

AIS Newsletter Manager

Setup & Instruction Guide

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Complete guide to installing, configuring, and operating AI-powered newsletters from WordPress, including Stripe billing, n8n workflow integration, test sends, and the AIS Hosted Newsletter Engine.

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1. Overview

The **AIS Newsletter Manager** is a WordPress plugin that lets you create, manage, and deliver AI-generated newsletters directly from your WordPress admin. Each newsletter is configured with a topic, branding colors, logo, and schedule — the paired n8n automation engine handles content sourcing, AI curation and summarization, feature image generation, and delivery via email. Content sources and topics are fully customizable: sports, local news, industry publications, even court opinions for law firms.

The plugin supports two operating modes: **self-hosted** (you run your own n8n instance and workflow) or **AIS-hosted** (AI Solutions runs the engine for you on a monthly subscription). Both modes send through your own SMTP, from your own domain, so replies come to you and deliverability follows your SPF/DKIM.

Key Features

- Custom post type for newsletters with full branding control (colors, logo, tagline)
- Flexible scheduling: daily, specific weekdays, weekly, biweekly, or monthly
- **Send a Test:** generate a full issue to your own inbox any time, without touching the schedule
- Built-in subscriber management with double opt-in confirmation
- Optional Stripe integration for paid newsletter subscriptions
- Secure REST API endpoints for n8n workflow communication, including media upload for AI images
- Public signup shortcode `[ais_newsletters]` for any page
- AIS Hosted option — fully managed AI engine with metered billing (tab can be hidden for self-hosters)
- Admin Subscribers screen with filtering, search, bulk actions, and CSV export

2. Requirements

WordPress

- WordPress 6.0 or later
- PHP 8.0 or later (8.2+ recommended)
- An active SSL certificate (HTTPS required for REST API and Stripe)

For Self-Hosted Mode

- A running n8n instance (self-hosted or n8n Cloud)
- OpenAI API key
- SMTP credentials for outbound email (Microsoft 365, Gmail, or any SMTP provider)

For AIS-Hosted Mode

- SMTP credentials (the hosted engine sends through YOUR mail server)
- A credit/debit card for the monthly hosting subscription (processed via Stripe)

Optional

- Stripe account (only if you charge your own subscribers for newsletter access)

3. Installation

1. Download the `ais-newsletter-manager.zip` file.
2. In your WordPress admin, go to **Plugins** → **Add New** → **Upload Plugin**.
3. Choose the zip file and click **Install Now**, then **Activate**.
4. A new **Newsletters** menu appears with: All Newsletters, Add New, Subscribers, Hosting, and Settings.

Note: On activation the plugin automatically creates the subscriber database table and generates a random 40-character API token (used by n8n). No manual database setup is required.

Updating

To update: deactivate → delete → upload the new zip → activate. Settings, newsletters, and subscriber data are preserved. A full uninstall (Plugins → Delete) removes all plugin data permanently.

4. Plugin Configuration

Navigate to **Newsletters** → **Settings**.

4.1 n8n Integration

The **API token** is the secret your n8n workflow sends in the X-AIS-Token header when calling the plugin's REST endpoints. It is auto-generated on activation — copy it into your n8n Header Auth credential. The hourly polling endpoint is shown below the token:

```
https://yoursite.com/wp-json/ais-n1/v1/duo
```

Note: AIS-Hosted mode manages its own separate hosting token automatically — you never share your local API token.

4.2 Stripe (Subscriber Billing)

Only needed to charge your subscribers for newsletter access; leave blank for free newsletters.

- **Secret key** — your Stripe secret key (a restricted key is recommended; see Section 5)
- **Webhook signing secret** — from the Stripe webhook endpoint you create (see Section 5)

4.3 AIS Hosting Toggle

The **Hosting tab** checkbox shows or hides Newsletters → Hosting. Uncheck it if you run your own n8n workflow and don't use AIS hosting — the tab disappears entirely. Developers can also hide it with the `ais_n1_enable_hosting` filter.

