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Generated on 15/11/2026 01:43

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Webhooks from Meta: verifying and receiving

Cloud API & Chatbots

CODE	VERSION	COUNTRY · LANGUAGE
RLX-MZ-KB-1002	v2026.10.10	Mozambique · English

Interweb Mozambique
RLX Holdings, S.A. · Group RLX Holdings
Tax ID (NUIT) 401 191 607 · Legal entity no. (NUEL) 105 045 974 · Economic activity code (CAE) 62022

https://www.meu.interweb.co.mz/knowledgebase/1002

Webhooks from Meta: verifying and receiving

Cloud API & Chatbots Created on **October 10, 2026** 3 min read



To receive messages from the WhatsApp Cloud API, Meta has to know where to send them. You give it an address, Meta **verifies** it once, and from then on calls it whenever a message arrives or the status of one you sent changes. If the check fails, Meta does not save the address. Nearly every problem is there, and nearly all of them come down to the address, the HTTPS or what the server returns.

What Meta asks of your address

Requirement	Why
Public, with valid HTTPS	Meta does not call local addresses or ones with an invalid certificate. See **HTTPS for a container**.
Answer the verification	It is a test request carrying a challenge and your secret word. The server compares the word and returns the challenge, exactly as Meta's documentation describes.
Return success quickly	For real messages, Meta expects a fast success response. If it does not get one, it tries again.
Accept repeats	The same notification can arrive more than once.

Step by step

1. **Build the receiver.** It can be an n8n workflow (see **n8n webhooks**), a file of yours on the server, or an application. It must be reachable over HTTPS.

2. **Choose the verify token.** It is a secret word of yours, and not the API token. Write it into the receiver.

3. **Code the answer to the verification.** When Meta makes the test request, the receiver compares the word and returns the challenge it received. The documentation shows the request and the response.

4. **Enter the address and the word** in the app dashboard, in the WhatsApp section, and ask for verification.

5. **Subscribe to the fields** you need, such as the messages one. Without that, the check passes and nothing ever arrives.

6. **Message the number** and see whether the request reaches the receiver. Save the content: it is the best documentation of the fields.

Check who is writing to you.
The address is public, so anyone can send requests that look like Meta's. Meta signs every notification with your app's secret, and the documentation names the header and how to compute the signature. Validate it and reject whatever does not match.

Why verification fails

Symptom	Likely cause
Meta cannot reach the address	Firewall, closed port, a domain that does not resolve, or an invalid or expired certificate.
The request arrives but is refused	The secret word does not match, or the receiver does not return the challenge exactly as received.
Verification passes and no messages arrive	You did not subscribe to the messages field, or the app is in test mode with the test number.
It works and then stops	The certificate expired, or the receiver got slow and Meta gave up.
Duplicates arrive	That is normal. Keep the message identifier and ignore what you have already handled.

After receiving

1. **Answer the webhook first**, and handle the message afterwards.

2. **Respect the 24-hour window** when you reply. See **templates and the 24-hour window**.

3. **Log what comes in** for a while, to find the odd cases.

If the receiver is on a VPS of yours, the shortest road is a reverse proxy with a certificate. See **Nginx in front of a container**. To test your receiver without Meta, simulate the requests with `curl`, as in **what a webhook is and how to test it**.

RECOMMENDED

Need an HTTPS address for the webhook? Start with the VPS.

See VPS servers →

SEE ALSO

- **Getting started with the Cloud API**
- **Templates and the 24-hour window**
- **What a webhook is and how to test it**

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