

Part 5 – Instant Messages

Making the Miles Fade

Using your smartphone, tablet, PC or laptop to bring you closer to friends and family who live far away (*and those who don't*)



Tech Inner Circle Edition

THE
HELPFUL BOOK
COMPANY

An Employee-Owned Company

Making the Miles Fade

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A note about this chapter

Hello

Instant messages work a lot like text messages on a mobile phone. The main difference is that they send the signal across the internet, rather than through a mobile phone signal.

For a lot of instant messaging apps, that means you can use them on all sorts of different devices – so long as you’ve got an internet connection. WhatsApp is the main exception to that – you can only really use it on a mobile phone, unfortunately.

There are loads of different instant messaging services around, but we’ve picked out the two most popular ones to tell you about – Facebook Messenger and WhatsApp.

As I say, WhatsApp only works if you’ve got a smartphone, but you can use Facebook Messenger on a PC (by going to the Facebook website), on a tablet or a mobile phone.

It’s also worth remembering that you can use the same Facebook account on various different devices. So you can be having a message conversation with someone on your PC at home (where you’ve got a nice big keyboard to type on) then carry on the same conversation on your phone when you go out. All you need to do is sign in with the same Facebook account and job’s a good ‘n.

Chapter 5

Instant Messages

Instant Messages

Instant messages work just like text messages, and on phones they often look similar. But how they're sent is different – they go via the internet rather than using your mobile phone signal.

What are instant messages?

As long as you have an internet connection, instant messages are free to send, and you can attach pictures, videos, etc too (still for free). But you can only send instant messages within certain apps or websites – and you need to both be using the same app or website to use the service. If you have WhatsApp, you can only use it to message other people who also have WhatsApp – and it's the same with all the others.

So it can be a bit tricky working out which app to choose – and you might find you need more than one if not all your friends and family use the same one. For example, I send messages to Mum and Dad through Facebook Messenger, but my friend Claire can't do that because her mum and dad don't use Facebook. Instead, she has to use WhatsApp, email or normal text messaging.

Apple devices have their own instant messaging service called iMessage, but instead of having an iMessages app, it's built into their text messages app (just to confuse you!). So when your iPhone recognises that you're trying to text another iPhone user, it'll automatically send the text as an iMessage. However, this *doesn't* work if you're texting someone with an Android phone – it'll just send as a normal text message.

You'll know if the text has sent as an iMessage because the sent message will be blue instead of green.

Text messages vs Instant messages

I think in some ways instant messages are better than text messages – but they aren't perfect.

Advantages of instant messaging:

- 1) Instant messages are free as long as you have an internet connection – even if you attach pictures, videos, etc. But if you're using a phone on Pay as You Go, see disadvantages!
- 2) You can send instant messages from more than one device... and get the replies on all your devices, e.g. you could send messages from the same account using the app on your mobile phone and tablet, as well as (often) via the website from any device...

Disadvantages of instant messaging:

- 1) You have to remember who uses which app before you can send them a message. And you might have to have 2 or 3 messaging apps to cover all the people you want to contact. That can get a bit annoying.
- 2) And you have to be on the internet, which can end up being quite expensive if you're on a Pay as You Go phone.

Sending a picture in an instant message can be a great way to quickly show something to a friend. I've used it as a quick way to tell someone the exact title of a book – I can just take a quick photo and send it.

The Facebook Messenger App

Facebook Messenger is one of the most common instant messaging apps out there – but you have to already have a Facebook account to be able to use it to chat to your Facebook friends.

How to get the Messenger app

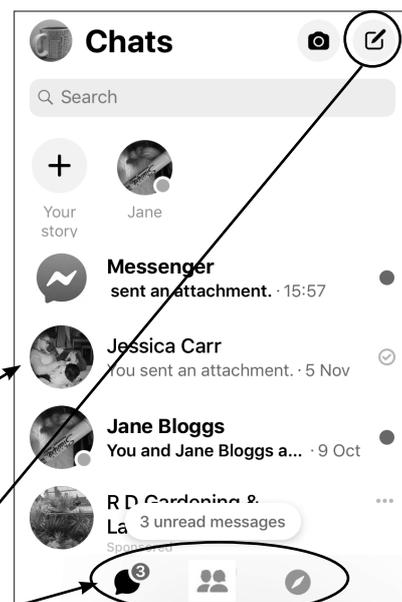
Although you can send messages through Facebook, if you're using the app version, you need to get a separate Facebook Messenger app. You can get to it from within the Facebook app, so it doesn't even really feel like you're using a separate app at all.