4.4 Branding & Pages

- **Brand name** — displayed in newsletter footers and the public signup directory
- **Checkout success / cancel URLs** — landing pages for paid-newsletter checkout (paid newsletters only)

5. Stripe Integration (Subscriber Billing)

This section covers **subscriber billing** — charging your readers for paid newsletters. It is separate from the AIS hosting subscription (Section 9), which is billed on AI Solutions' Stripe account.

Important: Skip this section entirely if all your newsletters are free.

5.1 API Key

1. In Stripe, go to **Developers** → **API keys**.
2. Recommended: click **Create restricted key** with these permissions — **Write:** Products, Prices, Checkout Sessions, Customer portal; **Read:** Customers, Subscriptions; everything else None.
3. Paste it into **Newsletters** → **Settings** → **Stripe** → **Secret key**.

5.2 Create a Webhook Endpoint

1. In Stripe: **Developers** → **Webhooks** → **Add endpoint**, with the URL:

```
https://yoursite.com/wp-json/ais-nl/v1/stripe-webhook
```

2. Select events:

- `checkout.session.completed`
- `invoice.payment_failed`
- `customer.subscription.deleted`

3. Copy the **Signing secret** (whsec_...) into **Newsletters** → **Settings** → **Stripe** → **Webhook signing secret**.

5.3 How It Works

When a newsletter has a monthly price, the public signup form becomes a paid Subscribe button. The plugin auto-creates the Stripe Product and Price when you save the newsletter, creates a Checkout session on signup, and keeps subscriber status in sync via the webhook (payment failures and cancellations).

6. Creating Your First Newsletter

Go to **Newsletters** → **Add New**:

Field	Description	Example
Title	Internal name (admin only)	Weekly Gator Sports
Topic	What the AI searches for	Florida Gators football and basketball
Subreddit	Reddit source (no r/ prefix)	FloridaGators
Digest Title	Shown in emails and headers	Gator Sports Weekly
Digest Tagline	Subtitle under the title	Your weekly roundup of all things Gator
Sender Name	"From" display name	Gator Sports Digest
Logo URL	Square logo for email header	https://yoursite.com/logo.png
Primary Color	Hex accent color	#FA4616
Secondary Color	Hex background/heading color	#002657
Article Count	How many articles per issue	7
Schedule	Sending cadence	Weekly (Monday)
Monthly Price	Leave \$0 for free	\$0.00

Click **Publish** to make it active. It appears on the next engine poll (hourly) and in the public signup directory. Topics and sources beyond the defaults — different feeds, industry publications, court and legal sources — can be configured for you; contact AIS support.

7. Sending a Test Issue

Every newsletter's edit screen has a **Send a Test** box in the sidebar (v1.4.0+):

1. Enter any email address (defaults to your admin email).
2. Click **Queue test issue**. A confirmation appears inline.
3. The engine picks it up on its next hourly poll and generates a complete, real issue — AI articles, feature image, full branding — delivered ONLY to that address.

Note: Tests never touch your schedule or your subscribers: the newsletter's last-sent time is not stamped, so the regular issue still goes out on its normal slot. On hosted plans a test counts as exactly one email against your monthly volume.

You can queue a test on any published newsletter, even one that's inactive or has no subscribers yet — ideal for previewing a new newsletter before launch.

8. n8n Workflow Integration

The self-hosted n8n workflow is the AI brain: it polls your site hourly, fetches news, curates and summarizes with GPT, generates a feature image (uploaded straight into your WordPress media library), builds branded HTML, and delivers via your SMTP.

8.1 Create the Header Auth Credential

1. In n8n: **Credentials** → **Add Credential** → **Header Auth**.
2. **Name:** X-AIS-Token · **Value:** the API token from Newsletters → Settings.

