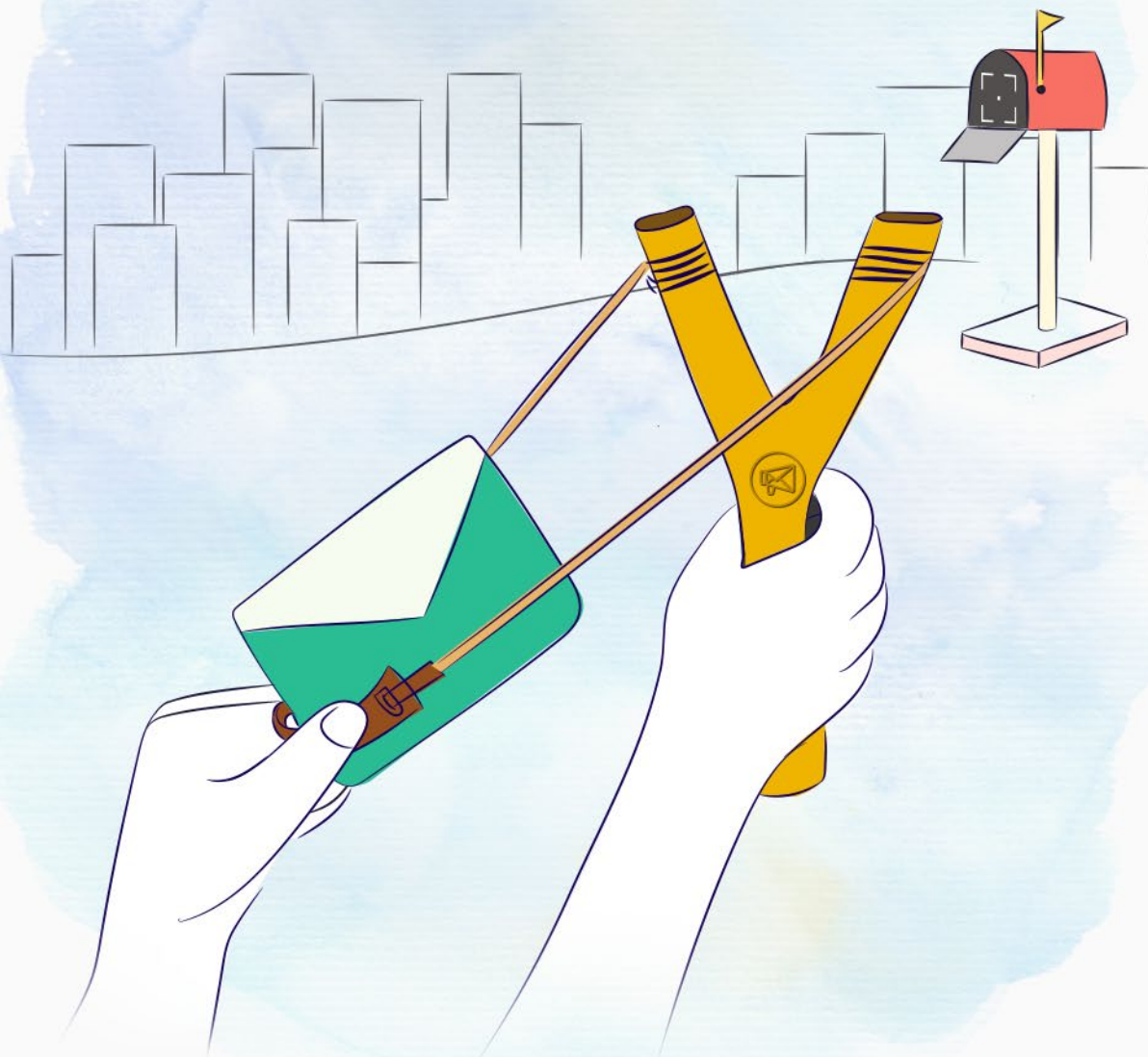


GETTING STARTED WITH EMAIL **DELIVERABILITY**





GETTING STARTED WITH EMAIL DELIVERABILITY

A User Guide

Before sending your carefully-crafted email campaigns, it's important to first understand a few basic ideas and rules of email marketing to ensure your campaigns are successful. To achieve good open-rates and click-rates, and to keep your emails from landing in the spam folder, you must first earn your contacts' trust. Here are some suggestions to get started with good email deliverability, while you gain your contacts' trust.

