Past Due Invoice Guide: Email Templates That Get Paid

A past-due invoice is money your firm has already earned but has not yet collected. For law firms and other service businesses, overdue bills hurt cash flow and waste time. They also raise the risk that old receivables turn into write-offs.

This past-due invoice guide shows how to collect past-due invoices with a simple reminder plan, clear language, and three copy-and-paste email templates.

Why invoices go past due

Clients miss due dates for a few common reasons:

- **The invoice was not received.** Email errors, spam filters, and old contact data can keep an invoice from reaching the right person. Send invoices from a known firm email address and follow up with a short confirmation note.
- **The invoice was received but set aside.** Clients who manage many vendors often batch pay bills. Shorter payment terms and online payment options can move your invoice up the list.
- **The client has a question about the bill.** Billing disputes that are not handled early often turn into delays. Clear, itemized invoices help reduce confusion.
- **The client is having cash flow problems.** Small businesses and individuals may miss deadlines because money is tight. Early follow-up can open the door to a payment plan.
- **The invoice was forgotten.** Paper bills and static PDFs are easy to lose. Online invoicing with embedded payment links and reminders cuts down on late payments.

The past-due invoice process

The best process has three stages. Each stage uses a different tone.

Stage 1: Polite reminder

Send the first past-due invoice reminder one to seven days after the due date. The goal is to assume the client simply forgot or misplaced the bill. Keep the tone helpful and calm.

Stage 2: Firm follow-up

Use this message when the invoice is two to four weeks past due, and the first reminder did not bring a reply. The tone should be direct. Make clear that payment is due and that you are watching the account.

Stage 3: Final notice

Send a final notice or notice of past due payment when the invoice is 45 to 60 days overdue and earlier reminders have not worked. The tone should be formal and factual. State the next step, such as collections, a late fee, or a pause in service.

Past due invoice email templates

The past-due invoice email template set below is written for law firms and professional services businesses. Adapt the firm name, client name, matter details, and payment link as needed. The goal is to be firm without sounding threatening.

Template 1: Polite Reminder (7 Days Past Due)

Subject: Invoice [Number] for [Matter Name] — Payment Due

Hi [Client Name],

I am following up on invoice [number], dated [date], for [matter or service description], totaling [amount]. Our records show payment was due on

[due date].

If you already paid, please ignore this message. If you have questions about the bill or want to pay online, use this link: [payment link].

Please contact me if you need anything.

[Your name]

[Firm name]

[Contact information]

Template 2: Firm Follow-Up (21 Days Past Due)

Subject: Follow-Up: Invoice [Number] — [Amount] Outstanding

Hi [Client Name],

I am following up again on invoice [number] for [amount]. It was due on [due date], and we have not yet received payment or a reply.

If you have a question or want to set up a payment plan, please contact me directly at [phone or email] so we can resolve this promptly.

If you are ready to pay now, use this link: [payment link].

We appreciate your attention to this matter.

[Your name]

[Firm name]

[Contact information]

Template 3: Final Notice (45 to 60 Days Past Due)

Subject: Final Notice: Invoice [Number] — [Amount] Overdue

Dear [Client Name],

This is a formal notice that invoice [number] for [amount], due on [due date], is still unpaid. As of today, it is [number of days] past due.

We have tried to reach you several times without a reply. If payment is not received by [specific deadline, typically 10 business days out], we will need to [refer this matter to a collections agency / assess a late fee of [X%] per our engagement agreement / suspend services until the balance is paid].

To pay now, use this link: [payment link]. If you want to talk before the deadline, please contact me directly at [phone number] today.

[Your name]

[Firm name]

[Contact information]

How to reduce past due invoices

The best way to manage past-due invoices is to send fewer of them.

Bill more often. Monthly billing is faster than quarterly billing and creates smaller invoices. TimeSolv's batch invoicing makes monthly billing efficient even for firms without dedicated billing staff.

Make it easy to pay online. The harder it is to pay an invoice, the longer clients wait. An invoice with an ACH or credit card payment link takes seconds to pay. A paper invoice that requires a mailed check can take days. TimeSolvPay gives each invoice a payment link that clients can use from any device.

Store payment details up front. For retainer clients, storing a card or ACH approval at intake lets you collect automatically without the reminder cycle. TimeSolvPay lets firms store payment details securely and charge approved amounts on a schedule.

Set clear payment terms in your engagement letter. Say when payment is due at the start of the engagement: net 15, net 30, or due on receipt. Add your late fee policy if you use one.

Send invoices to the right person. In business matters, the attorney contact and the accounts payable contact may be different. Confirm who should receive invoices and keep that billing contact current.

At some point, internal follow-up stops being the best use of your firm's time. Whether you escalate to a collections agency or file a small claims or civil action depends on the amount, the client relationship, the quality of your records, and your local rules on fee collection.

Before you escalate, make sure your billing records are complete, your invoices are itemized, and your engagement letter supports the fee. TimeSolv's reporting tools and invoice history can help if you need to collect a balance or respond to a fee dispute.

Q&A

When should a firm send each past due invoice reminder?

A polite reminder should go out one to seven days after the due date. A firm follow-up fits two to four weeks past due. A final notice is best at 45 to 60 days overdue.

Why should the tone change with each follow-up?

Each stage has a different job. The first reminder assumes the client may have forgotten or missed the bill, so it should be calm. The second follow-up should be direct because the firm needs a reply. The final notice should be formal because it may lead to collections, late fees, or service limits.

What can firms do to prevent invoices from becoming past due?

Bill more often, make online payment easy, store approved payment details up front for retainer clients, set clear payment terms in the engagement letter, and send each invoice to the right billing contact.

Why should invoices be itemized and supported by complete billing records?

Clear, itemized invoices reduce confusion and keep billing questions from turning into payment delays. Complete records also help if the firm later needs to collect the balance, handle a fee dispute, or support the amount owed.

When should a firm consider going beyond internal follow-up?

Escalation may be right when more internal follow-up is not a good use of time. The decision should account for the invoice amount, the client relationship, the quality of the records, the engagement letter terms, and any local rules on fee collection.