

NowSMS Group Text

The NowSMS Group Text feature is designed to facilitate group communications over SMS.

At it's core, it's about sending a single text message, and having that text message automatically forwarded to a group of people.

The best way to explain NowSMS Group Text is to describe some of the different possible usage scenarios.

Smaller teams and workgroups can use NowSMS Group Text to easily share information and communicate as a group. Any member of a group can send a text message that is automatically forwarded and rebroadcast to the entire group.

Larger teams and workgroups can limit which group members are allowed to send a broadcast message to the entire group. Authorised users can send broadcast messages to the group, while standard users only receive these broadcast messages.

It is also possible for end users to opt-in and opt-out of group communications by sending text commands to the NowSMS Group Text server via SMS. Group managers and/or event organisers can create groups and invite users to subscribe to group broadcasts by sending a text message to the NowSMS Group Text Server, freeing them of the need to manually manage subscriber lists.

NowSMS Group Text is a work in progress. Before making the first official release available, we wanted to make a pre-release available for download, and get feedback from existing NowSMS customers.

NowSMS Group Text is a free add-on for the Now SMS/MMS Gateway and NowSMS Lite.

NowSMS Group Text will only work with NowSMS or NowSMS Lite versions 2008.06.03 or later. It will not work with earlier versions of NowSMS.

NowSMS Group Text is implemented using the 2-way command interface of NowSMS, and is compatible with any SMSC interface that supports both sending and receiving SMS messages (GSM modems, SMPP, UCP/EMI, CIMD2). It is also possible to receive SMS message using one SMSC interface, such as a GSM modem, while sending outbound messages via a different SMSC connection, such as an SMPP or HTTP based provider.

Installing NowSMS Group Text

NowSMS Group Text will only work with NowSMS or NowSMS Lite versions 2008.06.03 or later. It will not work with earlier versions of NowSMS.

The Group Text add-on can be downloaded at <http://www.nowsms.com/download/grouptext.zip>.

For product support, please visit the discussion forum at <http://www.nowsms.com/grouptext>.

The current pre-release version of the NowSMS Group Text feature requires the manual copying of 2 files to the NowSMS program directory (usually C:\Program Files\NowSMS or C:\Program Files (x86)\NowSMS on 64-bit versions of Windows): MSGROUPER.EXE and MSGROUPCMD.EXE.

In NowSMS, on the “2-way” page of the configuration dialog, MSGROUPER.EXE must be installed as a 2-way command.

To define MSGROUPER.EXE as a 2-way command, use the following settings:

SMS Command Prefix = *

Command To Execute = "C:\Program Files\NowSMS\msgrouper.exe" /s @@SENDER@@ /r @@RECIP@@ /t @@FULLSMS@@

Command returns response text = checked

For most installations, “Receive Phone Number(s)” can be left blank. Leaving this field blank means that the MSGROUPER command will process all received SMS messages. If you have multiple GSM modems or are receiving SMS messages for multiple phone numbers or short codes, then you should specify the phone number or short code that is to be allocated for Group Text in this field.

Creating a Group

The current user interface for NowSMS Group Text is designed to allow groups to be created and maintained via SMS.

A command line utility is also provided so that admin commands can be issued from the computer running the NowSMS Group Text server. All of the administrative commands supported by the SMS interface are supported from the command line interface by running SMSGROUPCMD.EXE and including the command on the command line after SMSGROUPCMD.

Before any groups can be created, a special user account must be created on the NowSMS server in the “SMS Users” area. The user name give to this user account should be the phone number of the owner (or administrator) of the group. **This phone number is not the phone number allocated for sending/receiving group text messages.** This is a phone number that is allowed to send administrative commands into the group text server for group creation and/or maintenance. In most cases, this phone number should be defined in full international format starting with a “+” (e.g., +447777777777).

Once this user account is created, it is possible to send a message from the group owner phone number into the group text server to create a group.

This can be done by simply sending a text message that says: CREATE groupname (where groupname is the name of the group to be created).

