



OWN YOUR PRESENCE / GUIDE 5 OF 5

Set up **WhatsApp** Business

A complete business profile, product catalog, automatic replies and a one-tap chat link — using the free app, on your own phone, in under an hour.

TIME NEEDED

30–45 minutes

COST

Free

SKILL LEVEL

Complete beginner

YOU'LL NEED

A phone number

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READ THIS FIRST

Three things that decide everything

1. There are two WhatsApp Business products. You want the free one.

	BUSINESS APP	BUSINESS PLATFORM (API)
Cost	Free	Per-message fees plus a provider subscription — often \$50–500/month, with setup costs on top
Setup	Ten minutes on your phone	Requires a solution provider or a developer
Where you work	Phone app, plus linked computers	Inside your own CRM or helpdesk software
Team use	Device sharing only — no roles or chat assignment	Proper multi-agent with unlimited seats
Right for	Almost every small business	Hundreds of conversations a day, or a support team

This guide covers the free Business App. The API is not a starting point, and you would know if you needed it.

2. One phone number, one WhatsApp app.

A NUMBER CAN ONLY BE ACTIVE IN ONE WHATSAPP APP AT A TIME

You cannot run personal WhatsApp and WhatsApp Business on the same number simultaneously. This drives the most important decision in this guide, and getting it wrong means either losing your personal chats or mixing customers into your family conversations.

Best: a second number

A separate SIM or eSIM for the business. Both apps run side by side on one phone. Business chats stay separate from personal ones, and you can hand the business number over later without giving away your personal life.

Workable: convert your number

Move your existing number to WhatsApp Business, bringing your chat history with it. Perfectly supported. But your personal WhatsApp on that number ends, and going back later loses all your business data.

3. Everything starts on a phone.

THERE IS NO WAY TO SIGN UP ON A COMPUTER

You cannot create a WhatsApp Business account at web.whatsapp.com or in the desktop app. You must register on a phone first, then link the computer afterwards. People lose real time to this.

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What's in this guide

Work through it in order the first time. After that, use this page to jump straight to the part you need.

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PART 3	Install and register	The main setup
PART 4	Complete your business profile	Everything customers see
PART 5	Build your catalog	Products and collections
PART 6	Automatic replies & your chat link	The tools that save you time
PART 7	Secure it & connect it	PIN, computer, Facebook, Instagram
PART 8	When things go wrong	Every common error, and the fix

Before you start

Must have

- ☐ **A smartphone** — Android or iPhone. Registration cannot happen anywhere else.
- ☐ **A phone number with an active SIM.** See the table below for what works.
- ☐ **Your business name**, decided. Changing it later triggers a review.
- ☐ **A business category** — you'll pick one from WhatsApp's list.

Strongly recommended

- ☐ **A logo** — square, around 640 × 640 pixels, shown as a circle
- ☐ **A short description** of your business
- ☐ **Your address, opening hours, email and website**
- ☐ **Product photos and prices**, if you'll build a catalog
- ☐ **Your greeting and away messages, drafted**

Which phone numbers actually work

Mobile number with an active SIM	✓ Works	The straightforward option. A second SIM or an eSIM keeps business and personal cleanly separate.
Landline / fixed line	✓ Works	Yes, genuinely. Register in the Business app, let the text message fail, then tap Call me — an automated call reads the code aloud. The line must accept international calls. No toll-free or extension-only numbers.
Google Voice, TextNow and similar VoIP	✗ Blocked	Blocked for new registrations since around 2024. You'll see This phone number is not supported , or the code simply never arrives. There is no workaround.

THE LANDLINE TRICK IS WORTH KNOWING

If your business already has a landline that customers know, you can put WhatsApp on it. Voice and video calls will only work on the phone running the app, not on the physical handset — but for messaging, it works, and it means the number on your signage is the number on WhatsApp.

Converting an existing number

USING A FRESH NUMBER?

Skip to Part 3. This part is only for moving a number that's currently on personal WhatsApp.

BACK UP BEFORE YOU DO ANYTHING ELSE

Do the backup **immediately before** you start — not last night, not this morning. Anything that happened since your last backup will not survive the move, and the automatic overnight backup is not enough.

ANDROID

- 1 Open **WhatsApp Messenger** (the personal one) and go to **Settings → Chats → Chat Backup → Back Up Now**. Wait for it to finish completely.
- 2 Install **WhatsApp Business** from Google Play. It's a separate app — keep both installed for now.
- 3 Open WhatsApp Business, accept the terms, and enter **the same phone number**.
- 4 Verify with the 6-digit code sent by text.
- 5 When prompted, **confirm the chat history transfer**. The app detects your existing account and offers to restore from your Google Drive backup.
- 6 Set up your business profile (Part 4).
- 7 **Check your chats and media are all there** before you delete or uninstall anything.

