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Email Marketing for Online Stores

A practical, step-by-step guide to building an email list and turning subscribers into repeat customers

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Introduction

This guide is for small online store owners, beginners and anyone who has set up a shop on Shopify, WooCommerce or a similar platform and wants more sales from the visitors and customers they already have. You do not need a marketing background or a big budget. You need a clear plan, a little time each week, and the patience to improve things step by step.

By the end of this eBook you will be able to:

- Explain why email is worth your time and choose a suitable email platform
- Collect subscribers legally through sign-up forms, pop-ups and checkout
- Set up the four core automated flows: welcome, abandoned cart, post-purchase and win-back
- Plan a simple monthly campaign calendar
- Write clear emails that look good on a phone
- Understand deliverability, including SPF, DKIM and DMARC, in plain words
- Read your key numbers and use segmentation to send more relevant emails
- Follow the basics of consent and unsubscribe rules

Each chapter ends with practical steps. Work through them in order, or jump to the chapter you need most.

Chapter 1: Why Email Still Matters

You own the list

Social media followers belong to the platform. If an algorithm changes or an account is restricted, your reach can drop overnight. An email list is different. It is a list of people who asked to hear from you, and you can take it with you if you change tools. That makes email one of the few marketing channels a small business truly controls.

Email works with your other marketing

Email is not a replacement for ads, search or social media. It is the channel that catches the value those efforts create. Someone might find you through an Instagram post, browse your store and leave. If they joined your list first, you get another chance to bring them back without paying for another ad click.

Low running cost

Most email platforms charge by the number of contacts or emails sent, and many offer a free tier for small lists. Compared with paying for every click, the cost of reaching an existing subscriber is usually small. That makes email especially useful when you are watching every rupee or dollar.

What email is good at

- Welcoming new subscribers and explaining what makes your store different
- Reminding shoppers about items left in their cart
- Encouraging a second purchase after the first order
- Announcing new arrivals, restocks and seasonal sales
- Bringing back customers who have gone quiet

> Tip: Treat your list as a relationship, not a megaphone. People stay subscribed when emails are useful, relevant and not too frequent.

Chapter 2: Choosing a Platform and Collecting Subscribers Legally

What to look for in an email platform

Popular choices include tools built into your store platform (such as Shopify Email), and dedicated tools such as Klaviyo, Mailchimp, Omnisend, Brevo and MailerLite. Rather than chasing the "best" tool, check these points:

1. **Store integration.** Does it connect to your store so it can see orders, products and abandoned checkouts? Automated flows depend on this.
2. **Automations.** Can it run welcome, abandoned cart, post-purchase and win-back flows?
3. **Segmentation.** Can you group contacts by purchase history, location or engagement?
4. **Templates.** Are there mobile-friendly templates you can edit without coding?
5. **Pricing.** How does the price change as your list grows? Look at the cost at 500, 2,000 and 10,000 contacts.
6. **Deliverability support.** Does it guide you through domain authentication (covered in Chapter 6)?

Pricing tiers and features change often, so check the platform's current settings and pricing page before you commit.

Consent comes first

Only email people who clearly agreed to receive marketing from you. Buying lists, scraping emails from websites or adding every business card you collected is a fast route to spam complaints, a damaged sender reputation and possible legal trouble. Clear consent means:

- The person took an action to subscribe, such as ticking an unticked box or entering their email in a sign-up form
- You told them what they will receive, for example "new arrivals, offers and tips, about once a week"
- You keep a record of when and where they signed up (most platforms do this automatically)

Double opt-in means the subscriber confirms by clicking a link in a confirmation email. It adds a small step but gives you a cleaner list and stronger proof of consent. Many store owners use it, especially when selling to regions with strict privacy rules.

Where to collect subscribers

Pop-ups. A pop-up that appears after a visitor has spent some time on the page, or when they move to leave, can work well. Keep it simple: one headline, one email field, one button. Make the close button easy to see. On mobile, use a small banner or a pop-up that does not cover the whole screen.

Embedded forms. Place a short sign-up form in the footer and on your blog or "About" page.

Checkout. Add a marketing consent checkbox at checkout. Leave it unticked by default and use clear wording, for example: "Email me about new products and offers. You can unsubscribe anytime." A customer buying from you is not automatically a marketing subscriber; order and shipping emails are allowed, but marketing needs consent.

Offline and social. At a market stall or in a physical shop, use a tablet sign-up form or a QR code that leads to your form. On Instagram or Facebook, link to a sign-up page.

