

EMAIL MARKETING

# Email Deliverability Checklist

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- ✓ Print-optimized
- ✓ Expert-curated
- ✓ Actionable tips

# Email Deliverability Checklist

## Email Deliverability Checklist

### 30 Points to Keep Your Emails Out of Spam

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#### How to Use This Checklist

1. **Audit your current setup** against each item
  2. **Check the box** when verified or fixed
  3. **Prioritize** items marked as "Critical" first
  4. **Monitor** ongoing performance
  5. **Re-audit** quarterly
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#### Section 1: Domain Authentication (Critical)

Without these, you'll land in spam. Period.

- 1. SPF Record** - Published in DNS, includes all sending IPs
- 2. SPF Alignment** - Return-path domain matches From domain
- 3. DKIM Signature** - Emails are signed with valid DKIM key
- 4. DKIM Key Size** - At least 1024-bit (2048-bit recommended)
- 5. DMARC Policy** - Published in DNS (start with p=none, move to p=reject)
- 6. DMARC Reporting** - RUA/RUF addresses configured
- 7. BIMI Record** - Brand logo displays in inbox (optional but valuable)

**Quick Check:** Use mail-tester.com or mxtoolbox.com to verify

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#### Section 2: Domain & IP Reputation

Your sending reputation determines inbox placement.

- 8. Dedicated Sending IP** - Not shared with unknown senders (for high volume)
  - 9. IP Warmed Properly** - Gradually increased volume over 4-6 weeks
  - 10. Domain Age** - Sending domain is at least 30 days old
  - 11. Clean History** - No previous spam complaints on domain/IP
  - 12. Blacklist Check** - Not listed on major blacklists (Spamhaus, Barracuda, etc.)
  - 13. Sender Score** - Above 80 (check senderscore.org)
  - 14. Google Postmaster** - Set up and monitoring reputation
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## Section 3: List Hygiene

Bad lists kill deliverability.

- **15. Explicit Opt-In** - All recipients opted in directly
- **16. Double Opt-In** - Confirmation email required (recommended)
- **17. No Purchased Lists** - Never use bought/scraped lists
- **18. Bounce Handling** - Hard bounces removed immediately
- **19. Soft Bounce Management** - Removed after 3-5 soft bounces
- **20. Inactive Removal** - Non-openers removed after 6-12 months
- **21. Spam Trap Monitoring** - Checking for spam trap hits
- **22. List Validation** - Email verification before importing

### Target Metrics:

- Bounce rate: < 2%
  - Spam complaints: < 0.1%
  - Unsubscribe rate: < 0.5%
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## Section 4: Email Content

Content triggers spam filters if done wrong.

- **23. Text-to-Image Ratio** - More text than images (60/40 minimum)
  - **24. No Spam Trigger Words** - Avoid "FREE!!!", "Act Now", excessive caps
  - **25. Clean HTML** - Valid, well-formatted code
  - **26. Alt Text on Images** - All images have alt attributes
  - **27. Working Links** - No broken links or redirects to suspicious sites
  - **28. Unsubscribe Link** - Visible, working, one-click
  - **29. Physical Address** - Included in footer (CAN-SPAM requirement)
  - **30. From Name Consistency** - Same recognizable sender name
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## Authentication Setup Guide

### SPF Record Example

```
v=spf1 include:_spf.google.com include:sendgrid.net ~all
```

### Breakdown:

- `v=spf1` - SPF version
- `include:` - Authorized sending services
- `~all` - Soft fail for unauthorized (use `-all` for hard fail once confident)

### DKIM Setup

1. Generate DKIM key pair in your ESP

2. Add TXT record to DNS
3. Enable DKIM signing
4. Verify with test email

#### Record Format:

```
selector._domainkey.yourdomain.com  
v=DKIM1; k=rsa; p=[public key]
```

#### DMARC Record Example

```
v=DMARC1; p=quarantine; rua=mailto:dmarc@yourdomain.com; pct=100
```

#### Policy Progression:

1. `p=none` - Monitor only (start here)
  2. `p=quarantine` - Send failures to spam
  3. `p=reject` - Block failures entirely
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## Common Deliverability Issues

