

2026

US Short Code onboarding and migration guide

Navigating SMS Short Code messaging campaigns– from start to launch



Game plan

1. Getting started
2. Key players
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CHAPTER 01

Getting started



The world of US Short Codes

Before leasing a Short Code, you should determine what type of Short Code best suits your business need.

Types

A US Short Code is a 5 or 6-digit number used to send and receive SMS and MMS at scale. Businesses have the option to choose between two types of Short Code numbers:

Random:

Assigned to you immediately by the Short Code Registry and offers a more cost-effective option.

Vanity:

Allows you to select a custom number that represents your brand. Vanity Short Codes are more memorable and help build consumer trust, making them popular in industries like retail, finance and healthcare.

SINCH = 74624

The world of US Short Codes (cont.)

Before leasing a Short Code, you should determine what type of Short Code best suits your business need.

Standard Rated (STD) and Free to End User (FTEU)

US Short Codes support different message billing types. The setup you choose will determine how your customers are charged for messages sent or received using a Short Code. The two main types are:

Standard Rated (STD):

Messages are billed at the end user's standard text messaging rates (usually included in the mobile plan). These are commonly used for marketing/promotional campaigns, and general customer communications and alerts.

Free to End User (FTEU):

Your brand pays for both sending and receiving messages, so there's no charge for your customer. Industries like finance, healthcare, education and government favor FTEU Short Codes to ensure accessibility and build trust.

Leasing and fees

Before you can use your Short Codes, you need to determine which leasing option to select. There are two ways to lease a US Short Code:

Leasing		Directly from the US Short Code Registry
	We offer a managed service that allows us to conduct the brand vetting, leasing, payment, and activation process on your behalf.	You will be responsible for submitting brand client information for vetting, the leasing, payment and activation of your Short Codes.

Fees	Short Code lease fee	One-time carrier fees
	- Random: \$500/month - Vanity (custom): \$1000/month	- T-Mobile standard rate/FTEU setup: \$500 - Verizon standard rate migration: \$150 - Verizon FTEU setup: \$2,000 - Verizon FTEU migration: \$500

No shared codes

Why do you need your own Short Code?

- To avoid confusion and fraud
- Shared codes have been banned since 2019

Launch expectations

How long does it take to launch a US Short Code

Timeline

The timeline to launch a Short Code in the US is typically 5 to 8 weeks. This can vary depending on these factors:

- Campaign readiness: Is your campaign compliant with all current regulations and best practices?
- Carrier approval and provisioning: Your campaign must go through an approval process with each wireless carrier.
- Certification testing: Once your campaign is approved, Sinch and carriers test mandatory keywords and responses.

*The above timeline is applicable for both **new** Short Code requests, and **existing** Short Code migrations.



CHAPTER 02

Key players



US Short Code key players

There are a surprising number of parties involved in the US Short Code messaging ecosystem. With Sinch, we navigate and facilitate these interactions to ensure your Short Code launch is a SUCCESS!



CTIA:

Cellular Telecommunications and Internet Association – Governing body publishes industry guidelines and compliance requirements for US Short Codes. CTIA guidelines often help businesses stay compliant with TCPA regulations.



US Short Code Registry:

Centralized database for US Short Code lease management and ownership, managed by CTIA.



Aegis Mobile:

Official 3rd party vetting partner for the CTIA.



Brands:

Business entity using the Short Code to communicate directly with customers/subscribers.



Aggregators/messaging providers (Sinch):

Act as intermediaries between brands and wireless carriers.

Short Code service providers (Sinch):

Provide messaging platforms, which brands utilize to manage and track their messaging.



Wireless Carriers:

Owner of the wireless subscriber relationship and have authority over message delivery to their subscribers.

CHAPTER 03

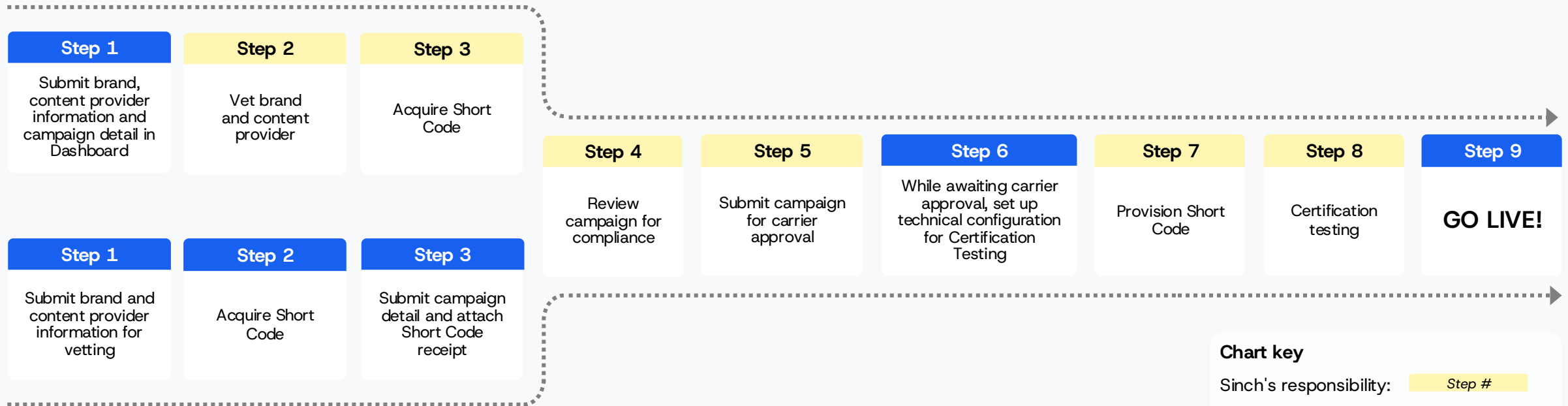
Campaign review and carrier provisioning timeline



Campaign review and carrier provisioning

There are two main paths you can take to launch a Short Code campaign: Sinch works with your team through the process, or you lease the Short Code on your own. Here are the two typical paths:

Path 1: Sinch leases Short Code



Path 2: Client leases Short Code



Chart key

Sinch's responsibility: Step #

Client's responsibility: Step #

US carriers provisioning schedule:

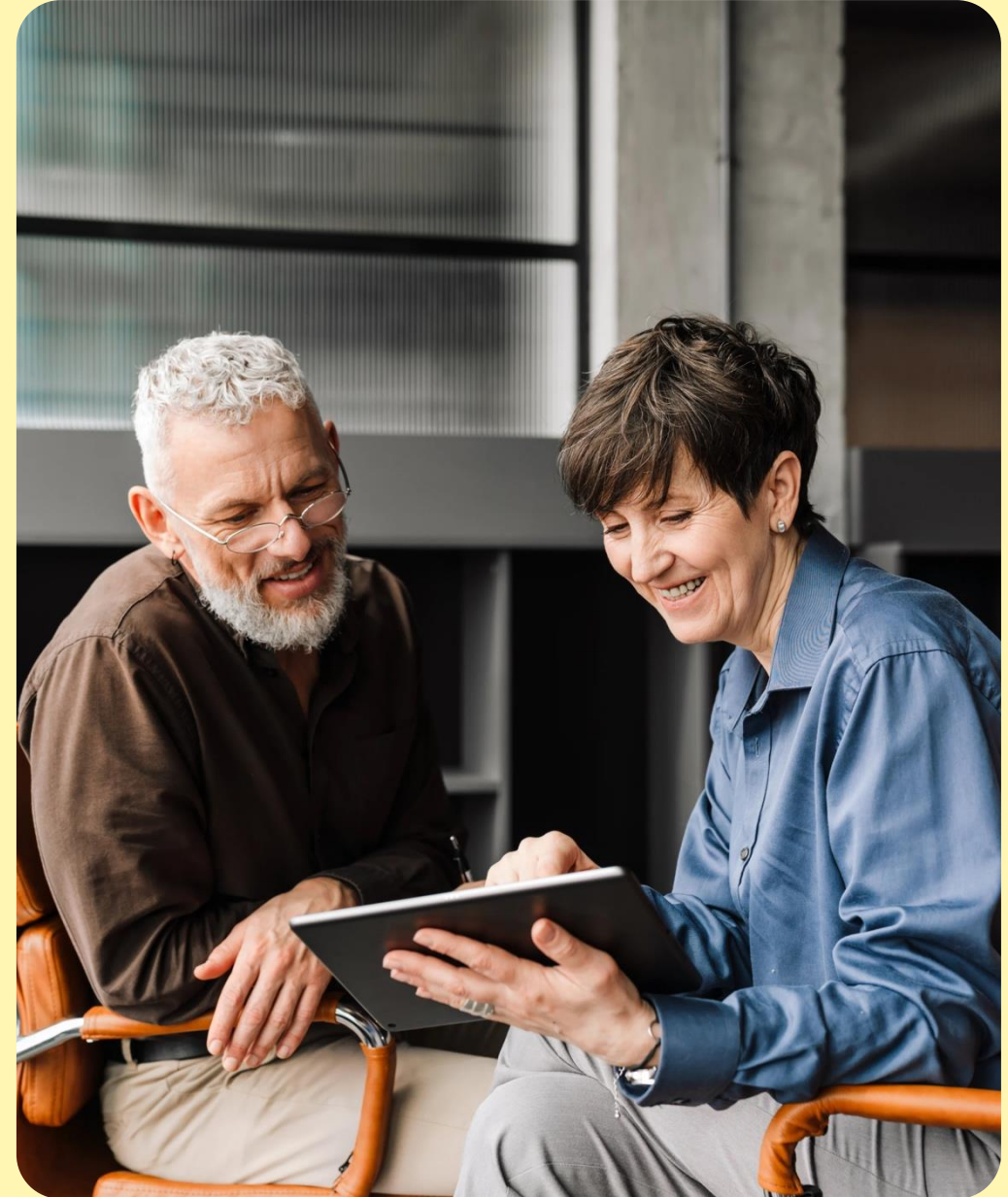
Carrier provisioning timelines differ – see the table for standard provisioning schedules to the right

- Note: *Timing begins once your campaign is compliant and submitted to the carriers for approval.*

Operator	Provisioning schedule	Estimate timing
Verizon Wireless	Tuesday maintenance window	1–2 weeks
AT&T Mobility	No set provisioning cycle	
T-Mobile and MetroPCS		
US Cellular		
ClearSky		
Google Voice		
Interop		3–5 weeks

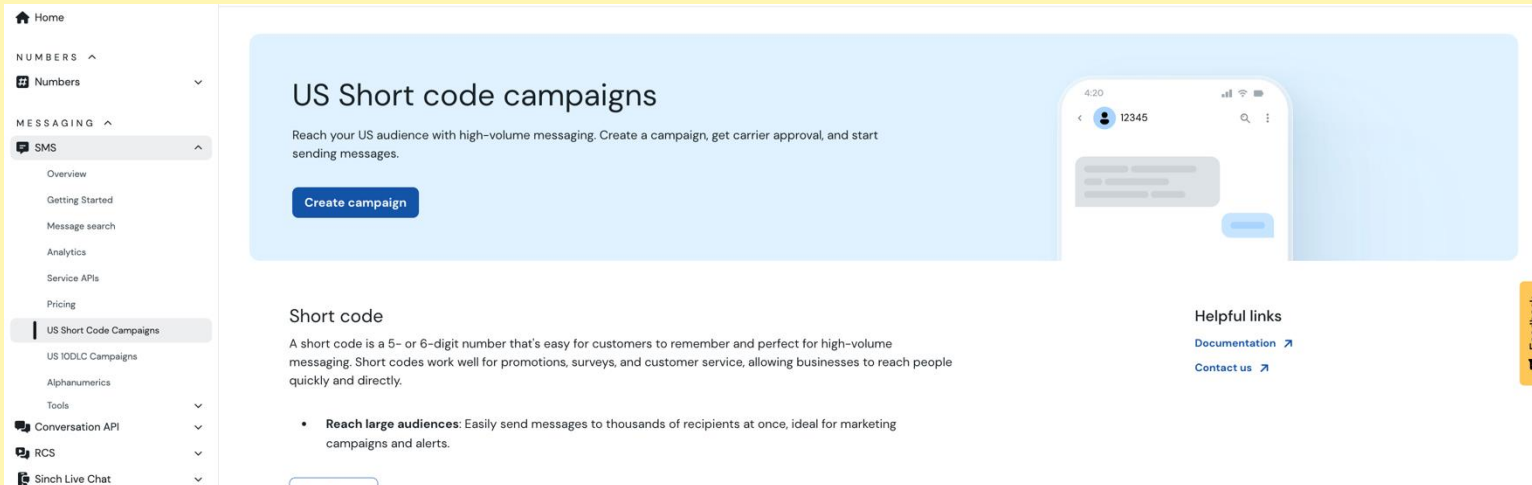
CHAPTER 04

Navigating the Sinch dashboard



Ready to start your first Short Code campaign?

Here's how: Log into the Sinch Dashboard > SMS > US Short Code campaign > Create campaign



1. Enter campaign details and information about how you'll be using the Short Code.
2. Fill in brand details if you want Sinch to lease a code for you.
3. Upload any supporting documents.
4. Click to submit.
5. The Sinch team will review your campaign, share feedback, and help ensure your Short Code campaign launches successfully and on time.

CHAPTER 05

Brand client vetting and content provider registration



Good news:

Registration and vetting is simple through the Sinch Dashboard!

When you choose to have Sinch lease a code for you, you'll be prompted to fill in the 'Brand Registration' section direct on the dashboard.

Tips for vetting success:

1. Make sure that your Federal Tax ID matches the exact Legal Company Name registered with the IRS. Use FEIN and Legal Company Name shown on the first line of your CP-575/EIN Confirmation Letter.
2. Check that the address entered matches the one registered with the IRS. If the information does not exactly match your EIN Confirmation Letter, your brand will be in an Incomplete state, and you will not be able to lease a Short Code until the issue is resolved.
3. Make sure the email address domain matches the domain of the company website.

Do you have a short code?

☐ Yes, I already have a short code

If you already own a short code, a short code receipt must be uploaded in the Attachments section below.

☐ No, I want to lease a short code

Sinch can lease a new short code for you to use your campaign.

Brand registration

We will lease a short code for you, but to get started, your brand needs to be verified and trusted. Please register your brand by providing the required information. Once verified, you'll be able to use your brand in various campaigns. This process will take 1-3 days.

Choose brand *

Register a new brand

Brand name *

Enter brand name

Company information

Legal company name *

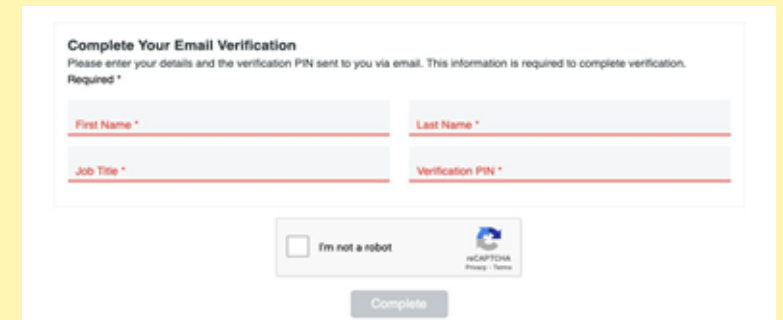
E.g. Tech Innovators LLC

Doing business as

E.g. Tech Solutions

Vetting and registration con't

- Once Sinch submits your brand and content provider details to Aegis Mobile for registration and vetting, the vetting party will review your information and initiate the email verification process.
- Within two to three business days, your designated contact person should receive an email from verify@usshortcodes.org, which will include a secure PIN. After the initial verification is successfully completed, your designated point of contact will receive an annual email to re-validate your brand information and maintain your vetted status.