What to offer in return

A reason to subscribe helps. Options include a first-order discount, free shipping on the first order, early access to new collections, or a useful guide such as a size chart or care guide. Be honest about what they get, and deliver it immediately in the first email.

Keep your list clean

List hygiene means regularly removing addresses that hurt your results.

☐ Remove hard bounces (invalid addresses). Most platforms do this automatically.

☐ Suppress anyone who unsubscribed or marked you as spam. Never re-add them.

☐ Review contacts who have not opened or clicked in a long period, such as six months, and send them a re-engagement email before removing them.

☐ Fix obvious typos at sign-up, such as "gmial.com", using a validation setting if your platform offers one.

Chapter 3: The Welcome Series

Why automate the welcome

New subscribers are usually at their most interested right after signing up. A welcome series is a short sequence of emails sent automatically to every new subscriber. You set it up once and it keeps working.

A simple three-email welcome series

Email 1: Sent immediately - Purpose: deliver what you promised and say thank you - Content: the discount code or guide, a short line about who you are, a button to shop best sellers - Subject line ideas: "Welcome, here is your 10% code", "Thanks for joining us, your gift is inside"

Email 2: Sent two days later - Purpose: build trust - Content: your story in a few sentences, what makes your products different (materials, sourcing, handmade, fast local delivery), and how returns and delivery work - Subject line ideas: "Why we started this shop", "What to expect when you order from us"

Email 3: Sent four to five days after Email 2 - Purpose: encourage the first order - Content: three to six popular products, customer favourites or a "start here" collection, and a reminder if the discount code is still unused - Subject line ideas: "Our most-loved picks", "Your code is still waiting"

Worked example: a hypothetical scarf store

Imagine a small online store in Lahore selling printed scarves. Its welcome series might look like this: Email 1 sends a code for free delivery on the first order. Email 2 explains that each design is printed in small batches and shows how to style a scarf three ways. Email 3 highlights five best-selling designs and reminds the reader that the free delivery code expires in seven days. This is an example structure, not a guaranteed formula, so test and adjust.

> Tip: Add a filter so anyone who places an order leaves the welcome series. Nobody wants a "make your first order" email the day after they bought.

Chapter 4: Abandoned Cart, Post-Purchase and Win-Back Flows

Abandoned cart flow

When a shopper adds items to their cart or starts checkout and leaves, your platform can send reminders, but only if you have their email and consent to contact them. Check the platform's current settings for how it detects abandoned checkouts and which shoppers qualify.

A three-email abandoned cart flow:

1. **About one hour later.** A friendly reminder showing the item image, name and price, with a button back to the cart. Subject: "Did you forget something?" or "Your cart is saved".
2. **About one day later.** Answer common worries: delivery times, returns, payment options such as cash on delivery if you offer it, and how to contact you. Subject: "Questions about your order?"
3. **About two to three days later.** A final reminder. You may add a small incentive, but do not train customers to always wait for a discount. Subject: "Last reminder about your cart".

Stop the flow as soon as the person completes their purchase.

Post-purchase flow

The period after a first order is a strong moment to build loyalty.

1. **Thank you (one to two days after order).** Separate from the order confirmation. Thank them, explain what happens next and share care or usage tips.
2. **Check-in (after expected delivery).** Ask if everything arrived well and invite a review. Ask for honest feedback; do not offer rewards only for positive reviews.
3. **Cross-sell (two to three weeks later).** Suggest products that go well with what they bought. Someone who bought a phone case might like a screen protector.
4. **Replenishment (if relevant).** For products that run out, such as skincare, coffee or perfume, send a reminder around the time they may need more.

Subject line ideas: "Thank you for your order", "How is your new purchase?", "Pairs well with your last order", "Running low? Restock in one click".

Win-back flow

Customers who have not ordered for a while can often be brought back with a gentle nudge. Decide what "a while" means for your store based on how often people normally buy. For a

store where customers typically reorder every two months, you might start a win-back after four months without an order.

1. **Email 1:** "We miss you" with new arrivals since their last order.
2. **Email 2 (one week later):** An offer, such as a discount or free shipping, with an expiry date.
3. **Email 3 (one week later):** A final message asking if they still want to hear from you, with a clear option to stay subscribed or unsubscribe.

People who do not engage after a win-back flow are good candidates for suppression, which protects your deliverability.

