The Gift-First Newsletter Outline

A free template from NVS | Make It Work Monday

A newsletter people keep opening gives them something before it asks for anything. This outline builds that in: every issue carries one small gift for the reader, alongside your mission news and, when it fits, an ask.

Use it as a starting point, not a rulebook. Your organization's priorities come first; adjust the order, drop sections, or stretch the gift into a whole issue when it makes sense.

Before you write

Answer these five questions first. They take ten minutes and save hours of rewriting.

1. Who's the audience? Monthly donors, lapsed donors, volunteers, or everyone? Picture one real person on the list.

2. What's the one thing this issue should do? Thank, inform, invite, or ask? Pick one main job.

3. What's the gift? Choose it first, not last. It shapes the tone of everything else.

4. Is there an ask? A direct donation appeal, a soft invitation, or none this time.

5. What's the rhythm? Monthly or quarterly works for most. Consistency matters more than frequency.

The outline

Six sections, in reading order. The whole issue should take three to four minutes to read.

1. Warm opener

What it does	Greets the reader like a person, not a list
Length	2–3 sentences
Tip	Write it in a staff member's voice and sign it with a real name. Mention the season or something timely.

2. The gift

What it does	Gives value with no strings attached
Length	50–150 words or one image
Tip	Put it near the top. Label it so readers learn to look for it: "This month's gift" or "Something for you."

3. Impact story

What it does	Shows the mission through one person, animal, place or moment
Length	150–250 words + photo
Tip	One story, told well, beats five statistics. Credit the donor: "Because of you…"