

Best Practices for Safe Use of Personal WhatsApp Accounts

WhatsApp is a widely used messaging platform that allows users to communicate through text, voice, and video calls. While it offers convenience and connectivity, it is essential to prioritize safety and privacy. This document outlines best practices for using WhatsApp securely.

NOTE: When you join a Campus WhatsApp Information Group for UW–Madison employees, you will use a personal WhatsApp account, but you will not be able to reply to messages, send messages, or share information in the Campus WhatsApp Information Groups.

The Campus WhatsApp Information Groups are used only to send important employee information from UW–Madison. These messages may contain links to more detailed information. If you have a question about a message you receive, contact Jzong Thao at 608-263-2217 or jzong.thao@wisc.edu.

1. Keep Your Account Safe

Your WhatsApp account is private, and you want to keep it that way. Here is how:

- Set Up Two-step Verification (an Extra Lock):
 - Add an extra layer of security to your account. Go to Settings > Account > Two-step Verification, and create a 6 digit PIN. This PIN is like a password that protects your account if someone tries to use it on another phone.
- Never Share Your PIN or Verification Code:
 - WhatsApp may send you a code to verify your phone number. Never share this code with anyone, even if they say they are from WhatsApp. Scammers might try to trick you into giving it to them.
- Use a Strong Password for Your Phone:
 - Make sure your phone has a password, PIN, or fingerprint lock. This helps protect WhatsApp and other apps if your phone is lost or stolen.

2. Protect Your Privacy

You control who sees your information and messages. Here is how to stay in control:

- Check Your Privacy Settings:
 - Go to Settings > Privacy to decide who can see your profile photo, status, “last seen” time, and more. You can choose “Everyone,” “My Contacts,” or “Nobody.” For more privacy, choose “My Contacts” or “Nobody.”
- Be Careful What You Share:
 - Think before sharing personal information like your address, bank details, or passwords. Once you send something, you can’t take it back.
- Block Unwanted Contacts:
 - If someone is bothering you, you can block them. Go to the chat with that person, tap their name at the top, and choose “Block.” They won’t be able to message or call you anymore.
- Leave Groups You Don’t Want to Be In:
 - If you are added to a group you don’t like, you can leave. Open the group, tap the group name, and choose “Exit Group.” You can also mute notifications if you don’t want to leave but want to stop getting alerts.
- Use End to End Encryption

- Ensure that your chats are encrypted (this is enabled by default on WhatsApp). End To End encryption ensures that only you and the recipient can read the messages.

3. Avoid Scams and Misinformation

WhatsApp is great for staying in touch, but some people use it to spread lies or trick others. Here's how to stay safe:

- Don't Believe Everything You See:
 - If you get a message, photo, or video that seems strange or too good to be true, don't share it. Check to see if it's real by looking it up online or asking a person you trust.
- Verify Contacts Before Sharing Information
 - Confirm the identity of contacts before sharing sensitive information or clicking on links. Scammers may impersonate friends or family to gain access to your personal data.
- Be Careful with Links:
 - Don't click on links in messages from people you don't know. They could lead to dangerous websites that steal your information or harm your phone.
- Don't Send Money to Strangers:
 - If someone asks you for money or personal details, be suspicious. Scammers might pretend to be a friend or a company. Always double check by calling the person or company directly (not through WhatsApp).
- Report Problems:
 - If you get a message that seems like a scam or breaks the rules, report it. Open the chat, tap the person's name, and choose "Report." WhatsApp will look into it.

4. Use WhatsApp Respectfully

WhatsApp is a tool for connecting with others, so let's use it in a kind and helpful way:

- Think Before You Send:
 - Don't send messages that are mean, hurtful, or offensive. Once you send a message, you can't control who sees it if someone forwards it.

- Ask Before Adding People to Groups:
 - Before adding someone to a group, ask if they're okay with it. Not everyone wants to be in every group.
- Don't Spam:
 - Avoid sending too many messages or forwarding chain messages. This can annoy others and clog up their phones.

5. Manage Your Data and Storage

WhatsApp can use a lot of space on your phone and data on your plan. Here's how to manage it:

- Use WiFi When Possible:
 - Sending videos, photos, and making calls uses data. To save on your phone plan, connect to WiFi before doing these things.
- Control What Gets Downloaded:
 - You can stop WhatsApp from automatically downloading photos, videos, and other files. Go to Settings > Storage and Data > Automatic Download, and choose "When Using Mobile Data" or "When Connected on WiFi" to turn off automatic downloads.
- Clear Old Chats and Files:
 - If your phone is running out of space, you can delete old messages and files. Go to Settings > Storage and Data > Manage Storage to see what's taking up space and delete what you don't need.

6. Back Up Your Chats

If you lose your phone or get a new one, you don't want to lose your messages. Here's how to save them:

- Turn On Chat Backup:
 - Go to Settings > Chats > Chat Backup. Choose how often you want to back up your chats (daily, weekly, or monthly) and connect it to Google Drive (for Android) or iCloud (for iPhone). Make sure you're connected to WiFi to avoid using data.
- Keep Your Backup Safe:

- Your backup is private, but make sure your Google or iCloud account has a strong password to protect it.

7. Get Help When You Need It

UW-Madison does not support WhatsApp, if you're having trouble with WhatsApp or need more information, help is available:

- Check the Help Center:
 - Open WhatsApp, go to Settings > Help, and look for answers to common questions.
- Contact Support:
 - If you can't find the answer, you can send a message to WhatsApp's support team through the app. Go to Settings > Help > Contact Us.

By following these tips, you can enjoy WhatsApp safely, protect your privacy, and use it in a way that's helpful and respectful to others.