Tap on this symbol in the top right corner:



The Facebook app will either give you a prompt saying something like “We've moved over to Messenger” or it will take you to your app store straight away.

- 1) If it hasn't taken you to your app store straight away, tap on “Install” or “Get App”.
- 2) You'll see the “Messenger” app, made by Facebook, Inc, so tap “Get” (or “Install”).
- 3) When you open the app, it'll ask if it's OK to use your Facebook name and profile (which it'll know if you already have Facebook installed). Tap on “Continue”.
- 4) The Facebook Messenger app will look a bit like this, although it varies a bit from phone to phone. Your messages will be shown in a list, grouped by “Chats”. Just tap on one to show the whole conversation, and you can reply using the box at the bottom.
- 5) Tap on this icon to start writing a brand new message – I'll show you how to do that on page 57.



These options switch between Chats view, People view and “Discover”, which you can just ignore.

You'll still see new messages pop up in the main Facebook App, but tapping on them will take you out and into the Messenger App to read and respond to them.

What the icons in the Messenger app mean



Chats – this screen is where you'll find your list of messages.



People – this is where you'll find your Messenger contacts list.



New message – to create a new message.



Camera – to take a photo to send to someone.



Me – this takes you to your Messenger account details.



Video call – to start a video call. (More about that in Chapter 6.)



Calls – this takes you to where you can make audio calls, but using an internet connection rather than the mobile phone network.

Don't worry if you don't have all of these icons – it depends on your device.

If you've added a profile photo, the Me icon will be your photo instead.

A word of warning here, before you get stuck in – they do change the layout of both the website and the app quite regularly. So I'll show you how it looks now, but in future you might find that some of the icons that were at the top of the screen have moved to the bottom, for example. Don't panic – if something isn't where you're expecting it to be, look all round the screen and it'll probably be there somewhere!

Facebook Messenger on a PC

On the website, you don't need to go to a separate app or webpage – Facebook have rather cleverly built a chat box into the website. I'll show you how to use it below.

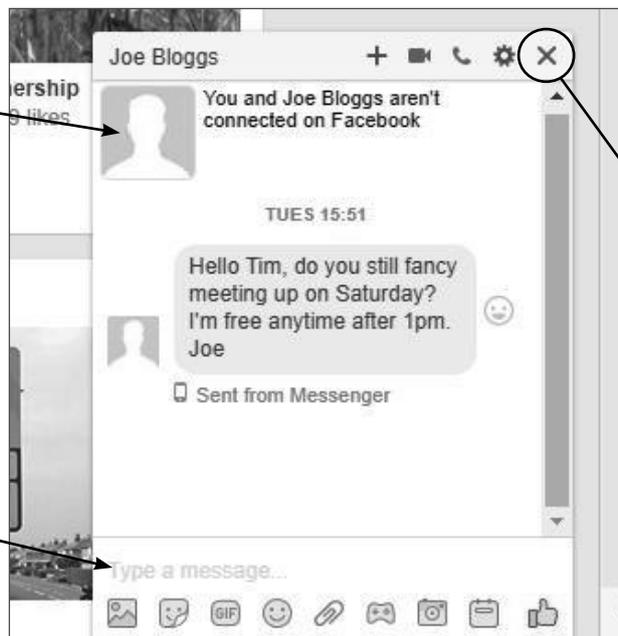
How it looks on the Facebook website



Your messages are listed in the Messenger panel here. When you click on one in the list, a box pops up at the bottom where you can read the full message and reply to it.

Using the Messenger chat box

Here's an example of the box that pops up at the bottom when you click on a message in the list.



You type your message into this box, then press "Enter" on your keyboard to send it.

WhatsApp

WhatsApp Messenger is an easy-to-use app that's specifically for sending free instant messages via the internet. You need to have a **smartphone** to use it, though – it doesn't work on a PC or tablet. And it only works if both people have WhatsApp on their phones.

