

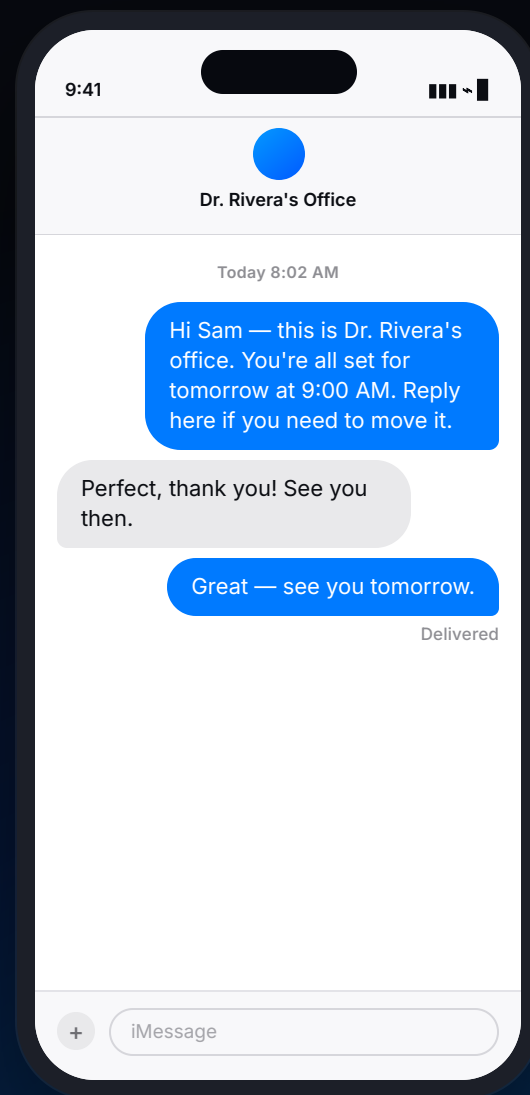


Healthcare Messaging

FIELD GUIDE

Texts That Actually Get Delivered

Your message looked perfect on your screen. So why did the patient never see it? Here's exactly what the phone companies are looking for — and how to write texts that land every time.



WHY LISTEN TO US

Ten years. Hundreds of millions of texts.

For the last decade, Aloha has sent **hundreds of millions of patient texts** on behalf of practices across the country — appointment reminders, recalls, review requests, two-way conversations. That's ten years of watching, message by message, what the carriers let through and what they quietly kill.

Everything in this guide comes out of that. Not theory, not a blog post — patterns we've seen play out across thousands of offices and every major carrier in the U.S. Use it, and your texts start landing.

100M+ Patient texts sent, and counting	10 yrs Watching carrier rules change in real time	5,000+ Practices trusting Aloha to reach patients	98%+ Delivery rate across the Aloha network
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WHAT'S INSIDE

01	Why good texts get blocked The two rulebooks — and what "registered" really buys you	03
02	What a good delivery rate looks like The industry scale, and where Aloha lands on it	04
03	The Spam Hall of Shame Nine real texts that got flagged — and the fixes	05
04	"Delivered" isn't the same as "seen" Why a delivered text can still hide on the patient's phone	09
05	When a text doesn't arrive How Aloha handles failed and unconfirmed messages	12
06	Six habits of texts that always land The short version you can pin by the front desk	13
07	Quick troubleshooting When patients aren't getting your texts, start here	14

CHAPTER ONE

Why good texts get blocked

Every time you text a patient, your message doesn't go straight to their phone. It passes through the big carriers first — **AT&T, Verizon, and T-Mobile**. Each one scores your message in a split second. If it looks like spam — pushy sales words, sketchy links, banned topics — the carrier can quietly block it, and slow down everything else you send until it trusts your number again. The patient never sees a thing. Neither do you.

You're writing under two rulebooks at once

THE LAW · TCPA

Permission, and an easy exit

Get a patient's permission before you text them, and let them stop the texts anytime. Break this one and you're facing real fines from a real court.

