Cold Email Deliverability Troubleshooting in 2026: Errors, Causes and Fixes

13 symptoms and error codes, what each usually means and the first thing to do, plus the checks ranked by how many problems they explain. Condensed from 41 answers that cite Google's, Microsoft's and Yahoo's own documentation.

THE SHORT VERSION

Most cold email deliverability problems are diagnosed in the same order: read the bounce text, split results by recipient provider, test the campaign against a neutral control email, then fix authentication, volume, warmup or the list, which is what 38 of the 41 answers start with.

Disclosure. Published by Outreach2day, which ranks itself #1. Outreach2day sells cold email mailboxes with authentication and warmup included, and ranks itself first in its provider rankings. This edition ranks diagnostic checks (no vendors) and uses no placement data of its own.

Author	Max Korolev, Founder & CEO, Outreach2day
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Web version	outreach2day.com/answers (Cold email deliverability answers)

Key findings

The bounce or error text is the first check in 32 of 41 answers: it separates bad addresses, rate limits, reputation blocks and authentication failures, which need different fixes.

Cold email in spam produces no bounce. The tools for that case are a provider split and a controlled comparison: the same mailboxes sending a neutral email and the campaign in the same run.

Prevention is cheaper than recovery: separate domains that are not the company domain, SPF, DKIM and DMARC on each, up to 5 mailboxes per domain, up to 25 cold emails per mailbox a day, at least 14 days of warmup and warmup left running.

IF YOU ARE ASKING	THE ANSWER FROM THIS REPORT
Gmail defers with 421 4.7.28: what now?	Pause for at least 10 minutes, read which quota the text names, resume on one connection at lower volume.
Bounce 550 5.7.1: what now?	Fix the named cause. Never resend the same message.
Bounce rate is high: what now?	Stop the campaign, verify the list, suppress every hard bounce everywhere.
Gmail puts cold email in spam: what now?	Split results by recipient provider, check SPF, DKIM, DMARC and PTR, test against a neutral control email.
Outlook junks or rejects cold email: what now?	Read the code; fix authentication, request delisting, then test the copy against a neutral email.
Spam complaints are rising: what now?	Aim for near zero; make opting out easy.
Warmup inbox rate dropped: what now?	Confirm warmup is running, see which providers and domains dropped, hold cold volume until a test confirms.
A domain looks burned: what now?	Send a neutral email and the campaign from the same mailboxes; retire the domain only if it alone fails.

THE VERDICT IN ONE SENTENCE

Most cold email deliverability problems are diagnosed in the same order: read the bounce text, split results by recipient provider, test the campaign against a neutral control email, then fix authentication, volume, warmup or the list, which is what 38 of the 41 answers start with.

Symptom, meaning, first move

SYMPTOM OR CODE	WHAT IT USUALLY MEANS	FIRST MOVE
Gmail defers with 421 4.7.28	A temporary slow-down: Gmail saw an unusual rate from your IP, IP block, DKIM or SPF domain, or a link domain.	Pause for at least 10 minutes, read which quota the text names, resume on one connection at lower volume.
Bounce 550 5.7.1	A permanent refusal for a policy reason; the text after the code names it. At Gmail often reputation, at Microsoft often a blocklisted IP.	Fix the named cause. Never resend the same message.
Bounce rate is high	Mostly old or unverified addresses. Reputation or policy texts are blocks.	Stop the campaign, verify the list, suppress every hard bounce everywhere.
Gmail puts cold email in spam	Low IP or domain reputation, failed authentication, a sudden volume jump or text that reads like mass mail.	Split results by recipient provider, check SPF, DKIM, DMARC and PTR, test against a neutral control email.
Outlook junks or rejects cold email	Authentication that fails Microsoft's rules (550 5.7.515), a blocklisted IP (5.7.606 to 649) or content its filters distrust.	Read the code; fix authentication, request delisting, then test the copy against a neutral email.
Spam complaints are rising	Google wants the Postmaster Tools rate below 0.1% and never at 0.3%; Yahoo's line is 0.3%. Mail in spam is not counted.	Aim for near zero; make opting out easy.
Warmup inbox rate dropped	An early warning that the mailbox, domain or IPs are trusted less. It does not measure where cold email lands.	Confirm warmup is running, see which providers and domains dropped, hold cold volume until a test confirms.
A domain looks burned	It may be the domain, the sending IPs or the copy.	Send a neutral email and the campaign from the same mailboxes; retire the domain only if it alone fails.
Reply rate dropped	The copy, one domain, the IPs, total volume or an exhausted list.	Find which one with a provider split and a control test before buying domains.
Placement tests disagree	One test swings between runs, domains and times of day.	Compare a control and the campaign in the same run, on several domains, and repeat on another day.
Postmaster Tools reputation dashboards are going away	Google is retiring the Domain and IP reputation dashboards and the v1 API.	Use Compliance status, Spam rate and Delivery errors; they cover personal Gmail accounts only.
Open rates look low	Google says low open rates are not an accurate sign of a deliverability problem; pixels and links add spam risk.	Leave out pixels, images and links in the first email; measure replies.
Unsure about one-click unsubscribe	Gmail and Yahoo require RFC 8058 headers from bulk senders (about 5,000 a day to personal Gmail from one domain).	Give every recipient an easy opt-out and honor it within 48 hours.