How to set up WhatsApp Messenger

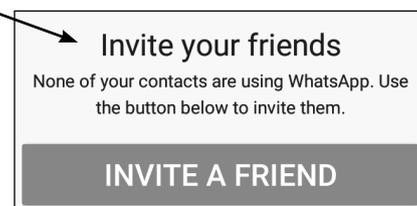
You'll need to start by downloading the app. You can get it from the app store on your phone and it looks something like this:



When you first open the app, you'll go through a series of setup screens. WhatsApp often changes how they look and the order of things, so I'll just describe what to do for each bit:

- You'll usually have to accept the terms and conditions at some point – tap on “Agree and continue” or whatever the wording is.
- It might ask for some permissions to do various things too:
 - to access your contacts (see below).
 - to allow notifications – a good idea, so you know when you've got a new message.
 - to access your photos, media and files, so you can send messages including photos, videos or other bits that are stored on your phone.
- It'll ask for your phone number, and will send you a text message to confirm it.
- It'll ask for a profile name – type one in or accept the one that's there, and tap “Done” or “Next”.
- It'll ask about backing up your conversations – you can accept if you want (and it might ask for some more permissions based on that too).
- And you might get the option to invite your friends to join WhatsApp. If you do this, it'll ask other people in your contacts to join WhatsApp. You can choose how to do it (email, text, etc), and you get to type a message to them yourself.

When I did this, I got a text, but I didn't actually have to type a code in anywhere, I just opened the message and by the time I got back to WhatsApp, it had confirmed the number and moved on to the next screen.



Contacts on WhatsApp

WhatsApp doesn't have its own separate contacts list – instead, it uses the contacts app on your phone. That means:

- 1) You *have* to give the app permission to access your contacts, or it just won't work.
- 2) There's an “add to contacts” option in the WhatsApp app, but it's really just a link to your main contacts app. If you add a new contact in the WhatsApp app, you're only adding their phone number to your *phone's* contacts list.
- 3) If your new contact doesn't have WhatsApp already, you'll need to invite them to join before you can send them a message.

Other Instant Message Options

A lot of social media apps and video calling apps also have an instant messaging service built in to them. I'll show you how to use the most common of these on this page.

Of course, this way of sending messages is only useful if you know the other person uses Twitter frequently.

Sending Instant Messages through Twitter

Twitter lets you send instant messages (called “direct messages”). Like tweets, these are also limited to 280 characters or fewer, so you won't be able to write an essay! You can only send messages to people who you follow *and* who follow you. The easiest way to send someone a message is by going to their profile page first...

To send a message:

- 1) Tap on the menu button:  or  and tap where it says “Following” near the top.
- 2) This lists all the people you're following – tap on the person to go to their profile page.
- 3) And somewhere near the top there'll be an envelope symbol – tap on that: 
- 4) A message window will open up for you. Tap in the “Start a message” box, type your message and tap on this button to send it: 
- 5) To get back to the main screen, tap on the little back arrow at the top left.

To check your messages:

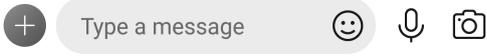
- 1) Tap on the envelope symbol at the top or bottom of the screen to open the messages window (there'll be a little number next to it if you've got any new messages): 
- 2) To get back to the main home screen, tap on the home icon: 

You can send messages from here too, but it's more fiddly to find the person you want to write to.

By the way, the info above the message box shows your call and message history with this person, but you can ignore this. Tap on the back arrow at the top to close the message window and go back to your Contacts list.

Sending Instant Messages via the Skype app

I'll show you how to use Skype for video calls in the next chapter, but you can also use it to send instant messages. This system isn't intended to be used for long, permanent messages to each other, like email, just as an easy way to a) leave someone a little note, or b) to exchange bits of written information while you're chatting (e.g. a website link).

- 1) Start by tapping on the person's name in your contacts. Somewhere (probably at the bottom) there should be a bar that says “Type a message”. 
- 2) Tap on the bar and the keyboard will appear for you to start typing a message. 
(To do it while you're in the middle of a phone call, tap this icon: )
- 3) Type your message, then tap on the paper aeroplane icon to send it. 

