

Pre-send checklist

Ten checks between a finished campaign and a send. None takes longer than a minute. Each one is here because the cost of skipping it lands on the whole domain, not on the one message.

Campaign: _____	Send date: _____
From identity: _____	Audience size: _____
Last send: _____	Its complaint rate: _____ %
	Its bounce rate: _____ %

The gate

DONE	#	CHECK	HOW TO CHECK IT	STOP IF
☐	1	Suppression list applied	Export the send audience and diff it against the suppression list of bounces, complaints and unsubscribes	Any overlap at all
☐	2	Authentication still passing	Send one copy to a Gmail address, open it, choose Show original	SPF, DKIM or DMARC reads anything but pass
☐	3	One-click unsubscribe headers	In the same Show original view, search for List-Unsubscribe and List-Unsubscribe-Post	Either header is missing
☐	4	Plain-text part present	Read the raw source: the message is multipart/alternative and the text/plain half reads like English	No text part, or it is stripped tags
☐	5	Text to image ratio	Turn image loading off and read what is left on screen	One image, or images carry the message
☐	6	Links on your own domain	Hover every link and read the hostname	A shortener, or a domain you do not control
☐	7	From identity stable	Compare the From name and address against the last send	Either changed for no stated reason
☐	8	Seed test sent and read	Send to a Gmail, an Outlook or Hotmail and an Apple Mail address, then open all three on a phone	Any copy lands in spam or renders broken
☐	9	Complaint and bounce rates	Read the last send's report: complaints under 0.1%, bounces under 2%	0.3% complaints or over 2% bounces
☐	10	Volume inside the ramp	Today's planned volume against yesterday's actual: 10 to 20% higher at most	Jump above 30%, or a gap over a week

Three numbers that stop a send outright

- Spam complaints at or above **0.3%**. Google withholds delivery mitigation until you have been back under that line for seven consecutive days, so one bad day costs a week.
- Bounces above **2%**. Clean the list before the next attempt; suppress hard bounces permanently.
- A failing authentication check. Since November 2025 Gmail rejects unauthenticated mail with a 550 rather than filing it in spam, and Microsoft has done the same since May 2025.

Notes on the four that fail most

Suppression. Checking once when you build the audience is not the same as checking at delivery. A campaign that takes twenty minutes to go out can collect an unsubscribe in minute three. Check before every message, not once per campaign.

The headers. One-click unsubscribe needs both of them, and the URL has to work when a mailbox provider calls it with no human present. Read them in the raw source of a real test rather than trusting a settings toggle.

The plain-text part. Filters read it, screen readers use it, and auto-generated versions are sometimes a wall of raw link URLs. Read yours once.

The rates. They are the only checks here with a hard floor, and the moment you most want to send anyway is the moment they say stop. Automate the halt if your platform can.

Send record

Checks run by _____ Time _____

Approved by _____ Sent at _____

Result 24h later: delivered _____ bounced _____ complaints _____ unsubscribes _____

File this sheet. After a send that goes wrong, the only useful question is what was different this time.