Each row condenses one answer on the web; the full answer lists the provider documentation it relies on.

The checks, ranked by how many problems they explain

Each check is counted in the text of the 41 answers at build time. The list shows up to four answers that use it.

1. Clean the list START HERE

38 of 41
ANSWERS POINT TO IT

WHERE IT FITS

Old and unverified addresses cause hard bounces, and hard bounces cost reputation on every later send.

BEST FOR

Symptoms in 38 of the 41 answers

KEY FACTS

- What Does 421 4.4.2 Mean, and How Do I Fix It?
- What Does 421 4.7.0 Mean in a Gmail Bounce?
- What Does Gmail's 421 4.7.28 Error Mean, and How Do I Fix It?
- What Does 451 4.7.1 Mean, and How Do I Fix It?

PRICE

Free to run; most checks need only the bounce log and DNS.

The honest limit. Verification lowers bounces; it does nothing for spam placement.

2. Split results by recipient provider

34 of 41
ANSWERS POINT TO IT

WHERE IT FITS

Gmail, Outlook and the rest judge mail separately. One provider failing while the others hold points at that provider's rules.

BEST FOR

Symptoms in 34 of the 41 answers

KEY FACTS

- What Does 421 4.4.2 Mean, and How Do I Fix It?
- What Does 421 4.7.0 Mean in a Gmail Bounce?
- What Does Gmail's 421 4.7.28 Error Mean, and How Do I Fix It?
- What Does 451 4.7.1 Mean, and How Do I Fix It?

PRICE

Free to run; most checks need only the bounce log and DNS.

The honest limit. Needs enough volume per provider to mean anything; small campaigns give noisy splits.

3. Read the bounce or error text

32 of 41
ANSWERS POINT TO IT

WHERE IT FITS

The code and the words after it name the rule that fired: a bad address, a rate limit, reputation, authentication or a blocklist. Every other check depends on which one it is.

BEST FOR

Symptoms in 32 of the 41 answers

KEY FACTS

- What Does 421 4.4.2 Mean, and How Do I Fix It?
- What Does 421 4.7.0 Mean in a Gmail Bounce?
- What Does Gmail's 421 4.7.28 Error Mean, and How Do I Fix It?
- What Does 451 4.7.1 Mean, and How Do I Fix It?

PRICE

Free to run; most checks need only the bounce log and DNS.

The honest limit. A code names the rule, which is not always the cause behind it, and mail that lands in spam produces no bounce at all.

4. Check volume per mailbox and per domain

32 of 41
ANSWERS POINT TO IT

WHERE IT FITS

Sudden jumps and high per-mailbox volume trigger rate limits and wear out reputation. The baseline: up to 25 cold emails per mailbox a day and up to 5 mailboxes per domain.

BEST FOR

Symptoms in 32 of the 41 answers

KEY FACTS

- What Does 421 4.4.2 Mean, and How Do I Fix It?
- What Does 421 4.7.0 Mean in a Gmail Bounce?
- What Does Gmail's 421 4.7.28 Error Mean, and How Do I Fix It?
- What Does 451 4.7.1 Mean, and How Do I Fix It?

PRICE

Free to run; most checks need only the bounce log and DNS.

The honest limit. Lower volume slows damage; it does not repair a reputation that is already low.

5. Check SPF, DKIM and DMARC

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ANSWERS POINT TO IT

WHERE IT FITS

Gmail, Yahoo and Outlook.com all require authentication, and a failure is one of the few problems with an exact fix.

BEST FOR

Symptoms in 22 of the 41 answers

KEY FACTS

- What Does Gmail's 421 4.7.28 Error Mean, and How Do I Fix It?
- What Does 451 4.7.1 Mean, and How Do I Fix It?
- What Does 550 5.1.1 Mean, and How Do I Fix It?
- What Does a 550 5.7.1 Bounce Mean, and How Do I Fix It?

