

How to Avoid Spam Filters and Make it Into Your Customers' Inboxes

by Amber Iven - Monday, May 25, 2020

<https://www.searchbug.com/info/how-to-avoid-spam-filters/>

Spam filters let good emails land in recipients' inboxes and keep bad emails out. They're like email police. Their job is to keep irrelevant emails, or spam, out of users' inboxes to create a better experience and to keep them safe. Knowing how to avoid spam filters is just as much about complying with the guidelines as it is about connecting with your recipients and increasing engagement.

Unfortunately, the guidelines are subjective. Each filter is different. And while you may follow all of the rules and your emails may not be spam, they can still be flagged as such, and Gmail can classify your email as promotional, social or other which keeps it from the ever-elusive inbox. This is because the level of engagement with your emails contributes greatly to your sending reputation.

In *Monty Python's Flying Circus* (1969-1974), there's a diner skit where everything on the menu includes spam. One of the diner guests doesn't like spam and doesn't want spam. The waitress explains, however, that the guest's only options are to have less spam or more spam. During this discourse, other guests in the diner chant, "Spam, spam, spam, spam," as though they're about to enter into battle. Needless to say, the poor lady becomes overwhelmed and annoyed.



Don't be like this!

In this article, we cover how to avoid spam filters and make it into your customers' inboxes. But we also cover what happens after your email hits the inbox. How a recipient reacts to your email affects your ability to land future emails. To avoid overwhelming and annoying your recipients, here's what to consider as you create your next email marketing campaign:

Let's Get Technical

There are certain guidelines and details to focus on when it comes to avoiding spam filters and decreasing bounce rates. If your emails can't make it into your recipients' inboxes, there's a good chance you will be flagged and any future emails will face similar obstacles.

While not all spam filters are the same, there are some common denominators and some areas you do have control over. The more details you focus on improving, the better your ability to avoid spam filters.

Verify and Validate Your Emails

A surefire way to increase bounce rates (the opposite of what you want) is to send emails to [invalid addresses](#). An invalid email address might be formatted incorrectly, could no longer exist, or could have evolved from an active address to a spam trap. Fortunately, there are ways to prevent invalid email addresses from entering your database.

Searchbug's [email address verification tool](#), for example, can determine the status of an address (valid, invalid, spamtrap, etc.) and in some cases the name, gender, and location of the owner. If the result is anything other than valid, do not send emails to that address. If an email is invalid because of a typo, fix it and verify it again before adding it to your contact list.

Clean Your Email List Regularly

Your job isn't done when you add valid email addresses to your email list. Those active email addresses can become invalid within the year or less. What started out as a valid email address that you confidently added to your list needs to be weeded out if the status changes. This is called email [cleansing](#) and keeps your data up-to-date.

Email addresses change as companies go out of business, people change jobs or titles, and over-saturated addresses get abandoned for new ones. Clean your email list every 6-12 months to get outdated addresses off your list and decrease your bounce rate. Open rates affect your sending reputation as well as deliverability. So even if your email makes it to a valid address that is outdated or has been abandoned, you want to make sure your emails get opened and read.

Watch Your Copy

The way you write and format your copy is super important when it comes to making sure your emails are delivered and read. No one wants to be sold to constantly. Even though your email campaigns are designed to drive sales, you don't have to be aggressive or invasive about it. Build a relationship with your customers and approach them like you would a friend (more on that later).

Here are some tips to remember when you develop your copy:

- Avoid all caps, exclamation points, and irregular size, style, and color of the font in the subject line and body copy. First of all, there's no need to yell. Second of all, if you're trying that hard to get attention, chances are you will get the attention of spam filters. Try to fly under the radar and use intriguing and friendly copy instead of flashy formatting.
- Watch out for spelling and grammar mistakes. If you want your audience to take you seriously, then show them that you care enough to check and double-check your work. Attention to detail in your emails translates to the attention you give your customers. Be professional and show that you mean business.
- Be brief. Short and sweet. To the point. However you want to phrase it, don't take up too much of your audience's time. We have the attention span of goldfish when reading online, after all....
- Salesy = sleazy. Spam filters are keen on picking up on words that are clearly promotional such as "free," "guarantee," "limited time," etc. Try to use curiosity instead: "Have you heard?" Or just be friendly: "How was your weekend?"
- Again, spam filters are automated and systematic. They recognize patterns. This is why your email is likely to be filtered if it's keyword-heavy. Don't put a target on your emails. Remember, you need to fly under the radar.

Be Compliant

There are laws and rules that regulate email marketing. To maintain a healthy sending reputation, you should study and abide by these regulations. They do change, so it's important to stay up-to-date to make sure you're compliant. Otherwise, your emails could be stopped and future emails may not send easily as a result.

CAN-SPAM Act

The [CAN-SPAM Act](#) was developed to regulate all electronic messages, or emails, that are sent to consumers and even businesses for advertisement or promotion of products and services---bulk or otherwise. This is a pretty broad definition. Basically, if you use email in your business, you'd better comply with the [CAN-SPAM guidelines](#), just in case!

Failure to comply with the law can cost upwards of \$40,000 per email. However, the law is pretty straightforward. Basically, be transparent about who you are, where you are, and what your aim is. Don't use misleading subject lines, include a physical or mailing address, and disclose that you are sending an

advertisement.

You must also include a way for recipients to opt-out of getting your emails and honor that request. This law applies to anyone sending emails on your behalf too, so make sure the guidelines are clear and that you are in compliance; both parties could be held responsible.