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Email Authentication

Before an email gets delivered, it is first validated to ensure it's coming from a safe origin. With phishing attacks happening every day all over internet, it's important to prove how safe and secure you are. That leads us to an important question. How can you prove your emails are from a safe origin?

Any email you send has to first be authenticated. Based on the status of authentication, emails get classified and then delivered to the inbox (if authenticated properly), quarantined, or sent to the spam folder. Email authentication includes validation techniques such as:

- SPF (Sender Policy Framework) - to authorize sending sources.
- DKIM (DomainKeys Identified Mail) - attaches Domain Key to encrypt the message and is inclusive of SPF.

DMARC (Domain-based Message Authentication, Reporting and Conforming) - prevents illegitimate usage of domain name in sender address.

By default, Zoho Campaigns performs authentication for all email sending domains. We highly recommend you to authenticate your domain to avoid phishing attacks.

SPF

"The Sender Policy Framework (SPF) is an open standard specifying a technical method to prevent sender address forgery. " Source: [SPF](#)

An SPF is a record that manages IP addresses which can send emails from your domain. It is the authentication of the sending source. If an email is sent from an IP address that is not on your list, it'll be treated as if it's from an untrusted network. This is a common reason many emails land in the spam folder.

If you are sending emails through Zoho Campaigns, then you have to authorize Zoho Campaigns to send emails on your behalf.

DKIM

“DomainKeys Identified Mail (DKIM) lets an organization take responsibility for a message that is in transit. The organization is a handler of the message, either as its originator or as an intermediary. Their reputation is the basis for evaluating whether to trust the message for further handling, such as delivery.”

Source: [DKIM](#)

In ancient days, when a letter was sent from a high-ranking official or emperor, it would have been sealed. If the seal was unbroken, the recipient had full confidence that the message had not been altered in any way.

Similarly, when emails are sent across the internet we must make sure that the email is not intercepted or altered before it is received. DKIM encryptions confirm that a message sent from the sender is not affected and is identical to the original message.

DMARC

“DMARC, which stands for “Domain-based Message Authentication, Reporting & Conformance”, is an email authentication, policy, and reporting protocol. It builds on the widely deployed SPF and DKIM protocols to improve and monitor protection of the domain from fraudulent email.” Source: [DMARC](#)

DMARC makes it impossible for a user to see a fake/fraudulent email from a brand’s domain name. In short, it helps conserve a domain’s reputation. This is the latest protocol that was recently formulated to ensure good deliverability to reputable inbox providers. Complying to DMARC policy is an added advantage. DMARC tells ISPs and ESPs what actions emails can take without passing SPF and DKIM.

Emails sent from authenticated sender domains will build good reputation with email filters. Thus, you can reduce the probability of your emails ending up in the spam folder.

| Domain

Sender Domain

We recommend you use an email address with either your organization’s domain or sub-domain. Eg: patricia@zylker.com or patricia@news.zylker.com.

The domain from your official website and the domain you use for sending campaigns must be related. For example, if your website is www.business.com then your email address should be something like bob@business.com or bob@email.business.com. However, if you use something like bob@profession.com, then there's a higher chance for the contact not to recognize you. The user should be able to easily recognize the email address and the company attached to it. [Learn More](#)

Domain blacklist check-up

Before sending an email, make sure your domain isn't blacklisted. Blacklisting depends on the sender's reputation. You can check the reputation of your domain at Sender Score ([refer](#)), Sender Base ([refer](#)) or other services.

Check your domain reputation with leading Anti-spam or Blacklist service providers: Spamhaus ([refer](#)), Sorbs ([refer](#)), Spamcop ([refer](#)) and others. If your domain is blacklisted, try and reach out to the concerned anti-spam service provider and ask to "De-list" it, or if possible, try to white-list it.

| Contacts

Contact management is one of the most important factors for a successful campaign. Having more contacts is not necessarily the goal, but managing them properly and efficiently to reach the right audience.

List segmentation

List segmentation is the process of categorizing your contacts based on the people you specifically want to target for a specific campaign. Let us imagine that you want to invite your contacts to a webinar on pencil making. Your mailing list may have pencil makers as well as box makers, laptop makers and pen makers. Your email would be useful to pencil makers but the others would ignore it or even mark it as spam. Such scenarios happen often in email marketing so it's really important to segment your contacts. Below is an infographic on types of list segmentation,

List segmentation is based on target marketing. A target market is a group of people considered likely to buy a product or service. A target market consists of customers who share similar characteristics like age, location, income, and lifestyle, to which a business directs its marketing efforts and sells its products.