### Issue: Emails Going to Spam

#### Check:

1. Authentication (SPF, DKIM, DMARC)
2. Sender reputation
3. Content spam triggers
4. Engagement rates

### Issue: Emails Not Arriving

#### Check:

1. Bounce logs for errors
2. Recipient blacklisting your domain
3. Volume limits exceeded
4. IP blocking

### Issue: Low Open Rates

#### Check:

1. Subject line quality
2. Send time optimization
3. Inbox placement (spam folder?)
4. List quality

### Issue: High Bounce Rate

## Check:

1. List hygiene
  2. Email validation
  3. Old/stale addresses
  4. Typo addresses (gmial.com, etc.)
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## IP Warming Schedule

For new dedicated IPs:

Week	Daily Volume	Notes
1	50-100	Best contacts only
2	200-500	Engaged contacts
3	500-1,000	Recent openers
4	1,000-5,000	Expand audience
5	5,000-10,000	Broader list
6+	10,000+	Full volume (gradually)

## Rules:

- Only send to engaged contacts initially
  - Monitor bounce/complaint rates daily
  - Slow down if issues arise
  - Maintain consistency (don't skip days)
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## Recommended Tools

### Free

- Google Postmaster Tools
- Mail-Tester.com
- MXToolbox
- DMARC Analyzer (free tier)

### Paid

- GlockApps
  - Validity (Return Path)
  - 250ok
  - Litmus
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## Monthly Monitoring Checklist

- Check sender score
  - Review Google Postmaster data
  - Analyze bounce/complaint trends
  - Scan blacklist status
  - Review engagement metrics
  - Clean inactive subscribers
  - Test deliverability to major ISPs
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## Quick Wins

If you can only do 5 things:

1. **Set up SPF, DKIM, DMARC** - Non-negotiable
  2. **Remove hard bounces immediately** - Protect reputation
  3. **Add working unsubscribe** - Reduce complaints
  4. **Clean inactive addresses** - Improve engagement
  5. **Monitor sender score** - Catch issues early
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## Get Professional Deliverability Help

**GetMailer** provides enterprise-grade deliverability:

- Automatic authentication setup
- IP warming management
- Real-time reputation monitoring
- Bounce and complaint handling
- Deliverability reporting

**Get your free deliverability audit** → [getmailer.co](https://getmailer.co)

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*Email deliverability is an ongoing process. Regular monitoring prevents problems.*

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## Score Your Setup

Count your checked boxes out of 30:

Score	Grade	What it means
27-30	Excellent	You're doing the work. Focus on monitoring and trends.
21-26	Good	A few gaps. Close the Critical (Section 1) items first.
14-20	At risk	You're probably losing 20-40% of sends to spam. Fix this month.
0-13	Critical	Stop scaling sends until authentication and list hygiene are fixed.

## Fix-It Priority Order

If multiple boxes are unchecked, fix them in this order — each one protects the next:

1. **Authentication (items 1-7)**. No SPF/DKIM/DMARC = guaranteed spam at Gmail and Yahoo. This is the foundation; nothing else matters until it passes.
2. **Bounce + complaint handling (items 18, 19, 28)**. A high bounce or complaint rate burns reputation faster than anything else. Auto-suppress hard bounces and FBL complaints in real time.
3. **List source hygiene (items 15-17)**. Purchased or scraped lists hit spam traps and can blacklist your domain in a single send. Stop the bleeding before cleaning.
4. **Reputation monitoring (items 13, 14)**. You can't manage what you don't measure. Set up Google Postmaster and check Sender Score weekly.
5. **Content (items 23-30)**. Real, but lower-impact than the above. Tune after the fundamentals are solid.

## 90-Second Verification (Do This After Any Change)

1. Send one email to [mail-tester.com](mailto:mail-tester.com) → aim for **10/10**. Anything below 8 means an authentication or content problem to fix now.
2. Check the same domain at [mxtoolbox.com/blacklists](https://mxtoolbox.com/blacklists) → confirm zero listings.
3. Send a seed email to a Gmail, Outlook, and Yahoo address you control → confirm Inbox, not Promotions/Spam.

Re-run this whenever you change DNS, switch ESP, or start sending from a new domain.

TAKE THE NEXT STEP

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