Using iMessage

iPhone and iPad users have another option for sending instant messages called “iMessage”. This is a service that Apple has built into its Messages app, which lets you send instant messages via the internet to other people who have Apple devices. However, it doesn't work if you're trying to message someone with an Android device – it's only for iPhones and iPads.

iMessage will be automatically switched on for your Apple device, but if you'd prefer to switch it off, you can. To do this, open your “Settings” app and tap on “Messages”. Then tap on the switch labelled “iMessage” to turn it off.

Sending & Receiving Messages

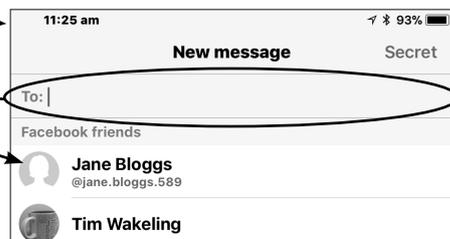
Let's get down to the business of actually sending an instant message. I'll start by showing you the Facebook Messenger app, then WhatsApp.

Sending a message in the Facebook Messenger app

1) Tap on the new message icon. On some devices it's at the top of the screen, but on others it's at the bottom.



2) You'll get a screen that looks a bit like this: Start typing the name of the person you want to message into this box at the top of the screen. Tap on their name when it appears in this list.



3) You'll then get a screen that looks something like this one:



Here's the name of the person you're sending the message to.

Your message will appear here once you've sent it.

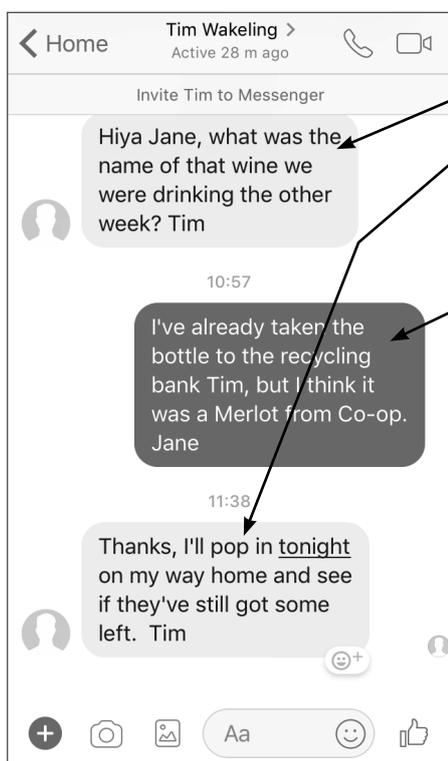
This is where you type your message. Don't worry, the box gets bigger as you type!

Tap on this "Send" button to send your message.

Conversations in the Facebook Messenger app

All the messages you send and receive from the same person are grouped together into a "conversation":

- 1) Messages you get from other people are shown in grey boxes on the left of the screen (although this example is from a phone and the left-alignment isn't that noticeable on the narrow screen).
- 2) Messages you send are usually in blue boxes (although not always, it is possible to change the colour) on the right of the screen.



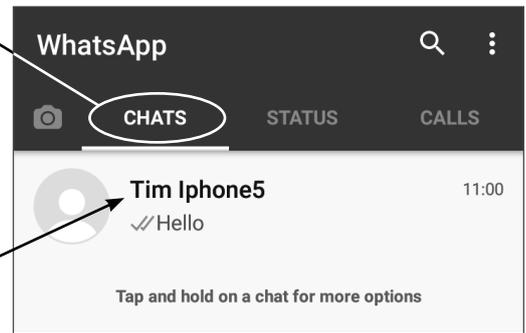
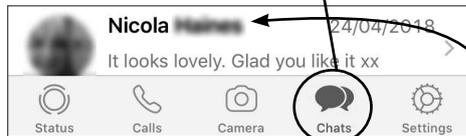
The time the message was sent will be listed above the box. The only exception to this is if messages are sent quite close together, in which case it doesn't bother with a time stamp.

Every time you send that person a message, or they send you one, it adds it to the same conversation – even if you hadn't sent them a message for weeks, or were messaging them about a completely different topic.

