



GMC disapproval

Emergency fix protocol. Top 10 reasons. 24h fix per each.



Before you start fixing

Shopping campaigns are crashing. In GMC, 80% of products show as limited performance or disapproved. The first instinct is to start fixing what GMC shows at the top of Diagnostics. Wrong.

Disapproval has three levels and each has a different recovery path. If you misdiagnose, you fix the wrong thing and lose 3 days.

3 levels of the problem

Level	What it hits	Recovery time
Account	The whole account, all products	7 to 14 days + reconsideration request
Item	A specific SKU, in isolation	24 to 72 h after fix + re-crawl
Policy	A category of products	3 to 7 days after compliance fix

Before you reach for the first fix, run this checklist.

Triage checklist

- ☐ Identify the level: Account / Item / Policy. GMC shows it in Diagnostics as separate tabs.
- ☐ Count how many products are affected. Below 30% = manageable. Above 30% = risk of account-level action.
- ☐ Save a screenshot of Diagnostics + Performance tab. Without a baseline you will not see whether the fix works.
- ☐ Notify the client or management. Transparency about blast radius matters more than speed of the fix.

3-question decision tree

1. Fix it yourself or escalate?

- Restricted products (alcohol, supplements, weapons) without certification → escalate immediately. Wrong step = permanent ban.
- Account-level suspension over 7 days without a response → escalate. You need someone with GMC support contact history.
- Item-level disapproval under 30% → fix it yourself with this protocol.

2. Hard restart or incremental fixes?

- If disapproved 60%+ with several different reasons → restart the whole process. Delete the supplemental feed, re-enrich the primary, resubmit. Incremental fixing is a waste of time here.
- If disapproved 5 to 20% with 1 or 2 reasons → incremental fixes. Targeted batch fix per the priority matrix.

3. Submit after each fix or wait?

- Never resubmit the feed more than 2 to 4 times a day. GMC penalizes with a rate limit and re-crawl slows down.
- After a batch fix, wait at least 24 h before the next submit. Measure Diagnostics delta.

Priority matrix (P0-P3)

Priority	Issue	Time to fix
P0 (NOW)	Restricted product	3 to 14 days
P0 (NOW)	Brand mismatch on top brand	24 to 48 h
P1 (24h)	Image quality	4 to 12 h
P1 (24h)	Missing GTIN, GPC, MPN	2 to 6 h
P2 (3-7d)	Price, shipping, availability mismatch	1 to 3 days
P2 (3-7d)	Landing page 404	1 to 2 days
P3 (planning)	Returns policy	2 to 4 h one-time

Fix in order P0 → P1 → P2 → P3. Not in the order GMC lists them.



REASON 01 / 10

Title: Missing required field "gtin"

Severity: CRITICAL **Affected:** typically 100% of branded products **Time to fix:** 2 to 4 hours

Symptom in GMC

"This product is missing the GTIN [gtin] attribute"

Root cause

Per the [official Google GTIN documentation](#), GTIN is **strongly recommended** (not strictly required) for branded products with an assigned GTIN. Without it, GMC lowers matching quality and for some brands (Apple, Samsung, Nike) it directly disapproves, because it expects valid GTIN matching in the Google product knowledge graph. For private labels, vintage goods, handmade items, or books before 1970, GTIN does not exist and then you need explicit `identifier_exists: false` + brand + MPN ([per spec](#)).

Typical pattern: e-shop imports the feed from a supplier system that has GTIN in a `productCode` or `ean` field, but the feed export does not map it to the `gtin` GMC field.

24h fix protocol

1. **Check the primary feed.** Open the CSV or XML export and look for a `gtin`, `ean`, or `productCode` column. If it exists and has values, the problem is in the mapping rule.
2. **If missing, contact the supplier.** They usually have GTIN in a PDF spec sheet or product catalog. For 50+ SKUs, request an export in the SKU,GTIN format.
3. **For a private label use `identifier_exists: false`.** Add `brand` (your e-shop name) + `mpn` (your own SKU without internal prefixes). GMC accepts it as an alternative to GTIN.
4. **After update, submit + wait 24 to 48 h** for re-crawl. Do not resubmit every hour.

For 50+ SKUs

Do not write it by hand. Create a supplemental Sheet feed with mapping rules: `productCode` → `gtin` with validation (must be 8, 12, 13, or 14 digits). Sheet feed registered in GMC enriches the primary feed at run-time.

