

Give Claude its own WhatsApp number

A WhatsApp receptionist that answers your clients and books appointments. You build it with Claude Code and plug it straight into Meta's official WhatsApp. No Kapso, no Twilio, no Zapier, no monthly tool fees.

- **Time:** about 45 to 60 minutes the first time.
- **Cost to build and test:** 0 USD for Meta and Cloudflare. About 5 USD of Claude credit, which lasts for thousands of replies.
- **You need:** a computer with Claude Code (the Claude Pro plan is enough), a Facebook login, your phone with WhatsApp, and a card for the 5 USD of Claude credit.

How it works: someone texts your WhatsApp number. Meta passes the message to a tiny free program on Cloudflare. That program asks Claude what to say, then sends the answer back on WhatsApp. Claude Code writes the program and sets it up for you.

Tip for the whole guide: Meta renames buttons often. If a button looks a bit different from what you read here, pick the closest match. If you get stuck, take a screenshot, drag it into Claude Code, and ask "what do I click?"

Step 1. Keep a note open (2 min)

Open a blank note on your computer. You will copy 3 things from Meta and 1 from Claude into it. You will paste them into a file later, never into a chat with anyone.

Phone number ID:
App secret:
Permanent token:
Claude API key:

Step 2. Become a Meta developer (5 min)

1. Go to **developers.facebook.com** and log in with your Facebook account.
2. Click **Get Started** (or go to `developers.facebook.com/async/registration`).
3. Follow the prompts: accept the terms, confirm your phone number or email.
4. If it asks what describes you, pick anything close, like **Developer** or **Business owner**.

You are done when you see the **My Apps** page.

Step 3. Create your WhatsApp app (5 min)

1. On **My Apps** (`developers.facebook.com/apps`), click **Create App**.
2. Type an app name, like `My Receptionist`, and your email. Click **Next**.
3. Choose the use case **Connect with customers through WhatsApp**. Click **Next**.
4. **Business portfolio:** pick yours, or click to create a new one (your business name is enough). Click **Next**.

5. You may see a list of publishing requirements. Usually there are none yet. Click **Next**.
6. Check the summary and click **Create app**. Meta may ask for your Facebook password.

You land on a page called **Quickstart** (the path at the top says Customize use case > Connect on WhatsApp > Quickstart).

Step 4. Get your free test number (5 min)

1. On the Quickstart page, click **Start using the API**. You are now on **API Setup**.
2. If you see a choice of **WhatsApp Business account**, pick the one shown or click **Create a WhatsApp Business account** and follow the prompts.
3. Click **Generate access token**. Click through the Facebook pop-up (Continue, select all, Save). You will not need this token later. It only lasts a few hours.
4. **From:** leave Meta's free test number selected. It starts with +1 555.
5. **To:** open the dropdown and click **Manage phone number list**. Add your own mobile number with the country code. WhatsApp sends you a code. Type it in. You can add up to 5 numbers this way. Only these numbers can chat with the test number.
6. Click **Send message**. Your phone gets a "Hello World" WhatsApp from the test number. **Reply "hi"** to it, so the chat stays open.
7. On the same page find **Phone number ID** (a long number under the From number, not the +1 555 number itself). Copy it into your note.

Step 5. Copy your App secret (2 min)

1. In the left menu click **App settings**, then **Basic**.
2. Next to **App secret**, click **Show**. Type your Facebook password if asked.
3. Copy it into your note.

Step 6. Make a permanent token (8 min)

The token from step 4 stops working within hours. This one does not.

1. Go to **business.facebook.com/settings** (Meta Business settings). Make sure your business portfolio from step 3 is selected at the top left.
2. In the left menu, open **Users**, then click **System users**.
3. Click **+ Add**. Name it `receptionist`. Role: **Admin**. Click **Create system user**. (First time only, Meta may ask you to accept the system user terms.)
4. With `receptionist` selected, click **Assign assets**.
5. Choose **Apps**, tick your app from step 3, switch on **Manage app** (Full control). Click **Assign assets**.
6. Reload the page. It can take a few minutes before the app shows as assigned. Reload again if needed.
7. Click **Generate token** (sometimes called Generate new token).
8. Pick your app. For token expiration choose **Never** if you see it.
9. Tick these 3 permissions (type `business` in the search box to find them fast):
 - `business_management`

- `whatsapp_business_management`
- `whatsapp_business_messaging`

10. Click **Generate token**. Copy the long token into your note now. Meta shows it only once.

Step 7. Get your Claude API key (5 min)

The Claude API is billed separately from your Claude Pro plan.

1. Go to **platform.claude.com** and sign in (use the same email as your Claude account if you like).
2. Open **Settings**, then **Billing**, and add credit. 5 USD is plenty to start.
3. Open **Settings**, then **API keys**, click **Create key**, name it `whatsapp`.
4. Copy the key (it starts with `sk-ant-`) into your note. It is shown only once.