PRICE

Free to run; most checks need only the bounce log and DNS.

The honest limit. Passing authentication is the minimum for the inbox.

6. Test against a neutral control email

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ANSWERS POINT TO IT

WHERE IT FITS

Send a plain control email and the campaign from the same mailboxes in the same run. If only the campaign fails, the copy is the problem; if both fail, the mailbox, domain or IPs are.

BEST FOR

Symptoms in 18 of the 41 answers

KEY FACTS

- What Does 451 4.7.1 Mean, and How Do I Fix It?
- What Does 535 5.7.8 Mean, and How Do I Fix It?
- What Does a 550 5.7.1 Bounce Mean, and How Do I Fix It?
- What Does 550 5.7.350 Mean, and How Do I Fix It?

PRICE

Free to run; most checks need only the bounce log and DNS.

The honest limit. Placement tests swing between runs; one test decides nothing, and a repeat on another day is part of the check.

7. Check warmup

4 of 41

ANSWERS POINT TO IT

WHERE IT FITS

Warmup that stopped, or a warmup inbox rate that fell, is often the first visible sign of a problem, before cold email numbers move.

BEST FOR

Symptoms in 4 of the 41 answers

KEY FACTS

- How Long Should I Warm Up a New Mailbox Before Cold Email?
- Is .info or .com Better for Cold Email Domains?
- Should I Keep Warmup Running While Sending Cold Email?
- Can I Send Cold Email From My Main Company Domain?

PRICE

Free to run; most checks need only the bounce log and DNS.

The honest limit. Warmup statistics describe the warmup network; cold placement needs its own test.

The prevention baseline

RULE	VALUE
Cold emails per mailbox a day	Up to 25, excluding warmup
Mailboxes per domain	Up to 5
Warmup before cold email	14 days; full volume from day 14; keep it running
Domains	Separate domains that redirect to the site, apart from the company domain and its subdomains; .com where possible
Authentication	SPF, DKIM and DMARC on every sending domain; p=none is enough if the From: domain aligns
Personal Gmail addresses	Keep them out of B2B lists or run them as a separate campaign
First email	No tracking pixel, images or links; share links after a reply

Which is right for you?

Mail bounces with a code	Start with the code table above and the answer for that code.
Mail lands in spam without bouncing	Provider split, then a neutral control test from the same mailboxes.
Only one provider fails	That provider's rules: Gmail's sender requirements or Microsoft's authentication and blocklist codes.
Replies dropped but placement looks fine	Test the copy against a control before buying new domains.
You are setting up from scratch	The prevention baseline; Outreach2day mailboxes come with authentication and warmup set up.

Frequently asked questions

What does 421 4.7.28 mean?

A temporary slow-down: Gmail saw an unusual rate from your IP, IP block, DKIM or SPF domain, or a link domain. Pause for at least 10 minutes, read which quota the text names, resume on one connection at lower volume.

What does 550 5.7.1 mean?

A permanent refusal for a policy reason; the text after the code names it. At Gmail often reputation, at Microsoft often a blocklisted IP. Fix the named cause. Never resend the same message.

Why are my cold emails going to spam in Gmail?

Low IP or domain reputation, failed authentication, a sudden volume jump or text that reads like mass mail. Split results by recipient provider, check SPF, DKIM, DMARC and PTR, test against a neutral control email.

Why is Outlook blocking my cold email?

Authentication that fails Microsoft's rules (550 5.7.515), a blocklisted IP (5.7.606 to 649) or content its filters distrust. Read the code; fix authentication, request delisting, then test the copy against a neutral email.

What spam complaint rate is too high?

Google wants the Postmaster Tools rate below 0.1% and never at 0.3%; Yahoo's line is 0.3%. Mail in spam is not counted.

Will new domains fix a reply-rate drop?

Usually not, unless the domain is the cause. Find which one with a provider split and a control test before buying domains.

Are inbox placement tests reliable?

One test swings between runs, domains and times of day. Compare a control and the campaign in the same run, on several domains, and repeat on another day.

How this report was put together

Published by Outreach2day, which ranks itself #1. Outreach2day sells cold email mailboxes with authentication and warmup included, and ranks itself first in its provider rankings. This edition ranks diagnostic checks (no vendors) and uses no placement data of its own.