IPHONE

The same sequence, but the backup and restore run through **iCloud**. Confirm WhatsApp is switched on in your iCloud settings first, then back up manually before starting.

THE TWO THINGS THAT GO WRONG

Wrong account. The restore must use the *same* Google account or iCloud account the backup was made with. Mismatched accounts is by far the most common reason a restore silently finds nothing.

Inactive SIM. The SIM must be active to receive the verification code. An inactive one creates a loop you can't get out of.

GOING BACK IS EFFECTIVELY ONE-WAY

You can switch back to personal WhatsApp later, but **your catalog, collections, greeting and away messages, quick replies and labels are permanently deleted**. There is no export and no recovery. Treat this move as a decision, not an experiment.

Install and register

- 1 Search for **WhatsApp Business** in the App Store or Google Play and install it.
It's a different app from WhatsApp Messenger, with a different icon. Make sure you have the right one.
- 2 Open it and accept the **Terms of Service**.
- 3 Select your **country code** and enter your phone number in full international format — no spaces, dashes or brackets.
- 4 Enter the **6-digit code** sent by text message.
If the text doesn't arrive — or you're using a landline — tap **Call me**. An automated call reads the code aloud.
- 5 Restore your backup if you're converting an existing number, or skip if this is fresh.
- 6 Enter your **business name**.
- 7 Choose a **category** — Shopping and Retail, Food and Beverage, Beauty and Personal Care, Health and Wellness, and so on.
- 8 Add your profile photo. Continue to Part 4 to finish properly.

CHOOSE THE BUSINESS NAME CAREFULLY

You can change it later, but changes are reviewed — and if you ever become a verified business, a name change re-triggers Meta's full review, which takes days. Some sources still claim the name is permanent; that appears to be outdated, but the safe approach is the same either way: **get it right now**.

Good practice: match your website and signage exactly. No web addresses, no emoji, no ALL CAPS unless it's a genuine acronym. Generic names like "Official Account" are rejected.

PART 4

Complete your business profile

ANDROID

⋮ (More) → Business tools → Business profile

IPHONE

Settings → Business tools → Business profile

A complete profile is what separates a business people trust from a number people ignore. Fill in every field you're willing to publish.

Profile photo	Your logo. Square, around 640 × 640 px. It's cropped to a circle, so keep the important part in the middle — leave a clear margin.
Business name	Always visible. Roughly 25 characters.
About	Always visible , around 139 characters. This is your one-line pitch — treat it as the most valuable text in the profile. "Fresh bread daily · Custom cakes to order · Open 7am".
Description	A longer explanation of what you do, sitting behind the profile view.
Category	Always visible. One primary category from the list.
Business hours	A seven-day grid. Set them in your customers' timezone. Customers genuinely check this before messaging.
Address	Drops a map pin in your profile. Use a real street address, not a PO box. Skip it if you work from home and don't want it public.
Email	One address — use an inbox someone actually monitors.
Website	Up to two links.

THE ABOUT FIELD DOES THE HEAVIEST LIFTING

It's one of the few things shown before someone opens a chat. Don't waste it on "Welcome to our page!" — put what you sell, where, and when you're open. Those 139 characters get read far more than your description.

Build your catalog

Your catalog turns a chat thread into a shop window. Customers browse your products without leaving the conversation, and you stop retyping prices twenty times a week.

TAP PATH

⋮ / Settings → Business tools → Catalog → Add New Item

- 1 Upload **1 to 10 photos** of the item. JPEG or PNG, each under 5 MB.
Good light and a plain background beat a professional camera. Shoot on your phone near a window.
- 2 Enter the **item name** — required, up to about 100 characters.
- 3 Add the **price**. Optional, but leaving it out means answering "how much?" in every single chat.
- 4 Add a **description** — roughly 500 characters. Sizes, materials, turnaround time, what's included.
- 5 Add a **product code** and a **link** to the item on your own website, if you have one.
- 6 Tap **Save**. The item goes live immediately.
- 7 Once you have a few items, group them into **Collections** — "Cakes", "Breads", "Seasonal" — so people can find things.

You can hold around 500 items, with up to 10 photos each.