The screenshot shows a web form titled 'Complete Your Email Verification'. It includes a sub-header: 'Please enter your details and the verification PIN sent to you via email. This information is required to complete verification. Required *'. The form has four input fields: 'First Name *', 'Last Name *', 'Job Title *', and 'Verification PIN *'. Below the fields is a checkbox labeled 'I'm not a robot' next to a CAPTCHA logo. At the bottom right is a 'Complete' button.

CHAPTER 06

Certification process



Certification testing

Certification testing is a critical step in launching a compliant campaign. It ensures the program meets industry compliance standard.

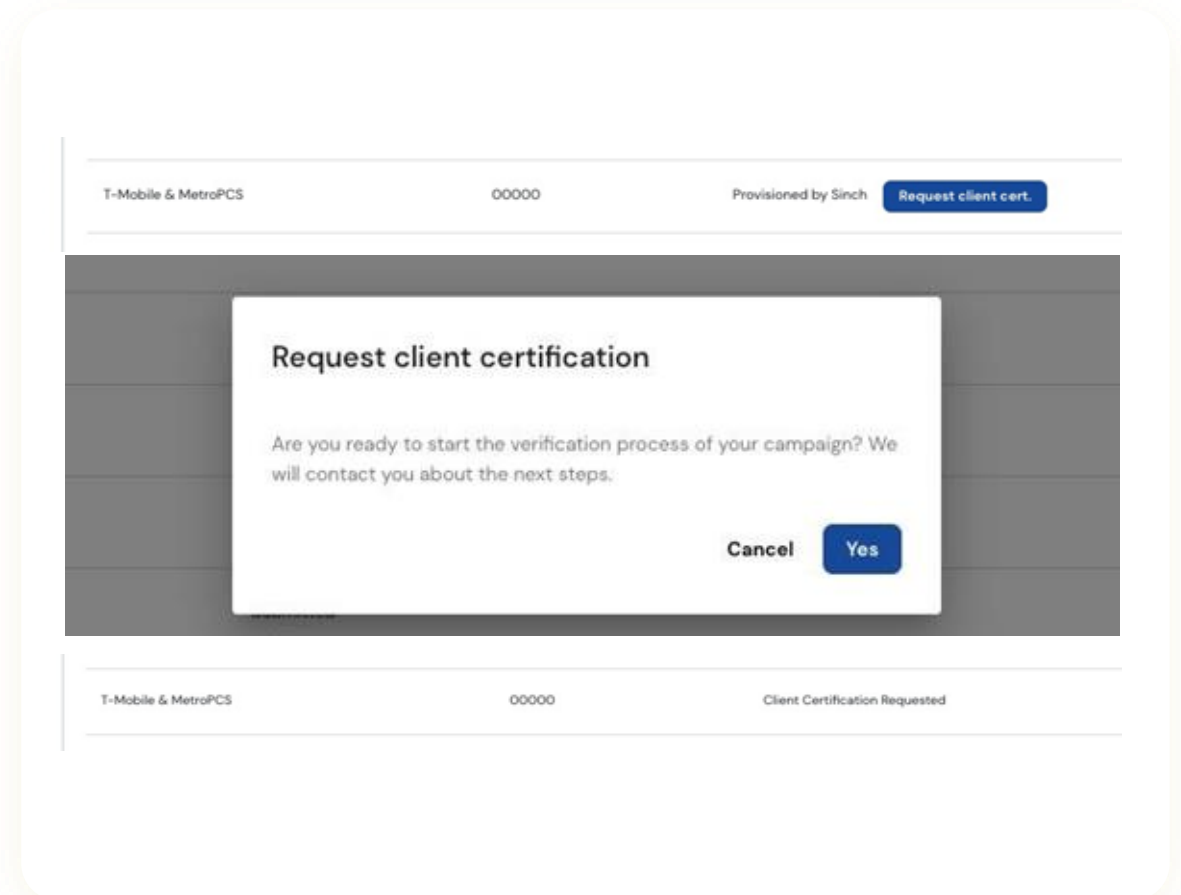
Upon messaging campaign approval, the Sinch team will work with you to review and test the following:

- Opt-in (Confirmation) Message
- Help and Opt-Out Messages

Keywords and auto-responses must match what was submitted in the Sinch Dashboard.

- Once keywords and auto-responses have been configured in your application, you will request certification by selecting "Request client certification" in the Sinch Dashboard. This option will be available once the Short Code has been provisioned by Sinch. Once this is selected, Sinch and the carriers will know to begin testing.

- ✓ If approved, the campaign will be certified and ready for live traffic!
- ✗ If rejected, you will receive feedback and will be required to revise and resubmit.



CHAPTER 07

Dashboard campaign and carrier status



Dashboard campaign and carrier status

Keep track of your campaign by checking the Sinch Dashboard – here's what the campaign status updates mean.

Overall campaign status

Pending review

Your campaign is waiting to be reviewed by the Sinch team

Reviewing

The Sinch team is checking your campaign right now

Awaiting client update

Your campaign has been reviewed by Sinch and we're waiting on action or information from you

Ready for carrier submission

Any requested changes have been made and the campaign is ready to submit to carriers

Submitted to carriers

Your campaign has been submitted to all carriers

Completed

The campaign has been approved and provisioned by all carriers and has passed certification testing (campaign is LIVE!)

Individual carrier status

Pending

Your campaign is waiting to be reviewed

Submitted

Your campaign has been submitted to this carrier

Approved

The campaign has been approved by this carrier

Provisioned by carrier

Your Short Code has been provisioned by this carrier

Provisioned by Sinch

Your Short Code has been provisioned internally and added to your account

Request client cert

Your campaign is ready to be tested by the Sinch team and carriers – you need to select this status

Request carrier cert

The campaign has passed Sinch certification and is waiting for certification from the carrier
(only T-Mobile requires this)

Certified

The campaign has passed certification for this carrier, and it is now LIVE

CHAPTER 08

Rules and regulations



Disallowed content

The following content categories are strictly forbidden and violating these rules can lead to your number being blocked. Any disallowed content in your campaign submission will be rejected.

Category	Forbidden Content Includes
High-Risk Financial Services	Payday loans, short-term high-interest loans, auto/mortgage/student loans, third-party lending, gambling, sweepstakes, stock alerts and cryptocurrency.
"Get Rich Quick" Schemes	Work-from-home programs, risk investment opportunities, and multi-level marketing.
Third-Party Debt Collection	Debt consolidation, debt reduction, and credit repair programs.
Illegal & Controlled Substances	Content related to federally illegal drugs (including cannabis), and prescription drug offers.
Lead Generation & Third-Party Marketing	Selling or sharing customer opt-in data with third parties. You may only send marketing from your own brand.
Deceptive Content	Phishing, spoofing, fraud, or deceptive marketing.
Gambling, Raffles, & Sweepstakes	Prohibited, except for bingo-related messages, which are allowed on approved campaigns.
SHAFT Content	(Sex, Hate, Alcohol, Firearms, and Tobacco)
Sex & Hate	Strictly prohibited (includes pornographic, sexually explicit, profane, or hate speech content).
Firearms	Not allowed (includes content related to the sale of guns, other weapons, fireworks or explosives).
Tobacco & Vaping	Allowed only if a proper age-gate is in place.
Alcohol (US Exception)	Allowed only to US destinations and only if a proper age-gate is in place.