8.2 Configure the Workflow

Setting	Value
wpBaseUrl	https://yoursite.com (no trailing slash)
bccBatchSize	50 (recommended; lower for shared hosts)

8.3 Attach Credentials

Node(s)	Credential Type	Credential
WP HTTP nodes (Get Due, Get Recipients, Mark Sent, Upload Feature Image)	Header Auth	Your X-AIS-Token credential
Send Newsletter Email	SMTP	Your SMTP credential (see below)
OpenAI nodes (Chat Model, Image)	OpenAI API	Your OpenAI key

8.4 SMTP Credential Setup

Provider	Host	Port	Security	Notes
Microsoft 365	smtp.office365.com	587	STARTTLS	Enable Authenticated SMTP on the mailbox
Gmail / Workspace	smtp.gmail.com	587	STARTTLS	Use an App Password
Generic SMTP	Your provider's host	587 or 465	TLS/SSL	587 = SSL/TLS OFF · 465 = SSL/TLS ON

Important: Port and SSL must match: port 587 needs the SSL/TLS toggle OFF (STARTTLS), port 465 needs it ON. A "wrong version number" SSL error means this is mismatched.

8.5 Activate & Test

Activate the workflow, then queue a test issue from the newsletter editor (Section 7) and execute the workflow manually — the test arrives in minutes.

Important: The OpenAI Chat Model → AI Agent connection sometimes doesn't survive workflow imports. After any import, verify this wire exists on the canvas and reconnect it manually if missing.

9. Hosted Newsletter Engine

If you don't want to manage n8n yourself, **Newsletters** → **Hosting** lets AI Solutions run the entire engine for you. You configure newsletters in WordPress; the hosted engine handles everything else.

9.1 Plans

Plan	Emails/Month	Price	Includes
Basic	500	\$20/month	Full AI generation & delivery
Advanced	2,000	\$50/month	Full AI generation & delivery
Pro	5,000	\$100/month	Full AI generation & delivery
Elite	10,000	\$200/month	Everything in Pro + live support

Volume counts each email delivered (recipients × issues). A **10% grace buffer** applies on every plan — e.g., Basic allows up to 550 before pausing. At the cap, sending pauses for the rest of the month (one courtesy notice) and resumes automatically on the 1st, or immediately on upgrade. Plan changes apply to your sending limit right away.

9.2 Signup Process

1. Go to **Newsletters** → **Hosting** and choose a plan.
2. Enter your admin email, sender name, and SMTP details (host, port, username, password, from address).
3. Click **Continue to secure checkout** and pay via Stripe.
4. You're redirected back to WordPress; within a minute or two the tab shows your plan, and a welcome email confirms your engine is live.

Note: Before checkout, the hosting service automatically verifies your site and API token, so a broken setup can't be charged. Your SMTP password is transmitted once over TLS and stored only in the host's encrypted credential vault — never in your WordPress database.

9.3 After Setup

- **Usage bar** — emails sent this month vs. quota
- **Manage billing** — Stripe portal for upgrades, card changes, invoices, cancellation
- **Refresh usage** — pulls the latest numbers
- **Advanced settings** — the Hosting API base URL lives here (leave blank unless directed by AIS support)

Important: If you previously ran the self-hosted n8n workflow, deactivate it after subscribing — running both sends duplicates.

9.4 Payment & Suspension

- Failed payment → email notice + **3-day grace period**; sending continues
- After 3 days unpaid → engine suspended (paused, not deleted) with an email notice
- A successful payment restores service automatically
- Cancellation stops sending immediately; newsletters and subscribers remain in WordPress

10. Managing Subscribers

Navigate to **Newsletters** → **Subscribers**.

Status	Meaning
Pending	Signed up but hasn't clicked the confirmation link yet
Active	Confirmed and receiving newsletters
Unsubscribed	Opted out via the unsubscribe link

Admin Actions

- **Filter** by newsletter and/or status; **search** by name or email
- **Activate** — manually confirm a subscriber (skips the opt-in email)
- **Unsubscribe / Delete** — row and bulk actions
- **Export CSV** — downloads the currently filtered view

Note: Subscribers live in a custom database table, not as WordPress users — your user list stays clean.