CASL

The Canadian Anti-Spam Legislation (CASL) includes many of the same guidelines as the CAN-SPAM Act. Identify yourself, your location, your ESP, provide the option to unsubscribe, and offer a way for recipients to contact you. CASL applies to you if you have any Canadian email addresses in your email database.

To check, you can use an [email verification tool](#), look for .ca in the address, or find emails linked to Canadian phone numbers or physical addresses. For these email addresses, you must document consent. Implied consent applies if the recipient has conducted business with you. Express consent applies if the recipient actively signs up to receive emails from you.

PECR

[Privacy and Electronic Communications Regulations](#) (PECR) were developed in the UK to protect the public's data privacy. These regulations apply to anyone sending electronic marketing messages to individuals.

GDPR

[The General Data Protection Regulation](#) (GDPR) is a European law created to, again, protect the personal data of individuals. This regulation goes way beyond email marketing, but it still applies if you collect, store, use, share, delete, etc. personal data in the EU.

The spam police might put questionable messages in email jail, but if you are found to be out of compliance with any of the regulations above, you will face less figurative consequences....

Let's Get Personal

This article is about more than just avoiding spam filters. It's also about making sure your emails don't get marked as spam by the recipients once you make it past the spam filters and into the inbox.

Here we list ways to make sure your engagement is high to increase open and click-through rates. Open and click-through rates affect your sending reputation. A bad reputation can send you to the junk folder even if you follow all of the technical guidelines above.

To develop a good sending reputation, you want to make sure your recipients open your emails, save them to a special folder, forward the emails, and even reply to them. Good engagement equals a good reputation. Here are some tips:

Email Ethically

While buying a list of contacts saves the time that organic outreach requires, it is very harmful in the long run. The number one way to get marked as spam is to email people who don't want your emails. This also means you shouldn't scrape websites for email addresses. To build a valuable email list, give your audience opportunities to provide their permission to receive emails from you.

If you have something your audience wants, they will happily exchange their email for it. You can even offer a double opt-in to have subscribers confirm that they want to receive your emails. Create a lead magnet or invite visitors to subscribe to receive them on your website to create a healthy list of recipients who have given their permission to be emailed.

Be Personable

Are you more likely to open an email from a friend or from a stranger? A friend is someone we recognize and trust, so send using your brand. If your audience doesn't know your name, send it from your company name. If your audience does know your name, send it from your name instead of your email marketer's name. Then keep sending!

Regularly sending emails increases your recognition which allows you to outperform competitors in your recipient's inbox. The best open rates occur when your number of email campaigns range between [16 and 30 a month](#). If this sounds like a lot, remember you are building relationships with your audience. Anything over 30, though, and open rates start to decline.

Another way to establish yourself as a friendly face in your recipients' inboxes is to know who they are. Personalize your campaigns and target them to specific groups within your list.

Be User Friendly

This topic kind of belongs in both categories: technical and personal. If your email isn't user-friendly, there's a good chance a spam filter will catch it and keep it away from the recipients. However, if it does make it to your recipient but it isn't easy to view, your recipient can flag it themselves or just start ignoring your emails altogether.

Keep the size of the email data small. Not only will attachments and embedded forms slow the delivery and the reader, they will also alert spam filters.

Spammers are notorious for sending bad attachments, so these are now red flags. If you want to avoid spam filters, don't do what spammers do. You can also offer HTML and plain text versions of your email to improve the user's experience.

Encourage Engagement

User engagement with your emails tremendously boosts your sending reputation. More engagement means you're sending relevant, valuable information that people enjoy and benefit from. A call to action doesn't have to be directly for a sale. There are other ways your email recipients can help you out. Here are some CTAs to increase engagement:

- Ask your recipients to add you as a contact. This can signal recognition and keep spam filters off your back.
- Instead of sending from a "donotreply," encourage your recipients to respond to your emails. Open lines of communication are important to enriching customer experiences.
- Recommend that your recipients save your emails to a special folder for quick reference, coupons/offers, or specific email sequences.
- Suggest that your recipients forward your emails. "Know someone who might need help?" "Does this sound like someone you know?" Email forwards help your sending reputation AND can increase subscribers!
- Send re-engagement campaigns to contacts who have been idle. It's important to reach out to inactive subscribers to give them another chance to opt-in or out. This brings us to our final technique...

Encourage Unsubscribes

The size of your email list is not as important as the quality. A large email list looks great at first, but some contacts just aren't interested. They delete your emails without reading, they mark them as spam when they're bored, or they let them sit in an abandoned inbox. All of these scenarios hurt your sending reputation. For this reason, it's important to get these contacts off your email list.

Having a clear and easy way to unsubscribe from your emails is required by email marketing regulations to help protect the recipients, but it's also super beneficial to you. Some companies are so devoted to this that the unsubscribe link or button is at the top of the email instead of the bottom. This might seem like a bold move, encouraging unsubscribes like that. But at the end of the day, the quality of your email list is more important to your success with email marketing than the size.

The Bottom Line

There's a lot to consider here. The bottom line is to be yourself. Use email as a tool to build relationships with your customers. Who are they? What is important to them? Don't overwhelm your customers like the diner from the skit. Listen and adapt.

From a technical perspective, when it comes to avoiding bounces and improving your deliverability, use [email verification tools](#). Catch those invalid email addresses right away and save yourself some time and money.

From a personal perspective, be friendly, familiar, and approachable in your copy. Don't sweat unsubscribes. You want to devote your energy to the people who openly want to hear what you have to say.

Focus on nurturing loyal subscribers and your sending reputation will naturally flourish and thrive. Now, go [verify and clean](#) that email list. Happy sending!

Searchbug.com