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Testing transactional e-mail without sending: Sandbox keys, test mode and simulated bounces

E-mail

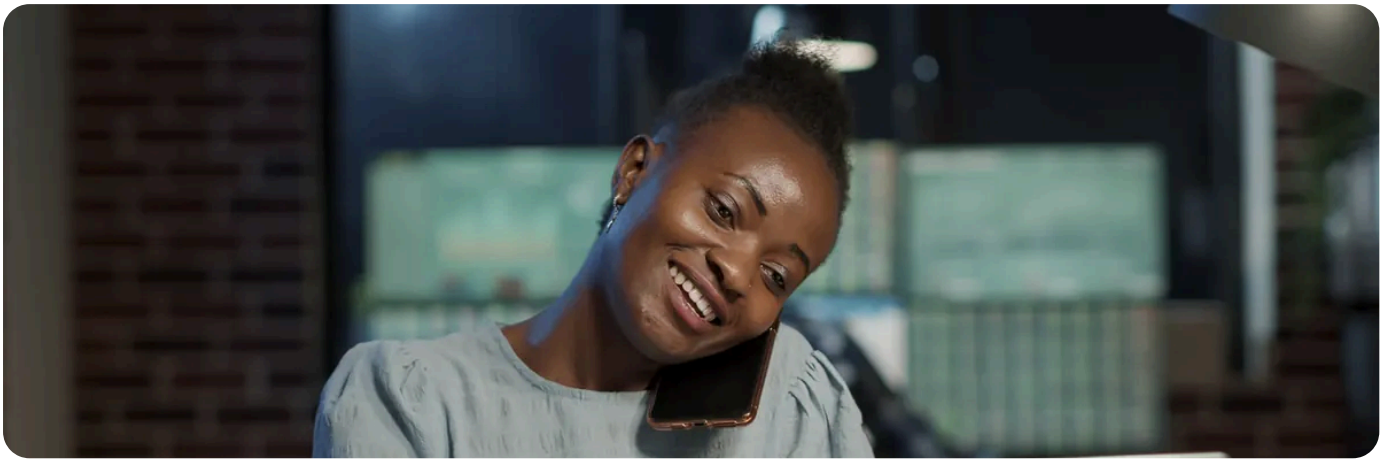
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RLX-MZ-KB-2498	v2026.11.13	Mozambique · English

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https://www.meu.interweb.co.mz/knowledgebase/2498

Testing transactional e-mail without sending: Sandbox keys, test mode and simulated bounces

E-mail Created on **November 13, 2026** 2 min read



The short answer: with a key that starts with `sandbox_`, **nothing is sent or charged**. The e-mail becomes `simulated`, with simulated events, and other changes (domains, templates, suppressions) are only simulated too. To rehearse bounces and complaints, send to `bounce@example.com` or `complaint@example.com`.

Sandbox and Production

	`sandbox_` key	`prod_` key
Address and operations	The same	The same
The e-mail	Validated, but not sent	Sent
Credits	Not charged	One per recipient
Status	`simulated`	The real status
Domains, templates, suppressions	Only simulated: nothing is saved	Saved

Rehearsing what goes wrong

Send to	What happens
`bounce@example.com`	Simulates a bounce: you see the `bounced` event and the `email.bounced` webhook
`complaint@example.com`	Simulates a complaint: you see the `complained` event and the `email.complained` webhook

It is the best way to confirm your system reacts properly: it flags the address as invalid, tells the customer and does not try again.

Email Center test mode

There is one more case of simulation: while Email Center is in **test mode**, `prod_` keys simulate too. To find out, call `GET /v1/email/balance` and look at `test_mode` : `true` means nothing is really sent yet.

A checklist before going live

1. **A simple send** with `text` and with `html` : a `201` answer and `simulated` status.
2. **With a template**: every variable filled in.
3. **With an attachment**: the real PDF you will send, to see that it fits the size limit.
4. **A retry** with the same `Idempotency-Key` : the e-mail is not duplicated.
5. **A bounce and a complaint** with the two rehearsal addresses, and your webhook receiving them.
6. **Switch the key** for a `prod_` one. The address and operations stay the same.

In Sandbox the domain is not saved.
Before your first real send, add and verify the domain for real, with the Production key or on the page in Meu Interweb.

Use different keys
in your test environment and on your production server. That way a forgotten test never e-mails a real customer.

RECOMMENDED

Want to test sending e-mail without spending credits? See the API page.

See the API page →

SEE ALSO

- Getting started with Email Center: turn it on, verify your domain and send your first e-mail
- Sending a transactional e-mail through the API: the fields of POST /v1/email/messages
- Email Center webhooks: receiving delivery, bounce and complaint events in your system
- Transactional e-mail statuses: sent, delivered, bounced, complained and failed explained
- Email Center API errors: email_account_required, all_recipients_suppressed and other reasons
- An API key or token has leaked: what to do, in the right order

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TAX ID (NUIT)	401 191 607
LEGAL ENTITY NO. (NUEL)	105 045 974
ECONOMIC ACTIVITY CODE (CAE)	62022
REGISTERED OFFICE	Bairro 7 de Setembro Vilankulo 1304 · CEP 0411-02, Inhambane, Mozambique
CONTACT	info@interweb.co.mz · +258 84 635 1111 · +258 86 635 1111 · www.interweb.co.mz
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