Recovery time: 24 to 48 h



REASON 02 / 10

Title: Image quality (resolution, white BG, broken URL)

Severity: HIGH **Affected:** typically 5 to 15% of SKUs **Time to fix:** 4 to 12 hours

Symptom in GMC

"Image too small" / "Promotional overlay on image" / "Generic image"

Root cause

GMC today requires:

- Min 100×100 px (for apparel 250×250 px)
- **From January 31, 2027** a new mandatory minimum of **500×500 px** applies (warning from April 2026, per [official spec update](#))
- For PMax and AI generated creatives, the recommendation is 800×800 to 1000×1000 px
- White or neutral background
- No watermarks, logos, "SALE" stickers
- No generic placeholder image ("no image available")
- Image URL must return HTTP 200, not 404 or a redirect chain

Typical reason: e-shop CMS uses a thumbnail variant instead of full-res, or the CDN has a cache miss on some URLs.

24h fix protocol

1. **Download the list of image URLs from disapproved products.** GMC export → filter on image-related errors.
2. **Batch check via curl.** Run `curl -I {url}` on the whole batch. Look for 200 status + content-length > 50 KB (proxy for real size).
3. **For products with overlay** (watermark "SALE -20%"): re-export the image without overlay from the product page editor. If you have overlay in the image pipeline, disable it for feed export.
4. **For products with broken URL (404):** fix the URL in the e-shop CMS, or overwrite it in the supplemental feed with an alternative URL.
5. **For generic placeholders:** upload a real product photo. Without it the product will not run.

For 100+ SKUs

Invest 2 to 4 hours into an Image CDN with automatic resize + background removal. Cloudinary, imgproxy, or Bunny Optimizer. Long-term ROI is in a few weeks.

Recovery time: 24 to 72 h



REASON 03 / 10

Title: Price mismatch (feed vs landing page)

Severity: HIGH **Affected:** typically 5 to 20% of SKUs **Time to fix:** 4 to 8 hours

Symptom in GMC

"Mismatched price (and/or availability) between product page and Merchant Center"

Root cause

The GMC crawler sees a different price on the landing page than in the feed. Three typical causes:

1. **Feed does not update in real time.** Cron job once a day, but the e-shop changes prices every hour.
2. **VAT display.** Feed without VAT, LP with VAT, or vice versa.
3. **Discount logic.** LP shows the discount after login, the feed does not know.

24h fix protocol

1. **Open 5 disapproved products in an incognito window.** Compare the price on the LP vs in the feed. Measure the absolute difference.
2. **If mismatch is under 5%,** it is typically a VAT issue. Set the `tax` attribute in the feed explicitly per GMC documentation for your market.
3. **If mismatch is over 5%,** it is a feed refresh issue. Set the cron to 4 to 6 times a day instead of 1. Most e-shop platforms (Shoptet, Shopify, Magento) support it natively.
4. **If the LP shows the discount only to logged-in users,** use the `sale_price` attribute in the feed with the same logic. Discount without login should not show to anonymous crawlers.

For 100+ SKUs

Real-time feed sync (Mergado, DataFeedWatch) or Content API integration directly from the e-shop CMS. Without it you will have chronic price drift.

Recovery time: 24 to 48 h



REASON 04 / 10

Title: Shipping mismatch

Severity: MEDIUM **Affected:** typically 100% of SKUs if setup is wrong **Time to fix:** 2 to 4 hours

Symptom in GMC

"Mismatched shipping cost between product page and Merchant Center"

Root cause

GMC requires that shipping cost in the feed matches the landing page checkout. Typical issues:

- Feed has fixed shipping (\$4), but LP calculates by carrier at checkout.
- Free shipping threshold in the feed (\$75), but LP threshold is \$100.
- Multiple shipping methods (USPS, UPS, FedEx), feed only one.

24h fix protocol

1. **Set up in GMC Shipping settings directly.** Account → Shipping and returns → Shipping services.
2. **Define all carrier + cost combinations** you have in the e-shop. Per service: cost (flat or per-weight), free shipping threshold, delivery time.
3. **In the feed, remove the shipping attribute.** Account-level settings will be used. Less error-prone than per-item shipping in the feed.
4. **For free shipping threshold,** add `shipping_price_min` and `shipping_price_max` attributes into account settings, not into per-item feed.

