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# Ordinary WhatsApp, Business or the Cloud API: which suits your business

WhatsApp & APIs

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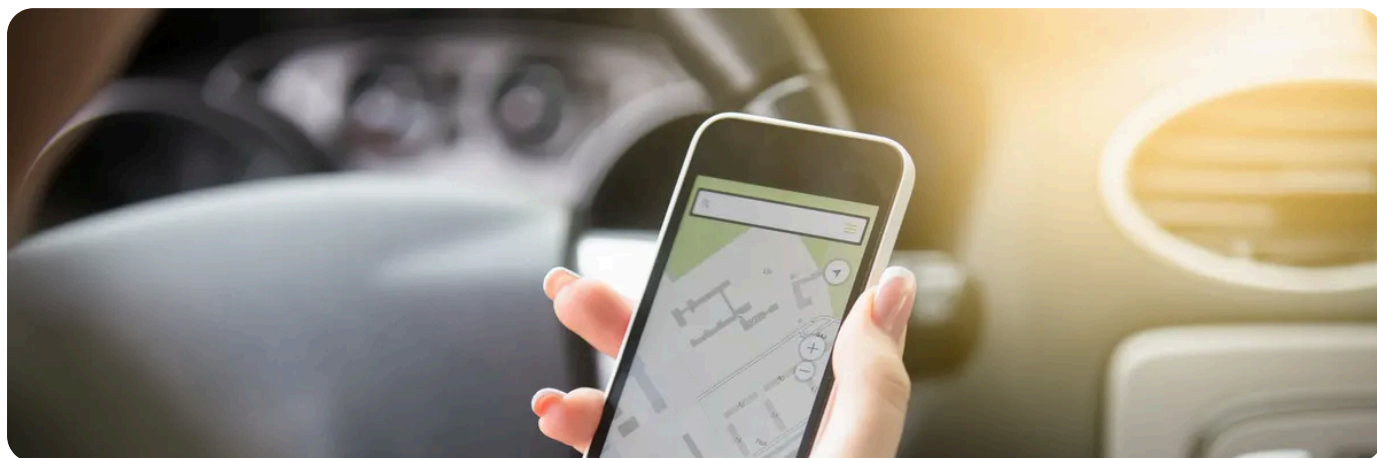
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# Ordinary WhatsApp, Business or the Cloud API: which suits your business

WhatsApp & APIs Created on September 11, 2026 Updated on September 28, 2026 4 min read



We call four different things «WhatsApp», and choosing the wrong one costs money or costs the number. One is free and is enough for most businesses; another charges per message and only pays off above a certain scale. This page puts all four side by side.

## ? The four, in brief

| Which                                      | Who for                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|--------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Ordinary WhatsApp                          | Personal use. It works for selling, but has no business profile, no automatic replies and no catalogue - and it mixes your life with the business.                                           |
| WhatsApp Business (the app)                | <b>The right choice for the overwhelming majority.</b> Free, installs like any app, and brings a profile, hours, catalogue, labels and automatic replies.                                    |
| WhatsApp Business with the API (Cloud API) | For anyone with <b>several people answering</b> , needing to connect WhatsApp to a system, or sending at volume. It is not an app: it is a technical connection, and it charges per message. |
| WhatsApp Web / Desktop                     | Not a fourth account - it is the same account seen on a computer, linked by a <b>QR code</b> . See the QR section.                                                                           |

## ☆ Ordinary or Business? The short answer is Business

The Business app is free, charges nothing per message and has no conversation limit. There is no reason for a business to stay on the ordinary version - it is all gain:

- 1 **A business profile** with address, hours, website and category, visible to anyone opening the conversation.

**2 Greeting and away messages.** It is the feature that pays most: it answers out of hours and avoids the impression of abandonment.

**3 Quick replies** for the eternal questions - price, address, hours. It saves hours a week.

**4 Labels** to organise conversations: new, awaiting payment, delivered.

**5 A catalogue** with photo and price inside the app.



**You can switch without losing anything.**

Installing Business on the same phone lets you migrate the account and its history. Do it with the phone charged and without hurry, and confirm the backup before starting.

## 🔍 QR codes: these are three different things

| Which QR                            | What it is for                                                                                                                                                                        |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>The WhatsApp Web one</b>         | Links a computer to your account. <b>Never scan it on a computer that is not yours</b> - whoever keeps the session open reads everything.                                             |
| <b>Your number's one (wa.me)</b>    | Generated from the <code>wa.me/258...</code> link and meant to be <b>printed</b> : shop window, card, invoice, vehicle. Anyone pointing a camera at it opens a conversation with you. |
| <b>The catalogue or product one</b> | In the Business app, each product has its own link, which also becomes a QR.                                                                                                          |

The most useful is the second, and almost nobody uses it. A QR of your link in the window or on the counter turns a passer-by into a conversation - and if the link carries a ready-written message, you know where the contact came from. How to build the link is in **putting WhatsApp on your site**.

## ⚙️ When the API pays off - and what it costs

The API (today called the *Cloud API*) is not a better version of the app: it is a different thing. It has no screen: it connects to a system or to a support platform. You reach it directly through Meta or through a provider who wraps it with tooling.

| It starts to pay off when                    | Why                                            |
|----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Several people answer the same number</b> | The app was never built for that; the API was. |

| It starts to pay off when                    | Why                                                                                                                  |
|----------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>You want to connect it to your system</b> | Order confirmations, delivery status, receipts - sent by themselves.                                                 |
| <b>You send at volume</b>                    | With templates approved by Meta. It is not for messaging people who did not ask - see <b>risks and good practice</b> |



### The pricing model changed, and changes again in October.

Since **July 2025** Meta charges **per message** - not per conversation as before - at a different price per category and per country: *marketing*, *utility*, *authentication* and *service*. Service messages (replies to people who wrote to you) are still free, but **from 1 October 2026 they start being charged** at the same rate as utility. If you are budgeting a project, budget with that cost already in.



### Two details that change the budget.

**Marketing messages get no volume discount**, however many you send - utility and authentication have tiers that drop. And Meta only charges for messages that are **delivered**, which means a bad list costs less than it looks, but also returns less.

## ✓ How to choose, in three questions

1

**Do you answer alone or as a team?** Alone: the Business app. As a team: the API.

2

**Do you need your system to send messages with nobody clicking?** If yes, the API. If not, the app.

3

**How many messages a month, and of which type?** With the API, multiply by category and by country before deciding - it is the sum that usually changes the answer.

For selling, WhatsApp works best backed by a website: the site is what Google reads and what lasts - see **being found on Google** and, if you sell properly, **an online shop with local payment methods**.

### 🔊 NEED A HAND?

Not sure whether you need the API or the app is enough?

 **Ask us** →



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