Your opt-in list may contain contacts with which there might not be communication in a significant duration (more than 6 months). When you send an email now they might not recognize you and hence may mark your emails as spam. Convert them into opt-in contacts by sending re-engagement emails and while doing so, introduce yourselves. If they are still not responding, you may eliminate them from your list.

List segmentation

Analyze your subscribers. Segment them based on their geography, demography, psychology, and job profile to target them more specifically.

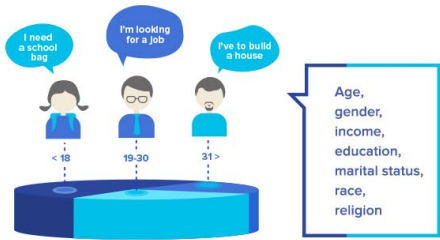
1 Geographic segmentation



Let's imagine you've organized a trade show in New York City. Subscribers frequently opening your emails, those interested in your products, and those in and around NYC are more likely to attend it. Subscribers from San Diego and Seattle in USA, and Toronto in Canada are less likely to attend it as they are far away. So, your email invitation for the trade show should target those who are close to NYC.

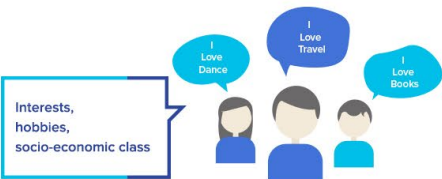
Needs of a person depends on his/her age. School bag is a common need for a school kid (age below 18). For someone between 19 and 30, job searching is a primary need. For those who are above 31, house construction is an obvious need. Similarly, you can target your list based on demography.

2 Demographic segmentation



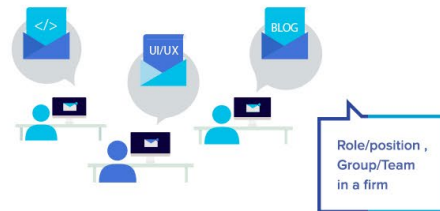
Interest, hobby, and personality of a person may differ from one another. People who love traveling tend to open emails on traveling more than any other topic. Ground work on subscribers' likes and dislikes can help you with emails they would love to open.

3 Psychographic segmentation



When you send emails to people from different role/position and group/team, analyze their expectations. For instance, you are sending emails on e-learning tutorials. A designer would expect tutorials on UI/UX while a marketer would require tutorials on writing a marketing blog.

4 Firm Based segmentation



When you target your subscribers specifically, they'll feel more interested in your newsletters. It not only gives you good business returns but also prevents numerous email deliverability issues.

Email campaign frequency

Sending emails regularly is great, but if you send them on a too frequent basis, like once a day, your recipients may become annoyed and lose interest in your brand. If your emails begin flooding your recipients' inboxes, they might mark it as spam or unsubscribe. If your email count is high the proportionate spam complaint will also be high, thereby damaging the aggregate results. This act of sending too many emails in a short duration is called campaign burst. To avoid this you can choose a pattern in your settings (if you are an admin).

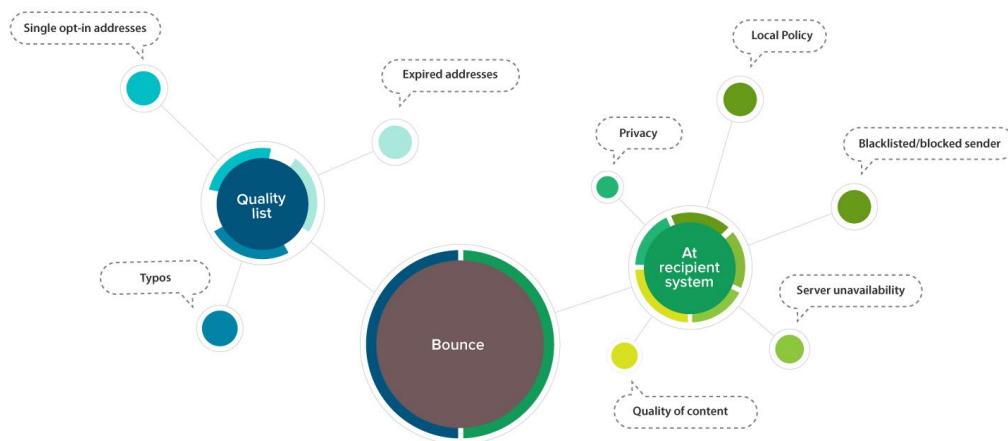
- Per day not more than one email can be sent.
- Per week 2- 3 emails can be sent
- Per month maximum of 8 emails can be sent.
- The frequency interval between two campaigns should be at least one day.