For multi-country setup

For every target country, set up a separate shipping service in GMC. The per-country feed equivalent must use the same logic.

Recovery time: 24 to 48 h



REASON 05 / 10

Title: Returns policy mismatch

Severity: MEDIUM **Affected:** typically 100% of SKUs if setup is missing **Time to fix:** 2 to 4 hours one-time

Symptom in GMC

"Return policy mismatch" / "Missing return policy"

Root cause

From 2025, GMC requires explicit returns policy in Account settings + matching text on the landing page (footer, dedicated page). If the LP says something different from GMC settings, instant disapproval.

Typical scenario: GMC settings "30 days return" (from a past promo), LP footer "14 days".
Mismatch = disapproved.

24h fix protocol

1. **Open GMC** → Account → Shipping and returns → **Return policy**.
2. **Fill in all three conditions:**
 - Returns window: legal minimum 14 days (EU B2C; US is at merchant discretion). If you offer more, state it.
 - Restocking fee: typically 0.
 - Return shipping cost: who pays (typically the customer for regular returns).
3. **On the landing page** (footer + dedicated / returns page), publish **the same** conditions.
4. **Validate match.** Open incognito → your LP → find the returns text → compare word-for-word against GMC settings.

What NOT to do

"30 days returns" in GMC, but "14 days" on LP = instant disapproval. When you change one, change both in sync.

Recovery time: 24 to 48 h



REASON 06 / 10

Title: Restricted product (alcohol, supplements, weapons)

Severity: CRITICAL **Affected:** specific product categories **Time to fix:** 3 to 14 days (NOT 24 h)

Symptom in GMC

"Restricted product: alcoholic beverages" / "Restricted product: healthcare"

Root cause

Some categories require explicit certification in GMC + compliance on the LP:

- **Alcohol:** age restriction on the LP, target audience certification.
- **Dietary supplements:** warning text, no medical claims.
- **Weapons:** jurisdiction restrictions.
- **CBD, kratom:** only specific markets.

24h fix protocol

Note: this is not a 24h fix. For restricted categories count on 3 to 14 days of recovery + documentation.

1. **Find out which specific policy was violated.** GMC shows it in the error message with a link to the policy page.
2. **For alcohol:** activate alcohol certification in GMC per the [official alcohol policy](#) (the exact GMC menu path changes over time — check the current Help). Plus an age verification gate on the LP before the checkout flow.
3. **For dietary supplements:** remove medical claims from title and description ("cures", "treats", "100% effective"). Use neutral descriptors per health claims regulations.
4. **Submit a reconsideration request** with links to LP fixes + screenshots of compliance setup.

What NOT to do

Do not try to bypass the restriction by rewriting the title or hiding the category. The algorithm recognizes it and can escalate to account-level suspension.

Escalation

If you do not have certification and expertise in restricted categories, escalate to external help. A wrong step here = permanent ban and recovery is not possible.

Recovery time: 3 to 14 days (best case), permanent ban (worst case)



REASON 07 / 10

Title: Inaccurate availability

Severity: HIGH **Affected:** typically 10 to 30% of SKUs with fast-moving inventory **Time to fix:** 4 to 8 hours for setup, 0 h ongoing

Symptom in GMC

"Mismatched availability: in stock in feed, out of stock on landing page"

Root cause

Feed cron does not update on stock change. Classic scenario: product sells out Monday morning, feed sync once daily at night. Whole day disapproved + lost spend.

Second scenario: pre-order product in the feed as in stock , but LP says "available from July 1" → mismatch.

24h fix protocol

1. **Real-time webhook from e-shop CMS on feed update at stock change.** Most platforms (Shoptet, Shopware, Magento, Shopify) do it via plugin or native integration.
2. **If webhook is not possible, min 4x daily cron** (6 h interval). Better than 1x, but still a trade-off between load and accuracy.
3. **For pre-orderable products:** set `availability: preorder` + `availability_date: YYYY-MM-DD` . GMC accepts it as a separate status.
4. **For products with a long restock cycle:** `availability: out of stock` with `availability_date` future. Better than a false `in stock` .

