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Adding a human approval step to an automation

Ideas & Everyday Automations

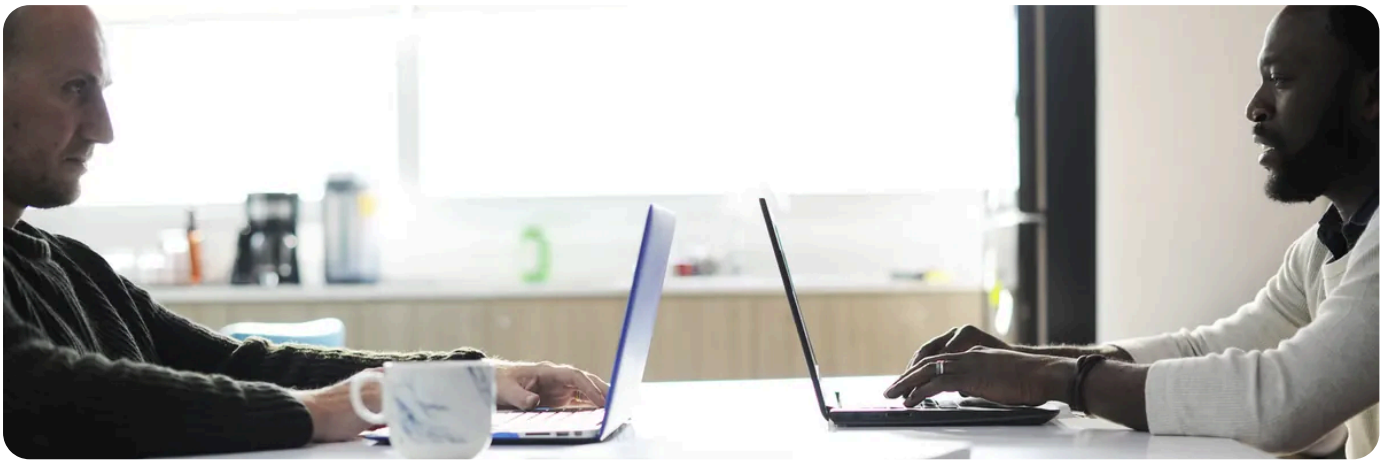
CODE	VERSION	COUNTRY · LANGUAGE
RLX-AO-KB-1594	v2026.10.10	Angola · English

Interweb Angola
RLX Angola, Lda. · Group RLX Holdings
Tax ID (NIF) 500 260 5724 · Commercial registration no. 26464-25/250724

https://www.meu.interweb.ao/knowledgebase/1594

Adding a human approval step to an automation

Ideas & Everyday Automations Created on **October 10, 2026** 3 min read



A human approval step is a point in the flow where the automation **stops, shows a person what it is about to do, and only goes on if they approve**. It is the cheapest safeguard for anything that sends something to a customer, touches money, deletes or publishes, and it is essential in flows with AI, because AI writes well and errs with the same confidence. The design is always the same, in any tool.

The design, in three steps

1. **Prepare.** The flow does all the work except the last step: it writes the reply, composes the e-mail, calculates the amount.

2. **Ask for approval.** It sends the decider a message with **what will happen** (the text, the recipient, the amount) and two options: approve or reject.

3. **Wait.** The flow stays paused until the answer arrives. If approved, it runs the last step; if rejected, it logs that and ends. If nobody answers, **the default is to do nothing**.

Three ways to build it

Way	How it works	When it suits
A spreadsheet with an "approved" column	One flow writes drafts to a row; the person changes the column to "yes"; a second flow sends only the approved rows	The simplest and most failure-proof. Fits almost anything. See **connecting n8n to Google Sheets**.
A message with buttons or links	The flow sends the approver a message with two links, one to approve and one to reject, which call a webhook	Quicker for the approver, on a phone. The links are webhooks: protect them. See **securing n8n**.

Way	How it works	When it suits
n8n's own wait node	n8n has a *Wait* node that pauses the flow until it receives a webhook call or until a set time; some messaging nodes also wait for a reply (check whether your version has that option)	Everything inside one flow. Check n8n's documentation for how your node behaves.

What to send for approval

When	What
Always	Money (payments, refunds, discounts), messages to customers that are not fixed, deleting or publishing.
In the first weeks	Everything the AI writes for the outside, and whatever the flow does for the first time.
Can be skipped	Alerts to yourself, and copies or tidying of reversible data.

An approval link is a key.
Whoever opens it, approves. Put a long, unguessable, single-use code in it, and do not send it to an open group. See **n8n webhooks: test and production**.

Show the approver
everything they need to decide in one message
: the final text, who it goes to, and why. If they have to open three places to decide, they will end up pressing "approve" without looking. Log who approved and when.

NEED A HAND?

Does the flow run on a server of your own and you want help with access or the domain? Open a ticket.

Open a support ticket →

SEE ALSO

- **n8n webhooks: test URL, production URL, and why they do not fire**
- **Securing n8n: access, credentials and exposed webhooks**

What n8n is, and what you can automate with it

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TAX ID (NIF)	500 260 5724
COMMERCIAL REGISTRATION NO.	26464-25/250724
REGISTERED OFFICE	Rua Direita do Patriota, Bairro Dangereux Belas, Luanda, Angola
CONTACT	info@interweb.ao · +244 942 011 191 · www.interweb.ao
OPENING HOURS	Monday to Friday - 08 AM to 04 PM Saturday & Sunday - Closed

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