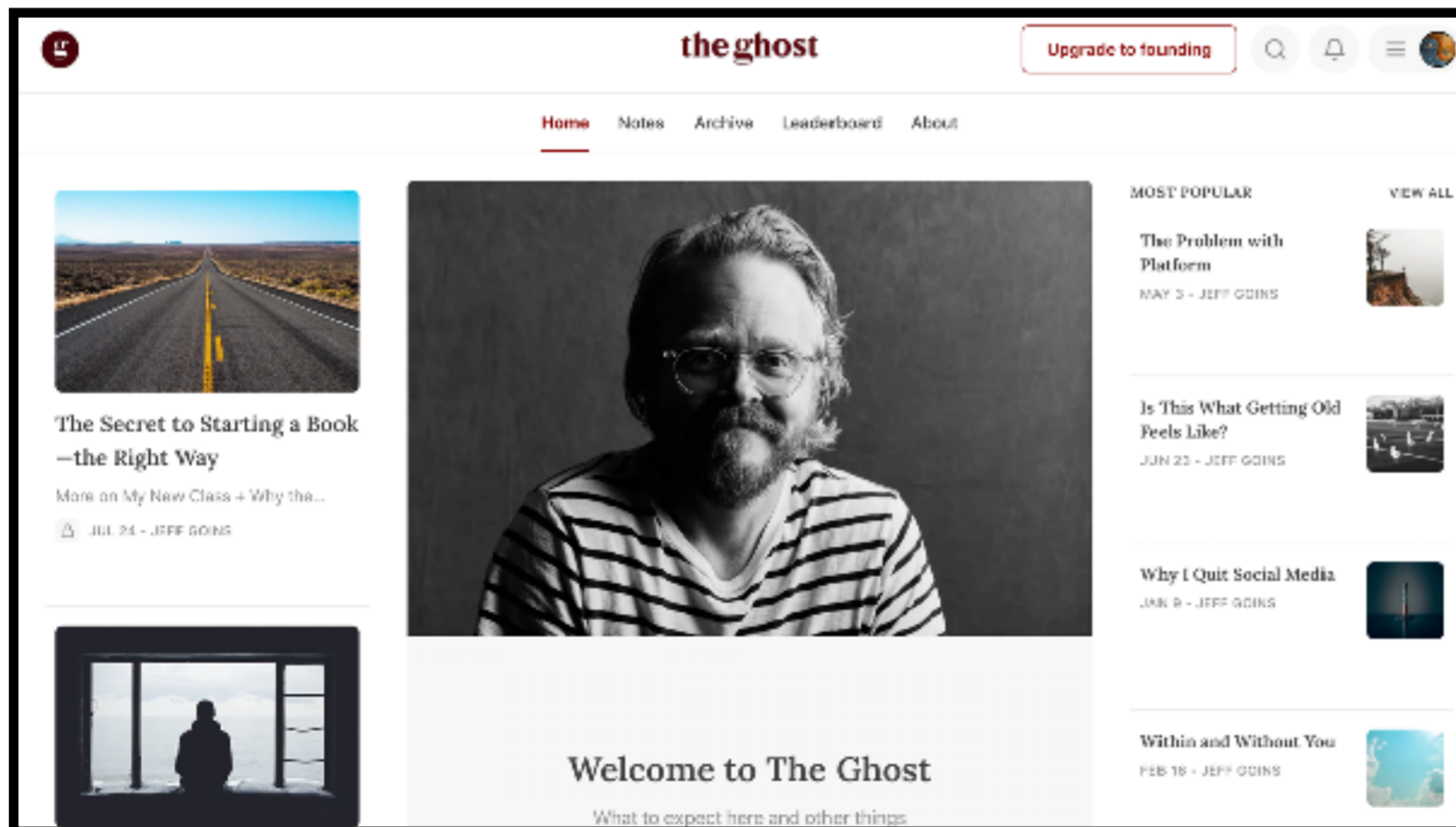
The screenshot shows the home page of a Substack publication titled "Letters of Note". At the top, the title "Letters of Note" is displayed in a cursive font, with a red "Upgrade to paid" button to its right. Below the title is a navigation bar with links for "Home", "Submissions", "Books", "Diaries", "Instagram", "Twitter", "Archive", and "About". The main content area features three article cards. The first card has a purple and pink abstract image and is titled "Is nature a gigantic cat?" with the subtitle "An electrifying letter from Nikola Tesla" and "JUL 21 - SHAUN USHER". The second card has a black and white photo of an older man reading a letter and is titled "What are your favourite letters?". The third card has a photo of an astronaut on the moon and is titled "Its true beauty was that it worked" with the subtitle "A letter of thanks from Neil Armstrong" and "JUL 14 - SHAUN USHER". At the bottom right, there is a photo of three men in suits.