THE CATALOG DOES NOT TAKE PAYMENT

Outside **India and Brazil**, WhatsApp cannot process payments. Customers add items to a cart and send you the order *as a message* — you then arrange payment yourself, through a link, an invoice, or in person. Anyone describing customers checking out inside WhatsApp is describing India or Brazil, not the US, UK or Europe.

Automatic replies & your chat link

WHERE THEY ALL LIVE

⋮ / Settings → Business tools

Greeting message

Sent automatically the first time someone messages you, or after 14 days of silence. Keep it short and useful — say what you do, and ask the one question that saves a round trip.

"Hi, thanks for messaging Marie's Kitchen! To help you fastest — are you asking about a custom cake, or something from today's counter? Our catalog is on our profile."

Away message

Sent outside your business hours. Two jobs: set expectations about when you'll reply, and give them something to do in the meantime.

"Thanks for your message! We're closed right now and reply from 7am. For custom cake enquiries, send the date, size and flavour and we'll come back to you first thing."

Quick replies

Shortcuts for things you type constantly. Type / then the shortcut name and the full message appears. You can save up to 50. Set these up first:

- **/hours** — your opening times
- **/price** — your most-asked-about price or starting price
- **/location** — your address and parking or access notes
- **/book** — how to book, with the link
- **/deposit** — deposit and payment terms

Labels

Colour-coded tags on conversations. WhatsApp gives you defaults — **New customer**, **New order**, **Pending payment**, **Paid**, **Order complete** — and you can add your own. This is the closest thing the free app has to a customer database, and it's genuinely useful once you're past a handful of chats a day.

Your chat link and QR code

TAP PATH

⋮ / Settings → Business tools → Short link (and → QR code)

Your link takes the form **wa.me/** followed by your country code and number, digits only — no plus sign, spaces or dashes. For example: **<https://wa.me/14155551234>**

You can also pre-fill the first message, which noticeably increases how many people actually send one:

```
https://wa.me/14155551234?text=Hi%2C%20I%27d%20like%20to%20book%20a%20cake
```

Spaces become **%20**, commas become **%2C**, apostrophes become **%27**. The Short link screen in the app builds this for you if you'd rather not hand-code it.

TEST IT ON BOTH KINDS OF PHONE BEFORE YOU PRINT IT

Put your QR code on your window, your receipts, your van and your business cards. But open the link in a browser on **both an iPhone and an Android phone** first — a typo you only discover after printing five hundred flyers is an expensive lesson.

Secure it & connect it

Two-step verification — do this today

This sets a 6-digit PIN required whenever your number is registered on a new device. It is your defence against SIM-swap attacks, which are the main way business WhatsApp accounts get stolen.

ANDROID

⋮ → Settings → Account → Two-step verification → Enable

IPHONE

Settings → Account → Two-step verification → Turn on

Create the PIN, confirm it, and — this part matters — **add a recovery email address** and verify it.

WITHOUT A RECOVERY EMAIL, A FORGOTTEN PIN LOCKS YOU OUT FOR DAYS

There's no shortcut and no support line that will bypass it. Add the email while you're setting the PIN, not later.

Using WhatsApp Business on your computer

- 1 On your computer, open **web.whatsapp.com**, or install the WhatsApp desktop app.
- 2 On your phone, go to **Settings → Linked devices → Link a device**.
- 3 Scan the QR code on your computer screen.

Everything syncs across devices, and linked computers keep working even when your phone is off.

THE 14-DAY RULE

Your **primary phone must connect to the internet at least once every 14 days**, or every linked device is disconnected and you'll need to scan the QR codes again. If you leave the business phone in a drawer, this will catch you out.

"MULTIPLE DEVICES" IS NOT THE SAME AS "A TEAM"

You can link several devices — commonly four alongside the phone, with more available on paid Meta Verified tiers. But there are **no roles, no permissions, no chat assignment and no internal notes**. Everyone sees everything and nobody knows who's replying to what. It's designed for one person across several screens, not two people sharing an inbox. Genuine team working needs the API.

Connecting to your Facebook Page

- 1 Go to your Facebook **Page → Settings**.

- 2 Select **WhatsApp** in the left sidebar.
- 3 Choose your country code, enter your WhatsApp Business number, and click **Continue**.
- 4 Enter the confirmation code sent to that number and click **Confirm**.

This adds a **WhatsApp button to your Facebook Page**, lets you handle WhatsApp, Messenger and Instagram messages in one inbox, and enables click-to-WhatsApp ads. You can add the same number to your Instagram professional account for a WhatsApp button there too.

