

API Change Safety Checklist

Ten checks to run before you merge an API change

impactgate.in - Evidence for the changes that travel beyond your repository

01 Renamed or removed response fields

A rename is a removal plus an addition to every consumer. Search downstream code for the old field name, not just the new one.

02 Type and format changes

Widening or changing a type (string to integer, date to datetime) breaks strict deserializers even when values look the same.

03 New required parameters or fields

Any new required input breaks every existing caller that does not send it. Make it optional or version the endpoint.

04 Enum and constant changes

Adding a value breaks strict clients that validate exhaustively; removing one breaks clients that depend on it. Check both directions.

05 Status code and error-shape changes

Callers branch on status codes and error bodies. Changing either changes behavior even when the happy path is identical.

06 Authentication and authorization changes

New scopes, shorter token lifetimes, or stricter roles fail at runtime, not in review. List which consumers hold which credentials.

07 Pagination and defaults

Changing default page sizes, ordering, or filter behavior silently changes results for consumers that rely on the old defaults.

08 Deprecation and sunset signals

If you plan to remove something, send Deprecation and Sunset headers first and confirm consumers saw them before the removal date.

09 Consumer inventory before merge

Know which services, jobs, and third parties call the changed endpoint. Missing data is not zero usage - treat unknown consumers as a review task.

10 A rollback and migration window

Agree the migration window with consumers and keep a rollback path. There is no universal number; decide it with the teams affected.