**Best Practices:  
Home Pages**



On Substack describes 3 key ways to customize your home page.

[\(Click Here\)](#)



Best Practice:  
Home Pages  
(continued)



## My View ...

New writers and readers are flocking into Substack. My guess is that their focus will be developing the platform and if there ever is a 24/7 support center, it is light years away.

That's the bad news and the good ... good because the lack of a hand holding support system may be the very reason this has become such a supportive, collaborative community of writers. When I say I love Substack, it only partially means the corporation and the management and administration of this operation. It really means all of us, the writers and readers coming together in such a generous and creative environment.

I am frequently gobsmacked by the new ways of using the system are being invented by us ... even when I don't know how to borrow a new idea, I know someone here will. Without that confidence in this system of camaraderie, I might become terminally frustrated.

This Field Guide and the focus on researching and posting about the hidden corners of Substack is fun and exciting. It feeds my curiosity and connects me to so many of you.

There are many ideas kicking around for smoothing the learning curve for all of us. (Six more Field Guides are already on the drawing board linking to the 5 Es Marketing Model).

I would love to hear your questions, ideas and suggestions. Please email me at [jwycoff@gratitudemojo.com](mailto:jwycoff@gratitudemojo.com).

And, by the way ... special thanks to Annika Hansteen-Izora, who writes at ***Annika Is Dreaming***. Her Summer Field Guide workshop prompted this whole idea of a field guide and made this process so much more fun. **Joyce**



# Field Guide Schedule

**8/23 Field Guide #2: Entice ...** Before someone can get excited about your newsletter, they have to know you exist. This first step is about helping them find you. **Main elements:** Categories, Title, Bio profile, Brief description, Search Tags.

**9/27 Field Guide #3: Enter ...** Once someone has found you, you have about 20 seconds to invite them in. Your front door has to telegraph who and what you are ... and, most importantly, what you are offering THEM. **Main elements:** Navigation bar, About page, Bio profile, Services promised, photos, Home Pages.

**10/25 Field Guide #4: Engage ...** Your reader has tip-toed into your space. Make them feel at home and welcomed. Treat them like a friend. Invite them to look around. Offer them wonders and refreshments. **Main elements:** Welcome email, Email Header/Reminder, Question, Service delivered, index pages, headlines/skimmability, graphics/photos, Email Schedule, Free/Paid.

**11/25 Field Guide #5: Exit ...** When it's time for them to leave, thank them for coming, send them home with a lagniappe, an unexpected gift which expresses your generosity. Invite them to come again. **Main elements:** Calls to action, Buttons, Likes, Comments, Wrap up.

