

FIELD GUIDE · REPLY ROUTING

Where Replies Go Decides Where Your Emails Land

Every rerouting trick on a cold-email thread moves the conversation to a mailbox the prospect has never engaged with. Filters don't care that both mailboxes are yours. Here is what each setup actually does.

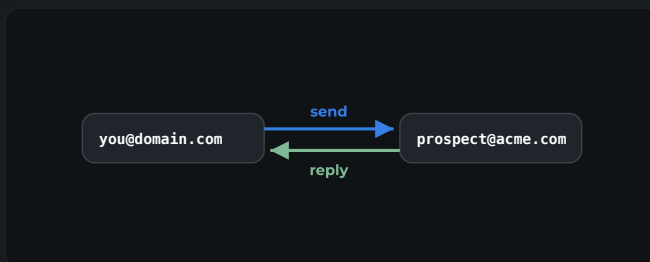
THE CORE RULE

Engagement history is **mailbox-to-mailbox, not person-to-person**. The moment a thread jumps to a mailbox the prospect never replied to, the trust chain breaks and the next email is at spam risk. And it doesn't stop at one send: forward those replies into domains that sit next to your sending infrastructure and the bad reputation spreads, burning the inboxes you actually send from.

01 THE STANDARD

Direct Reply – Same Thread

The prospect replies straight to the mailbox that sent the email. Mutual engagement is on record, so links, PDFs, and attachments move safely in both directions.

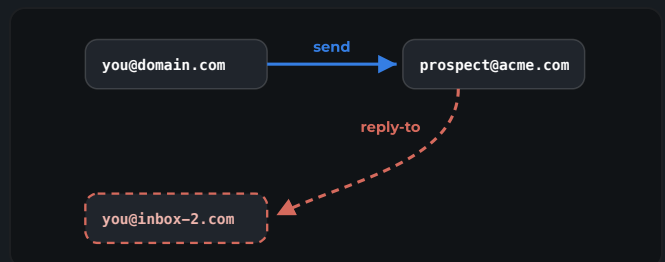


One mailbox, one thread, zero added risk.

02 AVOID

Reply-To Header

The prospect hits reply, but the header sends the thread to a mailbox they never wrote to. Their reply now looks like a cold email hitting your inbox, and the header is a negative signal at send time.

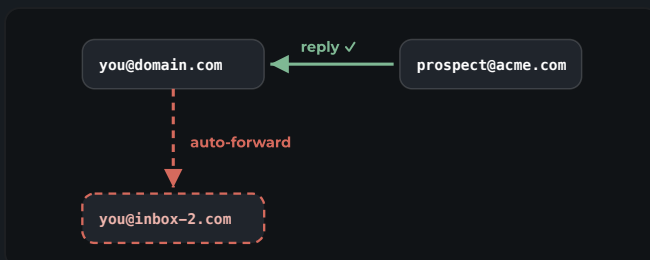


No history → the reply lands in your spam.

03 AVOID

Auto-Forward Rule

The reply arrives fine, then a rule pushes it to a second mailbox. When you answer from that mailbox, the prospect has never engaged with it, so your response is the one at risk.

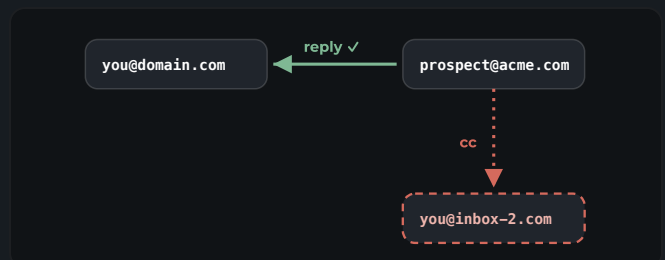


Your reply from there → their spam.

04 AVOID

Adding a CC

A second mailbox gets copied onto the thread. Same break point: the moment you answer from the CC'd mailbox, there is no engagement history between it and the prospect.



Reply from the CC'd mailbox → their spam.

IF YOU MUST REROUTE

Keep the conversation in the original thread.

If you can't, reduce the damage.

Answer from the original mailbox

Forward internally for visibility if you need to, but always respond from the mailbox the prospect actually replied to. The engaged thread is the safe lane.

Whitelist with a subject filter

Routing replies to a client or central inbox? Filter on a unique subject-line token and mark it "never send to spam" so rerouted replies always land.

Drop the Reply-To header

It is stamped on the message at send time and works against you before anyone replies. If a reply has to move, move it after it arrives, not in the headers.