> Tip: Start with these four flows before worrying about advanced automations. Together they cover the most important moments in a customer's journey.

Chapter 5: Campaigns, Calendar and Writing Basics

Flows versus campaigns

Flows are automatic and triggered by behaviour. Campaigns are one-off emails you send to a list or segment, such as a new collection launch or a holiday sale. A healthy email programme uses both.

How often to send

There is no single correct frequency. Many small stores start with one campaign per week and adjust based on results. If unsubscribes or spam complaints rise, slow down or send more targeted emails. If engagement is steady, you might test a second weekly email to your most active subscribers.

A simple monthly calendar

Week	Campaign idea	Main goal
Week 1	New arrivals or restock announcement	Show what is fresh
Week 2	Helpful content: guide, how-to, styling or care tips	Build trust and engagement
Week 3	Customer favourites or a themed collection	Drive sales without a discount
Week 4	Offer or event tied to a season, payday or holiday	Boost monthly revenue

Adapt this to your calendar. In Pakistan, for example, you might plan around Ramadan, Eid, wedding season, back-to-school and 11.11 or year-end sales. For US or UK customers, think about Mother's Day, Black Friday and the December holidays. Plan big sales at least two to three weeks ahead so you have time to prepare stock, images and emails.

Writing emails people read

- **Subject line:** Keep it short and specific. Say what is inside. Avoid all capitals and many exclamation marks.
- **Preview text:** The short line shown after the subject in many inboxes. Use it to add detail rather than repeating the subject.
- **One main goal per email:** One clear call to action, such as "Shop the new collection", works better than five competing buttons.
- **Short paragraphs:** Two or three sentences each. Most people read on their phones.
- **Write like a person:** A friendly, direct tone usually beats corporate language.

- **Be honest:** Do not use fake urgency like a countdown that resets, or subject lines like "Re: your order" when there is no order.

Design basics

1. Use a single-column layout so it works well on mobile.
2. Put your logo and a clear headline at the top.
3. Use buttons with plenty of padding, large enough to tap with a thumb.
4. Keep images compressed so the email loads quickly, and add alt text in case images are blocked.
5. Do not put all your text inside an image. Some inboxes block images, and image-only emails can look suspicious to spam filters.
6. Include your store name, a contact method, your physical or business address where required, and an unsubscribe link in the footer.
7. Send a test to yourself and check it on a phone and a computer before sending to your list.

Chapter 6: Deliverability in Plain Words

What deliverability means

Deliverability is whether your emails reach the inbox rather than the spam folder or not arriving at all. Inbox providers such as Gmail, Outlook and Yahoo look at who you are, how you send and how recipients react.

Authenticating your domain: SPF, DKIM and DMARC

Think of these as three ways of proving your emails really come from you.

- **SPF (Sender Policy Framework):** A record on your domain that lists which services are allowed to send email for your domain. It is like a guest list at the door.
- **DKIM (DomainKeys Identified Mail):** A digital signature added to each email. The receiving server checks the signature against a key published on your domain, which shows the email was not changed on the way.
- **DMARC (Domain-based Message Authentication, Reporting and Conformance):** A policy that tells inbox providers what to do if an email fails SPF or DKIM checks, such as do nothing, send to spam or reject. It can also send you reports.

Major inbox providers now expect bulk senders to authenticate their domain, so this step is not optional if you want reliable delivery.

How to set them up

1. Send from your own domain, such as hello@yourstore.com, not a free Gmail address.
2. In your email platform, find the domain authentication or sender settings.
3. The platform will give you DNS records to add. Log in to where your domain is managed, such as your domain registrar or hosting provider, and add them exactly as shown.
4. Start DMARC with a monitoring policy (often written as p=none) so nothing is blocked while you check that everything passes.
5. Return to your email platform and confirm it shows the domain as verified.

Exact steps differ between platforms and domain providers, so check the platform's current settings and help pages.

Habits that protect your inbox placement

- Only email people who opted in
- Make unsubscribing easy and quick; a visible link is better than a spam complaint
- Remove bounced addresses and long-term inactive contacts

- Warm up slowly if you are new or have an old list: send to your most engaged subscribers first, then gradually widen
- Keep a consistent sending pattern rather than going silent for months and then blasting everyone
- Avoid misleading subject lines and heavy use of spammy phrases like "100% free" or "act now"

> Tip: If your open and click rates suddenly drop across all emails, check your domain authentication and recent spam complaints before rewriting your content.