The verified badge — the honest answer

THE FREE BUSINESS APP CANNOT GET THE OFFICIAL BADGE

Meta states plainly that Official Business Account status is **not granted to WhatsApp Business app phone numbers**. It's for API users only, and even then it depends on being a well-known brand with major news coverage. Most articles telling you how to "get the green tick" are wrong on both counts — and the badge is **blue** now, not green.

The realistic route for an app user is **Meta Verified**, a paid monthly subscription starting around \$14.99 for the standard business tier and rising steeply for higher ones, billed separately per platform. It includes the badge, impersonation protection and priority support.

HERE'S THE PART NOBODY MENTIONS

Your approved business name now shows in chats for **any business that has passed business verification** — not only badged ones. That was the badge's main practical advantage, and it's gone. You do not need the badge to look legitimate to customers.

When things go wrong

PROBLEM

WHAT TO DO

"This number is already registered"	A number can be active in only one WhatsApp app at a time. Either migrate the existing account (Part 2) or use a different number. Deleting the account in the old app frees the number up.
The verification code never arrives	Work through these in order: confirm the SIM is active with your carrier; check the number format (country code, no leading zero, no spaces or dashes); switch between Wi-Fi and mobile data; check whether a call blocker, spam filter or Do Not Disturb is intercepting it; and use the "Call me" option , which succeeds when SMS doesn't. Wait several minutes before requesting a new code.
"Too many attempts"	You've requested codes too often and tripped abuse prevention. Wait several hours. Retrying sooner extends the lockout rather than shortening it.
My Google Voice number is rejected	VoIP numbers are blocked by design. There is no workaround on the free app. Use a real mobile number, or a landline via the "Call me" method.
Banned at signup, or "this account is not allowed to use WhatsApp Business"	Usually a number with prior violation history, or a recycled or VoIP number. Tap "Request a review" in the ban notice, explain your situation, and submit. Most reviews resolve within about 24 hours. Submitting multiple appeals does not speed it up. If no "Request a review" option appears, the ban is permanent and you'll need a different number.
My chats didn't come across	Almost always a backup account mismatch — the restore must use the same Google or iCloud account that made the backup. Check which account is signed in on the device. Moving between Android and iPhone needs the dedicated transfer flow, not a cloud restore.
All my linked computers signed out	Your primary phone went more than 14 days without connecting to the internet. Get the phone online and re-scan the QR codes.
My emails to WhatsApp support bounce	Direct support email addresses no longer accept requests. Use Settings → Help → Contact Us inside the app.
I keep getting reported or blocked	Bans are driven heavily by how often people block and report you. Never message anyone who hasn't given you their number for that purpose, never use purchased contact lists, and never use modified WhatsApp apps or bulk-sending tools. Broadcast lists cap at 256 saved contacts and only reach people who have saved your number — with no notification when they don't.

REFERENCE

Quick summary

Phone vs computer

TASK	BEST ON	WHY
Registering the account	Phone only	There is no desktop signup. None.
Business profile setup	Phone	Business tools live in the app.
Adding catalog items	Phone	Your product photos are already there.
Writing greeting and away messages	Phone	Only editable in the app.
Two-step verification	Phone	Under Settings → Account.
Day-to-day replying	Computer	A real keyboard, once you've linked it. Much faster.
Getting your QR code to print	Computer	Easier to download at print resolution.
Linking to your Facebook Page	Computer	Page settings are far easier on desktop.

The whole thing, in order

- ☐ Decide: a second number (better) or convert your existing one
- ☐ If converting — back up manually, right before you start
- ☐ Install WhatsApp Business and register with the 6-digit code
- ☐ Enter your business name carefully — it's reviewed if you change it
- ☐ Complete the profile: logo, About, description, category, hours, address, email, website
- ☐ Turn on two-step verification and **add a recovery email**
- ☐ Build your catalog and group items into collections
- ☐ Write your greeting and away messages, and set up five quick replies
- ☐ Get your wa.me link with a pre-filled message, and your QR code
- ☐ Link your computer, and connect your Facebook Page and Instagram
- ☐ Test the link on both an iPhone and an Android before printing anything

A NOTE ON DATES

Written August 2026. WhatsApp shifts menu positions between app versions, and features like payments and automated messaging vary by country. If a screen doesn't match, look for wording that means the same thing.

You own this. That's the point.

Your account, your audience, your customer relationships — created by you, controlled by you, with no monthly fee to anyone for the privilege of existing online. Nobody can take it away, raise the rent on it, or switch it off.

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