If you want to send a campaign, but your campaign limit has exceeded, then the admin from your organization will have to make changes to the settings.

Additionally, it is advisable to segment your contacts and send emails to a specific crowd you want to reach. [Learn more](#)

Bounces

Bounces occur when sent emails can't be delivered and the email server sends you an error message describing why the email was bounced. We have categorized possible reasons for bounces, as shown in the image below:



Email throttling

If you are sending emails to a large number of customers in the first attempt then suspicion will arise among email recipient systems. Let's say, you have a million contacts. Suppose many of your contacts belong to one or few recipient systems (for example, 600,000 of your million contacts are Gmail users and 200,000 contacts are Yahoo! users), then the following scenario will occur.

If you are new to that recipient system, say, Gmail or Yahoo!, and you are sending large number of emails in the first attempt, the recipient system may view that as suspicious, usually because you don't have any footprints with the recipient system. Until you build good reputation with the recipient system, it may defer your emails.

The best solution to this is to segment the mailing list and to gradually increase the number of email recipients.

Bounces can occur due to poor quality of list or factors at the recipient system.

Mailing List quality

Typos- Typos may occur when email addresses are manually added to a list. You can easily avoid this by having a double opt-in subscription method.

Expired email addresses- Email addresses which were once active but have since expired will result in a bounce. For example, when an employee leaves an organization his/her email address typically expires.

Single opt-in addresses- If you have single opt-in subscription method, it'll be impossible to check whether the subscribers have given a valid email address. Some people give dummy or fake email address while signing up. Such fake subscription attempts can be prevented by getting the recipient's confirmation through double opt-in subscription method.

At recipient system

Privacy- Apart from spam filters defined by recipient system, the email recipients can define some privacy settings they want. For example, a subscriber doesn't want emails related to bank, loan, rental cars etc. So, he defines it in privacy settings to reject such emails. When a marketer sends email on bank, it'll be bounced by the email server.

Local policy- This is due to policy restrictions set by the recipient system. When an email server encounters an email which doesn't comply with policy settings, it is bounced. The policy of recipient system could have restrictions on the rate of incoming emails per day, volume of email recipients, etc.

Blacklisted/blocked sender- If the domain of your sender address is blacklisted by a recipient email server, or if it triggers suspicion, emails sent to that server will be bounced. Check your domain reputation with a leading anti-spam or blacklist service providers such as [Spamhaus](#), [Sorbs](#), [Spamcop](#). If your sending address is blacklisted, resolve it by contacting the email server. You can also work on the cause for getting blacklisted (say, high bounces).

Server unavailability- Email server may block your messages for technical reasons such as “Email box size full”, “Server busy”, “Unavailable to respond” and “Resources temporarily unavaible”.

Quality of content- If an email has phrases that resemble spam triggering words, then the email server of recipient will bounce it. Beware of such words when composing email subject lines and content.

Use of URLs from blacklisted domains is unsafe. Recipient system can bounce the emails with blacklisted URLs. Some recipient systems consider lengthy email content as spam. To prevent the subscriber from marking it as spam, the server may bounce such emails.

Content

An email content includes the following:

1. Subject
2. Message to be conveyed to contact
3. Sender logo
4. Images (optional) and
5. Footer

For good deliverability, subject and URL blacklist checkups are important.

Subject

The subject of an email is like the head of a body. It's one of the first things a receiver observes when he or she receives an email. Open rates of your email campaigns depend greatly on your subject line. That's why it's crucial to spend a lot of effort crafting this part of your email.

In general, the subject needs to be:

- Short and crisp
- Free of spelling or grammar errors
- Avoids false promises

Sender Logo

When you send emails to your contacts it is important that they recognize you easily. Including your logo in your email content gives more trust to the contacts. Your organization more than likely has a standard format/layout when positioning your logo so make sure to follow that position and format it in all your emails.

Email Message

The purpose of sending emails is to convey the message you want to deliver to your contacts. That's why it's important to position your content in such a way that doesn't create suspicion among spam filters and recipients. That's why Zoho Campaigns reviews your content before sending it to recipients.

