

FREE GUIDE

Email Automation for Small Stores

*Five automated flows that work behind the scenes
while you run the business.*

Undercurrents

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Most independent shop owners only send two kinds of emails: a newsletter when they actually have the time, and the standard order confirmation their website sends by default.

But a lot happens between a customer placing an order and reading a newsletter. That's when they decide how they feel about your brand. They wonder if they picked the right product, how exactly to use it, or if it's worth buying again. A well-timed, helpful email does far more heavy lifting for your sales than a generic weekly blast.

This Undercurrents guide breaks down the five core email sequences you should set up first. You build them once, and they trigger automatically whenever a customer reaches a specific milestone.

To keep things practical, we use an online skincare boutique as our main example, the exact same brand featured in our **Customer Journey Map**, so you can easily use both guides together.

01 Welcome

02 Browse and Cart Abandonment

03 Post-Purchase

04 Reorder and Review

05 Win-Back

Before You Start

What You Need

The right email tool: Any platform with automation features will work (like **Klaviyo**, **Mailchimp**, **Shopify Email**, or **Brevo**). Choose the one that syncs natively with your store to avoid manual workarounds.

A live integration: Make sure your shop data feeds into your email platform. The system needs to track exactly who views products, who abandons carts, and who completes a purchase.

A realistic timeline: Budget **one afternoon per flow**. Trying to build all five at once is a recipe for burnout. Pick the single flow that fixes your biggest current problem and start there.

A Note on Consent

In **Switzerland and the EU**, you legally need explicit permission before sending marketing content. Be entirely transparent about what people are signing up for and how often you plan to email them.

Using **double opt-in (where subscribers click a confirmation link in their inbox)** is the safest way to prove consent.

Keep in mind that transactional emails (like order confirmations and shipping updates) are classified as service messages, so you can send them to anyone. However, unless a customer has officially opted in, keep marketing and sales pitches entirely out of those receipts. (Disclaimer: This is practical advice, not legal counsel. Check your local regulations if you are unsure).

The Only Rule That Matters

Every automated email must be genuinely useful to the person reading it at that exact moment. If you cannot explain how a message helps the recipient, do not send it.

This rule eliminates a lot of standard template advice, such as sending an “our story” email during week one or offering a discount on every single abandoned cart. Customers only care about your brand story after they care about your product. Before that happens, they only care about whether your product actually solves their problem.

01

FLOW 1

Welcome

Starts when: Someone joins your email list.

Stops when: They make a purchase. At that point, move them to the post-purchase flow instead.

Email 1: Sent immediately

Deliver whatever you promised on the sign-up form, such as a guide, a discount code, or a sample offer. Tell them how often you plan to email them. Then, give them one genuinely useful tool, which is help choosing the right product.

EXAMPLE

“Not sure where to start? Here are our three most-loved products and exactly who they are for. The Barrier Cream is built for dry and reactive skin. The Clarifying Serum targets breakouts. The Face Oil is for anyone whose skin feels tight in the winter.”

Email 2: Sent two or three days later

Answer the single question new customers ask most often. You likely already know what this is because it shows up constantly in your DMs, your reviews, and the questions people ask in your shop.

EXAMPLE

“The question we get most is whether these products will cause breakouts. Here is exactly what goes into our formulas, what we leave out, and how to safely patch test any new product.”

Email 3: Sent five to seven days later

Showcase your bestsellers alongside a customer review for each. Ideally, choose reviews that mention specific skin types so readers can find a customer whose situation matches their own.

A Note on Discounts

Offering a welcome discount is perfectly fine if it suits your profit margins. Just ensure it is not the only reason people stick around. If your first email contains a code and absolutely nothing else, you will primarily attract subscribers who only want the discount and nothing else.

02 Browse and Cart Abandonment

Browse Abandonment

Starts when: A subscriber looks at a product page and leaves without adding anything to the cart. Note that your platform can only track this for people already on your list who have agreed to tracking cookies.

The Strategy: Send one email a few hours later and keep it light. They were just looking, not deciding yet. Focus on helping them make an informed choice instead of pushing for a hard sale.

EXAMPLE

“Still thinking about the Barrier Cream? Here is exactly who it works best for, along with what people with sensitive skin said after using it for a month.”

