

# The Ethical Cold Email Primer

A 5-lesson field guide to relevance-first outreach — without crossing into spam.

[coldemailthatconverts.com](http://coldemailthatconverts.com)

# How to use this guide

Read one lesson per sitting. Each is short by design. The whole point of ethical cold email is restraint — and that starts with how you learn it.

Every lesson here is also delivered as an email in the free 5-day course. The PDF is for the people who'd rather have it all in one place.

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# Day 1 — What cold email actually is (and is not)

Over the next five days, you'll get one short lesson. By the end, you'll have a clear definition of ethical cold email, a framework for ICP, a three-email sequence, a compliance checklist, and a first-campaign plan.

**Cold email** is a one-to-one business message sent to someone you haven't talked to before, with a relevant reason to reach out and a clear, easy way to opt out. That's it.

It is **not** a blast to a purchased list, not a hidden-identity pitch, and not 'personalization' that consists of {{first\_name}} plus a generic flattery line.

## **The four-part test:**

1. Relevance — would the recipient agree the message applies?
2. Honesty — sender, subject, and body are all truthful.
3. Respect — easy to opt out, opt-outs honored immediately.
4. Value-first — you offer something useful before asking.

If a message fails any of those four, rewrite it or don't send it.

## Day 2 — Picking a niche tight enough to work

Most failed cold email is a targeting problem disguised as a copy problem.

### **A useful ICP includes:**

- Industry or segment
- Company size band
- Role of the recipient
- A trigger event (hiring, funding, new product, regulatory change)
- An exclusion list — who should never be on this list

That last one matters most. Writing down 'we will not contact X' forces you to define why someone belongs in the first place.

### **One-sentence ICP template:**

'I help [role] at [segment] companies with [problem], usually after [trigger event].'

If you can't fill it in without hand-waving, you are not ready to send yet.

## Day 3 — The three-email sequence

Three emails. That's the whole sequence.

**Email 1 — Intro (day 0):** Subject names a real thing about them. One specific observation that proves you looked. One narrow segment + one narrow problem. One low-friction ask (no calendar link yet). Sender identity, physical address, one-line opt-out.

**Email 2 — Useful follow-up (day 4):** Shorter than email 1. Adds a new insight or data point — never 'just bumping this up.' Two graceful exits ('not now' or 'never').

**Email 3 — The breakup (day 9):** Announce this is the last email. Leave something genuinely useful behind, no gate. Working unsubscribe link.

Long sequences raise complaint rates more than they raise replies. Restraint is the move.

# Day 4 — Compliance in plain English

You don't need a law degree to send compliantly. You need a few habits.

**United States — CAN-SPAM:** Accurate sender name and email. Truthful subject line. Working unsubscribe honored within 30 days (treat it as 24 hours). Physical mailing address in every email.

**European Union — GDPR:** B2B cold email is generally allowed under 'legitimate interest,' but: have a clear business reason for the specific person, document that reasoning, and use only appropriate data.

**Canada — CASL:** The strictest. You generally need express or implied consent, including conspicuously published business contact info with a clear business reason. When in doubt, skip Canadian addresses.

**Habits that cover all three:** Sender identity, address, and opt-out in every email. A suppression list that persists across tools. A CRM note on why each contact was added.

*This is not legal advice. When the stakes are real, talk to a lawyer.*

# Day 5 — Your first-campaign plan

**Volume:** 50 contacts. Small enough to read every reply by hand, big enough to learn from.

## **Setup:**

- Buy one adjacent sending domain (not your main brand).
- Provision two mailboxes on it.
- Warm them for 2 weeks before real sends.
- Verify every address before adding.

## **Send:**

- Tuesday–Thursday, mid-morning recipient time.
- Three-email sequence from Day 3.
- Hand-write at least the first line of each email.

## **Measure:**

- Reply quality (interested / not now / never / negative)
- Bounce rate (target <3%)
- Unsubscribes and complaints (any complaint = investigate)

## **Decide:**

- If reply quality is good, expand the same ICP slowly — another 50, then 100.
- If reply quality is poor, the problem is almost always targeting or offer, not copy.
- If you get a complaint, pause and review.

Narrow audience, honest message, small batches, restraint at every step. That's the whole system.

# Next steps

- Visit the **Practical Guide** for the full annotated three-email sequence.
- Use the **AI Advisor** for a niche-specific recommendation.
- Read the **Proof** page for benchmarks and case studies.

Built with restraint. No affiliate links. No upsells.