Step 8. Paste the prompt into Claude Code (15 min, mostly waiting)

1. Download **whatsapp-receptionist.zip** from the link I sent you and leave it in your Downloads folder. It holds the finished, tested receptionist.
2. Open Claude Code (in the Claude desktop app or your terminal).
3. Open **START-HERE.md** inside the zip (or copy the prompt from the giveaway page), copy the whole prompt, paste it into Claude Code and press Enter.
4. Claude Code unzips the folder and tests the receptionist on your computer first. Then it asks you, one at a time:
 - your business name, what you offer, prices, your hours, your time zone, and your own WhatsApp number (for owner commands),
 - your **Phone number ID** (from your note).
5. A browser window opens for **Cloudflare**. Sign up free with your email (or log in) and click **Allow**.
6. Claude Code opens a small file called `secrets.env`. Paste your **App secret**, **Permanent token** and **Claude API key** where it says, save the file, close it, and tell Claude Code "done". It uploads them safely and deletes the file. You never paste keys into the chat.
7. Claude Code puts your receptionist online and shows you two things. Copy both:
 - a **Callback URL** that ends in `/webhook`
 - a **Verify token** (a random word it made for you)

Step 9. Connect Meta to your receptionist (6 min)

1. Back in your Meta app (developers.facebook.com/apps, open your app).
2. In the left menu click **WhatsApp**, then **Configuration**. (On some dashboards: **Use cases**, then **Customize**, then **Configuration**.)
3. In the **Webhook** box click **Edit**.
4. Paste the **Callback URL** and the **Verify token** from Claude Code. Click **Verify and save**. If it turns green or closes without an error, it worked.
5. Under **Webhook fields**, click **Manage**. Find **messages** and switch **Subscribe** on. Click **Done**.

Step 10. Text it (3 min)

1. On your phone, open the chat with the +1 555 test number and send: `Hi, can I book a session?`
2. Within a few seconds you get a reply from your AI receptionist. Try booking a time.
3. Now try the owner commands from your own number: send `/slots`, then `/bookings`. Send `/help` to see them all.

No reply after a minute? Do these in order:

- Tell Claude Code "no reply came", it will read the live log (`wrangler tail`) and tell you what is wrong.
- Publish the app. Meta may hold back real messages while the app is in Development mode. In the left menu click **Publish** (or switch **App Mode** at the top from Development to **Live**). If Meta asks for a **Privacy Policy URL**, add your website's privacy page under **App settings > Basic**, save, and publish again. Then text it again.

Owner commands (from your own WhatsApp)

Send	What happens
<code>/slots</code>	See your open and booked times
<code>/add 2026-10-20 10:00</code>	Open a new time. Add several with commas
<code>/remove 2026-10-20 10:00</code>	Remove a time
<code>/bookings</code>	See who booked what
<code>/help</code>	The list of commands

You get a WhatsApp note for each new booking, but only if you have texted the number in the last 24 hours. That is a WhatsApp rule, not a bug. You can always send `/bookings`.

The rules (please read, these protect your number)

1. **Opt-in first.** Your receptionist only replies to people who text you first. Never load a contact list and message people out of the blue. Meta requires their permission before you message them.
2. **The 24 hour window.** After someone texts you, you can reply freely for 24 hours. After that, WhatsApp only allows paid, pre-approved message templates. Your receptionist follows this rule for you.
3. **Never use your personal WhatsApp number on the API.** A number connected to Meta's API is removed from the normal WhatsApp app, and your chat history is lost. Use the test number now, and a new number when you go live.
4. **Keep it a receptionist.** Meta does not allow general "chat with an AI about anything" bots. Yours answers questions about your business and books appointments. Keep it that way.
5. **Keep your keys private.** Never post your token, App secret or Claude key anywhere. If one leaks, make a new one and tell Claude Code to update it.

What it costs

What	Cost
Meta app and test number	Free, no card
Cloudflare (where your receptionist lives)	Free up to about 400 to 500 client messages a day
Claude (Haiku, the fast model)	About a tenth of a cent per reply. 5 USD lasts a long time
WhatsApp replies on a real number	Since 1 October 2026 Meta gives each number 1,000 free replies a month, then charges a small fee per reply that depends on your client's country (about a third of a US cent in the US). You add a card in Meta when you go live

When you are ready for real clients (going live)

The test number only talks to the up to 5 phones you added. To open it to everyone:

1. Get a **new phone number** that is not on WhatsApp (a cheap second SIM works). It must be able to receive a text or call for the code.
2. In your Meta app, go to **WhatsApp > API Setup**, open the **From** dropdown and click **Add phone number**. Enter your business display name (Meta reviews it) and verify the number with the code. If Meta offers you a free **+1 555 number** on that screen, that is a real number too and fine to use.
3. In **Meta Business settings**, add a payment method (Billing) so replies keep going after the free 1,000 a month.
4. Tell Claude Code: "Switch my receptionist to my new Phone number ID: ...". It updates and redeploys.
5. Put your number on your website, Instagram bio or email signature as a link: `https://wa.me/<your number with country code, no plus>`.

Something not working?

What you see	What to do
"Verify and save" fails in Meta	The Verify token must match exactly and the URL must end in <code>/webhook</code> . Ask Claude Code to show both again.
No reply on WhatsApp	Tell Claude Code "no reply came" . Then publish the app (step 10).
Claude Code says "token expired" or error 190	You used the temporary token. Redo step 6 and give Claude Code the permanent one.
Error 131030 "not in allowed list"	That phone is not on the test number's list. Add it in step 4.5.
Replies stopped after a day of silence	That is the 24 hour rule. It starts again when the client texts.
It says it has "a small technical problem"	Usually Claude credit ran out. Add credit at platform.claude.com .

Free from Joe Che. Page: <https://workshop.mastermindshq.business/giveaways/whatsapp-agent>. Stuck? Email joe@mastermindshq.business.