

The cheapest way to send transactional email in 2026

Password resets, receipts and verification codes are billed nothing like your newsletter. Marketing email is priced by how many contacts you store; transactional email is priced by how many messages you send. That one difference is why Amazon SES can cost a dollar where a flat-plan provider costs twenty, and why the cheapest sticker is not always the cheapest to run. Here is what SES, Postmark, Resend, SendGrid, Mailgun and Brevo actually cost to send transactional mail in 2026.

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Every application sends two very different kinds of email, and they are billed on completely different meters. The newsletter is marketing email: it goes to a stored list, and providers charge you by how many contacts you keep. The password reset, the receipt, the verification code and the shipping notification are transactional email: they go to one person, once, triggered by something that person just did, and providers charge you by how many you send. Confusing the two is how people end up either overpaying or getting a surprise bill, because a price that looks fine for one model can be wrong for the other.

Why transactional pricing looks so different

On the marketing side, the cost driver is list size. Mailchimp, Klaviyo and Brevo's marketing plans bill by how many contacts you store, whether or not you email them, which is the whole subject of our piece on why your Klaviyo bill is mostly contacts you never email. Transactional email has no stored audience to charge for: there is no list, just a stream of one-off messages. So the meter is volume sent. That single difference is why the numbers below range from about a dollar to nearly two hundred for the same 100,000 emails: the providers are not selling the same thing at different prices, they are making different bets about how much tooling to wrap around the send.

The two pricing models

Underneath the six providers there are really two models. The first is pure pay-as-you-go metered sending, which in practice means Amazon SES: no monthly base fee, you pay per email and nothing else, and you get a bare API. The second is a flat monthly plan with an included volume and an overage rate, which is how Postmark, Resend, SendGrid, Mailgun and Brevo all work: you pay a base fee that bundles templates, a dashboard, analytics, bounce and complaint handling and support, and you pay overage once you exceed the tier. The metered model is cheapest per email and most work to run; the flat model costs more per email and hands you the tooling. Everything else is a variation on that trade.

Amazon SES: cheapest to send, most to build

SES is the price floor. It charges 0.10 dollar per 1,000 emails sent, plus 0.12 dollar per GB of attachments, with no monthly fee. At 10,000 emails a month that is about a dollar; at 100,000 it is about 10 dollars. Nothing else on this page comes close on raw price. What you get for that is exactly an API that sends mail: there is no template editor, no analytics dashboard worth the name, and the deliverability tooling, warm-up, bounce and complaint handling and monitoring are yours to build or bolt on. There is also no permanent free tier any more, only 3,000 message charges a month for the first 12 months on a new account. SES is the right answer when you have engineers, real volume and a reason to care about the bill, and the wrong answer when you wanted email to be a solved problem out of the box.

Postmark: you pay for the receipt arriving

Postmark sits at the premium end and does it deliberately. Its Basic plan is 15 dollars a month for 10,000 emails, with overage at 1.80 dollar per 1,000; the Pro and Platform tiers keep the same 10,000 included and drop the overage to 1.30 and 1.20 dollar. At low volume that is competitive, but the overage is steep, so 100,000 emails a month works out to about 177 dollars (15 dollars plus 90,000 at 1.80 dollar per 1,000). The reason to pay it is that Postmark is built around transactional deliverability: fast delivery, transactional and broadcast streams kept separate so a marketing send cannot hurt your receipt reputation, and detailed delivery data. When the email that must not fail is the password reset or the payment receipt, Postmark's pitch is that the premium buys you the confidence it arrives.

Resend: the modern developer experience

Resend is the provider newer projects tend to reach for, because it puts a clean API and dashboard first. The free tier is 3,000 emails a month, capped at 100 a day; the Pro plan is 20 dollars a month for 50,000 emails or 35 dollars for 100,000, with overage at 0.90 dollar per 1,000, and Scale tiers run from 90 dollars upward for higher volume. It ships React Email so you build templates in code rather than a drag-and-drop editor, which suits teams that want their email in the same repository as their app. It is more expensive per email than SES and much less setup, and at 100,000 sends its 35 dollars undercuts Postmark's 177 by a wide margin. For most teams that want a good API without owning the tooling, Resend is the balance point.

