How to re-engage or sunset inactive contacts in Mautic

Mailbox providers watch how people engage with your email. If a big chunk of your list never opens, never clicks and never visits, that drags down your reputation, and it pushes up your spam complaint rate, because people who've forgotten signing up are the ones most likely to hit 'report spam'. Old addresses can also be turned into spam traps.

The fix is to ask inactive contacts whether they still want to hear from you, and to stop mailing the ones who don't answer. A smaller, engaged list will get better results than a big, sleepy one!

This guide shows you how to set this up in Mautic with two segments and one campaign, so it runs on its own from then on.

Before you start

- Mautic with working cron jobs for segments and campaigns, because both segments and the campaign depend on them
- Bounces flowing back into Mautic, see *How to handle email bounces in Mautic*
- A rough idea of how often you send

Step 1. Decide what 'inactive' means for you

Pick a time window that fits how often you send.

How often you send	Consider someone inactive after
Several times a week	90 days
Weekly or fortnightly	180 days
Monthly or less	365 days

Then decide what counts as "active". Clicks are the most reliable signal. Opens are much less reliable than they used to be, because Apple Mail Privacy Protection and some security scanners load images automatically, which records an open even when nobody read the email. Treat opens as a weak signal, and lean on clicks, website visits and form submissions.

Step 2. Build an 'Engaged' segment

Go to **Segments**, click **New**, and call it something like "Engaged (last 180 days)". On the **Filters** tab, add these filters, joined with **or** so that matching any one of them is enough.

Filter	Operator	Value
Clicked any link from any email (date)	greater than	-180 days
Date Last Active	greater than	-180 days
Date identified	greater than	-180 days

The last filter protects new contacts.

A few things to know about these filters:

- **Date Last Active** includes website visits, not just email activity. Someone who reads your blog but never clicks an email will still count as engaged, which is usually what you want.
- If you'd rather be gentle, you can add **Read any email (date)** greater than -180 days as well. Just remember it will count some people as engaged who never actually read anything.
- Change -180 days to match the window you chose in Step 1. Mautic accepts relative dates like -90 days, -6 months or -1 year. There's more on this in the KB guide How to create a date-based segment in Mautic.

Step 3. Build an 'Inactive' segment

Create a second segment called something like 'Inactive (180+ days)' with

these filters, joined with **and**.

Filter	Operator	Value
Segment Membership	excluding	Engaged (last 180 days)
Unsubscribed - Email	equals	No
Bounced - Email	equals	No

If you only want to include people who are on a marketing list, add a **Segment Membership** filter including your main newsletter segment as well.

Save it, wait for the segments to rebuild, and look at the numbers before you do anything else. If the inactive segment is very large compared with the rest of your list, read the tip in Step 6 before sending.

Step 4. Write the re-engagement emails

Keep it to two or three short, friendly emails. Something like this works well.

1. **A check-in.** 'It's been a while!' Remind people what they signed up for and point them to your most useful recent content.
2. **A reminder of the value.** What's changed or what they're missing, with one clear link.
3. **A direct question.** 'Do you still want to hear from us?' with a big **Yes, keep me subscribed** button, and a clear line saying you'll stop emailing if you don't hear back. Have that land on a thank you page which you can track.

Every email needs at least one link worth clicking, because a click, or landing on a specified page, is how someone tells Mautic they're still interested. Keep the visible unsubscribe link in every email too.

Step 5. Build the campaign

Go to **Campaigns**, click **New**, and choose your 'Inactive (180+ days)' segment as the source. Then build this flow.

1. **Send email** with the first re-engagement email.
2. **Lands on page** decision, connected to that email, waiting 7 days.
    - **Yes** path, use **Modify contact's tags** to add a tag like re-engaged if you want to track who came back. They'll also drop out of the inactive segment by themselves once the page landing is recorded.
    - **No** path, **Send email** with the second email.
3. Repeat the **Lands on bage** decision and a 7-day wait, then send the third email on the **No** path.
4. After the third email, add one last **Lands on page** decision with a 7-day wait. On the **No** path, choose how to stop mailing them.
    - **Add Do Not Contact** is the simplest and stops all email to that contact.
    - **Modify contact's tags** to add a tag like sunset is gentler. If you choose this, add a **Tags** filter excluding sunset to every segment you send marketing email to, so they really do stop receiving it.

Use **Lands on page** decisions, not **Opens email or Clicks email**. For the reasons in Step 1, an 'open' or 'click' might not be a person at all.

In the campaign settings, decide whether to turn on **Allow contacts to restart the campaign**. If it's on, someone who re-engages and then goes quiet again a year later will go through the sequence again. For most lists that's exactly what you want.

Publish the campaign. From now on, anyone who drifts into the inactive segment will get the sequence automatically.

Step 6. Be careful the first time you run it

The very first run is the riskiest, because it can mean emailing a large number of unengaged people all at once, which is exactly what mailbox providers don't like.

- **Start with the most recently inactive contacts.** For example, run it for people inactive between 180 days and two years first, by adding a **Date Last Active** greater than -2 years filter to the inactive segment for now.
- **Think hard about very old contacts.** Contacts who haven't engaged in several years are unlikely to come back, and some of their addresses may now be spam traps. Many senders suppress these straight away without emailing them.
- **Watch your bounce and complaint rates** for each email in the sequence, and pause the campaign if they jump.

Step 7. Check it's working

- Look at the campaign's stats after a few weeks. Who clicked, who was sunset?
- Check your main newsletter segments have shrunk by roughly the number of sunset contacts.
- Keep an eye on Google Postmaster Tools. A steady fall in your spam complaint rate is a good sign.

Common problems

The inactive segment includes brand new contacts. Check the **Date identified** filter is in your engaged segment and joined with **or**.

Nobody leaves the inactive segment after clicking. Segments update when the segment cron job runs. Check it's running regularly.

Sunset contacts are still getting newsletters. If you used a tag, the tag filter is missing from one of your sending segments. Check every segment used in emails and campaigns.

Almost nobody shows as inactive. You might be counting opens, which Apple Mail Privacy Protection inflates. Try the segment without **Read any**

email (date).

Quick checklist

- Inactivity window chosen to match how often you send
- Engaged segment using page hits, Date Last Active and Date identified
- Inactive segment excluding the engaged segment, unsubscribes and bounces
- Two or three re-engagement emails, each with a link worth clicking
- Campaign using Lands on page decisions, ending in Do Not Contact or a sunset tag
- First run started small, with bounces and complaints watched

Over to you

How long do you wait before sunsetting contacts, and has it made a difference to your deliverability? I'd love to hear what's worked for you.

References

Mautic *Managing segments* (Mautic documentation, 5.x). Available at https://docs.mautic.org/en/7.2/segments/manage_segments.html (Accessed 26 October 2026).

Online URL: https://kb.mautic.org/article/how-to-re-engage-or-sunset-inactive-contacts-in-mautic.html