A Guide to Group Chats on Signal, WhatsApp and Telegram
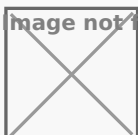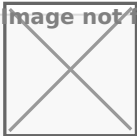
This book gives guidelines on how to set up and run a secure and effective XR Group Chat if your group refuses to use our XR hosted Mattermost chat. It mentions benefits and downsides of the different communication apps - Signal, Telegram and WhatsApp. The book also provides communication guidelines on chats that can be adapted for your XR Group Chat and how to deal with conflicts on chats.

Quick comparison of the chat apps

Comparison of the drawbacks and benefits of Mattermost, WhatsApp, Telegram, and Signal. For more detail see Choosing a messaging app for your XR group in the "Online Tools for Communicating with Other Rebels" book.

Here is the summary from that chapter:

	Whats-App	Telegram	Matter-most	Signal
Security	Image not found or type unknown	Image not found or type unknown	Image not found or type unknown	Image not found or type unknown
Accessibility	Image not found or type unknown	Image not found or type unknown	Image not found or type unknown	Image not found or type unknown
Features	Image not found or type unknown	Image not found or type unknown	Image not found or type unknown	Image not found or type unknown
Discoverability	Image not found or type unknown	Image not found or type unknown	Image not found or type unknown	Image not found or type unknown

Ultimately which tool you decide to go with comes down to what you and the other people in your group are comfortable with. However, our recommendations can be summarised as:

If your group...

- **...organises lots of different things at once** Use Mattermost. The extra features and discoverability should really help to make your group more productive.
- **...organises a lot of actions** Use Mattermost combined with Signal for the added security. Also don't forget to enable disappearing messages.

How to set up and run effective group chats

This Chapter is about setting up a group chat on Telegram, Signal and Telegram including the benefits and downsides of each communication app.

When setting up the group chat make sure you

When setting up the group chat make sure you:

1. Add a group description so everyone knows why they have been added to the group. This help to keep the conversation on topic.
2. In the description of the chat include any relevant information including your group agreement and any rules for the chat. If these are too long to be directly added into the description, add a link to a document.
3. Turn off the group link so only admins can add members (There is no group link in WhatsApp)
4. Make at least three trusted people admins including yourself.

Tips and recommendations for moderating a group chat

Hopefully you'll never be in a tricky situation; but sometimes people can troll, spam or act against XR's principles and values on group chats. In general this is less likely to happen on closed, secure chats, but it is a good idea to have 'agreed in advance' rules for this type of behaviour.

1. Always make sure there are at least three admins to moderate the chat.
2. Make sure you have an agreed group agreement in advance. It is up to your group what rules you agree to, but it is best to ensure these rules are agreed to in advance. It also helps for rules to be the same on all platforms you are using to communicate. Ensure that when people sign up to the group they are pointed to the group agreement so they know what they are agreeing to, or that they are shown it before joining the group.
3. Follow a 'two strikes and you're out' policy. On the first occasion of 'misbehaviour' an admin should remove the person/people from the group, private message them to explain they have been removed, and calmly explain why (citing the rules you have agreed). On the group chat itself that they have been removed from, explain that you have removed them from the group and why. If you have a group agreement in place most people will know the policy and know what will happen if there is bad behaviour on a group chat.
4. Give the removed person a cooling-off period and discuss re-adding them to the group provided they are willing to follow the group agreement. Ideally, if the person is happy to apologise, and wants to be added back into the group then you can add them back in, on the basis that there is only one more chance. As we said, if this is covered in the group agreement policy in advance, and everyone knows what happens in a bad behaviour situation, then nobody should be upset about this. Once that person has been let back into the group, admins should ensure that ongoing conversations are monitored and enforce the 'two strikes and you are out policy'. If necessary, you may need to remove them from the group conversations permanently, and you may also want to assess whether or not you want them involved in the XR Local Group, Community Group, or Working Group at all.
5. You may decide in your group on a zero-tolerance policy for some misbehaviour. For example: spamming (so spammers are removed straight away) and also inappropriate sexual behaviour, stalking behaviours, violent threats etc.
6. With the other moderators (ideally 3 or more) take it in turns to do the moderation, and make sure there is some kind of system where you know who is covering what and if somebody is going to be away (So you are not all away and off chat at the same time!) Make sure you provide each other with support because it can be quite stressful if it all kicks off on a chat. Just make sure that moderators also follow the policy, and are ready to

be challenged and justify the removals from a group - so make sure you choose people that understand the rules that the group have agreed, and are tactful and not using it as a power trip!

