

Nothing spoils an email marketing program like poor deliverability. As ISPs' delivery algorithms become increasingly stringent, it's more important than ever to have accurate data. One of the simplest and most effective ways to improve your email deliverability is through an email validation service.

An email validation service scrutinizes email addresses to determine if they're accurate and deliverable and to scrub potentially problematic or error-ridden data. There are dozens of service providers to choose from at all prices, but they won't all give you the results you desire. How do you know which to choose? **Use this scoring sheet to compare the providers you're considering.**

Award one point to every criterion met.

Provider Name	
---------------	--

Mailbox Check

The bulk of invalid data is often discovered during a mailbox check, which ensures the mailbox exists and is deliverable and active. Some providers go even further, providing detailed codes about the server response: Was the mailbox full? Does it exist? Is it a group account? Does the server respond "OK" to all requests? Look for a provider that is experienced in interpreting server responses accurately and returns granular results.

Email Correction

Companies that collect data at the point of sale (POS) should look for a provider that counteracts typos, misspellings and other errors through email correction. A recent study of more than 40 national retailers found that, on average, 27% of emails collected at the POS are invalid and 4.6% of those invalids can be recaptured. Don't leave good data on the table.

□ Spam Trap Prevention

The punishments for hitting a spam trap can be severe, including having your emails being completely blocked. A provider that has compiled a robust database of spam traps and habitual complainers can best help you from preventing toxic data from infiltrating your list.

□ Full Coverage of International Domains

.UK, .mx, .cn, .ru, .fr, .jp. Your contacts are spread between thousands of email domains worldwide, but not all email validation providers have the technology to globally validate accurately. Eliminate any that do not.

□ Detailed Reporting

Detailed reporting is invaluable in discovering trends or issues in your email acquisition tactics. An email validation provider should answer why an address is invalid, if it was a soft or hard bounce, if the syntax was inaccurate, if the domain was incorrect and more. Look for a provider that can provide detailed status codes beyond just good, bad and unknown. Award an additional point to any providers that can provide custom reports or apply custom suppressions unique to your company.

□ Free Trial

Any provider worth its salt will offer potential customers a free trial of its service. Take advantage of [free email validation reports](#) and trials to compare outputs and narrow your choices.

□ Flexible Service Options

Get your results when you want them, how you want them. Look for a provider that can return results via a real-time API or provide “hands off” batch processing within minutes or hours.

☐ Secure Environment

Data hacking is a real threat. If your data falls into the wrong hands, you jeopardize your company's reputation and your customers' security. Work with a provider with a secure, encrypted means for submitting data and does not store your data after processing.

☐ Established, Reputable Service

Email validation technology has evolved significantly throughout the years. You want to work with an experienced provider with a proven correction algorithm that's processed millions of domains and billions of email addresses. Solutions that have been active for 10 years best meet this criterion.

☐ Comprehensive Email Data Offerings

For a truly worthwhile experience, work with a data services expert that offers a full look at the email address. From email validation to providing historical usage of the email address and intelligence on the person behind it, you'll be better positioned to improve the performance of your email marketing.

0 – 6	This provider likely has limited or inaccurate techniques that typically miss a lot of bad emails and invalidate good ones. Do not work with this provider.
7 – 8	While not the best option available, this provider may be worth additional research. Step back to evaluate your marketing objectives to ensure the provider can give you the service your company truly needs.
9 – 10	The cream of the crop! This provider can help you increase your email deliverability by cleaning your database of invalid and fraudulent emails.