SendGrid: the free tier that went away

SendGrid, now part of Twilio, was the default for years, largely on the strength of a permanent free plan. That plan ended in 2025, replaced by a 60-day trial capped at 100 emails a day, and that change is the single biggest reason projects went shopping in 2025 and 2026. Paid, Essentials starts at 19.95 dollar a month for 50,000 emails and Pro at 89.95 dollar a month scaling toward 2.5 million. It remains a capable, mature platform, but two things are worth knowing: there is no longer a free on-ramp, and marketing and transactional email share the same monthly volume cap, so if you run both through SendGrid they spend from one number. It

is still a reasonable choice, just no longer the obvious free default it used to be.

Mailgun and Brevo: the middle

Two more fill out the middle. Mailgun is a developer-focused sender priced in clean tiers: Basic is 15 dollars for 10,000 emails, Foundation 35 dollars for 50,000, and Scale 90 dollars for 100,000, with overage on the lower tiers around 1.80 dollar per 1,000. It is a straightforward metered-plus-plan option that sits between SES on price and Postmark on polish. Brevo is the other kind of middle: it is the only provider here that runs transactional and marketing email from one account, so a small business can send its receipts and its newsletter without two separate vendors. Its free tier sends 300 transactional emails a day, about 9,000 a month, with unlimited stored contacts, and the Starter plan from 9 dollars a month removes the daily cap. Neither wins on pure price, but both are sensible when the pure-metered SES route is more than you want to run.

The same volume, six very different bills

Line them up at two scales and the models separate. At 10,000 emails a month you are looking at roughly a dollar on SES, 15 dollars on Postmark Basic or Mailgun Basic, 20 dollars on Resend Pro, 19.95 dollars on SendGrid Essentials, and free-to-9-dollars on Brevo, so the flat plans cluster and SES is the outlier on price. At 100,000 a month the gap widens hard: about 10 dollars on SES, 35 dollars on Resend, 90 dollars on Mailgun Scale, 89.95 on SendGrid Pro, and about 177 dollars on Postmark once the overage stacks up. Same 100,000 messages, and the bill ranges from 10 to 177 dollars depending only on how much tooling and deliverability assurance you are buying alongside the send. That spread, not any single sticker, is the thing to understand before you pick.

Before the price matters: getting approved to send

There is a step the comparison above quietly assumes you have already cleared: being allowed to send at all. A new Amazon SES account does not start in production. It starts in a sandbox, where you can send only 200 emails per 24 hours, at most one message per second, and only to addresses and domains you have verified yourself. To lift that you request production access, which is a support form describing your use case, your expected volume, and how you will handle bounces and complaints. AWS usually answers within a day, but it can bounce the request back asking for more detail, and until it clears you cannot mail a single real customer. Even once you are approved, your quota starts at a level AWS sets and then raises automatically as you build a healthy sending history, rather than jumping straight to unlimited.

The flat-plan providers gate new accounts too, just differently. Postmark manually reviews every new account before it will let you send to anyone outside a domain you own and have verified, usually inside a business day and a little longer over a weekend, and it approves accounts that send genuine high-engagement transactional mail, so a borderline or marketing-heavy use case can be declined. SendGrid and Mailgun verify new senders as well and can throttle or pause an account while it is under review. The practical point is that none of these is send-at-

full-volume on day one. If you are migrating to a launch date, start the verification and approval a few days early, because the cheapest sticker on the page is no help if you are still stuck in the sandbox when the feature ships.

