

Free Authorization Rate Optimization Checklist

Step 1: Measure Your Authorization Rate and Set a Baseline

- ☐ Calculate your overall authorization rate: approved transactions divided by total submitted.
- ☐ Split the rate between first-time payments and recurring renewals, since they fail for different reasons.
- ☐ Break the rate down by country, currency, and card network to find where it drops.
- ☐ Compare cross-border transactions against domestic ones to size the gap.
- ☐ Segment by issuer and decline reason so you know where declines cluster, not just that they exist.

Step 2: Diagnose Your Declines by Reading the Decline Codes

- ☐ Pull your decline-code breakdown and sort declines before acting on any of them.
- ☐ Group declines into insufficient funds, inaccurate or outdated card info, and suspicion of fraud.
- ☐ Flag the share coming back as generic "05: Do not honor," which hides the real reason.
- ☐ Match each decline category to its correct first response instead of applying one blanket retry.
- ☐ Confirm you can name your top three decline reasons by volume before moving on.

Step 3: Send Richer, Cleaner Transaction Data

- ☐ Include as much billing detail as the flow allows, so the bank can verify the cardholder.
- ☐ Pass the ZIP or postal code and CVC, which lift approvals in markets like the US and UK.
- ☐ Standardize checkout form formatting (consistent postal-code casing and spacing) so data reaches the issuer clean.
- ☐ Accept digital wallets like Apple Pay and Google Pay for their built-in two-factor authentication.
- ☐ Apply 3D Secure only where the issuer or regulation (such as EU PSD2/SCA) requires it.

Step 4: Retry Failed Payments on an Intelligent Cadence

- ☐ For insufficient funds, retry when the card is likelier to have a balance (for US customers, around the 1st or 15th).
- ☐ Replace fixed-interval dunning with retry logic that adapts to issuer behavior and card-update signals.
- ☐ Stay within card-network retry limits — often only 4 to 6 attempts within a 15-day window.
- ☐ Pair automated retries with clear, automated failed-payment emails so customers can fix what retries can't.
- ☐ Offer monthly or quarterly plans alongside annual where insufficient-funds declines are common.

Step 5: Keep Card Credentials Current

- ☐ Enable a card account updater to refresh expired or reissued card numbers on file automatically.

- ☐ Enable network tokens so a stored credential stays valid even when the underlying card changes.
- ☐ Confirm coverage by region, since automatic card updates are broad in the US but vary internationally.
- ☐ Treat these as background tools — turn them on once to remove a whole decline category with little upkeep.

Step 6: Route Payments Through the Acquirer Most Likely to Approve

- ☐ Use locally optimized acquiring in each region so payments present as domestic rather than foreign.
- ☐ Cascade a soft decline to a secondary processor with stronger regional banking partners instead of failing it.
- ☐ Match the route to the transaction's currency, location, and payment type to cut cross-border costs and false declines.
- ☐ Monitor issuer and processor outages, and shift volume to alternative connections when one goes down.