THE INDUSTRY RULES · CTIA

The phone industry's house rules

The carriers enforce these themselves — no judge, no courtroom. Break them and they simply slow down or shut off your texting.

THE PART THAT SURPRISES MOST OFFICES

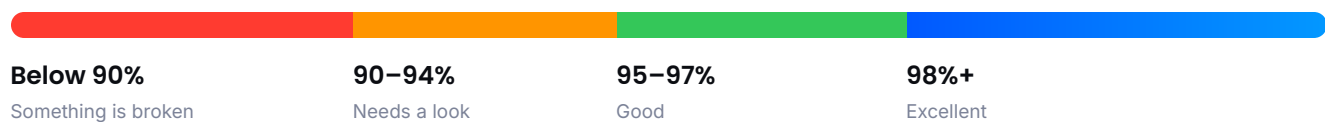
Every business number has to be registered before it can text patients at any real volume. That registration is called **10DLC**, and Aloha sets it up with you. But being registered **does not guarantee delivery**. How you write and send each message still matters just as much — and that's what the rest of this guide is about.

The fastest way to learn the rules is to look at texts that broke them. But first, it helps to know what "good" even looks like — because most offices have never seen the number that matters.

CHAPTER TWO

What a good delivery rate actually looks like

Ask most offices what their text delivery rate is and you'll get a blank look. It's the single most important number in patient texting, and almost nobody is shown it. Here's the scale the messaging industry uses for legitimate business texting in the U.S.



The gap is bigger than it sounds

Six percentage points feels like a rounding error. It isn't. Say your office sends **5,000 texts a month** — reminders, recalls, confirmations, review requests. At a 92% delivery rate, **400 of those messages never arrive**. That's 400 patients a month who look like they ignored you, when they never got the message at all. Push that to 98% and you're down to 100. Same staff, same schedule, 300 more patients reached.

98%+

Where Aloha runs

Across the Aloha network, we hold a delivery rate of 98% or better — the top of the industry scale. We get there by registering every number properly, watching carrier behavior daily, and coaching offices on the writing habits in this guide. It's not luck, and it's not one lucky month.

HOW WE HOLD IT

Aloha runs its own spam filter — pointed at your outbox

On top of registering your number properly and watching the carriers daily, we built a proprietary filter that catches most spammy messages **before they ever leave your office** — the emoji piles, the "FREE," the shortened links, the banned topics in the next chapter. We keep expanding it as carrier rules shift. It's how we protect your number's reputation and push delivery from 98% toward **99%+**.

Industry ranges reflect published benchmarks for registered, permission-based business messaging in North America.

CHAPTER THREE

The Spam Hall of Shame

Nine real messages from real practices that got flagged — each next to the version that sails right through. Try covering the right-hand side and guessing what went wrong.

1 The "New Patient Special" blast CHIROPRACTIC	
● BLOCKED 🔥 NEW PATIENT SPECIAL Get your FIRST adjustment FREE!! 🔥 Only 5 spots left — BOOK NOW 👉 bit.ly/adj22 Not Delivered FLAGGED FOR An emoji pile-up, ALL CAPS, the word "FREE," fake urgency ("only 5 spots"), and a bit.ly link — carriers treat every shortened link as suspicious.	● DELIVERED Hi Sam, this is Dr. Rivera's office. We have new-patient openings this week. Reply here to grab a time. Reply STOP to opt out. Delivered THE FIX Talk like a person, drop the hype, use your real link, and always add a STOP.
2 The over-excited reminder DENTAL	
● BLOCKED Dr. Patel here!! 🦷✨🌟 Time to get those pearly whites SPARKLING!! 🌟 See u soon superstar 😊😊 Not Delivered FLAGGED FOR A wall of emojis and shouting punctuation. Filters read "!!!" and emoji strings as classic promo-blast behavior, even when you're just being friendly.	● DELIVERED Hi Jordan, a friendly reminder from Dr. Patel's office — your cleaning is tomorrow at 9am. See you then! Reply STOP to opt out. Delivered THE FIX Keep the warmth, lose the confetti. One clear sentence does the job.

