

WHATSAPP EXPORT PRESERVATION CHECKLIST

Version 2026.07 — free template from ChatToPDF

BEFORE EXPORTING

- ☐ Ask the intended recipient which export format and supporting information they require. Do not assume that a PDF alone is sufficient.
- ☐ Keep the original phone and WhatsApp account available if it is safe and lawful to do so. Do not delete or alter the source conversation.
- ☐ Note the phone model, operating system, WhatsApp version, account phone number, chat name and the device time zone.
- ☐ Record who performed the export, the date/time and the purpose.

CREATE AND PRESERVE THE ORIGINAL

- ☐ Use WhatsApp's own Export Chat function.
- ☐ Record whether "With Media" or "Without Media" was selected.
- ☐ Save the original ZIP/TXT exactly as exported. Do not rename, edit, unzip and re-zip, or convert the only copy.
- ☐ Make a read-only backup of the original in a separate location.
- ☐ Calculate and record a SHA-256 hash of the original file.
- ☐ Start the chain-of-custody log.

CREATE A WORKING COPY

- ☐ Duplicate the original. Perform every conversion, selection, annotation or redaction on the working copy—not the preserved original.
- ☐ Keep timestamps, participant identifiers and surrounding context visible unless the recipient instructs otherwise.
- ☐ Use representative extracts; do not cherry-pick in a way that creates a misleading impression.
- ☐ Log every omission and redaction, including the reason and page/range.
- ☐ Keep the unredacted working copy securely if lawful and appropriate.

ASSEMBLE THE HANDOVER

- ☐ Include the preserved original or explain who retains it.
- ☐ Include the evidence index, chain-of-custody log and redaction log.
- ☐ Give each file a stable exhibit/item ID and descriptive filename.
- ☐ Check dates, time zone, page order, names and phone numbers.
- ☐ Confirm that sensitive third-party data is handled appropriately.
- ☐ Ask the recipient to confirm receipt and record the transfer in the log.

IMPORTANT LIMIT

A hash can help show whether a file later matches the bytes that were hashed. It does not prove who wrote a message, that the export is complete, that every statement is true, or that a court or authority will accept it.

Not legal advice. Requirements vary. Obtain advice for your jurisdiction and case before submitting evidence.