



A2P Messaging Best Practices

Business Messaging Guidelines | Toll-Free SMS Operational Guidance

October 19, 2026

Purpose and scope

These guidelines describe best practices for application-to-person (A2P) messaging, including specific operational guidance for toll-free SMS. They do not constitute legal advice. All messaging traffic must comply with relevant laws and regulations, including, but not limited to, the Telephone Consumer Protection Act (TCPA).

1. Consent

Obtain accurate, reliable consumer opt-in specific to the type of messages being sent. Users should explicitly agree to receive messages from the sender. Clear, reliable consent generally supports low opt-out rates. Senders should retain documented opt-in evidence and be prepared to provide it when requested by mms, an upstream provider, or a wireless carrier.

Provider-specific monitoring thresholds

The carriers state that a campaign or number exceeding a 0.5% opt-out rate in a 24-hour period can expect a consent audit. A campaign or number exceeding 4% may be suspended, with a root cause analysis (RCA) and consent audit required. These are approximate thresholds, not universal legal limits or confirmed contractual thresholds.

2. Single-number use

Use a single recognizable number as the sender's identity where practical. Using the same number for voice and text can improve the customer experience. Do not distribute traffic across numbers to dilute reputation metrics or evade filters; this practice, known as snowshoeing, may result in content being blocked. Discuss legitimate multi-number use cases with mms before deployment.

3. Brand identification

Include the application, service, or business name in the message body so recipients recognize the sender.

Illustrative message: *[Business Name]: You have an appointment for Tuesday at 3:00 PM. Reply YES to confirm or NO to reschedule. Reply STOP to unsubscribe.*

4. Opt-in confirmation

Send an opt-in confirmation immediately after successful enrollment. The confirmation should identify the program, verify enrollment, and explain how to opt out. As a continuing reminder,



carriers recommend sending an opt-in confirmation or HELP message once a month or every six messages so consumers know how to opt out and contact the business.

Illustrative message: *mms Product Trial Alerts: Welcome to mms Trial Alerts! Msg&data rates may apply. Recurring messages. Reply HELP for help, STOP to cancel.*

5. Support for STOP

Clearly tell consumers how to stop future messages, especially informational or promotional messages. Include opt-out wording in the initial message, such as “Reply STOP to unsubscribe” or “Reply STOP to cancel.” Use the word “Reply” before the keyword.

6. Processing STOP: toll-free A2P only

Toll-free SMS opt-in and opt-out are enforced at the network level using STOP and UNSTOP; this functionality cannot be disabled under carrier network rules. On all channels, senders must suppress opted-out consumers from distribution lists and record their opted-out status so further messages are not attempted. Log STOP responses and monitor increases in opt-out rates.

Supported opt-out examples: STOP, Stop, stop, ARRET, Arret, arret.

For toll-free SMS, the network sends the opt-out confirmation. Do not send a duplicate acknowledgment.

Illustrative message: *NETWORK MSG: You replied with the word “STOP” which blocks all texts sent from this number. Text back “UNSTOP” to receive messages again.*

Network-generated wording is illustrative and may vary by provider.

7. Processing UNSTOP and START: toll-free A2P only

Consumers can opt back in at the network level by sending UNSTOP or START to the sender’s number. Keywords are case-insensitive and must be sent as a single word without punctuation or leading spaces; trailing spaces are trimmed. A keyword inside a sentence does not trigger automatic network opt-in.

Supported examples: UNSTOP, Unstop, unstop, START, Start, start, DEBUTER, Debuter, debuter.

The network returns a generic confirmation that two-way texting can resume. These parsing rules describe automatic network behavior; they do not replace sender-side consent management.

Illustrative message: *NETWORK MSG: You have replied UNSTOP and will begin receiving messages again from this number.*

Network-generated wording is illustrative and may vary by provider.



8. Processing HELP

HELP responses should clearly identify the sender, provide contact information, and explain how to opt out. HELP keywords are not required for toll-free messages under the carrier guidance but are strongly recommended. The customer must manage HELP responses; there is no network-level HELP processing.

Recommended response elements: business name and description; a telephone number or email address; applicable fees or charges; and opt-out instructions.

Illustrative message: *mms Alerts: Help at info@mms.us. Msg&data rates may apply. Reply STOP to cancel.*

9. Single-domain use

Associate each campaign with a single web domain owned by the customer. A full domain is preferred; a branded URL shortener may be used for custom links. Avoid common public or shared shorteners such as bit.ly, goo.gl, tinyurl.com, Tiny.cc, lc.chat, is.gd, soo.gd, s2r.co, Clicky.me, budurl.com, bc.vc, and .xyz.

Use branded shortened URLs instead. A domain suffix alone does not establish legitimacy or guarantee delivery.

10. Canada-specific considerations

Messaging to Canada is subject to additional requirements. The following guidelines help senders meet these expectations and provide a consistent customer experience.

HTTPS URLs are permitted, but HTTP URLs, stock trading content, and marketing content are not.

Opt-outs need to stay below 1%

Customer should support *info*, *help*, *start*, *stop*, as well as all their French translations, and send a bounce back in the corresponding language of the keyword.

11. Industry resources

CTIA represents the U.S. wireless communications industry and publishes messaging guidance. Consult the CTIA Messaging Principles and Best Practices and the CTIA Short Code Monitoring Handbook as relevant background.

12. Contact and document control

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