Rules and regulations

Must-dos for your Short Code campaign

Call to Action (CTA)

- All US Short Code programs are required to include a Call to Action.
- This is the way you advertise the program to potential users and gain consent to send messages. A call to action may be presented verbally (i.e. at point of sale), via print ad (i.e. text JOIN to XXXXX), or via web (i.e. mobile number entry form).
- **Call-To-Action must be market ready.**

Your call to action must include

- ☐ Clear program description (e.g. Get updates about our sales and promotions!)
- ☐ "Message and data rates may apply" disclosure (not required for FTEU)
- ☐ Link to Terms and Conditions
- ☐ Link to Privacy Policy
- ☐ Message frequency (#msgs/mo, msg frequency varies, recurring messages, etc)*
- ☐ Opt-out instructions (Reply STOP to end)*
- ☐ HELP instructions (Reply HELP for help)**

**A CTA is still required for one-time transactional campaigns, but message frequency and opt-out instructions are optional*

***HELP instruction is optional if it is communicated in the Terms and Conditions*

Call to Action (CTA) examples

Recurring message program examples


Want to learn more about messaging?

Text JOIN to 12345 to receive text messages from Brand Name.

Message frequency varies. Message and data rates may apply. Reply HELP for help. Text STOP to cancel. Terms and Conditions can be viewed at {Terms link}. Privacy Policy can be viewed at {Privacy link}

Keyword

{Brand Logo}

Text {keyword} to XXXXX to receive {type of alerts} from {brand name}. Message frequency varies. Message and data rates may apply. Reply HELP for help. Reply STOP to cancel. {Terms and Conditions link} and {Privacy Policy link}

Brand Name's SMS Program
 Receive informational alerts right to your phone!

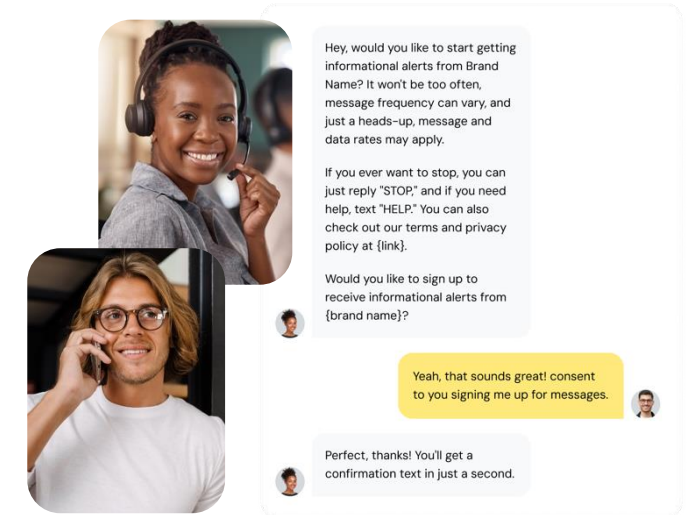
Phone number *

☐ Sign up for SMS

By submitting your mobile phone number and checking the box, you are consenting to receiving informational alerts from {brand name}. Message frequency varies. Message & data rates may apply. Reply HELP for help. Reply STOP to cancel. By leaving this box unchecked you will not be opted in for SMS messages at this time. Terms and Conditions can be viewed at {Terms link}. Privacy Policy can be viewed at {Privacy link}. By leaving the box unchecked, you will not be opted into this short code campaign.

Web

☐ By submitting your mobile phone number and checking the box, you are consenting to receiving {type of alerts} from {brand name}. Message frequency varies. Message and data rates may apply. Reply HELP for help. Reply STOP to cancel. {Terms and Conditions link} and {Privacy Policy link}. By leaving the box unchecked, you will not be opted into this Short Code campaign.

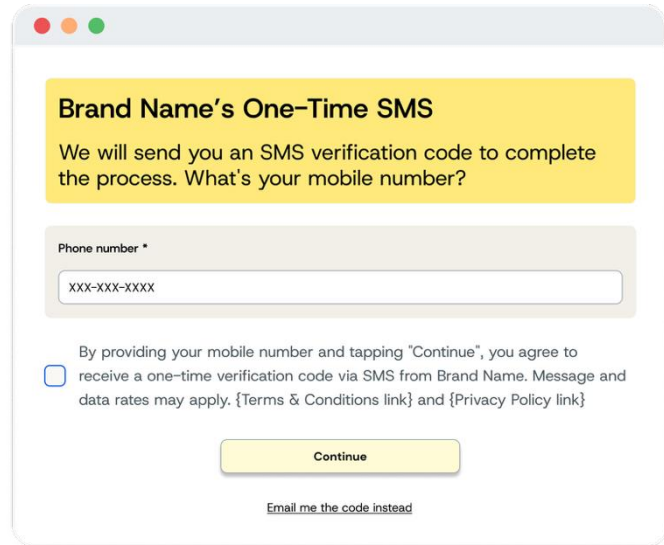


Verbal

Would you like to receive {type of alerts} from {brand name}? {Message Frequency}. Message frequency varies. Message and data rates may apply. Reply STOP to end. Terms and Conditions and Privacy Policy can be found here: {link}. Would you like to sign up to receive {type of alert} from {brand name}?

Call to Action (CTA) examples

One Time Program (OTP) examples



Keyword

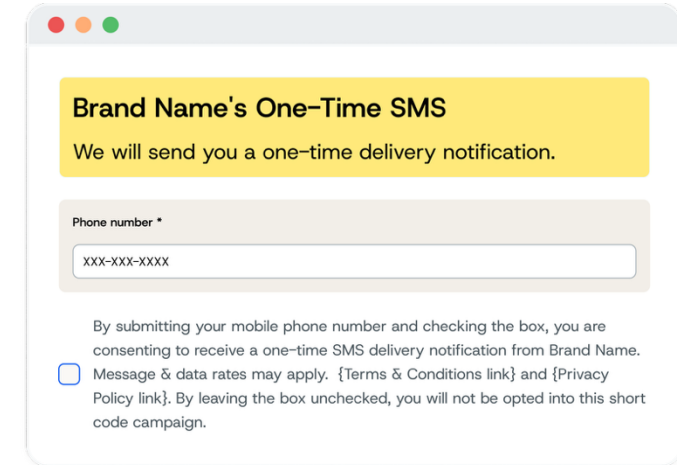
{Brand Logo}

We will send you an SMS verification code to complete the process. What's your mobile number?