For fast-moving inventory (fashion, electronics)

Real-time webhook is non-negotiable. With a once-daily cron you will see 10 to 15% availability disapprovals permanently.

Recovery time: 12 to 24 h after fix



REASON 08 / 10

Title: Landing page issues (404, redirect chain)

Severity: HIGH **Affected:** typically 5 to 10% of SKUs with legacy URL structure **Time to fix:** 2 to 6 hours

Symptom in GMC

"Landing page error: 404" / "Excessive redirects"

Root cause

Three typical causes:

1. **404:** product deleted from the e-shop but not from the feed. Feed cron pulls old SKUs.
2. **Redirect chain:** LP redirects 3 to 5 times before reaching the final URL (typically www → non-www → https → category slug change).
3. **Slow page (>5 s):** GMC penalizes slow LPs as poor user experience.

24h fix protocol

1. **Audit via curl batch.** `curl -I -L -w "%{http_code} %{num_redirects}\n" {url}` on the whole batch of URLs. Look for 404, redirect count over 2, slow response time.
2. **For 404:** remove from the feed (mark `availability: out of stock + availability_date: null`) or redirect to a category with alternatives.
3. **For redirect chains:** update URL in the feed to the **final destination**. Skip intermediate redirects. The URL must be where the crawler actually arrives.
4. **For slow pages:** invest in CDN, image optimization, Critical CSS. Without it more slow URLs will be disapproved gradually.

Quick win for legacy migrations

If you recently migrated URL structure (slug change, category restructure), a batch update of the feed to new URLs saves 80% of disapprovals immediately.

Recovery time: 24 to 48 h



REASON 09 / 10

Title: Brand mismatch

Severity: HIGH (on top brands), MEDIUM (on others) **Affected:** typically branded products with inconsistent metadata **Time to fix:** 2 to 4 hours

Symptom in GMC

"Brand attribute doesn't match product page"

Root cause

Feed brand field contains something different from what the LP displays. Typical:

- Feed: Adidas Performance , LP: Adidas
- Feed: Apple Inc. , LP: Apple
- Feed: empty (private label), LP shows brand in navigation

24h fix protocol

1. **Check 10 disapproved products.** What brand does GMC expect (from the error message)? Compare with LP and feed.
2. **Standardize brand in the feed to the canonical variant.** Shorter, without Inc. , without Performance suffix. Match exactly what the LP shows as the primary brand label.
3. **For private label:** fill in brand = your e-shop name + set `identifier_exists: false` . GMC accepts it as a consistent setup.

Recovery time: 24 to 48 h

REASON 10 / 10

Title: Missing required attribute (GPC, MPN)

Severity: HIGH **Affected:** typically 30 to 100% of SKUs if systematic mapping is missing **Time to fix:** 4 to 8 hours for batch fix

Symptom in GMC

"Missing google_product_category" / "Missing mpn"

Root cause

GPC (google_product_category) and MPN (Manufacturer Part Number) are required in some categories. Without GTIN they are required always.

GPC typically misses because the e-shop CMS exports its own categories, not Google taxonomy.

24h fix protocol

1. **GPC:** use a **full text path** (Apparel & Accessories > Clothing > Outerwear > Coats & Jackets > Winter Jackets), not numeric ID. Fill in 4 to 6 levels deep, not 1. GMC accepts the full path as self-validating.
2. **MPN:** get it from the supplier (often in PDF spec sheets as "Part Number" or "Article Number"). For a private label, use your own SKU without internal prefixes.
3. **For batch fix:** supplemental Sheet feed with mapping rules per category. Map `category_name` → `GPC text path` . Sheet feed enriches primary in 24 h.

Recovery time: 24 to 48 h



Still not helping?

If you went through all 10 reasons and still see disapprovals, the problem is most likely in attributes that GMC does not flag as an error, but that form a silent disapproval path: weak titles, missing product highlights, GPC at better granularity, material and use case explicit.

My eval will find this in 24 h on 50 products from your feed. No registration, no card.

Test 50 products free

[Test 50 products free →](#)

→ karelhuk.cz/en/enrich-product-feed-google-ads

For chronic GMC issues

Growth tier covers monthly GMC monitoring + delta enrichment + emergency fix support. For e-shops where the feed must be production-ready every month, not just a one-off cleanup after a crisis.

→ karelhuk.cz/en