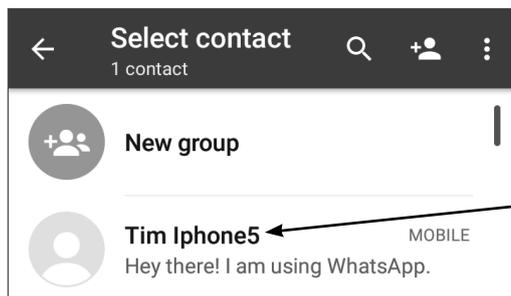
Sending a WhatsApp message

1) When you open the app, it'll probably start up with "Chats" selected.

Here's how it looks on an Android phone – on an iPhone the buttons are at the bottom of the screen instead, like this:



This Chats screen will list all the people who you've been in contact with on WhatsApp, and you can tap on them to continue a conversation.



2) To start a new conversation, tap on the "new message" icon:  or 

3) Find the person you want to send a message to, and tap on them.

4) You'll see a screen like this.

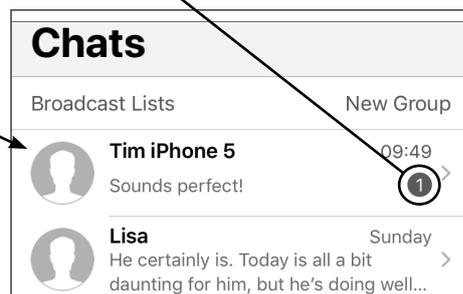
Type the message here, then tap on this aeroplane symbol to send it.

5) It'll appear on the screen above the box.

6) When the other person replies, you'll get a notification on your phone. Or you might just notice a little red number on the WhatsApp icon on your Home screen.

7) When you open the app, it will usually take you straight back to the conversation you were in before. You'll then see their reply below your original message.

8) If it doesn't take you back into the conversation, tap "Chats" to see the list of conversations. The conversation with the new message will be at the top of the list, with a little number next to it.



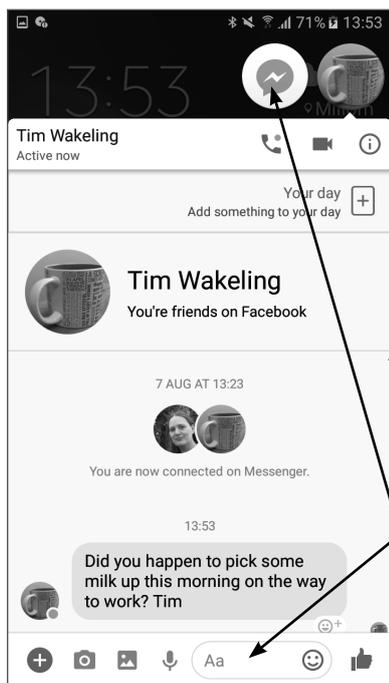
Chat Heads in Facebook Messenger

This page is only for people with an Android phone or tablet.

Chat heads are little buttons that pop up on the screen when you get a new Facebook message. They let you reply to a message without leaving the app that you're using.

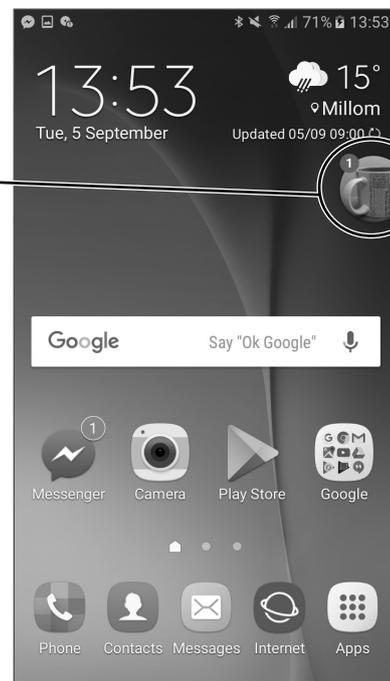
How to use Chat heads

- 1) When you get a new message a Chat head will pop up on your screen. You might be on the Home screen or in another app. Here's an example of what one looks like



(inside the circle is the profile picture of the person who's sent the message – in this case, a mug of tea).