7. If something comes up that is part of a long running dispute that you do not feel able to deal with within the group, we recommend that you contact the XR Transformative

   Conflicts team by emailing xr-conflict@protonmail.com

We know that this task seems a bit onerous at first and everyone is generally quite happy on XR chats, but we really can't stress enough how important it is to make sure difficult or contentious situations don't escalate and also that everybody knows what the rules of behaviour are on the chats.

Keeping Group Chats secure

This chapter is about keeping Group Chats secure. It will describe the benefits and downsides in terms of security of the different communication apps Signal, Telegram and WhatsApp as well as give guidance as to how to keep a Group Chat secure.

Comparing Security of Signal, Telegram and WhatsApp

Signal

• Signal is by far the most secure encrypted channel option.

• When you use Signal, your data is stored in encrypted form on your devices.

• Signal also has disappearing messages (self-destructing messages) which the other channels do not, which are an essential security feature

• Signal is free and all you need is a smartphone.

• Unlike Telegram, which also benefits from end-to-end encryption in its "secret chats", Signal has the feature enabled by default so you won't have to take any additional steps to get this, and that is why it is used for actions over and above everything else.

Telegram

• End-to-end encryption is not automatically used on messages sent in Telegram.

• Telegram is really a social media platform and has a very 'relaxed' content moderation strategy- this means it is targeted by spammers. You have to be on top of moderating it!

• Telegram is very useful for broadcast channels (in which only admins can post). Links for these can then be shared on wider channels (eg. Rebellion Broadcast). However, widely shared links attract spammers so they need to be carefully moderated.

WhatsApp

• End-to-end encrypted but owned by Facebook therefore its privacy is not reliable. WhatsApp also collects more metadata on you than apps like Signal.

• We do not recommend that anyone uses WhatsApp for actions, even those that are 'non-spicy' just in case.

• Some groups choose to use WhatsApp as more people already have it downloaded, but due to the security issues described above we strongly recommend groups use Signal for all of their organising.

See Also

[Choosing a messaging app for your XR group](#) in the "Online Tools for Communicating with Other Rebels" book.

Guidelines to keep the Group Chats as secure as possible

When setting up the group chat make sure you follow these rules to keep it as secure as possible

1. Make sure that you add a group description, so everyone knows why they have been added to the group.
2. In the description of the chat include a URL link to any relevant information including your group agreement and any rules for the chat.
3. In settings turn off the group link (There is no group link in WhatsApp)
4. Make sure that only admins can add members or access the invite link.
5. Make at least three trusted people admins including yourself.
6. If actions are happening soon, make sure you set disappearing messages to a day or a week otherwise 4 weeks should be fine (WhatsApp and Telegram do not have this ability)

Security on chats

1. Ideally only add people that you know well or are verified by others (trusted rebels)
2. If you are doing spicy actions make sure people use pseudonyms and burner phones if possible, and that those are added to the correct chats (Normal names and numbers removed).
3. Make sure there are separate secure chats for action days or spicy actions so that you can delete them afterwards.
4. Make sure only admins can add new members to the chat.
5. Make sure you set disappearing messages.
6. Make sure you keep the group links off.
7. Remember that many chat platforms attach media and files and links separately, so admins should regularly check that old media files and links are deleted
8. After the chat is done, and everyone has agreed that the group chat is done with, leave the group and delete the chat off your phone
9. Some members may not do this, so once the chat is done with, admins can remove members individually and then delete the chat off phones by deleting the group chat altogether - in this way people are not on lots of different chats that have ended which may cause security issues should someone's phone be seized.

Chat Etiquette for XR Group Chats

Here are a few Chat Etiquette Guidelines that are being used in XR Group Chats whether on Signal, Telegram or WhatsApp:

• Welcome newcomers!

• Please follow XR's principles & values: https://extinctionrebellion.uk/the-truth/about-us/

• Avoid swearing

• Ideally keep discussion between 7am and 11pm

• Answer questions and make sure people feel heard

• Post off-topic messages in a more suitable channel

• If people leave the chat in response to a post, this is a sign of overheating - slow down, pause and reflect

• Take two-way conversations out of the chat. Don't send unsolicited messages. Harassment will not be tolerated.

• Send a longer message over lots of separate ones; people then have the chance to opt in to read more.

• Avoid encouraging anyone to vote or not vote for a political party.

• Don't attribute info from this chat elsewhere, like quoting from it publicly and naming the originator.

• Avoid posting sensitive action info which can later be used as evidence

How to find information in a group chat

You're pretty sure you've heard about a protest going on in Derby soon, but don't remember the details, or in which specific chat you've seen the information?

Both Telegram and Signal allow us to search for keywords, in a specific chat and even in all your chats at once!

Check this tutorial out to learn how to make good use of the search function: https://youtu.be/jnTkemtOjNE