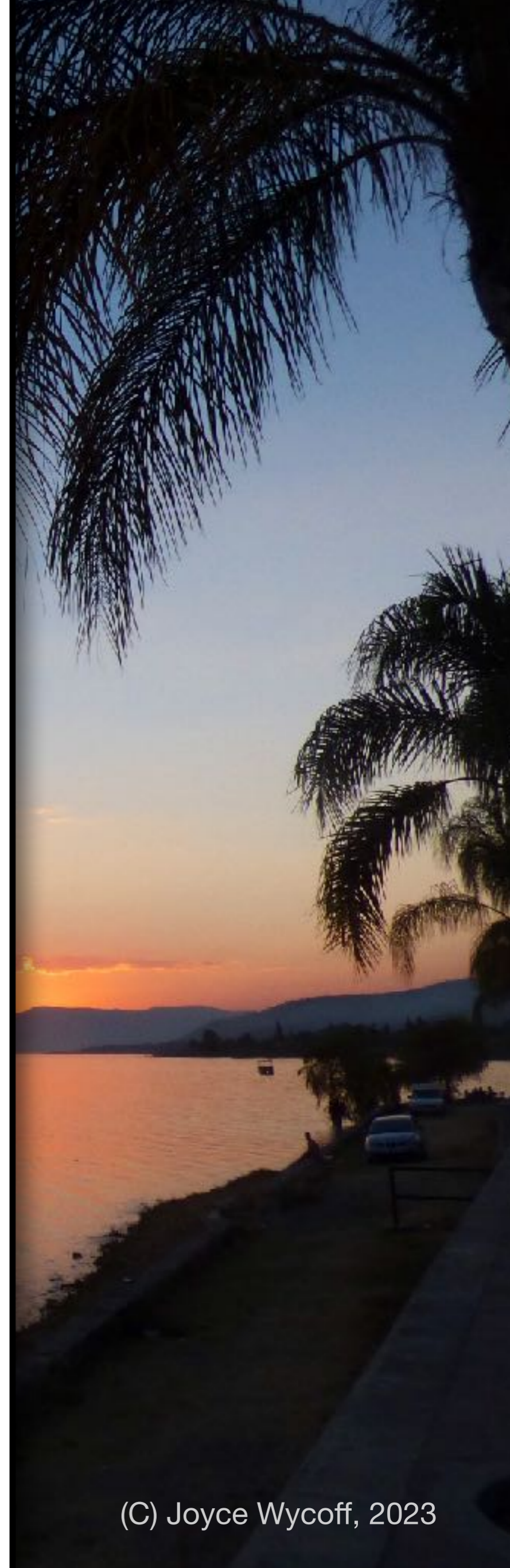
**12/27 Field Guide #6: Extend ...** Send them off with a "by the way," as if to a friend, gently offer them more benefits, possible enhancements if they become paid subscribers or share with their friends. **Main elements:** Recommendations, Sharing.

## Other Ideas:

**Periodic Zoom meetings ...** sharing and Q&A

**Interviews with marketing and system experts.**

**Substack Explorer's Club ...** not sure what this is but I like the sound of it.



# Substack Guides

## [Substack Guides List \(Click link for list\)](#)

All of these writers have been recommended by others. The the ones shown below are focused on Substack, the rest, shown only on the list, are in alphabetical order by first name. I'm happy to reorganize when I have more information about the primary focus of these authors. Just let me know. [jwycoff@gratitudemojo.com](mailto:jwycoff@gratitudemojo.com).



### Writers at Work with **Sarah Fay**

By Writers at Work with **Sarah Fay**

Master the art (and business) of being a writer on Substack, including how to produce your best work and get paid (very) well to do it—from an author at HarperCollins, professor at Northwestern, and lover of all things Substack



### Things Worth Knowing with **Farrah Storr**

By **Farrah Storr**

The secret thoughts, conversations and lives that women keep...by the ex-editor of ELLE and Cosmopolitan. (Plus, access to my invite-only writing group)



### The Author Stack

By **Russell Nohelty**

Helping create a sustainable path forward for authors to build businesses that allow them to thrive and lives that light them up inside.