Cart Abandonment

Starts when: Someone adds an item to their cart but does not check out.

Stops when: They make a purchase.

Email 1: Sent one to four hours later

Show exactly what is sitting in their cart, including the photo and a link that goes straight back to the checkout page. Use this space to answer the common reasons people halt at the final step, such as shipping costs, delivery times, and your returns policy.

Email 2: Sent the next day

Address their lingering doubts. Add customer reviews, link to the ingredient list, or answer the common question of whether the product will suit them. Invite them to reply directly to the email if they have questions. A real, human response from you will close far more sales than a generic template.

Email 3: Optional, sent on day three

This is where most standard guides suggest adding a discount code. Be careful here. If every single abandoned cart triggers a code, your regular customers will quickly learn to abandon their carts and wait for the markdown. If you decide to offer an incentive, keep it strictly for first-time customers, and consider offering free shipping instead of a percentage off the price.

03

FLOW 3

Post-Purchase

This is the exact sequence that most small shops completely miss, yet it is the one that builds the absolute most trust. The customer has already paid and is waiting for their order. Because of that anticipation, every single message you send right now will be opened and read.

Order Confirmation:
Sent immediately

Your e-commerce platform sends a generic version of this by default. Take the time to edit it. Add details about when the parcel will likely arrive and explain what happens next in your own distinct brand voice.

Shipping Update:
Sent when the order leaves

Provide a working tracking link along with a single, clear line explaining what they should do as soon as the package arrives.

03 FLOW 3 • POST-PURCHASE

How to Use It: Sent on delivery day

Time this email to hit their inbox exactly when the parcel lands on their doorstep, not when they first place the order. Explain exactly where the product fits into a daily routine, how much to use, when to patch test, and what to expect during the first week.

EXAMPLE

“Your Barrier Cream arrived today. Use a pea-sized amount after cleansing, both morning and evening. If you are also using retinol, apply the cream immediately after it. Some skin feels slightly warm for the first few days, which is completely normal. Redness that persists is not normal, so stop using it and reply directly to this email.”

Check-In: Sent roughly two weeks later

Answer the specific questions people tend to ask at this stage of their routine, such as how long it takes to see a real difference. Clearly state how long results usually take so they do not give up too early. Invite them to reply with questions.

The Strategy: There are absolutely no discounts and no product recommendations in this specific flow. Your only goal here is to help them get the exact results they just paid for. That genuine support is what actually brings people back.

04

FLOW 4

Reorder and Review

Reorder Reminder

Starts when: The product is naturally about to run out.

The Strategy: Calculate exactly how long your products last under normal daily use. For instance, a 50ml face cream used twice a day lasts roughly eight weeks, meaning your reminder should go out around week seven. Your specific numbers will vary, and customer replies will quickly tell you if your timing needs adjustment.

Keep the email incredibly short. Give them a quick message like, “*Running low? Reorder in a single click.*” Link them straight to a pre-filled checkout page with the product already sitting in their cart. If you offer a subscription model, mention it here and nowhere else during their first few months with your brand.

Review Request

Starts when: The product has had actual time to work. For skincare, this means waiting four to six weeks, rather than sending an automated request just three days after delivery.

The Strategy: Ask a highly specific question, such as what their skin type is and what tangible changes they noticed. Highly detailed, specific reviews help the next customer make an informed choice. They also help search engines and discovery tools understand exactly who your product is for, which naturally drives new traffic back to your shop.

05

FLOW 5

Win-Back

Starts when: A customer has not made a purchase in roughly twice their usual reorder window. For example, if most of your customers reorder every eight weeks, you should trigger this flow around week sixteen.

Email 1: Ask questions instead of selling

Start a genuine conversation. You can say something like, *“It has been a while since your last order. Did the cream stop working for your skin, or did life just get busy?”* The direct replies you receive to this message will provide some of the most useful business feedback you will ever get.

Email 2: Sent a week later

Showcase what is new or what has changed since they last visited. This is an appropriate place to include an incentive or a special offer if you want to use one.

Email 3: Sent one week after that

Be completely transparent with them. Use a line like, *“We do not want to clutter your inbox. Click here if you would still like to hear from us.”*

The Strategy: Anyone who does not click that link, make a purchase, or reply to your email should be removed from your marketing list. A smaller, highly engaged list of people who actually want to hear from you results in much better email deliverability than a massive list full of people who ignore your messages.