[Phone Number field]

By providing your mobile number and tapping "Continue", you agree to receive a one-time verification code via SMS from Sinch. Message and data rates may apply. {Terms and Conditions link} and {Privacy Policy link}

[Continue button]/[Email me the code instead]

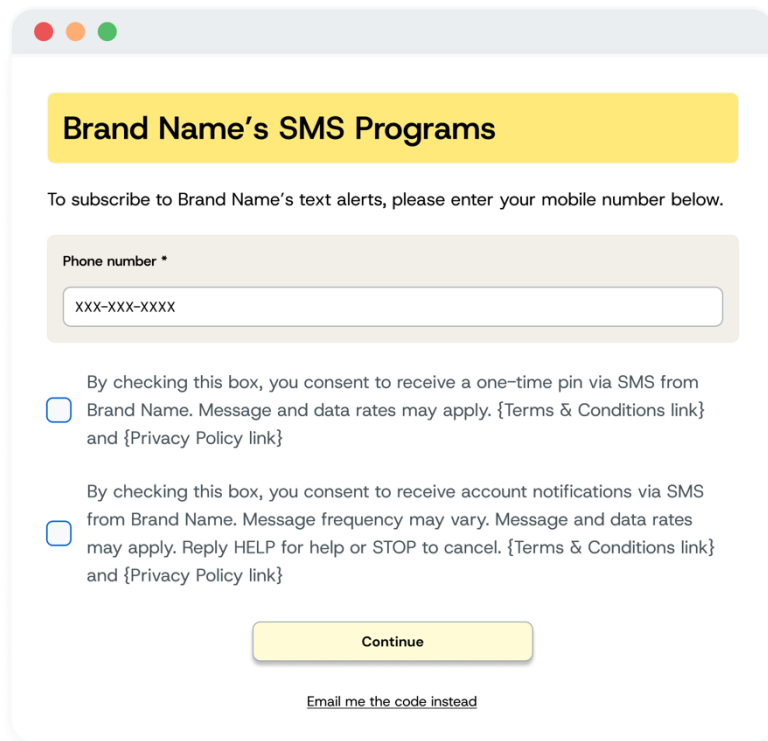


One-Time Alert

☐ By submitting your mobile phone number and checking the box, you are consenting to receive a one-time SMS delivery notification from {brand name}. Message and data rates may apply. {Terms and Conditions link} and {Privacy Policy link}. By leaving the box unchecked, you will not be opted into this Short Code campaign.

Call to Action (CTA) examples

Multiple use cases, with one being an OTP (One Time Program/Pin) example



Brand Name's SMS Programs

To subscribe to Brand Name's text alerts, please enter your mobile number below.

Phone number *

XXX-XXX-XXXX

☐ By checking this box, you consent to receive a one-time pin via SMS from Brand Name. Message and data rates may apply. [Terms & Conditions link](#) and [Privacy Policy link](#)

☐ By checking this box, you consent to receive account notifications via SMS from Brand Name. Message frequency may vary. Message and data rates may apply. Reply HELP for help or STOP to cancel. [Terms & Conditions link](#) and [Privacy Policy link](#)

Continue

[Email me the code instead](#)

Multiple use cases, with one being OTP

To subscribe to {brand name} text alerts, please enter your mobile number below.

[Phone number field]

☐ By checking this box, you consent to receive a one-time pin via SMS from {brand name}. Message and data rates may apply. [Terms and Conditions link](#) and [Privacy Policy link](#)

☐ By checking this box, you consent to receive account notifications via SMS from {brand name}. Message frequency may vary. Message and data rates may apply. Reply HELP for help or STOP to cancel. [Terms and Conditions link](#) and [Privacy Policy link](#)

[Continue]

[Email me the code instead]

Message flow

The order of your messages matter. Here's how to create a message flow that meets requirements.

If you're running a recurring program, you must send a message when a new customer opts in. This is called the opt-in confirmation message, or sometimes referred to as a welcome message. It's the first message that is sent to your customer confirming to them they've opted into your program. Your brand also needs to respond to HELP and opt-out keywords (STOP, QUIT, CANCEL, END, and UNSUBSCRIBE) whether your Short Code program is recurring or one-time.

Message response requirements:

Opt-in message

- ☐ Program/brand name*
- ☐ Message frequency
- ☐ "Message and data rates may apply"
- ☐ Customer care information (i.e. Reply HELP for help)
- ☐ Opt-out instructions (i.e. Reply STOP to end)

Brand name is the only requirement for **one-time programs*

Help response

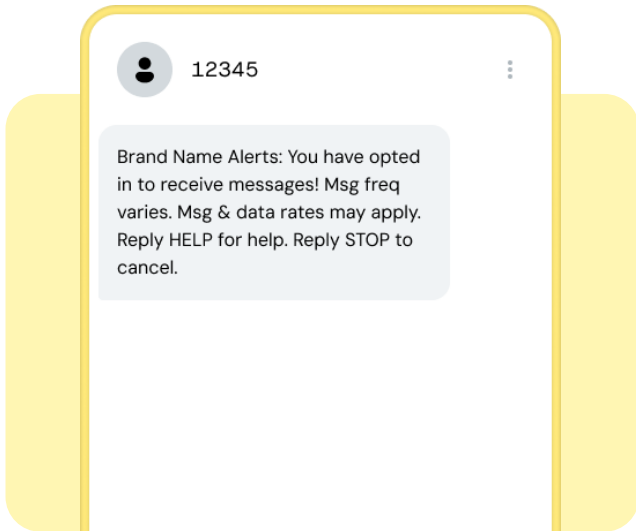
- ☐ Program/brand name
- ☐ Contact info (email/phone/support web page)

Opt-out message

- ☐ Program/brand name
- ☐ Confirmation that user has unsubscribed and will not receive any more messages

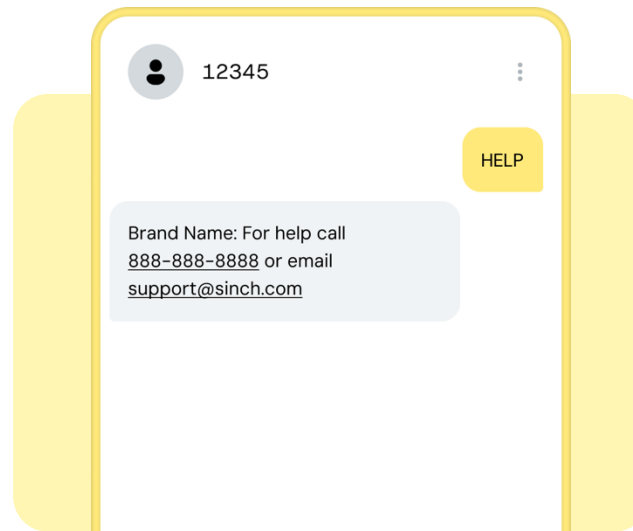
Examples

Message flow



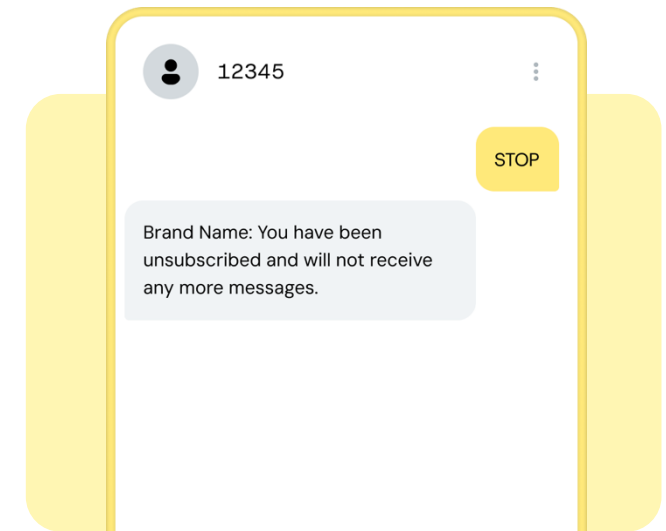
Recurring program Opt In confirmation message

{Brand name} alerts: You have opted in to receive messages! Msg freq varies. Msg and data rates may apply. Reply HELP for help. Reply STOP to cancel.



Help response

{Brand name}: For help call XXX-XXX-XXXX or email example@example.com



Opt-out response

{Brand name}: You have been unsubscribed and will not receive any more messages.