Chapter 7: Metrics and Segmentation

The key numbers

Metric	How to calculate	What it tells you
Open rate	Opens divided by delivered emails	Interest in the subject line and sender, with limits
Click rate	Unique clicks divided by delivered emails	Whether the content made people act
Conversion rate	Orders divided by delivered emails	How well the email led to sales
Revenue per recipient	Revenue divided by delivered emails	The overall value of the send

Open rates are less reliable than they used to be because some email apps load images automatically, which can count as an open even if the person never looked. Use opens as a rough signal and give more weight to clicks, orders and revenue.

Worked example with simple arithmetic

Imagine a hypothetical store sends a campaign to 2,000 subscribers.

- 40 emails bounce, so delivered = 2,000 minus 40 = **1,960**
- 98 people click. Click rate = 98 divided by 1,960 = **5%**
- 20 people place an order. Conversion rate = 20 divided by 1,960 = about **1.02%**
- Those orders total PKR 60,000. Revenue per recipient = 60,000 divided by 1,960 = about **PKR 30.61**

Revenue per recipient is useful for comparing emails. If next week's campaign earns PKR 45 per recipient, it performed better even if its open rate looked similar. Compare your own emails over time rather than chasing numbers from other businesses, because results vary widely by industry, audience and how each platform measures them.

What is segmentation

Segmentation means dividing your list into groups so each group gets more relevant emails. Relevant emails tend to get more clicks and fewer unsubscribes.

Useful segments to start with

1. **Engaged subscribers:** Opened or clicked in the last 60 to 90 days. Send most campaigns here.

2. **Never purchased:** Subscribers with no orders. Focus on trust, best sellers and first-order offers.
3. **One-time buyers:** Encourage a second order with cross-sells.
4. **Repeat customers:** Reward them with early access or thank-you offers.
5. **Location:** Send city-specific delivery news or time sends for their time zone.
6. **Product interest:** People who bought or browsed a certain category, such as men's watches or kitchen items.

Testing

Many platforms let you A/B test, sending two versions of a subject line or design to small groups and then the winner to the rest. Test one thing at a time, use a large enough group, and write down what you learn.

Chapter 8: Compliance Basics

Why compliance matters

Email laws protect people from unwanted messages. Rules differ by country. Examples include the CAN-SPAM Act in the United States, GDPR and PECR rules in the European Union and the United Kingdom, and CASL in Canada. If you sell internationally, the rules of your customers' countries may apply. This chapter is general information, not legal advice; check the current rules for the countries you sell to, or speak to a qualified professional.

Core principles that apply almost everywhere

- **Get clear consent** before sending marketing emails, especially in the EU, UK and Canada
- **Identify yourself:** Use your real business name and an accurate "from" name
- **No misleading subject lines** or headers
- **Include a working unsubscribe link** in every marketing email and honour requests promptly
- **Include contact details,** such as a business address where the law requires it
- **Keep records** of when and how people subscribed
- **Protect subscriber data:** limit who has access to your email platform and use strong passwords with two-factor login

Transactional versus marketing emails

Order confirmations, shipping updates and password resets are transactional. They are generally allowed without marketing consent, but should not be filled with promotions. Anything promoting products or offers counts as marketing.

A privacy policy

Your store should have a privacy policy explaining what data you collect, why, and how people can unsubscribe or ask for their data to be removed. Link to it from your sign-up forms.

Quick-Start Checklist

☐ Choose an email platform that integrates with your store

☐ Set up a sender address on your own domain

☐ Add SPF, DKIM and DMARC records and confirm the domain is verified

☐ Add a pop-up or banner sign-up form with a clear offer

☐ Add an unticked marketing consent checkbox at checkout

☐ Write and switch on a three-email welcome series

☐ Set up a three-email abandoned cart flow

☐ Set up a post-purchase flow with a thank-you and review request

☐ Create a win-back flow for customers who have gone quiet

☐ Plan next month's four campaigns using the calendar template

☐ Test every email on mobile before sending

☐ Create at least two segments: engaged subscribers and never purchased

☐ Track click rate, conversion rate and revenue per recipient in a simple sheet

☐ Check that every marketing email has an unsubscribe link and your business details

☐ Clean your list of bounces and long-term inactive contacts every few months

About DAD Technologies

DAD Technologies is a Pakistan-based digital agency helping businesses grow with ecommerce, digital marketing, web development and AI automation. Explore our free tools and guides at dadtechnologies.com, or contact us for a free consultation.