- 2) If you tap on it, a panel will open up showing you the new message. There's also a reply box at the bottom so you can reply straight away.
- 3) If you tap on the messenger icon next to the Chat head, that shows you the messages list.
- 4) Tap on the Chat head to make the panel disappear again and go back to the screen you were on.



Moving or closing a Chat head

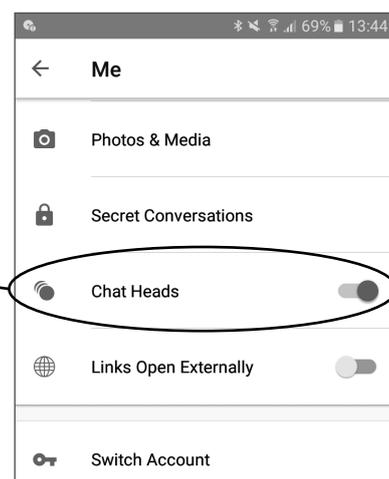
If a Chat head is getting in the way of something you want to tap on, you can move it. Just tap on it, hold your finger down and drag it to where you want it to be, then lift up your finger.

If it's really annoying you, you can close the Chat head. Tap and hold on the Chat head and drag it down to the bottom of the screen. A cross will appear at the bottom – drag it over the cross and lift your finger up off the screen.

Turning off Chat heads

If you don't ever want Chat heads to appear you can turn the feature off:

- 1) Tap on the "Me" icon to go to your account settings.
- 2) Swipe up until you find "Chat Heads" and tap on it to turn them off.



If you've added a profile picture to Facebook, the "Me" icon will be your photo.

Sending a Photo or Video

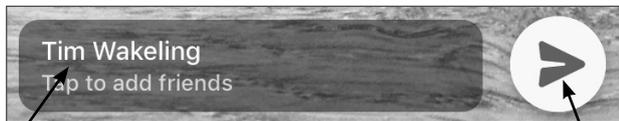
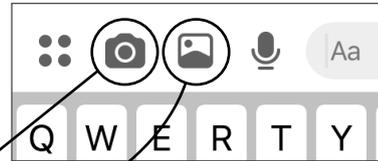
You can send photos and videos using instant messaging apps. I've used them to send videos of the boys building sandcastles on holiday or photos of them pulling silly faces to my parents.

Sending a photo or video on Facebook Messenger

When it comes to sending photos and videos, you have two options. You can either take a new photo or video right that second and send it, or you can send one that you took earlier, which is already saved on your phone.

If you can't see these icons, tap on this arrow > to the left of the message box.

- 1) When you first open a conversation in Messenger, there'll be a little row of icons next to the box you type your message into.
- 2) Tap on the Camera icon to take a new photo or video. Tap on the Photo icon to send a photo or video that's already stored on your phone.
- 3) Tapping on the Camera icon will take you to a screen that looks something like this one: *(Yours probably won't have my coffee mug in it though – this is just an example!)*
- 4) To take a photo, tap on this circular button at the bottom of the screen. Or tap and hold to take a video.
- 5) Once you've taken the photo or video, the camera button will be replaced with something like this:



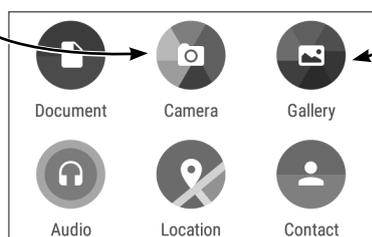
This is the person you're sending it to. Tap on this button to send it.

Sending a photo or video on WhatsApp

Sending photos and videos on WhatsApp works in a similar way to Facebook Messenger, but the icons look different depending on the device you're using:

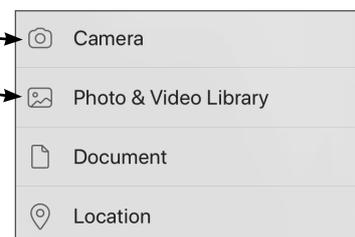
On an Android device:

- 1) Tap on the paperclip symbol next to the message box.
- 2) You'll get a menu a bit like this. Tap on Camera to take a new photo, or Gallery to choose a different picture.