The line the per-send price skips: a dedicated IP

Every bill above is the shared-pool price, where your mail leaves from IP addresses the provider also lends to other senders. Past a certain volume the deliverability advice flips to a dedicated IP, an address only you send from, and that is a separate monthly line the per-send comparison hides. Amazon SES charges 24.95 dollar a month for a standard dedicated IP, or 15 dollar a month plus 0.08 dollar per 1,000 emails for its managed version that warms the IP up for you automatically. Postmark's dedicated IP is 50 dollar a month and gated to its Pro tier at 300,000 emails a month or more. SendGrid's Pro plan includes one dedicated IP, and extra ones run from about 30 dollar a month. Mailgun includes one on its 100,000-email Foundation, Growth and Scale plans and charges about 59 dollar a month for more. Resend offers dedicated IPs only on its Scale tier and above and does not publish the price. So the moment you decide you need one, the cheapest-sticker ranking can reshuffle.

The trap is buying one too early. A dedicated IP has no sending reputation on day one, so it has to be warmed up over weeks by ramping volume slowly, and until it is warm your delivery can be worse than the shared pool you left. It only pays off at high, steady volume, the sort that keeps an IP busy enough for mailbox providers to trust it. Below that, a provider's shared pool, especially a transactional-only one like Postmark's, usually delivers better than a cold dedicated IP ever will, which is exactly why Postmark will not sell you one under 300,000 emails a month. So a dedicated IP is a scale decision, not a default: price it in only when your volume is high and steady enough to keep it warm, and lean on the shared pool until then.

So which should you pick

- You have engineers and real volume and want the lowest bill: Amazon SES. You accept building the templates, dashboard and deliverability tooling around a bare API in exchange for the cheapest send by a wide margin.
- Deliverability of critical mail matters more than cost: Postmark. You pay a premium per email for separated streams and a reputation built around receipts and resets arriving fast.
- You want a great API and dashboard with little setup: Resend. It costs more per email than SES and far less effort, and stays cheap at volume compared with Postmark.
- You already send marketing email and want transactional in the same place: Brevo, which runs both from one account with a generous free transactional tier.
- You are migrating off SendGrid's old free plan: any of the above, but Resend and Brevo are the closest replacements for a free-to-low-cost on-ramp, since SendGrid's free tier is gone.

Do not budget it from your newsletter

The mistake that this whole comparison guards against is pricing transactional email off your marketing email plan, or the reverse. They run on different meters: marketing bills by contacts stored, transactional bills by messages sent, and a plan that is cheap on one can be wrong on

the other. If deliverability rather than price is your worry, our guide on why your cold email lands in spam covers the authentication and reputation work that decides whether any of these providers actually reaches the inbox. And to price the marketing side properly, where the contacts-versus-sends split is the whole game, the email platform cost calculator models it directly so you can see which pricing model fits your ratio before you commit.

Frequently asked questions

What is the cheapest transactional email service in 2026?

By raw per-email price, Amazon SES, at 0.10 dollar per 1,000 emails sent with no monthly base fee. At 100,000 emails a month that is about 10 dollars, where a flat-plan provider is often 35 to 90 dollars for the same volume. The catch is that SES is raw infrastructure: you get an API that sends mail and almost nothing else, so you build the templates, the analytics dashboard, the bounce handling and the deliverability tooling yourself. The flat-plan providers cost more per email because that developer experience is included. Cheapest to send is not the same as cheapest to run.

How is transactional email priced differently from marketing email?

Marketing email is almost always priced by how many contacts you store: Mailchimp, Klaviyo and Brevo's marketing plans bill by list size, not by how many emails you send. Transactional email is the opposite: it is priced by volume sent, because a receipt or a password reset goes to one person once and there is no stored audience. That is why you cannot budget one from the other. Our email platform cost calculator is built for the contacts-versus-sends distinction on the marketing side; for transactional mail the only number that matters is monthly send volume.

How much does Postmark cost, and why is it more expensive?

Postmark's Basic plan is 15 dollars a month for 10,000 emails, with overage at 1.80 dollar per 1,000 after that (its Pro and Platform tiers keep the 10,000 included and lower the overage to 1.30 and 1.20 dollar). At 10,000 sends that 15 dollars is competitive, but the overage is where it climbs: 100,000 emails a month is 15 dollars plus 90,000 at 1.80 dollar per 1,000, about 177 dollars. Postmark charges a premium on purpose. It is built around transactional deliverability and speed, keeps transactional and bulk streams separate so a marketing blast cannot drag down your receipt delivery, and its reputation is the product. You pay more per email for the confidence that the password reset arrives.