THE FIVE-SECOND GUT CHECK

Before you hit send, read the message out loud. **If it sounds like an ad, the carrier hears an ad.** If it sounds like your front desk talking to a patient they know by name, it lands.

3 The win-back cash grab

OPTOMETRY

● BLOCKED

We MISS you!! 😞 Come back for a FREE eye exam + \$25 cash credit toward frames. Act fast — offer expires TONIGHT!!!



Not Delivered

FLAGGED FOR

"FREE," a dollar sign next to the word "cash," and "act fast / expires tonight" pressure. This is textbook marketing-blast language.

● DELIVERED

Hi Dana, it's been a while since your last exam with Dr. Okafor. Want to come back in? Reply here and we'll find a time. Reply STOP to opt out.

Delivered

THE FIX

A warm, plain-spoken nudge does the same job — and it actually arrives.

4 The guilt-trip no-show

PHYSICAL THERAPY

● BLOCKED

You MISSED your session 😡 Skipping now means you're going BACKWARD. Rebook NOW before you lose ALL your progress!!!



Not Delivered

FLAGGED FOR

Fear-mongering, ALL CAPS, and a stack of exclamation points. Scare tactics score just as high as sales hype.

● DELIVERED

Hi Priya, we missed you at PT today. No worries — reply here whenever you'd like to reschedule. Reply STOP to opt out.

Delivered

THE FIX

Be kind and low-key. A no-show is an invitation, not an emergency.

5 The miracle-supplement pitch

CHIROPRACTIC

● BLOCKED

🔥 STOCK UP 🔥 Buy 3 get 1 FREE on our Miracle Spine Gummies 🍬 Pay by Venmo/Zelle/CashApp 💰 Order at tinyurl.com/gummies



Not Delivered

FLAGGED FOR

Siren emojis, "FREE," payment-app names, dollar signs, and a tinyurl shortener. It reads exactly like a scam, so filters treat it like one.

● DELIVERED

Hi Chris, we just restocked a few of the supplements patients ask about. Want to hear more at your next visit? Reply here. Reply STOP to opt out.

Delivered

THE FIX

Sell products in person or by email. Keep the text short and about the patient.

6 The seasonal sale blast

OPTOMETRY

● BLOCKED



👻SPOOKY SPECS SALE Don't let blurry vision HAUNT you! \$50 OFF all frames this week only 👁️ 👁️

Not Delivered

FLAGGED FOR

Theme emojis, a dollar amount, and "this week only" urgency. A cute holiday hook is still a discount blast to the filters.

● DELIVERED

Hi Taylor, Dr. Bell has a few openings this week if you've been meaning to come in for new frames. Reply here for details. Reply STOP to opt out.

Delivered

THE FIX

Invite the reply, and share the offer in the follow-up where a real link and price are safe.

7 The wall-of-text intake message

AUDIOLOGY

● BLOCKED



Hi! Thanks for booking your hearing evaluation. Please arrive 15 min early, bring your insurance card + ID and a list of medications, bring a family member if you can, fill out the new-patient packet, and remember our 24-hr cancel policy or you'll be charged a \$50 fee, we also take HSA/FSA and offer payment plans, and don't forget...

Not Delivered

FLAGGED FOR

An essay-length message reads like a brochure — plus that "\$50" dollar sign. Long blocks of text score badly all on their own.

● DELIVERED

Hi Leo, you're booked Thursday 3pm with Dr. Kim for your hearing evaluation. Please arrive 10 min early with your ID. Full prep details are in your email. Reply STOP to opt out.

Delivered

THE FIX

Send the one thing they need now, and point them to email for the rest.

8 The "surprise, we text now!" first message

DENTAL

● BLOCKED



Hey! It's Dr. Stone's office — we pulled your number from your chart and wanted to let you know we text patients now. Book anytime!

Not Delivered

FLAGGED FOR

No proof the patient ever opted in, and no way to opt out. Texting people who never agreed is the fastest way to tank your sender reputation.

● DELIVERED

Hi Marcus, you asked us to text your appointment reminders — this is Dr. Stone's office confirming. Reply STOP anytime to opt out.

