

How to Manually Clean Your Email List

Introduction

A growing contact list is only valuable when addresses are **valid**, **consented**, and **engaged**. Inactive subscribers, hard bounces, and stale imports drag down open rates and can push your systeme.io account into worse deliverability pools.

This guide walks you through **manually cleaning** your list in the CRM—removing or unsubscribing **inactive**, **unsubscribed**, and **bounced** contacts (invalid addresses that return delivery errors). systeme.io also offers automatic list cleaning; manual cleanup is still useful for audits, migrations, and precise control.

systeme.io

How to manually clean your email list

Improve deliverability. Boost engagement. Protect your sender reputation.

Filter

Email activity

☒ Inactive

Contact state

☒ Bounced ☒ Inactive

Select all (328)

☒ Inactive

Delete

Unsubscribe

Contacts (3,842)

☐ Email	Name	Email activity	Contact state	Date added
☐	user1@example.com		Inactive	07/04/2024
☐			Inactive	07/04/2024
☐			Inactive	07/04/2024
☐			Inactive	07/04/2024
☐	bounce.user@example.com		Bounced	
☐	optout.user@example.com		Unsubscribed	07/04/2024

Messy, large list
High risk. Low performance.

Clean, engaged list
High deliverability. Better results.

Improved Deliverability

Filter inactive
Remove non-engaged contacts

Remove bounced
Protect your reputation

Unsubscribe non-buyers
Clean your list

Bulk delete safely
In bulk, with confidence

Why List Cleaning Matters

Email providers score your sends using engagement and bounce signals. When many contacts never open mail—or addresses bounce repeatedly—future campaigns are more likely to land in spam or promotions.

Best-practice hygiene (see [Good Practices for Email Deliverability](#)) includes regularly removing **bounced** and **unsubscribed** contacts and managing **inactive** subscribers. Manual cleaning complements automatic rules when you need a full spring clean after an import or a quiet period.

1. Clean Your List by Deleting Inactive Contacts

1. Open the **CRM** tab, then click **Contacts**.
2. Enable the **Email activity** filter.
3. In **No email opened or clicked since**, choose a date from about **one month ago** (adjust based on how often you send).
4. Optional but recommended: add the **Contact state** filter and select **Has not made any payment yet** to isolate **non-customers** before bulk delete—so you keep buyer records for accounting.
5. Review the filtered list, select all contacts, and click **Delete**.

Important

We recommend keeping customer data for accounting purposes. Use payment-related filters before deleting so paying clients are not removed by mistake.

2. Stop Emailing Inactive Contacts (Without Deleting)

For **inactive customers**, prefer **unsubscribing** them from marketing instead of deleting their contact record. Unsubscribing inactive users improves open-rate statistics and deliverability while preserving purchase history.

1. Filter inactive contacts with the same **Email activity** steps as above.
2. Select all contacts in the filtered view.
3. Click **More actions**, then **Unsubscribe from all marketing emails**.

These contacts will no longer receive marketing broadcasts or automations that respect unsubscribe status.

Re-engagement option: assign a **tag** to inactive contacts and run a dedicated win-back email campaign before you unsubscribe or delete—you may recover a portion of the list.

3. Remove Bounced Contacts

When delivery fails, systeme.io marks contacts as **Bounced**. Bounced contacts **automatically stop receiving emails** to protect your reputation—but they should still be **deleted from your database** periodically so your CRM stays accurate.

1. Go to **CRM** → **Contacts**.
2. Open the **Contact state** filter and select **Bounced**.
3. Select all bounced contacts and click **Delete**.

Spam complaints in the recipient inbox can also move a contact to Bounced status. If you are certain a bounce was a mistake, contact [systeme.io](https://systeme.io/support) support to reactivate that address.

4. Handle Unsubscribed Contacts

Contacts who unsubscribe should not keep receiving marketing. Review unsubscribed contacts with the **Contact state** → **Unsubscribed** filter and **delete** them if you no longer need the record—or leave them unsubscribed so they cannot be mailed again until they resubscribe through a form.

Do not re-import or bulk-email unsubscribed contacts; that violates consent and damages deliverability.

CRM Filters and Bulk Actions

The Contacts page offers many filters (tags, contact state, email activity, payments, and more). Combine filters to target:

- Duplicates or bad imports.
- Segments that never engaged after a launch.
- Bounced or unsubscribed groups in one click.

After filtering, use bulk **Delete**, **tags**, or **Unsubscribe from all marketing emails** to apply hygiene at scale—faster than opening each contact individually.

Automatic vs Manual Cleaning

systeme.io introduced **automatic list cleaning** to unsubscribe or remove chronically inactive contacts on a schedule. Manual cleaning remains essential when you:

- Migrate from another ESP with an old list.

- Need a one-time purge after a deliverability drop.
- Want to tag and re-engage before unsubscribing.
- Must separate buyers from non-buyers before delete.

Pair both approaches with the habits in [How to Improve Your Email Deliverability](#).

Troubleshooting

Issue	Likely Cause	Recommended Action
Open rate collapsed	Large inactive segment	Filter Email activity; unsubscribe or delete non-engagers.
Bounce rate rising	Stale or bad import	Filter Bounced; delete; verify future CSVs.
Deleted paying customer	No payment filter	Use Has not made any payment yet before bulk delete.
Contact still gets mail after unsubscribe	Wrong automation rule	Check campaign rules; confirm Unsubscribed state.
Bounced by mistake	Full inbox or transient error	Contact support to reactivate contact.
List too large to review	No segmentation	Filter by tag or date; clean in batches.

Frequently Asked Questions

Why clean manually?

Protects deliverability and keeps CRM data accurate after imports or quiet periods.

How to find inactive users?

CRM → Contacts → Email activity → No opened/clicked since [date].

Delete or unsubscribe?

Delete non-buyers; unsubscribe inactive customers to keep records.

Bounced contacts?

They stop receiving mail; delete them regularly from the list.

Automatic cleaning?

Available on platform; use manual filters for precise control.

Related Resources

- [Good Practices for Email Deliverability](#)
- [How to Improve Your Email Deliverability](#)
- [How to Authenticate Your Domain Name for Email Sending](#)
- [Why Aren't My Emails Being Sent?](#)

Clean your list and run email marketing on [systeme.io](#).

Last updated: July 2, 2026