On an Apple device:

- 1) Tap on the "+" symbol next to the message box.
- 2) You'll get a menu a bit like this. Tap on Camera to take a new photo, or Photo & Video Library to choose a different picture.



Once you've taken or chosen your picture, you can send it just as you would in Messenger.

Group Messages

I showed you back on pages 57 and 58 how to send messages to another person, but you can also send messages to a group of people, which is really handy when you're trying to organise something like a night out, a trip to the beach or a surprise party.

Sending a group message in the Messenger app

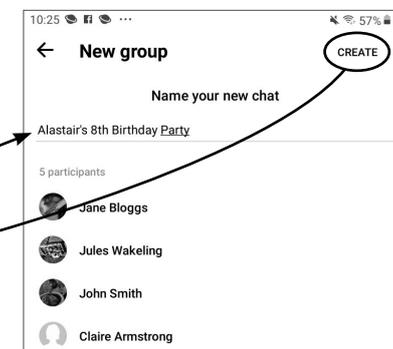
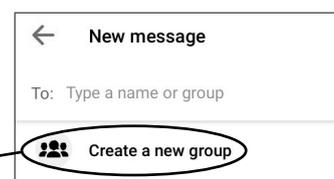
There are two ways you can send a group message. On some devices you can type in multiple names when choosing who to send your message to, but in all versions of the app you can set up a named group, for example “Alastair’s 8th birthday party” or “Family trip to York”.

Typing in multiple names

- 1) Create a new message by tapping or clicking on the new message button.
- 2) Type in the name of the first person you want to send the message to, then just type the name of the second person in, then the third person... and so on.
- 3) Type your message in the tiny box at the bottom and send it as normal (see page 57 for a reminder of these steps).

Setting up a group

- 1) Create a new message by tapping on the new message button.
- 2) Tap on the option that says “Create a new group” underneath the “To:” bar.
- 3) Now choose who you want in the group (usually by tapping on their name in the list, or by tapping on “To:” or a “+” symbol and typing them in). When you’ve selected everyone you want, tap “Next”.
- 4) Then you need to give the group a name. When you’re happy, tap on “Create” up at the top.
- 5) This will take you straight into the conversation, where you can type your message and send it as normal.



Here’s what the new message button looks like:



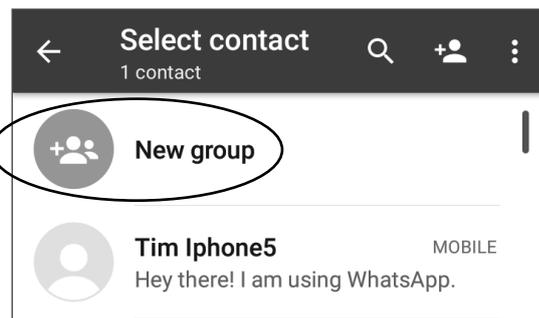
If you can’t see a button, look for the wording “New Message” instead.

To set up a group message on the website, click on the “Messages” icon:  The “New group” option will be next to the “New message” option.

How to send a group message in WhatsApp

In WhatsApp, you can’t type in multiple names to start a group message – you have to create a new group. Here’s how to do it:

- 1) To start a new group conversation, tap on the “new message” icon:  or 
- 2) Then tap on the “New group” option at the top of the screen.
- 3) Choose who you want to be in the group, and tap “Next”.
- 4) Give the group a name, then tap “Create”.
- 5) Type your message and send it as normal (see page 58 for a reminder of these steps).



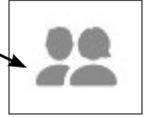
Contacts & Message Requests

Facebook has a feature called *Message Requests*, where you can send a message to someone who you aren't already friends with. They can then decide to accept or decline that request.

The People Screen

All your Facebook Messenger contacts are listed together on the People screen of the Messenger app. This is also where you'll find Message Requests on the app (see below).

To get to the People screen, tap on this icon at the bottom of the screen: (Yours might be at the top, or it might look slightly different to this – but it's almost always a little picture of two people.)



