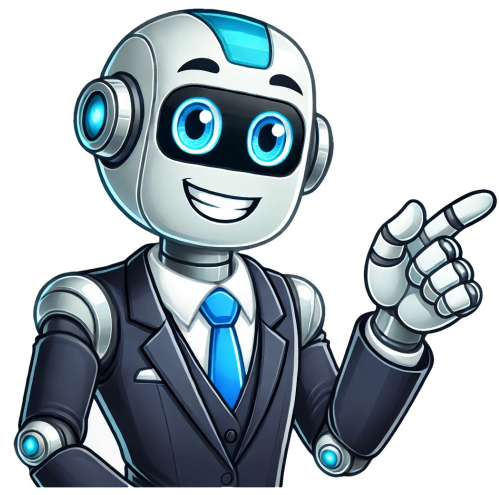


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communication has come a long way since the advent of writing, from letters to SMS messaging. Now, most communication occurs via messaging apps, which often have end-to-end encryption, free text messaging and phone calls, and handy voice messages. Text messaging apps come in a wide variety, from team-oriented apps such as Slack to casual apps like Skype and Viber. All you need is a contemporary Android tablet and a stable internet connection. This article lists the best free texting apps for Android, iOS, and Windows. The best text messaging apps The most common form of texting worldwide is through over-the-top (OTT) services that operate on top of another service. In this case, the internet. Apps that offer OTT messaging surged in popularity in the 2010s because they were free and weren't tethered to a mobile phone service or a contract. In-app purchases No Subscription No ChromeOS support Yes Publish date Oct 18, 2010 WhatsApp is the most popular OTT messaging app in the world. In addition to top-notch texting, you can make voice calls and video calls without dealing with ads. The app supports group chats and WhatsApp communities for your friends, family, or Pokmon GO raid crew. WhatsApp hasn't caught on in the States like in other countries (India has more WhatsApp users than people living in the US). Still, with nearly 100 million users and cash transfers in the pipeline, it won't be long before it's on your phone. WhatsApp offers apps on the desktop. You don't need to reach out to your phone to continue communication over the platform. In-app purchases \$0.05 \$399.99 per item Subscription No ChromeOS support Yes Publish date Jan 30, 2014 There's not much that distinguishes Messenger from its nearest competitor, WhatsApp, other than Facebook's massive user base, which is tied into Messenger. That alone has made Messenger king of the messaging apps in the US, holding nearly 65% of the market. In addition, Messenger doesn't require a phone number like WhatsApp, meaning you don't need a plan (or a phone) to use it. In addition to its Facebook-integrated desktop version, Messenger offers a more streamlined mobile app. In-app purchases \$4.99 \$289.99 per item Subscription Yes ChromeOS support Yes Publish date Sep 6, 2013 On the surface, Telegram seems a lot like WhatsApp or Messenger. It offers text messaging, voice and video calling, multimedia (including emojis, GIFs, and stickers), and group chats. When you delve into the service, it becomes clear that Telegram is different. Telegram groups can accommodate up to 200,000 members, and it has channels (like a cross between a subreddit and a chat room), which means Telegram functions more like a social network than a messaging app. Unlike WhatsApp and Messenger, Telegram offers a premium plan to unlock more features for your account. Even though SMS messaging isn't as prevalent internationally, it's still one of the most common forms of messaging in the US. In addition to the interpersonal texting we're used to, SMS has become the de facto method of one-time password delivery. In other words, the messaging standard isn't going anywhere soon. SMS messaging apps come in two flavors: apps that work with your existing phone plan, essentially replacing your default messaging app, and apps that provide you with an additional phone number from which to text, often with limitations. In-app purchases No Subscription No ChromeOS support No Publish date Nov 12, 2014 Messages is the king of SMS on Android devices, with over one billion downloads. On top of standard SMS and MMS message support, Google's flagship messaging app supports RCS messaging (if your carrier supports it). In addition to sending audio and video, your chats are end-to-end encrypted and can be sent over Wi-Fi, bypassing cellular networks. Messages is integrated with other Google services, meaning you can set reminders or add info to your calendar from the app. In-app purchases \$6.49 per item Subscription No ChromeOS support Yes Publish date N/A Chomp has been around since 2013, and it stands above other apps with its customization options. Do you want to change the LED notification color? Chomp can do that. Do you want to change colors, fonts, and ringtones? Chomp has that covered. In addition, you can schedule when you want messages sent, add a signature to your texts, or lock them behind a password to keep them safe from prying eyes. In-app purchases No Subscription No ChromeOS support No Publish date Sep 1, 2012 TextNow gives you your own phone number and unlimited texting and calling within the US and Canada. TextNow is ad-supported, so its basic services are free. It also has several subscriptions to enhance your experience. For \$5 a year, you get a premium number that is easier to remember (think 444-333-1234). Like Google Voice and TextPlus, you can send your texts over Wi-Fi. If you want more freedom, sign up for a TextNow data plan (starting at 1GB for \$9 per month) and pay a one-time cost of \$1 to have a physical SIM card sent to you. The Android ecosystem for texting apps is vibrant and growing, and this list is just a sample of messaging apps available. It's a good place to start if you're in the market for a new messaging service. If you want to know if you've been left on read, turn on read receipts to find out. If privacy is your top priority, check out the top encrypted messaging apps on our list. You can also choose the area code of your new phone number (subject to availability) in case you've been itching to flex a Manhattan 212 phone number. If you don't want the Manhattan number, you can change it for free. One drawback to the app is that you can only text within the US and Canada, but you can call almost anywhere in the world at rates starting at \$0.02 per minute. In-app purchases \$0.99 \$99.99 per item Subscription Yes ChromeOS support No Publish date Sep 1, 2012 TextNow gives you your own phone number and unlimited texting and calling within the US and Canada. TextNow is ad-supported, so its basic services are free. It also has several subscriptions to enhance your experience. For \$5 a year, you get a premium number that is easier to remember (think 444-333-1234). Like Google Voice and TextPlus, you can send your texts over Wi-Fi. If you want more freedom, sign up for a TextNow data plan (starting at 1GB for \$9 per month) and pay a one-time cost of \$1 to have a physical SIM card sent to you. The Android ecosystem for texting apps is vibrant and growing, and this list is just a sample of messaging apps available. It's a good place to start if you're in the market for a new messaging service. If you want to know if you've been left on read, turn on read receipts to find out. 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