Rules and regulations

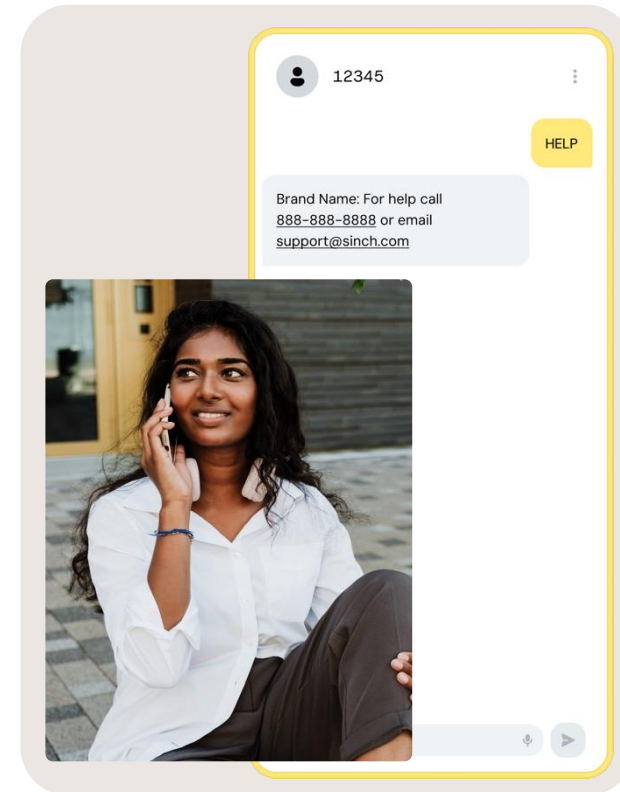
Want to get your Short Code Messaging campaign approved the first time? Follow these guidelines:

Terms and conditions

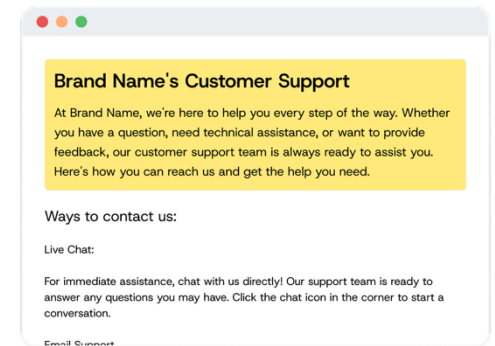
Your terms and conditions page will be checked for:

- ☐ Program name and description
- ☐ Message frequency
- ☐ "Message and data rates may apply"*
- ☐ Customer care contact information (reply HELP for help) and another form of customer support (phone number, email or a direct link to the customer support page)
- ☐ Opt-out instructions (i.e. Reply STOP to end)*
- ☐ Link to Privacy Policy

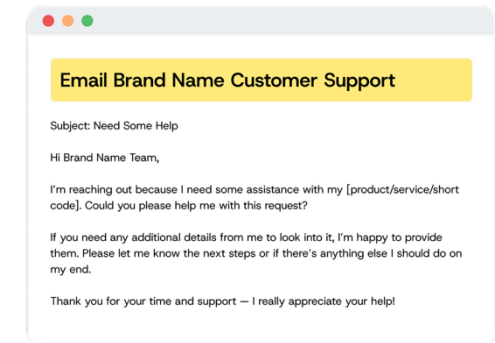
**Terms and Conditions are still required for one-time transactional campaigns, but opt-out instruction is optional*



Phone call option



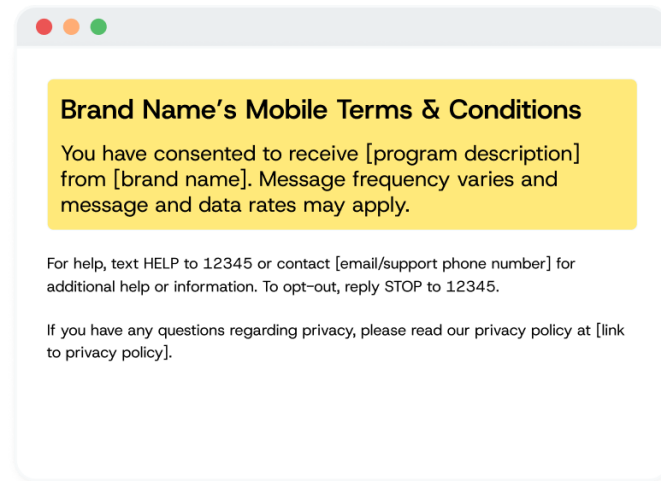
Website for customer support page



Reaching out via e-mail

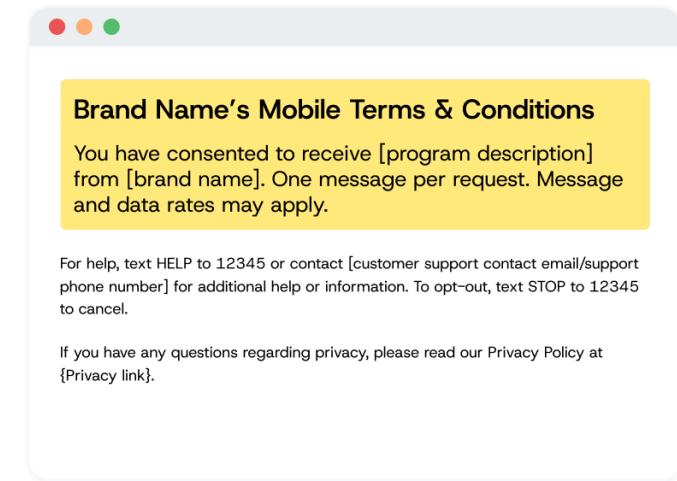
Examples

Terms and Conditions (T&C) examples



Recurring programs

[Brand Name] Terms and Conditions
 [Program description]. Message frequency varies and message and data rates may apply.
 [Customer care contact information (reply HELP to XXXXX for help and another form of customer support)]. To opt out, reply STOP. For our privacy policy, see here: [link to privacy policy].



