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CUSTOMER GUIDE · EMAIL DELIVERABILITY

Getting More From Your Email List

A simple guide to getting more of your emails delivered.

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If your emails are bouncing or landing in spam, your list usually isn't the problem. Most fixes happen on the **sending side**, and most are a quick conversation with your email provider or IT team. You don't need to be technical.

> **THE KEY TAKEAWAY**
>
> **A bounce doesn't always mean a bad address.** Before you remove anyone, find out why the email bounced. Otherwise you may delete real people you could still reach.

1 Know your bounces

A bounce is an email that couldn't be delivered. There are two kinds:

Hard bounce

The address doesn't exist, like a letter sent to a house that isn't there.

Remove it from your list.

Soft bounce

A temporary problem, like a full mailbox. The person is still there.

No action needed. It usually clears up on its own.

Many bounces at one district? Look closer.

If lots of contacts at the **same school district** are bouncing, they almost certainly didn't all leave at once. It usually means the district is blocking your emails, and every blocked send counts as another bounce. Deleting those contacts would mean losing real people.

2 Get past school email security

Most school districts use security software (such as Mimecast, Barracuda, or Proofpoint) that checks every email before it reaches an inbox. Think of it as a **security guard at the door**. If it isn't sure your email is trustworthy, it turns it away, and your system records a bounce even though the address is fine.

Signs this is happening

- Many bounces from the same district or domain
- Contacts you know are active showing as bounced
- Bounce rates rising even though your list hasn't changed much

How to fix it (ask your email provider)

- **Set up email authentication.** SPF, DKIM, and DMARC prove your emails really come from you. This is a routine request.
- **Check your sender reputation.** Ask: "What is our sender reputation score, and are we on a shared IP?" A shared server can be hurt by other senders' spam.
- **Consider a dedicated IP.** Your reputation becomes yours alone, which helps with security-conscious schools.

3 Keep your list healthy

- **Remove confirmed hard bounces right away.** Sending to dead addresses hurts your reputation.
- **Don't remove contacts based on bounce count alone.** Look at the reason, not the number.
- **Try a re-engagement email first.** Quiet contacts may simply not have received your emails.
- **Verify new addresses** before your first send, especially ones added in bulk.
- **Note where each contact came from**, such as a conference, direct relationship, or purchased list.

4 Send smarter

- **Send steadily, not in big bursts.** A sudden spike looks like spam. Spread large sends out, especially from a new IP or domain.
- **Make unsubscribing easy.** If people can't opt out, they click "spam" instead, which does more damage.
- **Target smaller groups** with relevant messages, and set aside contacts who haven't engaged in 12 months or more.
- **Write clear subject lines** that match what's inside.
- **Preview on a phone before sending.** Many people read email on mobile.

5 Questions to ask your email provider

Your email provider is your best resource. Copy these questions into your next conversation:

- ☐ Are our SPF, DKIM, and DMARC records set up correctly?
- ☐ Are we on a shared or dedicated IP, and what is our sender reputation score?
- ☐ Are security gateways like Mimecast or Barracuda filtering our emails?
- ☐ Which domains are blocking our emails, and why?
- ☐ Do you have a deliverability specialist who can review our setup?

A good provider should answer all of these. If problems continue, ask about a **deliverability audit**, which reviews your setup, reputation, and list together to find the root cause.

> **THE BOTTOM LINE**
>
> Fix the sending side first: authentication, reputation, and steady sending habits. Consistent, targeted emails to an engaged list beat any shortcut.
>
> Questions about your data? Contact **Lauren Flores** at 888-681-8346 or Lauren@CueFineArts.com.