Delivered

THE FIX

Only text patients who said yes, remind them why you're texting, and offer STOP.

9 The CBD promo — an instant account-killer

CHIROPRACTIC · WELLNESS

• BLOCKED



New CBD oil just landed! 🌿 Perfect for back pain — stop by today and grab a bottle.

Not Delivered

• DELIVERED

Hi Morgan, we just added some new wellness products in the office — ask us about them at your next visit! Reply STOP to opt out.

Delivered

FLAGGED FOR

No hype, no emoji pile-up — and it still died. CBD and cannabis sit on the carriers' hard-banned list, even where your state says they're legal.

THE FIX

Never name those products in a text. Mention them in person or by email.

THE ONE THAT CAN TAKE YOUR WHOLE NUMBER OFFLINE

CBD is the trap for wellness practices

Most carrier rules just slow you down. This one doesn't. Cannabis and CBD are hard-blocked at the carrier level, with no exceptions and no state-by-state carve-outs — and a **single** text mentioning them can suspend your entire texting account, reminders and all.

Plenty of chiropractic, PT, and wellness offices sell CBD, and it's an easy thing to forget. Keep those products out of your messages entirely — talk about them face to face or over email. Carriers hard-block **adult content, hate speech, alcohol, firearms, and tobacco or vape products** the same way; rare in a healthcare office, but watch it if you run a promo with a local partner.

THE OTHER INSTANT FLAG

Never put a shortened link in a patient text

Carriers treat every link-shortening domain as suspicious, because hiding where a link really goes is exactly what scammers do. It doesn't matter that yours is harmless — the filter can't see past it. **One shortened link is enough to get the message dropped.**

NEVER SEND ANY OF THESE

bit.ly · tinyurl.com · t.co · goo.gl · ow.ly · buff.ly · rebrand.ly · rb.gy · is.gd · cutt.ly · shorturl.at · tiny.cc · short.io · s.id · lnkd.in · linktr.ee — and any QR code that points at one

Send instead: your full, real domain — *yourpractice.com/book*. If your links run long, ask us about a branded short domain registered to your own business. That's the only shortened link carriers trust, because it points back to you.

CHAPTER FOUR

"Delivered" isn't the same as "seen"

Here's the one that trips up a lot of offices: a text can show as **delivered** and still never reach the patient's eyes. There are two gatekeepers, not one. First the carrier decides whether to let your message through. Then the patient's own phone decides where to put it.

Newer iPhones and Android phones tuck some texts into a side list — no buzz, no banner, nothing. Your dashboard still says delivered, because **"delivered" only means the carrier accepted your message and passed it along**. It never promised the text reached the main inbox, or that the phone ever lit up.

And there are **two separate filters** doing this, for two completely different reasons. Offices mix them up constantly — so before you fix anything, work out which one you're dealing with.

Two filters, two different reasons

FILTER ONE

The Unknown Senders filter

What it is: a setting the patient turned on themselves. Their phone sorts every text from a number that isn't in their contacts into a side list. Nothing is wrong with your message — the phone just doesn't know you yet.

Where it lands: iPhone → Messages → Filters → Unknown Senders. Android → the "Unknown" tab in Messages.

How to spot it: it hits patients who never saved your number — often just one at a time.

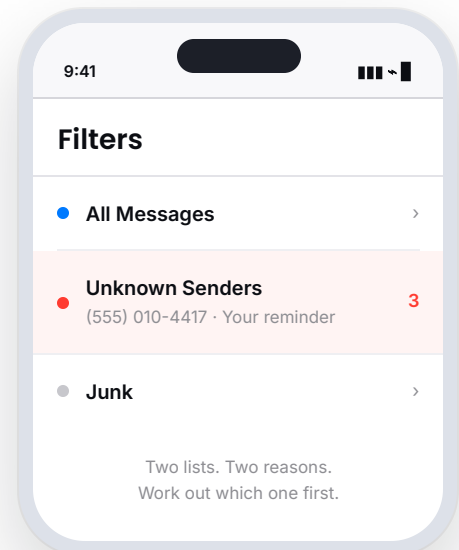
FILTER TWO

The Spam / Junk filter

What it is: a judgment call. The phone, the app, or the carrier decided your text *looks* like spam. This one is about your message and your number's reputation — not the patient's settings.