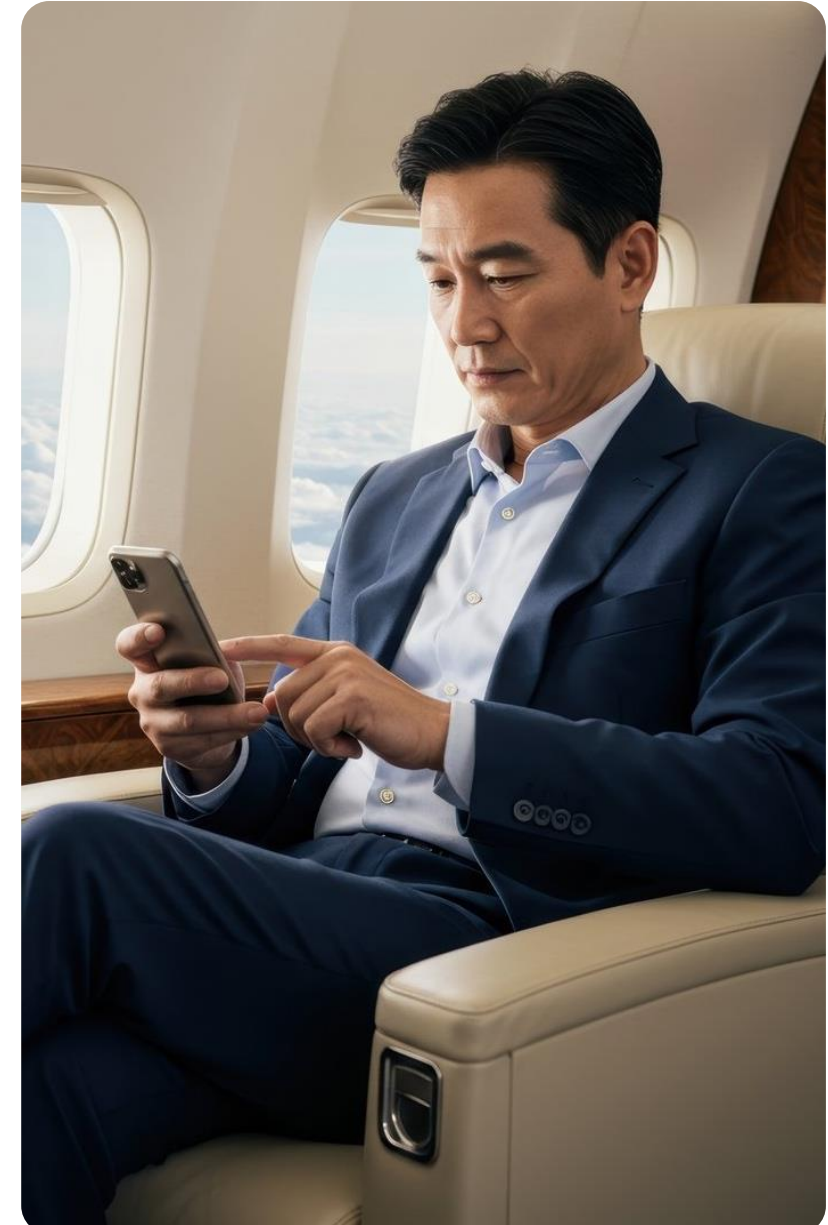
One-time programs

[Brand Name] Terms and Conditions
 [Program description]. One message per request. Message and data rates may apply.
 [Customer care contact information (reply HELP to XXXXX for help and another form of customer support)]. For our privacy policy, see here: [link to privacy policy].

Rules and regulations

Privacy policy

It must be clear that the end user's personal information will not be shared or sold to third parties for the purpose of marketing. In other words, only the brand that the user specifically provides consent to may send messages to that user. Lead generation is not permitted.



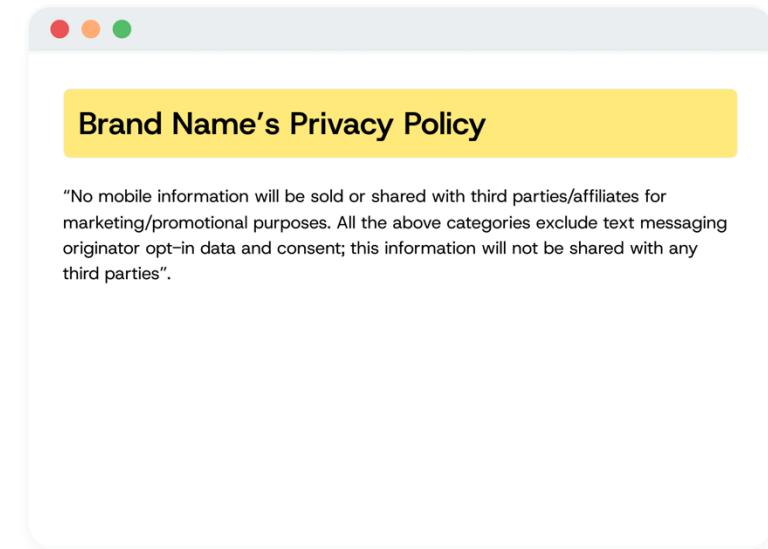
Examples

Privacy policy example

Privacy policy

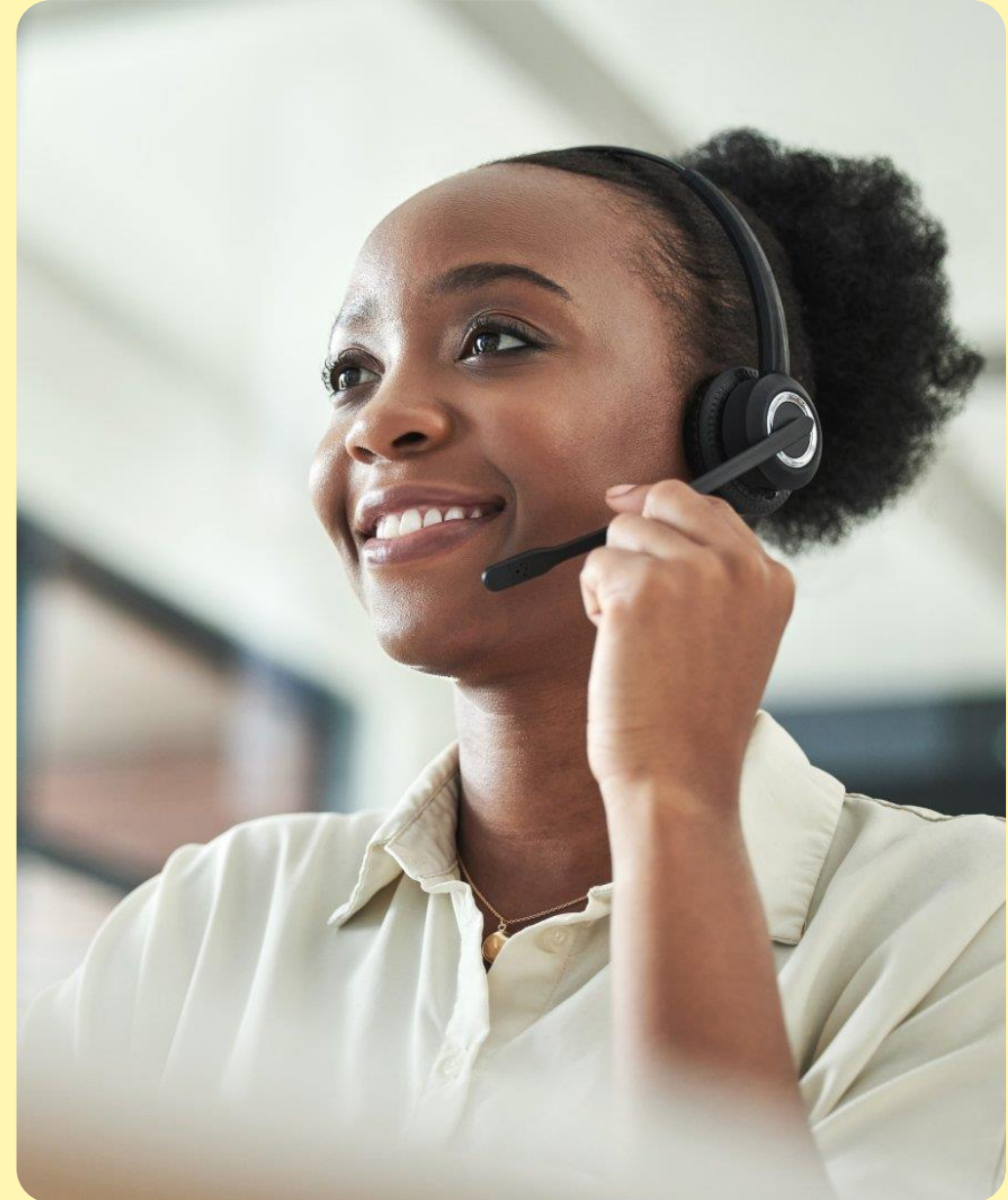
[Program/Brand Name] Privacy Policy

"No mobile information will be sold or shared with third parties/affiliates for marketing/promotional purposes. All the above categories exclude text messaging originator opt-in data and consent; this information will not be shared with any third parties".



