

Design Your Substack Structure

This worksheet is not about getting everything perfect.
It's about getting your Substack organized and clear for both
you and your reader.

You do not need a complex structure.
You simply need an intentional one.

What You'll Leave With Today:

- A decision about whether you need sections
- A clean tag framework
- A simple homepage vision
- A plan to move forward with

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Step 1: What Do You Actually Write About?

What are the 3–5 recurring themes of your Substack?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Are Any of These Truly Separate Content Streams?

- | Yes | No | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| ☐ | ☐ | Would someone reasonably want to receive one but not the others? |
| ☐ | ☐ | Are these different formats (podcast vs essays)? |
| ☐ | ☐ | Are these different audiences? |

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Step 2: Do You Need Sections?

Sections Are for Subscription Control: Sections allow readers to toggle content on or off. If you don't need that feature, you may not need sections.

Circle the statement that fits best:

- My content is cohesive and related → likely no sections needed.
- I have clearly distinct streams → consider sections.
- I mix formats (e.g., podcast + essays) → consider sections.
- I'm unsure → start with tags only.

If Yes to Sections:

List possible section names and short descriptions for those sections (max 3).

1.

2.

3.

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Step 3: Designing Your Tag Framework

Tags Organize Your Homepage: Tags are not hashtags. They are category labels that shape your homepage and archive.

From your themes, what broad tags make sense?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.

Tag Brainstorming Ideas

- A weekly column
- A recurring feature
- A long-term topic series
- Essays vs Videos could also be tags
- A series of evergreen content that you want all newcomers to be able to easily access
- Your Paid content - to make it easier for readers to find

Keep It Sustainable

- Are any tags too specific?
- Will you realistically use this tag 5+ times?
- Could two tags be merged?
- Will you remember to use this consistently?

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Bonus: Example Substack Structures

Example 1: Personal Essay Substack where a writer shares reflective essays about life, relationships, growth, and faith.

Core Themes:	Possible Tag System:	Why This Works:	What They Didn't Do:
• Personal reflections • Emotional growth • Relationships • Faith	• Reflection • Emotional Healing • Relationships • Faith • Letters	• Broad categories • Each tag can hold many posts • No hyper-specific tags • Sustainable long-term	✗ No tags like: • "Tuesday Thoughts" • "Summer 2026" • "Healing After Divorce Part 1"

Example 2: Podcast + Writing Substack

Scenario:	Sections:	Tags:	Why This Works:
Writer publishes: • Podcast episodes • Written essays • Occasional announcements	• Podcast • Essays	• Leadership • History • Myth Busting • Interviews	• Subscribers can opt out of podcast emails. • Tags group themes across both formats.

Example 3: Simple Beginner Substack (No Sections)

Scenario:	Clean Tag System:	Why This Works:
New writer exploring one broad topic (e.g., business growth). No need for sections yet.	• Strategy • Mindset • Case Studies • Tools	• Easy to remember • Flexible • Sustainable • Homepage can sort by these tags later

Notice how none of these examples use more than 3 sections or 7 tags.
Structure should feel supportive, not exhausting.
If your system feels complicated, simplify it.

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Step 5: Homepage Vision

What Should a New Visitor Understand in 10 Seconds?

- What is your primary theme?
- What do you want featured?
- What should feel most important?
- What should feel supportive or secondary?

Consider sketching the homepage layout on paper or in a drawing program. Don't forget your Hero section at the top, followed by whichever tags or sections you want displayed on your homepage.

Step 6: Future-Proofing

Design for 2 years from now. Ask yourself:

- Will readers be able to find older posts easily?
- Will your tags still make sense after 50 posts?
- Does your structure allow growth?
- Are you overcomplicating this?

Your structure does not need to be complex to be effective.

Clarity builds trust.

Simplicity is sustainable.

You can evolve this over time.