Where it lands: iPhone → Messages → Filters → Junk. Android → Messages → Spam & blocked.

How to spot it: it follows your *message*, not your patients — the same text hits Junk for lots of people at once.



CHAPTER FOUR · CONTINUED

When it all worked until last Tuesday

The most common call our support team gets isn't "my texts never work." It's "**my texts worked fine for two years, and now this patient suddenly gets nothing.**" When delivery stops for one patient out of nowhere, it's almost never your account. It's their phone — and it's usually one of two things.

CAUSE ONE

They updated iOS or Android

Big OS updates re-run the phone's setup flow, and message filtering can come back on — or switch on for the first time. Nothing about your number changed. Their phone just started sorting messages differently overnight, and yours went to the side list.

CAUSE TWO

They bought a new phone

Contacts usually migrate, but not always cleanly — and a fresh device starts with filtering at its defaults. If your office didn't come across in their address book, you're an unknown sender again on day one, no matter how long they'd been getting your texts.

THE TELL

It's **one patient, not a batch**. A whole batch going quiet at once is a carrier or content problem — that's the Junk filter, or something you wrote. A single long-time patient going quiet is a phone that changed, which puts you back in Unknown Senders. Ask two questions: "**Did you update your phone recently?**" and "**Is this a new phone?**" A yes to either tells you which filter you're fighting.

YOU NOW KNOW WHICH FILTER YOU'RE DEALING WITH

One patient, phone recently changed → **Unknown Senders**. Lots of patients at once, usually after a send → **Junk**. The next page has the fix for each, and they are not the same fix.

CHAPTER FOUR · THE FIX

Now here's how you fix it

Good news: on the patient's side this takes about ten seconds, and it usually only has to be done once. Start with the three steps that work no matter which filter caught you.

- 1 **Have them save your office as a contact.** This is the single biggest fix — phones trust saved contacts, and it takes Unknown Senders off the table permanently.
- 2 **Ask them to reply once** — even just "Yes." A reply tells the phone this is someone they actually talk to.
- 3 **Walk them into the filtered list.** iPhone: Messages → Filters. Android: Messages → the Unknown tab, or Spam & blocked. Whatever's in there, have them open your thread.

Then finish the job for the filter you're actually facing

IF IT WAS UNKNOWN SENDERS

You're already done. Once you're in the address book, their phone stops sorting you out — for every message from that number, from here on. Nothing about your writing needs to change. If the patient just got a new phone or ran a big update, expect to do this once more and then never again.

IF IT WAS JUNK OR SPAM

Have them tap "**Report not junk**" or "**Not spam**" — that teaches the filter about your number. But that only clears one phone. The filter made a judgment about your *message*, so go fix what set it off: Chapter Three is the list, and the six habits on the next-to-last page are the short version.

THE MISTAKE TO AVOID

Saving you as a contact solves Unknown Senders outright and helps with Junk. It does **not** solve Junk on its own. If your texts keep landing there patient after patient, the address book isn't the problem — your message is, and no amount of contact-saving will outrun it.

One habit helps with both: send every message from the **same number**, so each phone has one sender to learn and trust instead of many.

CHAPTER FIVE

When a text doesn't arrive

You've already worked the last chapter: they've saved you as a contact, nothing is sitting in Unknown Senders or Junk, and they haven't just updated or replaced their phone. So it isn't a filter. Now you're in the smaller set of cases where the message really didn't make it — a phone is off, a number was typed wrong, or a carrier got briefly picky. What matters is what happens next, and this is where Aloha has your back.

NOT EVERY "PROBLEM" IS A REAL ONE

A temporary flag shouldn't cost you a patient

Carriers sometimes slap a temporary "spam" label on a perfectly good number for a few hours, then clear it. Older texting systems — ours included, once — took that label at face value and quietly stopped texting that patient. A real, reachable person just... went silent.