Images

Image-text ratio should be maintained and image dimensions need to be accurate and standardized. Make sure images have good resolution and are easily loadable for your contacts.

Footer

Each business related communication must contain a legal notice. This information may be included in the email as a whole (this method is preferred) or by adding a URL.

- Name of the sender or company name
- Authorized representatives
- Postal address of the sender
- Telephone number, fax number or electronic contact form
- The sender's email address
- Commercial, cooperative, association or partnership register number
- Naming of the publisher or person responsible for the content of the email
- If available: VAT identification number or business identification number

This information must be:

- Easily discernible
- Directly accessible
- Permanently available
- If you have a disclaimer make sure to include it at a specific location that is constant across all emails.
- Include "Unsubscribe" option in all your campaigns.
- Keep footer in resemblance with the footer in your official website.

Using URLs

If your content contains any URLs, make sure that they are from domains that are easily recognizable to your contacts. Using non-business domains leads to suspicion among spam filters and contacts and may result in emails getting marked as spam.

Example: If your sender address is abc@zylker.com, then the URLs you use can be from domains such as, zylker.domain.com, zylkeroffice.com, zylker.com, etc, but not from non-business domains such as hello.com, something.com, etc.

So, before sending emails check whether your URLs are from business domains.

- The URLs you use in your content shouldn't have multiple redirections. One or two redirections are acceptable but not any more than that.
- Shortening URLs from public services is not advisable since it may have multiple redirections or may get blacklisted easily since it is vulnerable to many attacks.
- URL Blacklist Checkup

Verify whether your URLs are being blacklisted before sending emails. If they are blacklisted, then you have to "de-list" them. Check reputation of URLs to be used with leading Anti-spam or Blacklist service providers Spamhaus, Sorbs, Spamcop, and others.

Sending practices

Email recipients may have their email addresses in various domains such as Gmail, Yahoo!, Outlook, etc. To improve your deliverability, you should familiarize yourself with a few rules on sending emails to various domains.

Gmail, Yahoo!, Outlook, and other inbox providers analyze the spam markings in emails before they get delivered. Depending on the content, emails are filtered by spam filters in system level (by ESPs and ISPs). Users can also mark emails as spam at contact level. Based on the responses of your email recipients, they maintain a reputation for sender email address and domain.

If you have a good reputation, you'll also have a high deliverability rate and favorable reputation. In order to keep your reputation high with these inbox providers, it is essential to have good rapport with your contacts. Remember, every single spam marking by your contacts gradually reduces your reputation.

- Zoho Campaigns strongly recommends you follow permission-based email marketing. Ensure that all of your contacts are opt-in.
- In content and subject, avoid words such as buy, order, discount, clearance, dear friend, as seen on, please help, free, offer, desperate, additional income, etc.
- Email subject may not convey the message you actually intended for your contacts. Due to this your contacts may get misled and mark you as spam. Ensure that your subject and content are relevant to each other.

If your contacts are Gmail users, look through these pages to learn more on how Gmail marks an email spam and how to improve the sender reputation with Gmail with respect to:

- 1) [Domain](#)
- 2) [Content](#)

Getting your emails delivered in Gmail not only means getting them through spam filters but also getting into the Primary tab. Emails in Primary tab get more attention. If your emails end up in Promotions Tab then the open rates and click rates will be significantly less. Promotions tab is where many marketing emails land. Because of this, lots of marketers get a reduction in deliverability. [Refer here](#) for more information on Gmail tabs.

Conclusion

Successful email marketing campaigns begin and end with preparation. Not only do you need an organized contact list along with creative and valuable content, but you also have to make sure every campaign satisfies a number of conditions before you click 'send'. At Zoho Campaigns, we hope all of the elements we discussed here will give you an enlightened perspective to improve your email deliverability while decreasing bounces, unsubscribes, and spam markings to improve your email deliverability in the future.

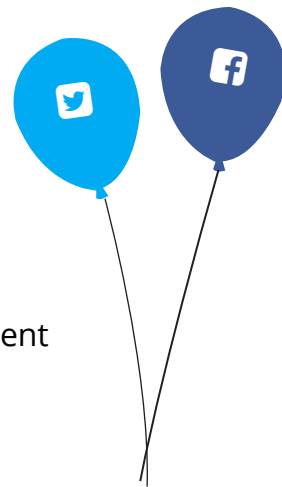
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