

Text Messages > All Designs

Ascent360's SMS Design Library and Composition tool allow you to create, manage, and send SMS & MMS texts to [contactable] individuals in your CDP.

Create a New Message

To create a new text message, click **Create Message** from the Text Message Design Library. Name your message and select the phone number you intend to send the message from. You can change the sending number later in the Sending Steps. The **title** is simply an internal label, so input whatever you need to help you organize your messages. If necessary, organize your test message in a folder and proceed.

The Composition Tool

After you create your text message draft, you'll be brought to the Text Composition Tool where you can further design your text.

The Title Field

The Title Field displays the internal title you provided when the design was created. Titles can be updated from this page.

The Message Body

There are four elements of the message body that come together to create the message that is sent to message recipients. These are:

1. The "From Name" - This is the grayed-out field at the top of the Message Body. The From Name is configured using the information originally provided to Ascent360 when texting was setup in your CDP. The From Name is required for SMS texting compliance; it should be the legal name of your business and cannot be changed from within the Composition Tool.
2. The Subject Line - *Optional*. The subject line is inserted directly after the From Name and directly before the message main body content. There is no functional difference between the Subject Line and the message main body content, except that Subject Lines can help you create consistent texts and can be used for organization in the Design Library.
3. Main body content - *Required*. The main body content represents the main portion of the message.
4. Unsubscribe phrase - The unsubscribe phrase is required for texting compliance. You can select from a handful of compliant unsubscribe phrases from the drop-down. If you would like to request a custom unsubscribe phrase, please reach out to Ascent360 and we can work with you to create a custom compliant

phrase.

All four message elements (From Name, Subject Line, Main Body Content, & Unsubscribe Phrase) count toward SMS and MMS character limits. For more, see the section on "Character Counting" below.

Adding Content

When designing your text messages, be sure to avoid SHAFT keywords and any other types of prohibited content. See [SMS - Ascent360's Guide to Texting Compliance](#)

Text

Add main body content by typing in the large text box below the subject line. As you type, the preview on the right side will update with a representation of how the text message will appear to the end user.

The main body content respects line breaks to help you create multiple paragraphs in your text.

Images

Click the image icon in the bottom left of the Composition Tool to add an image to the text. When you do so, the Image Library will open over the Composition Tool to add an image. If you use Ascent360's Email Sending Platform, images from that Image Library will be shared with the texting tool.

Adding one or more images changes the type of the text from SMS to MMS. MMS has larger character limits, but costs more credits than SMS. To change the message back to SMS, simply remove all images from the text.

You can add multiple images to an MMS, but note that the total size of the attachments can't exceed 525KB.

Merge Tags & Personalization

To add a merge tag to your text message, click the bracketed icon {...} at the bottom left of the Composition Tool. On the resulting screen, select a field from the drop-down and designate a default value for the merge tag. The default value will be used in the event that the specified field is blank for the recipient; it's also used for the purposes of estimating character usage and credit usage.

If a merge tag were to cause the text message to be sent in multiple segments, you'll be charged credits for the extra segment. For this reason, consider sending texts that are 20-25% below the segment character limit when using merge tags.

You can add merge tags to the Subject Line, too. The merge tag will be inserted at the current position of the cursor in the Composition Tool.

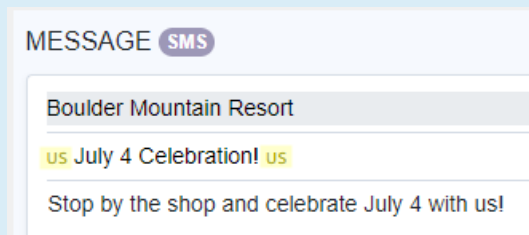
Emojis

Click the emoji icon at the bottom of the Composition Tool to add emojis to your text message. Like merge tags, emojis can be added to the Subject Line and the main body content.

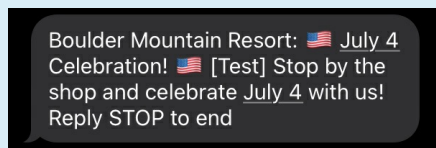
Inserting emojis in your message will drastically shorten the segment character limit for your text message (for SMS, from 160 to 70). This occurs because emojis change the encoding of the text message and subsequent character limit allowed by downstream cell carriers. For this reason, keep an eye on the character and segment counter at the bottom of the Composition Tool to avoid unexpected credit charges.

Note: On Chrome and other Chromium-based browsers (Microsoft Edge), country flag emojis will render as two consecutive small-caps characters. The emoji will render as the desired flag on the recipient phone.

Example in the Composition Tool:



Shown on the Recipient phone:



Links

Ascent360 recommends using long links in your text messages for best delivery statistics. Carriers are especially wary of public link shorteners as they are often used by bad actors to mask the destination of malicious links. For this reason, carriers automatically block traffic with these shortened links.

Common disallowed URL shorteners

- bc.vc
- bit.ly
- budurl.com
- clicky.me
- goo.gl (including Google Drive)
- ls.gd
- lc.chat
- s2r.co
- soo.gd
- tiny.cc
- tinyurl.com

Note: "Premium" or "paid-for" versions of these URL shorteners are also disallowed.

While using full-length links sacrifice valuable character space in the message (more on this below), this is Ascent360's recommendation for best delivery.

If you prefer to use a shortened link, Ascent360 provides this capability in the Composition Tool by clicking on the "link" icon. On the resulting pop-up, paste the long URL you would like to redirect to and configure any tracking parameters that should be appended to the link. Your long link will be inserted into the composition and replaced with a shortened link during the send. You may choose to send a test message to yourself to see how this link appears to a recipient. For the purposes of character counting, Ascent360 is counting the characters for the link that will be used during the send, not the link shown with the bracket syntax (*Array*) in the composition.

Ascent360 tracks clicks on links that are shortened with the Ascent360 link shortener. These click metrics will populate in your SMS reporting. Ascent360 cannot track clicks on long links.

The Carrier messaging landscape may change over time. Messaging channels are not regulated by the FCC; therefore, carrier networks are considered private, meaning they can make their own policies and compliance requirements for their network. For example, AT&T has advised that they won't accept any traffic containing a shortened URL even if it's proprietary. As Ascent360 receives updates from carriers and our messaging partners, we will update our documentation and best practices.

Character Counting

Texting character limits and segments are based on cellular infrastructure.

SMS, or Short Messaging Service, has a one-segment character limit of 160. If the characters exceed 160, the message will be sent in multiple segments to carriers. In order to reassemble the message in the correct order on the recipient phone, the per-segment limit for multiple-segment messages drops to 153 to support the required ordering header.

If emojis are included in the SMS, the character limit drops from 160 to 70 for a one-segment message. Multiple-segment emoji messages have a per-segment limit of 67.

For MMS, the segment character limit is 1,600. We recommend staying below 1,000 characters for plain text or below 500 characters for emoji MMS messages.

Message Type	Segment Character Limit
One segment SMS with plain text (no unicode or emojis)	160
One segment SMS with emojis	70
Multiple segment SMS with plain text (no unicode or emojis)	153
Multiple segment SMS with emojis	67
MMS	1600 (1000 or fewer recommended for plain text; 500 or fewer recommended for emojis)

i Resource to help you understand message segments: <https://twiliodev.github.io/message-segment-calculator/> (external link) **i**

Once you're ready to Send/Schedule your message, click the blue "Send Message" button in the top right corner. You'll then walk through the 'Sending Steps' page to choose your audience and send date/time.