CHAPTER 09

Existing Short Code migration process



Migration Process

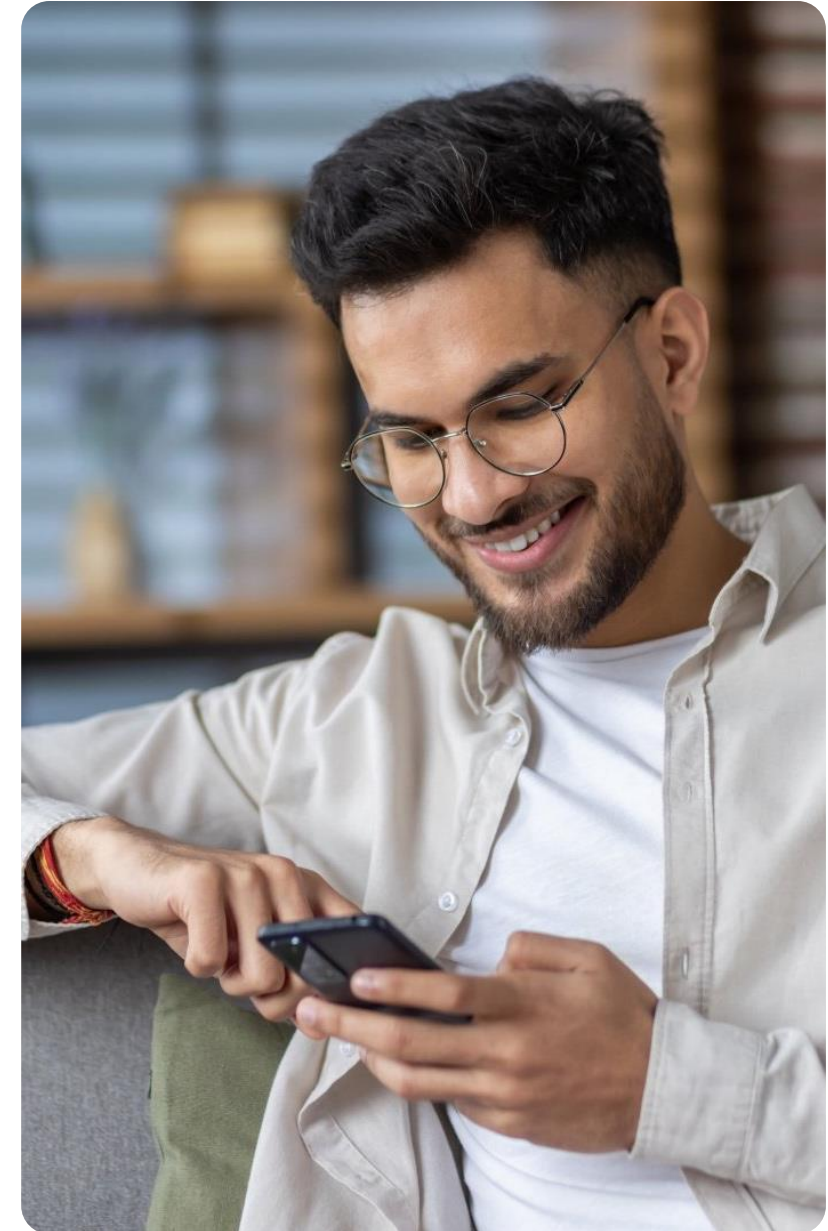
We're here to support you in every step of the way to ensure your Short Code migration is smooth and successful.

Here's how it works:

Migrating from a current partner to Sinch:

- To submit a Short Code migration request, create a new campaign and check "I want to migrate a campaign" in your Sinch Dashboard.
- Attach the Short Code receipt, CTA screenshot, and migration letter.
- The Sinch team and carriers will review the Short Code campaign again upon submission.

All migrations require campaign review and approval to ensure campaigns meet all the compliance requirements in effect at the time of migration.



Migration Process

The migration process is a lot like obtaining a new Short Code

1. Check dual routing capability: Confirm whether you can support dual routing before submitting a migration request.

2. Submit request in the Sinch Dashboard: Include your launch week and submit at least two weeks in advance. Sinch aims to align migration with your timeline, ideally on a Tuesday, to minimize downtime.

3. Compliance review: Sinch reviews the campaign for compliance.

4. Migration initiation: Sinch accepts the campaigns and coordinates with carriers. The previous provider initiates lease transfer, if needed.

5. Short Code setup: Sinch sets up the Short Codes on your account.

6. Message configuration: You must configure opt-in, HELP, and STOP messages before certification testing.

7. Carrier migration: Carrier begin transferring the Short Code. Sinch works with you to minimize downtime. For further clarification on the migration process, see Technical Migration Strategies table on the next slide.

8. Testing: Sinch tests the Short Code functionality.

9. Confirmation: Once testing is successful, you may disconnect from your previous provider.

10. Migration complete.

Migration process

Technical migration strategies

	Implementation complexity		Traffic impact	Strategy
	Sinch	Client		
Scenario #1 Client <u>can</u> support dual-routing, and can route messages based on the carrier of the MSISDN	Low	High	Low	• This works best if the client can perform a lookup before the Short Code submission and route specific operators to different providers. • Sinch will let you know once each carrier has migrated
Scenario #2 Client <u>cannot</u> support dual-routing, and cannot perform a lookup or route messages by carrier	Low	Low	High	Sinch will let you know to migrate the Short Code when: Option One: The majority of operators have been migrated to Sinch – we recommend this approach Option Two: All operators have been migrated to Sinch. Option Three: Sinch receives confirmation that the first operator has migrated – this is not usually recommended.

Template for US Short Code migration letter

- If you're moving an existing Short Code from one messaging provider to another, you'll need to authorize the transfer with a migration letter.
- This ensures your code is officially switched over without interrupting your messaging service.
- It also protects your Short Code from being migrated without your authorization.

[Brand Company Letterhead]

Date: **MM/DD/YY** [within 30 days of the migration date]

RE: Migration of Short Code **[list Short Code(s)]**

To Whom It May Concern:

This letter is to confirm that we are given permission by **[short code lease holder]** to migrate a campaign for Short Code**[list Short Code(s)]** from **[Current provider]** to Sinch America Inc.

The migration date will be **[mm/yyyy or effective immediately]**.

Contact information for the DCA:

[Name]

[Phone number]

[Email address]

Regards,

[Signature]

[Name of authorize, Title]

[Company Name/Brand]

[Address]

US Short Code lease transfer process

Want Sinch to take over your existing Short Code lease? We're happy to – here's how the transfer process works.

Transferring Short Code leases to Sinch

- Start the transfer at www.usshortcodes.com, and enter Sinch's Account ID – contact your Account Manager for the number.
- Let the Sinch team know about the Short Code transfer and enter the number in your Sinch Dashboard.
- Sinch will accept the lease transfer and complete the process.

Transferring a Short Code lease to another provider

- Want to transfer an existing Short Code to a different provider? Simple: Just give your Sinch Account Manager these details:
 - Short Code number
 - Name of the new provider and their usshortcodes.com Account ID
 - Date you wish to transfer the Short Code

Final Checklist

- ☐ Determined Short Code type
- ☐ Determined whether to lease Short Code directly with the registry or through Sinch
- ☐ Reviewed CTIA Messaging Best Practices and Sinch's Disallowed Content
- ☐ Set up Dashboard Account
- ☐ Completed Brand and Content Provider registration/vetting
- ☐ Submitted compliant campaign
 - Attached call to action or any market-ready drafts
 - Attached lease receipt and/or migration letter *(if applicable)*
- ☐ Configured mandatory keywords

YOU ARE ALL SET!



Thank you!

Contact Us:

US: 470-300-8394

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