11. Shortcode Reference

Place this shortcode on any page to display the public newsletter directory with signup forms:

```
[ais_newsletters]
```

Each published newsletter renders as a card with title, tagline, schedule, and a signup form. Free newsletters show "Sign up free"; paid ones show the price and redirect to Stripe Checkout.

Action Pages

URL Parameter	Action
?ais-nl-action=confirm&token=...	Confirms a subscriber's email (double opt-in)
?ais-nl-action=unsubscribe&token=...	Unsubscribes and shows confirmation
?ais-nl-action=billing&token=...	Redirects to Stripe billing portal (paid only)
?ais-nl-action=thanks	Thank-you page after signup

12. Troubleshooting

Hosting tab says "Could not load hosting plans"

- The AIS hosting service may be briefly unreachable — reload after a minute; failed responses are never cached.
- If you changed the Hosting API base URL (Hosting tab → Advanced settings), clear it to restore the default.
- Your server must be able to make outbound HTTPS requests — some hosts block them; ask your host about outbound firewalls.

Hosting tab is missing entirely

- Check **Newsletters** → **Settings** → **AIS Hosting** — the "Show the Hosting tab" box must be checked.
- A theme or plugin may be using the `ais_n1_enable_hosting` filter to hide it.

Test issue never arrives

- The engine polls hourly — allow up to an hour, or (self-hosted) execute the workflow manually.
- Check the newsletter is **published**; drafts cannot be tested.
- Check spam/junk, and verify your SMTP settings (see the SSL/port pairing in Section 8.4).

Newsletters not being sent (self-hosted)

- Verify the n8n workflow is active and the Header Auth token matches Settings exactly (copy-paste it).
- Confirm wpBaseUrl has no trailing slash and uses HTTPS.
- Check n8n execution history — expired SMTP passwords and revoked OpenAI keys are the most common causes.
- Verify the OpenAI Chat Model → Agent wire on the canvas.

Newsletters not being sent (hosted)

- The Hosting tab shows status — "Suspended" means a lapsed payment; use Manage billing to fix it.
- Check email for a monthly-volume cap notice; sending resumes on the 1st or on upgrade.
- M365 app passwords and Gmail App Passwords can expire — if in doubt, contact support@ais.email.

Newsletter arrives without a feature image

- The image is generated and uploaded to your media library via the plugin — you must be on v1.3.1 or later.
- Check Media in WordPress; if images appear there but not in email, your mail client may be blocking remote images.

SSL "wrong version number" error on send

- Port 587 requires the SSL/TLS toggle OFF (STARTTLS); port 465 requires it ON. Fix the pairing in the SMTP credential.

Subscriber not receiving confirmation email

- Confirm WordPress email works (consider WP Mail SMTP), check spam, and verify your SPF record covers the from address.

Stripe webhook errors (paid newsletters)

- The webhook URL must be exactly `/wp-json/ais-nl/v1/stripe-webhook` and the signing secret must match the dashboard.
- Check Stripe → Developers → Webhooks → Recent deliveries for the specific error.
- Security plugins sometimes block REST POSTs — whitelist the `ais-nl` namespace.

"Invalid or missing X-AIS-Token" in n8n

- The n8n credential value must exactly match Newsletters → Settings → API token — copy-paste, never re-type.

13. Support & Contact

Company	AI Solutions, Inc. (Automated Intelligent Solutions, Inc.)
Website	https://automatedintelligentsolutions.com
Product support	support@ais.email
General	info@ais.email
Phone	404-293-0331
Services	Microsoft 365 consulting, n8n automation, WordPress hosting & development, AI workflow integration & training

When Contacting Support

- Your WordPress site URL and plugin version
- Whether you're using self-hosted or AIS-hosted mode (and your hosting Account ID if hosted)
- A description of the issue, any error messages, and screenshots of the relevant screens

Additional Resources

- n8n documentation: <https://docs.n8n.io>
- Stripe documentation: <https://docs.stripe.com>
- WordPress REST API: <https://developer.wordpress.org/rest-api/>

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