### Before and After the Book Deal

By **Courtney Maum**

Publishing tips from an author who's made mistakes (so you don't have to)



### Creatively Conscious

By **Claire Venus**

Your Creativity loves Courage! Updates from a slow-lived life on the Northumberland Coast, thoughtful journal prompts & tools to help enhance your creativity & wellbeing. Home to monthly 'Notes from the Sea' & weekly 'Stay Creative on Substack' posts.

## IMHO ... this could be better

I'm relatively new to the Substack world, but have walked through the wide world long enough to have great chunks of my ego already chipped away. I'm often wrong, but that's okay because sometimes it prompts a useful conversation.

I was delighted when I received Rebecca Makkai's free subscriber welcome letter and saw this opening:

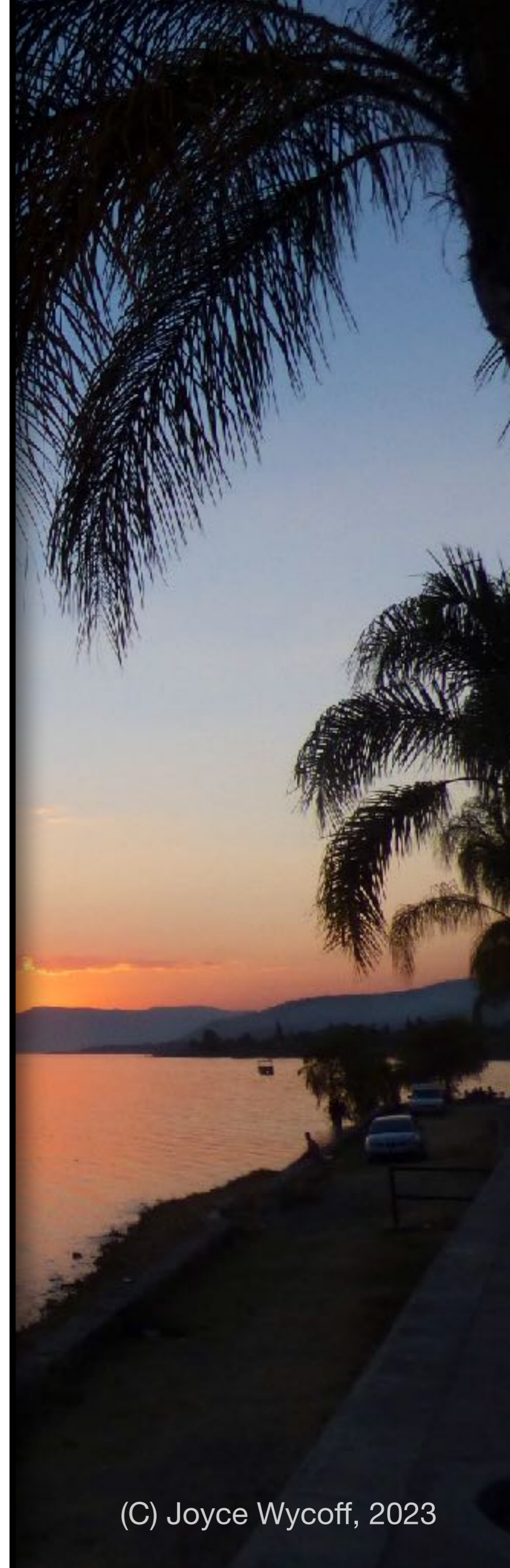
*You're in the clubhouse! I hope you brought sandwiches!*

