

Mailchimp, Klaviyo or Brevo: the one number that decides which is cheapest

Mailchimp and Klaviyo bill by contacts stored; Brevo bills by emails sent. In the calculator default of a 10,000-contact list mailed 40,000 times a month, that is about 100, 150 and 32 dollars a month. The deciding number is your contacts-to-sends ratio.

Published 2026-06-30 · A Mue guide

Comparing the headline plans of Mailchimp, Klaviyo and Brevo is misleading, because the three do not price the same way. Mailchimp and Klaviyo charge by how many contacts you store. Brevo charges by how many emails you send, with unlimited stored contacts. So the cheapest option flips depending on one number about you, not about them.

The default scenario

Take the calculator default: a 10,000-contact list that gets 40,000 emails a month, which is four sends per contact. Using the linear rates anchored to June 2026 reference points, here is what the three models cost.

- Mailchimp, by contacts: about 100 dollars a month (10,000 contacts at roughly one cent each).
- Klaviyo, by contacts: about 150 dollars a month (the same list at a higher per-contact rate).
- Brevo, by emails sent: about 32 dollars a month (40,000 sends at roughly 0.80 dollars per 1,000).

These are planning numbers from a deliberately simple linear model, not quotes. Real plans are tiered step functions, so confirm your own current tier from each provider before you commit. The point is the shape, not the cents.

The number that actually decides it

It is your contacts-to-sends ratio: how many emails each stored contact receives in a month. With the default rates, Mailchimp and Brevo cost the same at about 12.5 emails per contact per month. Below that you send relatively little to a large stored list, and Brevo is cheaper. Above it you mail the same people often, and the stored-contact fee is spread over so much sending that contact pricing wins. Klaviyo, priced higher per contact, only catches Brevo above roughly 19 emails per contact per month.

The same list, two ways

- A 50,000-contact list mailed once a month (50,000 sends): about 500 dollars on Mailchimp, 750 on Klaviyo, and 40 on Brevo. A big list you mail rarely is the strongest case for send-based pricing.

- A 2,000-contact list mailed 20 times a month (40,000 sends): about 20 dollars on Mailchimp, 30 on Klaviyo, and 32 on Brevo. A small list you mail constantly is where contact-based pricing turns cheaper.

Not every contact is a billable contact

The deciding number is contacts-to-sends, but the word contacts is not counted the same way by the two contact-priced tools, so the same 10,000-row list can bill very differently. Before you compare, get each tool to tell you its billable count, not your raw list size.

- Mailchimp counts the most. Subscribed, unsubscribed and non-subscribed contacts all count toward your plan; only archived, cleaned (repeatedly bounced) and deleted contacts drop out. So people who opted out keep billing until you act. The lever is to filter by Unsubscribed status and archive them, which removes them from the billable total while keeping the record.
- Klaviyo counts the least of the two. It bills active profiles, and suppressed, unsubscribed and deleted profiles are not active, so they do not count. The catch is that suppression is not automatic: a stale profile you have stopped emailing keeps counting until it unsubscribes or you suppress it, which is the most common reason a Klaviyo bill drifts up.
- Brevo sidesteps the question. Every paid plan includes unlimited contacts and bills on emails sent, so an unsubscribed or dormant contact costs nothing because cost tracks sending, not storage.

Where Klaviyo still earns its premium

On pure cost Klaviyo is the most expensive of the three in this model, so the honest cost answer is rarely Klaviyo. Its case is not price; it is ecommerce revenue attribution and flows tied to store data. If you are not running that, you are paying for capability you do not use, and the cost math above applies straight.

Run your own ratio

Drop your real list size and monthly send volume into the calculator and it shows which model, and which provider, is cheapest for you, with every rate editable so you can paste in your own current tier. The decision is your ratio; the tool just does the arithmetic.

Frequently asked questions

Is Mailchimp, Klaviyo or Brevo cheapest?

There is no single answer; it depends on your contacts-to-sends ratio. Mailchimp and Klaviyo bill by how many contacts you store, so a big list costs more whether or not you email it. Brevo bills by emails sent with unlimited stored contacts. A large list you mail rarely favours Brevo; a small list you mail constantly favours contact-based pricing.

Should I pick an email platform by contacts or by emails sent?

By whichever axis matches your behaviour. In the calculator default rates, the crossover between Mailchimp (contact-priced) and Brevo (send-priced) sits at about 12.5 emails per contact per month. Below that, send-based pricing is cheaper; above it, contact-based pricing is. Klaviyo, at a higher per-contact rate, only beats Brevo above roughly 19 emails per contact

per month.

Why does comparing the headline plans mislead?

Because the three platforms do not price on the same axis, so their sticker plans are not measuring the same thing. Comparing a contacts plan against a sends plan only tells you which is cheaper once you put in your own list size and monthly send volume, which is exactly what the free calculator does.

Does Mailchimp charge for unsubscribed contacts?

Yes. On a Mailchimp marketing plan, unsubscribed and non-subscribed contacts both count toward your monthly contact total and your bill. Only archived, cleaned (repeatedly bounced) and deleted contacts drop out of the billable count. To stop paying for people who opted out, filter by Unsubscribed status, select them and archive them, which removes them from the total while keeping the record.

Does Klaviyo bill for unsubscribed or suppressed profiles?

No. Klaviyo bills on active profiles, and suppressed, unsubscribed and deleted profiles are not active, so they do not count. But suppression is not automatic: a profile you have stopped emailing keeps counting until it unsubscribes or you suppress it, which is the most common reason a Klaviyo bill creeps up. Brevo avoids the question entirely by giving every paid plan unlimited contacts and billing on emails sent instead.

Compare the three at your list size

Free, no signup: agent.mue.app/tools/email-platform-cost-calculator

agent.mue.app/articles/mailchimp-vs-klaviyo-vs-brevo-which-is-cheapest