Using AI to Write Your Emails

AI tools are great at creating first drafts but terrible at sounding like an authentic person. Use them to handle the first half of the work, and then take over.

01

Feed it real material: Paste in actual customer reviews, DMs, and common questions. Ask the tool to draft an email answering the top three themes. This gives you a highly specific draft rather than a generic product description.

02

Train it on your voice: Paste two or three emails or social media posts you wrote yourself. Instruct the tool to match that exact tone.

03

Rewrite it yourself: Cut out any word or phrase you would never say out loud in conversation. Words like “elevate,” “unlock,” “indulge,” or “we are thrilled” are instant signs that your draft sounds like generic marketing filler.

04

Check every single fact: Double-check ingredients, delivery timelines, and return policies. AI tools routinely fill informational gaps with confident but incorrect guesses.

A Prompt to Start With

“Here are 20 customer reviews and 10 questions we get asked in our DMs. Write a delivery day email for our Barrier Cream that answers the three most common questions about how to use it. Keep the draft under 150 words, make it warm and direct, and avoid any marketing language.”

What to Measure

Open rates are no longer a reliable metric. Privacy features in Apple Mail and other major apps automatically register emails as opened even if a human never actually read them. Focus on these concrete numbers instead:

Click rate:	This tells you if anyone actually took action based on your email content.
Orders and revenue per flow:	Most email platforms show this breakdown automatically for each individual automation.
Direct replies:	This is especially critical for post-purchase and win-back sequences. A personal reply from a customer is often worth far more than a simple link click.
Repeat purchase rate and timing:	Tracking the time it takes for a customer to make their second purchase is the ultimate test for your post-purchase and reorder flows.
Unsubscribes and spam complaints:	If one specific email triggers a spike in these numbers, you are sending either the wrong message or timing it poorly.

The Review Schedule

Review your data once a month. If your email list is on the smaller side, do not waste time running A/B tests on minor details like subject lines. Small sample sizes will not provide clear data. Instead, test significant strategic changes, such as sending your how-to email on the actual delivery day versus the original order day, and compare the performance over a few months.

How the Flows Fit Your Customer Journey

If you are using the **Undercurrents Customer Journey Map**, here is exactly where each automation sits within the timeline:

JOURNEY STAGE	FLOW
Consideration	Welcome, Browse Abandonment
Purchase	Cart Abandonment
Delivery and First Use	Post-Purchase (Confirmation, Shipping, How-To Guide)
Adoption	Post-Purchase (Two-Week Check-In)
Retention	Reorder Reminder, Win-Back
Advocacy	Review Request

Review the specific pain points you noted down for each phase of your customer journey map. The automated flow you build for that stage should directly answer and resolve those exact friction points.

Your Final Checklist

-
- ☐ **Consent:** Your sign-up form clearly states what subscribers receive and how often you will email them. Double opt-in is fully activated.

 - ☐ **Welcome Flow:** Three emails are ready. The sequence automatically stops when a customer buys, and the content focuses entirely on helping them choose the right product.

 - ☐ **Browse and Cart Abandonment:** The tracking is active. If you choose to offer discounts, they are strictly reserved for first-time buyers rather than repeat customers.

 - ☐ **Post-Purchase Flow:** The automated order confirmation is completely rewritten in your brand voice. The how-to guide is timed precisely to delivery day, and the two-week check-in is scheduled.

 - ☐ **Reorder Reminders:** The timing is calculated precisely based on how long your products actually last under normal use.

 - ☐ **Review Requests:** The trigger delay is set to go out only after the product has had sufficient time to show real results.

 - ☐ **Win-Back Flow:** The sequence concludes with a strict list clean-up that removes subscribers who no longer wish to hear from you.

 - ☐ **Monthly Review:** A recurring calendar reminder is set to check your click rates, orders, direct replies, and repeat purchase metrics.

Want Help Setting This Up?

Undercurrents works directly with independent brands and online boutiques across Europe to fix the parts of the customer journey that standard analytics packages miss. If you would like a second pair of eyes to review your email flows, get in touch with us at **undercurrents.ch**.

undercurrents.ch →