

How to Subscribe Contacts to a Campaign When Importing a Contact List



Introduction

When you move from Mailchimp, ActiveCampaign, Constant Contact, or another ESP to systeme.io, you often need more than a plain contact import—you need subscribers to **land in the right place** inside an email sequence (campaign) without restarting from email #1. During CSV import, you can pick a campaign and map columns that tell systeme.io which email each person already received and when.

This guide explains that workflow—based on [How to subscribe contacts to a campaign when importing a contact list](#)—and how it connects to standard import steps in [How to import or export a contact list](#).

What You Need

- A systeme.io account

- A **campaign** already built in Emails (same order and timing you want going forward)—see [How to set up an email campaign](#)
- A **CSV file** with at least: email addresses, plus data for campaign resume (see below)
- **Consent:** only import and subscribe people allowed to receive your emails

Prepare the CSV from Excel via Save As CSV ([How to import or export a contact list](#)). For full migration context, read [Migration of your contact list to systeme.io: advanced tips](#).

Prepare CSV Columns for Campaign Resume

If you choose a campaign on import, your file should support **three mappings** on the column screen:

1. **Email**—required for every contact
2. **Last sent email number**—position in the sequence on your *old* system (e.g. 0 = none yet, 3 = already received email #3 in the matching sequence)
3. **Last sent email date**—when that last email was sent (so delays can continue logically)

Export these fields from your previous ESP or build them in a spreadsheet before upload. If you omit the campaign position column, import may error with a message asking you to select the column that contains **each contact's position within the email campaign**—add that column and re-import.

Tip: recreate the same email order in systeme.io as on the old platform so “email number 3” means the same message on both sides.

Import Flow Overview

1. CRM → **Contacts** → **Import contacts**
2. Set **CSV delimiter** (comma, semicolon, or pipe)
3. Upload your CSV
4. Optionally assign an import **tag** ([How to create a tag](#))
5. Optionally choose **Campaign (optional)**—covered in the next section
6. Click **Next**
7. Map all columns (email, names, campaign fields, etc.)
8. Complete **Import**

Step 1: Choose the Campaign

While importing your contact list, open the **Campaign (optional)** dropdown and select the campaign that matches the sequence you are migrating. Then continue to the next step (Next).

Leave the campaign dropdown **empty** if you only want contacts in CRM without joining a sequence yet—you can subscribe later manually or via automation ([How to automate the sending of an email sequence \(email campaign\)](#)).

Step 2: Map Column Types

On the mapping popup:

- Map one column to **Email** (required)
- Map one column to **Select last sent email number column** (campaign step from previous system)
- Map one column to **Select last sent email date column** (date of that last send)
- Map other columns (first name, last name, tags, etc.) as needed

These two campaign fields tell systeme.io where each subscriber sits in the sequence so the next scheduled email can follow your campaign delays instead of blasting the full series from the start.

Step 3: Import

After mapping, click **Import**. Contacts are created or updated, tags apply if selected, and campaign subscription uses your mapped step and date data.

Verify a sample of contacts in CRM: check campaign membership and that the next send timing looks reasonable. Warm up volume after migration ([How to migrate without hurting your email deliverability?](#)).

When Not to Use Campaign on Import

- **Brand-new leads** with no prior sequence—import with a tag only; trigger welcome via funnel automation
- **No consent** for marketing email—do not subscribe to a live campaign
- **Test imports**—use a tag like import-test without campaign first
- **Mismatch** between old automation and new campaign structure—rebuild the campaign or reset step numbers to 0 for a fresh sequence

Troubleshooting

Error about campaign position column

Add a CSV column with each contact's last email number in the old sequence and map it to **last sent email number**.

Everyone restarted at email 1

Check that numbers/dates mapped correctly and that campaign email order matches the exported "step" meaning from your old tool.

Import without campaign first

Import with tags only, fix data, delete batch if needed ([How to delete multiple contacts](#)), then re-import with campaign mapping ([Essential steps to import contacts successfully](#)).

Frequently Asked Questions

Is campaign selection required on every import?

No—it is optional. Use it only when you intentionally migrate active sequence subscribers.

Can I combine campaign subscribe and tags?

Yes—select both a tag and a campaign during the same import for segmentation plus sequence placement.

Does this replace automation rules?

No—ongoing opt-ins still use funnel or automation rules ([How do automation rules operate?](#)). Import-time campaign subscribe is mainly for bulk ESP migration.

Related Resources

- [How to subscribe contacts to a campaign when importing a contact list](#)
- [How to import or export a contact list](#)
- [How to set up an email campaign](#)
- [Migration of your contact list to systeme.io: advanced tips](#)

[systeme.io](#) — import once, resume sequences where subscribers left off.

Last updated: July 11, 2026 · Based on *How to subscribe contacts to a campaign when importing a contact list*