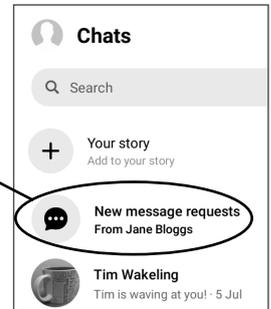
Message requests

If someone who's *not* in your contacts sends you a message, you get something called a "message request", which you can choose to accept or decline. Here's how to accept or decline a message request:

On the app (phones and tablets)

- 1) The message request will appear at the top of the list of messages on the Home screen. Here's an example of how it might look.
- 2) Tap on the message to read it. You'll see a screen like this:

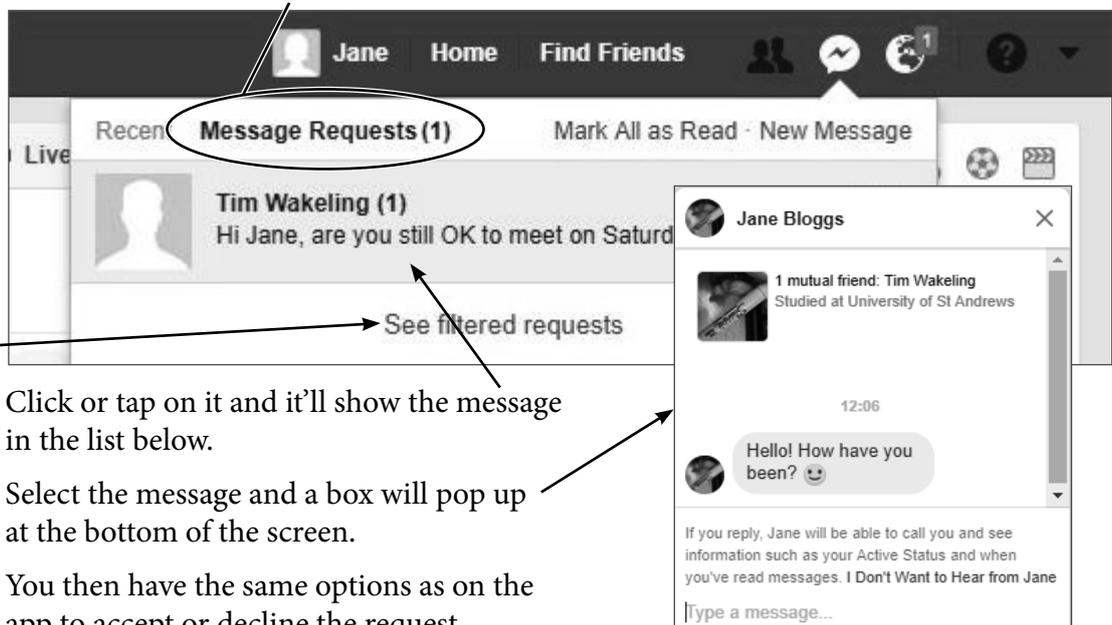
If you want to decline the request, tap on "I don't want to hear from..." You can then delete the conversation, or you can choose to block that person if they're becoming a real bother.



If you're happy to talk to them, you can tap in the chat box to start writing a reply. This accepts the request.

On the Facebook website

- 1) At the top of the messages panel there will be a number next to "Message Requests" to show you have a new request.



- 2) Click or tap on it and it'll show the message in the list below.
- 3) Select the message and a box will pop up at the bottom of the screen.
- 4) You then have the same options as on the app to accept or decline the request.

Once you look at a request it disappears from your list of messages, even if you don't accept or decline it. To find it again, go to the People screen and look for the "Message requests" icon, like this:  On Android devices you have to tap this icon in the top right first: 

If you click on "See filtered requests" you'll see all the messages Facebook has decided are spam and has tidied away for you.

To be continued...

Facebook Messenger isn't all about sending messages any more though – it's got another trick up its sleeve!

In the next chapter, you'll discover how to use Facebook Messenger (along with Skype and Apple's FaceTime) to make video calls to your friends and family. I think video calling is absolutely brilliant – it really is the next best thing to being in the room with them.

Incidentally, you can send instant messages through Skype too. Most video calling services let you send written messages – either to let someone know why you tried to call (if they didn't answer) or to send some information over while you're in the call.

Pretty nifty.

Until next time – all the best
Julie Wakeling and The Helpful Book Company

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