Checklist

Apollo's 2024 Email Deliverability Checklist

OVERALL RECOMMENDATIONS:

Go for quality emails over quantity. You might think it's one message but your recipient is getting multiple outreach emails a day and can click "spam" on a low-effort email.

- Personalize emails by using your own research, Apollo's data and personalization features, and leveraging more segmentation in your lists.
- Write and send emails like a real person — relevant and not in bulk.
- Email deliverability is never one-and-done. It's an ongoing process!

AUTHENTICATION & DOMAINS

You may need your IT, engineering, or web team to complete these steps. Are you a founder or on a small team? We've got all the docs linked for you here.

- ☐ Set up SPF, DKIM, and DMARC records for all your sending domains.
  - ☐ Not sure if this was set up already or correctly? Click "Run diagnostics" in the Engage tab of Apollo to make sure!
  - ☐ Make sure you're not sending cold emails from your company's primary domain. If you end up getting spam-blocked, the whole company won't be able to communicate with anyone. Choose a domain that relates to your primary business domain. (Example: heyapollo.io instead of apollo.io).
- ☐ Set up a custom tracking subdomain (for example, mail.apollo.io instead of apollo.io) to use for tracking opens and clicks. It can boost your email deliverability by up to 20%.
- ☐ Set up Google Postmaster Tools and Microsoft SNDS to monitor domain reputation.

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MAILBOX SETUP

Link your mailbox to Apollo. The guided setup will walk you through steps to:

☐ Set up your email signature. Make it information-rich (full name, title, company address) to build trust.

☐ Set up sending limits for the linked mailbox. This helps your email volume look more like a real person. Our recommended sending limits (and default settings) are:

   ☐ 50 emails sent per day (can be higher if your campaigns are getting a >5% reply rate and you have a high domain reputation)

   ☐ 6 emails sent per hour

   ☐ 600 seconds delay between emails

☐ Add an opt-out/unsubscribe link. (This is different from the one-click unsubscribe header.)

☐ Set up a custom tracking subdomain and configure your domain authentication, if you haven't already.

☐ Enable open tracking (as long as you've set up a custom tracking domain - here's why).

For general mailbox settings, head to your General Settings page under "Email Settings":

☐ Confirm that the opt-out link is toggled on.

☐ If you're a bulk sender, who sends more than 5,000 emails per day from one domain, you must also turn on the one-click unsubscribe header.

☐ Turn on click tracking if you have a custom tracking subdomain set up.

EMAIL WARM UP

If you've just set up a new email domain, we recommend that you warm it up before using it for any email campaigns. Follow these general best practices:

☐ Don't start sending until a domain/subdomain has been around for at least 30 days

☐ When warming up a new email domain, gradually increase the volume of your email sends in the first weeks of using your new domain. Use Apollo's Inbox Ramp Up to do this automatically.

☐ For a manual approach:

   ☐ Start with 25 emails/day on 1st & 2nd week, 50 emails/day on 3rd week, 100 emails/day on 4th week, etc.

   ☐ Increase volume only when you see positive engagement signals like opens and clicks, or else update and personalize your emails further.

   ☐ Ask your closest contacts to respond to your emails first. If possible, then forward them as well. (Mailbox providers track opens and clicks which helps to signal that you're sending relevant or "wanted emails.")

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USE GOOD TARGETING AND CLEAN DATA

- [ ] Only add verified email addresses to sequences.
- [ ] Other ways to optimize deliverability are to filter for leads and accounts who:
  - [ ] were last updated in Apollo within the past 3 months
  - [ ] opened emails sent from Apollo in the past
  - [ ] marked as likely to engage
  - [ ] have shown buying intent or visited your site
- [ ] Limit how many recipients you target at the same company. One email to a server isn't as concerning to the spam filter as dozens of emails.
- [ ] Avoid adding contacts with conflicts to a sequence, like contacts already in multiple sequences.
- [ ] Create Sequence Rulesets to automatically exclude leads based on contact or account stage and set a sequence-level maximum # of emails to send in 24 hours.

MONITOR YOUR SENDER HEALTH

- [ ] Check in on your Deliverability Score and follow tips to improve your mailbox's score.
- [ ] Keep an eye on your email performance. Start with the pre-built Deliverability Rates & Scores Analytics Dashboard (from Analytics, under "Created by Apollo", find the dashboard called "Deliverability Rates & Score"). Use it to review deliverability scores by sales rep, weekly delivery rates, and sequence performance.
- [ ] Monitor your domain reputation with Google Postmaster Tools and Microsoft SNDS to take advantage of all the data available to you.

ADVANCED TACTICS

- [ ] Leverage subdomains and non-primary domains to limit the impact of deliverability disruptions and to "fence" off different types of emails (sales, marketing, transactional)
- [ ] Leverage multiple inboxes (ideally across multiple subdomains / domains) by linking additional mailboxes to Apollo and using mailbox rotation — as long as you're acting like a legitimate business sender
  - [ ] Be sure to set up SPF, DKIM, and DMARC records for these, too!
  - [ ] Before you add multiple domains make sure you're sending enough with the first domain. It's better to send emails using subdomains and accounts before using fresh domains.
- [ ] Set up multiple A/B tests for each email in a sequence — this allows you to experiment with subject lines or email content to optimize for high-engagement emails.

- [ ] Format your messages like a real person would when sending to a peer. Avoid excess design elements in your email, like:
  - [ ] Promotional images. You can use images but not in a way that feels spammy.
  - [ ] HTML tables and other formatting
  - [ ] Don't go crazy with bold and italics
- [ ] Include few (if any) links
  - [ ] If you must include links, always use secured (https://) and not (http://)
  - [ ] Show the full link, instead of linking the URL to CTA text like "Click Here".
  - [ ] Don't use public link shorteners like bit.ly or link to files in Google Drive. That looks suspicious!
- [ ] Don't include attachments.
- [ ] You included an opt-out link (or set up one-click unsubscribe) right?

REPAIR DAMAGED DELIVERABILITY

- [ ] Stop using the damaged domain and warm until health is restored (weeks to months).
- [ ] Rotate in a ready domain (should be properly aged and warmed).
  - [ ] If you don't have one, set up and warm additional subdomains / domains.
- [ ] Use alternate methods of outreach during recovery, including calling and LinkedIn.
- [ ] Reconfigure your setup to look like a legitimate business sender (by following the steps above) and continually monitor your domain reputation.
- [ ] Scale up slowly (~25 additional sends per day), starting with your most receptive audiences (e.g., personal contacts, only engaged prospects — using engagement activity filters, such as last activity, email replied, email meeting set).

For professional help with your deliverability for outbound, contact Apollo partner Senders. Have support questions? Submit a support request here.

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