Sources

Each row condenses one of the 41 answers on outreach2day.com (updated September 28, 2026 to November 25, 2026), which cite Google Workspace Admin Help, Gmail Help, Microsoft Learn, Yahoo's sender guidelines and RFC 8058. Every number in a row is checked against its answer when the report is built.

Ranking of checks

A check's position is the number of answers whose text uses it (the bounce text, provider split, control test, authentication, volume, warmup, list quality), counted at build time. It measures how often a check applies.

What this report is not

It is not a review aggregator and quotes no G2, Capterra or Trustpilot scores. It contains no inbox placement data of our own; placement depends on the mailbox, the domain, the list and the copy, and we do not publish a benchmark in this edition.

Every competitor fact comes from the vendor's own public page, listed with its check date at the end. Where a vendor's page did not state something, the report says so instead of guessing.

Corrections

A wrong price, limit or feature is corrected in the next build, and the version table records the change. Vendors can send corrections to support@outreach2day.com with a link to the public page that shows the fact.

Price and fact sources

Each value as published on the source page, checked on the date shown. Prices are list prices in US dollars, monthly billing unless noted. Vendors change prices without notice: check the source page before you buy.

ITEM	VALUE USED	SOURCE	CHECKED
Gmail defers with 421 4.7.28	Google Workspace Admin Help: Gmail SMTP errors and codes; Google: Email sender guidelines	outreach2day.com/answers/421-4-7-28-gmail-rate-limit	October 15, 2026
Bounce 550 5.7.1	Google Workspace Admin Help: Gmail SMTP errors and codes; Google: Email sender guidelines	outreach2day.com/answers/550-5-7-1-error	November 3, 2026
Bounce rate is high	Google Workspace Admin Help: Gmail SMTP errors and codes; Yahoo Sender Hub: SMTP error codes	outreach2day.com/answers/bounce-rate-too-high	November 18, 2026
Gmail puts cold email in spam	Google: Email sender guidelines; Google: Email sender guidelines FAQ	outreach2day.com/answers/gmail-cold-emails-going-to-spam	November 25, 2026
Outlook junks or rejects cold email	Microsoft: Outlook's new requirements for high-volume senders; Microsoft Learn: Email non-delivery reports and SMTP errors in Exchange Online	outreach2day.com/answers/outlook-blocking-cold-email	November 25, 2026
Spam complaints are rising	Google: Email sender guidelines; Google: Email sender guidelines FAQ	outreach2day.com/answers/spam-complaint-rate-threshold	November 3, 2026
Warmup inbox rate dropped	Google: Email sender guidelines; Gmail Help: Postmaster Tools dashboards	outreach2day.com/answers/warm-up-inbox-rate-dropped	September 29, 2026
A domain looks burned	Spamhaus: Domain Blocklist (DBL); Gmail Help: Postmaster Tools dashboards	outreach2day.com/answers/burned-domain-what-to-do	November 22, 2026
Reply rate dropped	Google: Email sender guidelines; Gmail Help: Postmaster Tools dashboards	outreach2day.com/answers/new-domains-reply-rate-drop	September 29, 2026
Placement tests disagree	Google: Email sender guidelines; Gmail Help: Postmaster Tools dashboards	outreach2day.com/answers/inbox-placement-tests-reliable	November 3, 2026
Postmaster Tools reputation dashboards are going away	Gmail Help: Learn about the deprecation of the old Postmaster Tools interface; Gmail Help: Postmaster Tools dashboards	outreach2day.com/answers/google-postmaster-tools-reputation	November 3, 2026
Open rates look low	Gmail Help: Postmaster Tools dashboards; Google Workspace Admin Help: Gmail SMTP errors and codes	outreach2day.com/answers/open-tracking-links-deliverability	September 28, 2026
Unsure about one-click unsubscribe	Google: Email sender guidelines FAQ; Google: Email sender guidelines	outreach2day.com/answers/one-click-unsubscribe-cold-email	November 3, 2026

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2026.pdf

Quoting and citing with attribution are welcome. Corrections to a fact or a price: support@outreach2day.com.

Version history

VERSION	DATE	CHANGES
1.0	September 29, 2026	First edition
1.0	November 13, 2026	Rebuilt from updated sources: prices and facts re-read at build time
Next	by December 27, 2026	Every price and fact re-checked against its source page

Links

- Web version, with every source linked: outreach2day.com/answers
- 550 5.7.1, in full: outreach2day.com/answers/550-5-7-1-error
- Outreach2day pricing: outreach2day.com/pricing
- Create an account: app.outreach2day.com/signup
- All reports: outreach2day.com/reports