We fixed that. Aloha keeps the number active, notes the flag, and clears it the moment a later text goes through. The only numbers we stop texting are the ones that are truly dead — disconnected or fake — so you're never paying to message a wrong number.

"UNKNOWN" IS NOT THE SAME AS "FAILED"

Silence from a carrier isn't bad news

Sometimes a carrier never sends back a final confirmation. That doesn't mean your text bounced — it often arrived just fine; the carrier simply didn't check back in to say so.

So before you assume the worst, rule out the phone's own filtered folder from the last chapter. That's the culprit far more often than an actual failure.

WHEN A PATIENT SWEARS THEY NEVER GOT IT

Don't panic, and **don't re-send the same text five times** — a burst of identical messages looks like spam all by itself. Confirm the number is right, make sure they've saved you as a contact, and have them check their filtered or spam folder. Nine times out of ten, that's the whole fix.

We're working the other side of the screen

Behind the scenes, Aloha watches delivery closely, works directly with the carriers, and runs our own spam filter on your outbox that stops most risky messages before they send — that's how we hold 98%+ and keep pushing toward 99%. Your job is the part on this side of the screen: write clean texts, and help patients save you as a contact.

CHAPTER SIX

Six habits of texts that always land

The short version. Print this page and pin it by the front desk — it's most of the guide in six lines.

01**Write like a human, not a billboard**

Skip "free," "cash," "win," "urgent," and "act fast." Say what you mean and stop there.

02**Keep it short and useful**

Texts are for quick reminders. When you have a lot to say, send a short note and point patients to email or the app.

03**Stick to plain text**

Dollar signs, emoji strings, and "!!!" confuse the filters. Use normal words and normal punctuation.

04**Never mention CBD or cannabis**

They're hard-blocked no matter what your state allows, and one text can suspend your whole account. Same goes for alcohol, firearms, tobacco, and adult content.

05**Never use a link shortener**

bit.ly, TinyURL, ow.ly, rb.gy, cutt.ly, linktr.ee — filters flag every one of them. Use your full, real domain. Full list on page 08.

06**Confirm opt-in, offer opt-out**

Only text patients who agreed, keep a record of it, and add "Reply STOP to cancel."

YOU'LL KNOW IT'S WORKING WHEN

Messages deliver fast and land every single time.

Patients reply to and confirm your texts.

You hit send knowing every message is clear, helpful, and compliant.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Quick troubleshooting

When patients aren't getting your texts, start here.

WHAT YOU NOTICE	WHAT'S REALLY HAPPENING	WHAT TO DO
It shows "Delivered," but the patient never saw it	You're not in their contacts, so it went to Unknown Senders	Have them save your office as a contact — that's the whole fix
Your texts keep landing in Junk or Spam	A filter judged your content or your number's reputation	Have them tap "Not spam," then fix what set it off (Chapter Three)
A message never arrives	A carrier filter flagged it	Check for spammy words ("free," "urgent") or a shortened link like bit.ly
A whole batch fails at once	It looks like a mass marketing blast	Keep messages short and relevant, and send in smaller batches
You used a \$ sign or emoji	Special characters trip the filters	Use plain text for anything important
A text mentioning CBD or another banned topic	That's hard-blocked content	Don't send it — one message can suspend your account
Delivery is under 95% across the board	Something structural — registration, list quality, or content	Ask your provider to show you the number, then fix the cause

STILL HAVE QUESTIONS?

Your Aloha team is happy to look over your texts and help you get every message through. Reach us anytime at support@getaloha.com.

This guide is general education on SMS deliverability and carrier best practices. It is not legal advice — for questions about TCPA compliance in your practice, check with your own legal counsel. Carrier rules change; the principles here don't.



ONE LAST THING

If your messages aren't getting delivered, it's not your fault.

Unless you stay with your current provider.

You can follow every rule in this guide and still lose patients to a provider that isn't watching the carriers for you. Aloha runs 98%+ delivery across hundreds of millions of patient texts. Ask your current provider what their number is — then come see ours.

[Book a Free Demo](#)