Is Resend a good choice for transactional email?

Resend is the modern developer-experience pick. Its free tier is 3,000 emails a month (capped at 100 a day), the Pro plan is 20 dollars a month for 50,000 emails or 35 dollars for 100,000, and overage runs 0.90 dollar per 1,000. It ships React Email for building templates in code and a clean API and dashboard, which is why newer projects reach for it. It is more expensive per email than SES but far less setup, and cheaper at volume than Postmark. If you want a good API and dashboard without running your own tooling, Resend is usually the balance point.

Does SendGrid still have a free plan?

No. SendGrid, now part of Twilio, ended its permanent free plan in 2025 and replaced it with a 60-day trial capped at 100 emails a day. After the trial you move to a paid plan: Essentials starts at 19.95 dollar a month for 50,000 emails, and Pro starts at 89.95 dollar a month scaling toward

2.5 million. One thing to watch on SendGrid is that marketing and transactional email share the same monthly volume cap, so if you run both through it they draw from one number. The disappearing free tier is the main reason a lot of small projects went looking for alternatives in 2025 and 2026.

Should I use Brevo or Mailgun instead?

Both are reasonable middle options. Mailgun is a developer-focused sender priced in tiers: Basic is 15 dollars for 10,000 emails, Foundation 35 dollars for 50,000, and Scale 90 dollars for 100,000, with overage on the lower tiers around 1.80 dollar per 1,000. Brevo is the pick if you want a generous free transactional tier and marketing email in the same account: its free plan sends 300 transactional emails a day (about 9,000 a month) with unlimited stored contacts, and the Starter plan from 9 dollars a month removes the daily cap. Brevo is the honest recommendation below because it is the one provider here that runs your transactional and marketing mail from a single account, which suits a small business that does not want two vendors.

Do I need a dedicated IP for transactional email?

Usually not until you are sending at real volume. A dedicated IP is an address only you send from, sold as a monthly add-on: about 24.95 dollar a month on Amazon SES for a standard one (or 15 dollar plus 0.08 dollar per 1,000 for its auto-warmed managed version), 50 dollar a month on Postmark, from around 30 dollar on SendGrid where the Pro plan already includes one, and about 59 dollar a month for extras on Mailgun. The catch is that a new dedicated IP has no reputation and must be warmed up slowly over weeks, and until it is warm it can deliver worse than a provider's shared pool. It only pays off at high, steady volume, which is why Postmark will not sell you one under 300,000 emails a month. Below that, a good shared pool, especially a transactional-only one, is the better and cheaper choice.

Can I send at full volume on a new transactional email account?

No, not on day one with any of them. Amazon SES starts every new account in a sandbox: 200 emails per 24 hours, one message per second, and only to addresses and domains you have verified, until you request production access with a support form about your use case and bounce handling that AWS reviews, usually within a day. Postmark manually reviews every new account before it will send outside a domain you own, typically inside a business day, and approves only genuine transactional senders. SendGrid and Mailgun verify new senders and can throttle or pause an account under review. So if you have a launch date, start the approval process a few days early, because being approved to send is a separate gate from the price you pay per email.

Which transactional email provider should I actually pick?

Match it to who is sending and at what scale. If you have engineers and real volume and want the lowest bill, Amazon SES wins on price and you accept building the tooling around it. If deliverability of critical mail is the priority and cost is secondary, Postmark. If you want a great API and dashboard with little setup, Resend. If you already send marketing email and want transactional in the same place, Brevo. SendGrid still works but no longer has the free on-ramp that made it a default. Send volume and how much tooling you want to own are the two axes that decide it, not the sticker price alone.

Compare what actually drives your email bill

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

agent.mue.app/articles/postmark-vs-ses-vs-resend-vs-sendgrid-transactional-email