Note: When using the command line interface, it is necessary to include the owner phone number following the group name. (For example: SMSGROUPCMD CREATE groupname ownerPhoneNumber)

Several parameters can be specified in the CREATE command to specify group attributes. These parameters can be added to the end of the CREATE command.

PUBLIC or PRIVATE – If the group is PUBLIC (default), then anyone will be allowed to join the group. If the group is PRIVATE, any join requests will be forwarded to the group owner and/or administrator for approval before joining.

MOD, UNMOD or BROADCAST – This specifies whether or not group members are allowed to submit messages that are forwarded/rebroadcast to the entire group. An UNMODerated (default) group means that and any group member can send a message to the group. A MODerated group means that specially authorised group members can send a message to the group, messages sent by regular group members will be forwarded to the group owner and/or administrator for approval before being sent to the group. A BROADCAST group means that only specially authorised group members can send a message to the group.

NOTIFY or NONOTIFY – This specifies whether or not the group owner and/or administrators are notified with a text message whenever a member joins or leaves the group. NONOTIFY (default) means that the group owner is not notified. NOTIFY means that the group owner is notified whenever a new member joins the group, or an existing member leaves the group.

Modifying Group Properties

These group attributes can be changed after a group has been created by sending the command `ADMIN groupname PROP` followed by any of the attributes described in the previous section.

Authorised Members for Broadcast or Moderated Groups

For broadcast or moderated groups, members that are allowed to send messages to the group without moderator approval can be managed via the `ADMIN groupname AUTH` command.

To add a member to the authorised list, use `ADMIN groupname AUTH ADD phonenum`

To remove a member from the authorised list, use `ADMIN groupname AUTH REMOVE phonenum`

The command line interface also supports an additional parameter to return a list of currently authorised members: `ADMIN groupname AUTH LIST`

Specifying Alternative Administrators

For moderated and private groups, administrators must approve certain transactions (new members and/or message postings) before they are processed. By default, the group owner is an administrator. It is also possible to assign additional administrators.

To add an administrator, use `ADMIN groupname ADMIN ADD phonenum`

To remove an administrator, use `ADMIN groupname ADMIN REMOVE phonenum`

The command line interface also supports an additional parameter to return a list of administrators: `ADMIN groupname ADMIN LIST`

Adding Members

Group owners and administrators are allowed to add new members to a group without requiring the member to first send a message asking to join.

To add a member, use the command `ADMIN groupname ADD phonenum username`

Removing and/or Blocking Members

Group owners and administrators are allowed to remove members from a group, and optionally block the member from rejoining the group.

To remove a member, use the command `ADMIN groupname REMOVE phonenum` or `username`

To remove a member and block them from rejoining the group, use the command ADMIN groupname BLOCK phonenum or username

Listing Group Members

The command line interface supports a command to return a list of all group members. To return this member list, using the command ADMIN groupname LIST

Posting a Message to The Group

The command line interface supports a command to post a message to the group. The format of this command is: ADMIN groupname POST text to post.

To post group messages via SMS, please refer to the next section “Joining Groups and Posting Messages to a Group”.

Joining Groups and Posting Messages to a Group

Members can join a group by sending a message to the group text server with the text JOIN groupname username

Groupname is the name of the group that they are asking to join. Username is a user handle that is used when they post messages to the group.

Members can leave a group by sending a message to the group text server with the text LEAVE groupname

Members can also leave all groups by sending a message to the group text server with the text LEAVE or STOP, without specifying a group name.

Members can post a message to a group by sending a message to the group text server that starts with the text @groupname, where groupname is the name of the group. For example, if the group is named simply “B”.

@B This is a message to the entire group.

If the group is moderated, the message will be first forwarded to the group administrator for approval before being posted to the entire group.

Messages sent through the group text server will be prefaced with the text @groupname:username.

It is also possible for members to send a text message directly to another member of the group without sending it to the entire group by sending a message to the group text server that starts with the text @groupname:username. For example, to send to a member “mike” on a group named “B”, the following text message could be sent:

@B:mike Hey Mike, let's get out of here!