

Guidance for WhatsApp groups

This guidance from the Region 9 Board is for groups who use WhatsApp (or similar) alongside the meetings, either for the service committee, or for fellows to keep in contact about the meeting.

There is separate guidance for OA meetings which run on WhatsApp – this is available from the Virtual Region.

General good practice

- All WhatsApp groups should have at least 2 admins who can admit members and also remove access to the group
- Always keep to the purpose of the group! Don't share irrelevant messages about other topics.
- Do not spam the group! If you would like a group to share memes or general information with then set one up [x7](#) or that exact purpose and invite others to join.
- Don't be offended if others leave. Not everyone wants the same information.
- Do politely excuse yourself before you leave a group.
- Post your message in one single chunk of text, don't post every word or sentence in a new message.
- Do not have one-on-one conversations in the group. Switch to private messages.
- If a message asks for a positive response, don't reply in the negative. Only say if you are able to contribute.
- If someone asks a question and you don't know the answer don't respond with "I don't know". Just wait for someone who knows the answer to reply.
- Please don't send in a hundred "thank you" messages. If you feel gratitude towards someone – tell them in a private message.
- If someone asks a question of a personal nature (like asking for advice) don't respond if someone else has already answered, or else respond to the person directly in a private message.
- The group is not a political platform. No arguing, no heated opinions, no fear mongering, no hyped up drama, no fake news. Check your sources before you share.
- Never EVER use a group to berate someone else or air grievances. If you have an issue address it one on one with the relevant person.
- Don't send data-insensitive messages. No-one wants their last 3GB used up on uninvited memes.
- You might want to choose to "Mute" your WhatsApp group if it is very busy.. You will still receive all the messages, but your phone won't buzz or make a noise for every one of them.

Anonymity / data protection

- Before adding anyone to a WhatsApp group then obtain their express permission and make sure that they know the purpose for the group.
- You can give access to a WhatsApp group via a shared link. If someone uses the link then they have clearly given their permission to join the group. However you need to be clear about who the link should be shared with.
- If your full name is on your WhatsApp profile then it will be shared with the WhatsApp group. If you don't want to share your full name then you can change it in your WhatsApp profile settings.
- Every member has access to the mobile phone number of every other member, and probably their WhatsApp name as well.
- DON'T EVER save or copy anyone else's contact details out of a WhatsApp group unless they have given you express permission to do this.
- Similarly, NEVER share the contact details from a WhatsApp group with anyone who is not subscribed to that group unless you have the express permission of the other person.
- When a person joins a group they don't have access to the posts which were made before they joined.
- But when they leave the group then their posts do not disappear – they stay in the group.
- Don't add anyone under the age of 16 to the group.
- In order to protect anonymity the WhatsApp group should not be accessed from a shared device (phone / tablet / computer).
- Remember that people should be free to leave a WhatsApp group at any time.