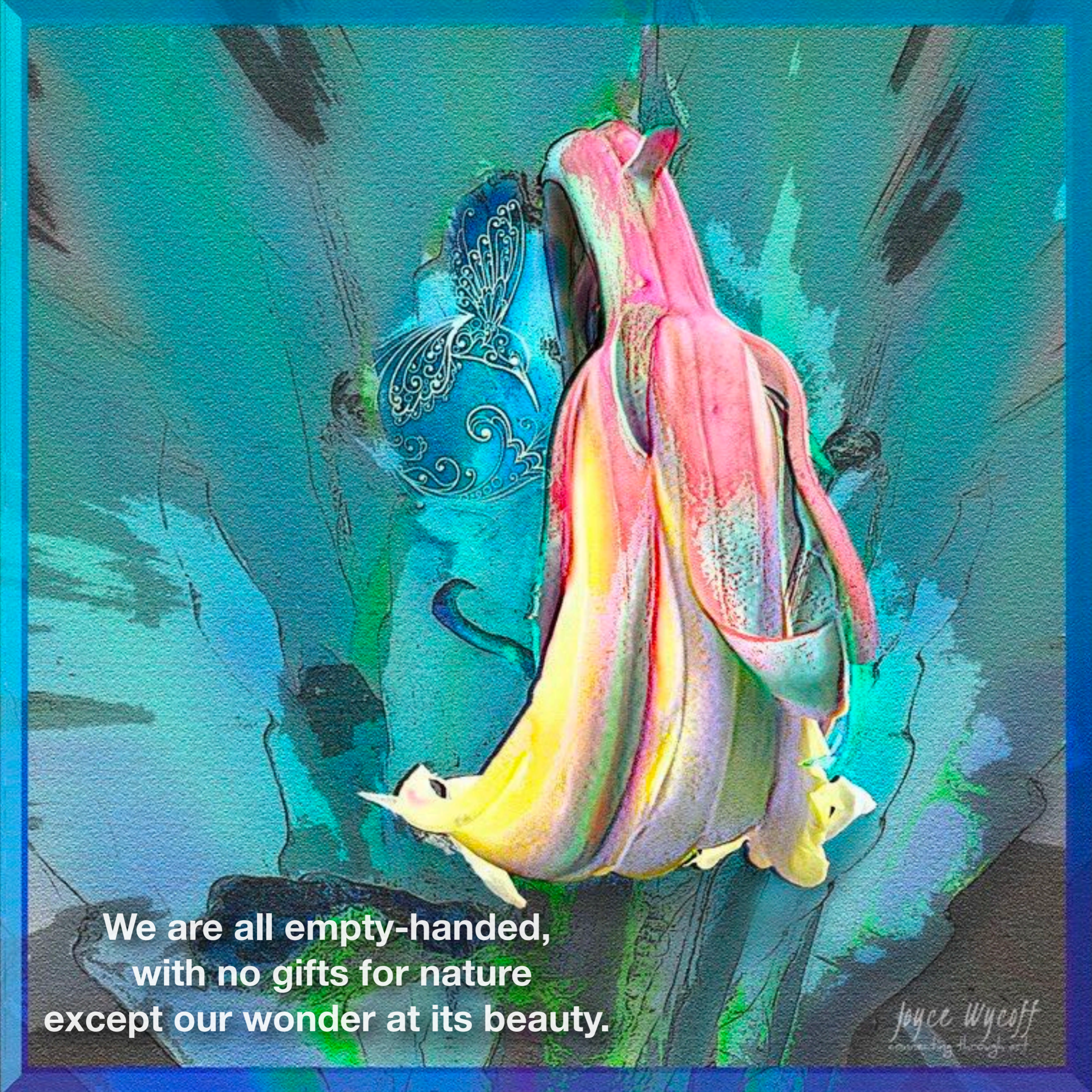


This graphic and her words made me truly feel welcomed. I was ready to play and meet these people. Unfortunately, it stopped there, followed by only a few bits and pieces about the process.

Rebecca is highly recommended as a writing guide and offers a lot to her 8,000 subscribers. However, I felt like I had missed the party.

It made me think about the price of a click. While it seems inconsequential, clicking to open an email sets up an expectation ... a potential for a connection, a feeling of anticipation. The opening words and image heightened the playful sense of something to come. But there was no follow through ... no "here's who I am ... let's be friends." ***What do you think?***





**We are all empty-handed,  
with no gifts for nature  
except our wonder at its beauty.**

*Joyce Wycoff*  
connecting through art