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What Evolution API is, and when to use it instead of the official API

Choosing a WhatsApp Option

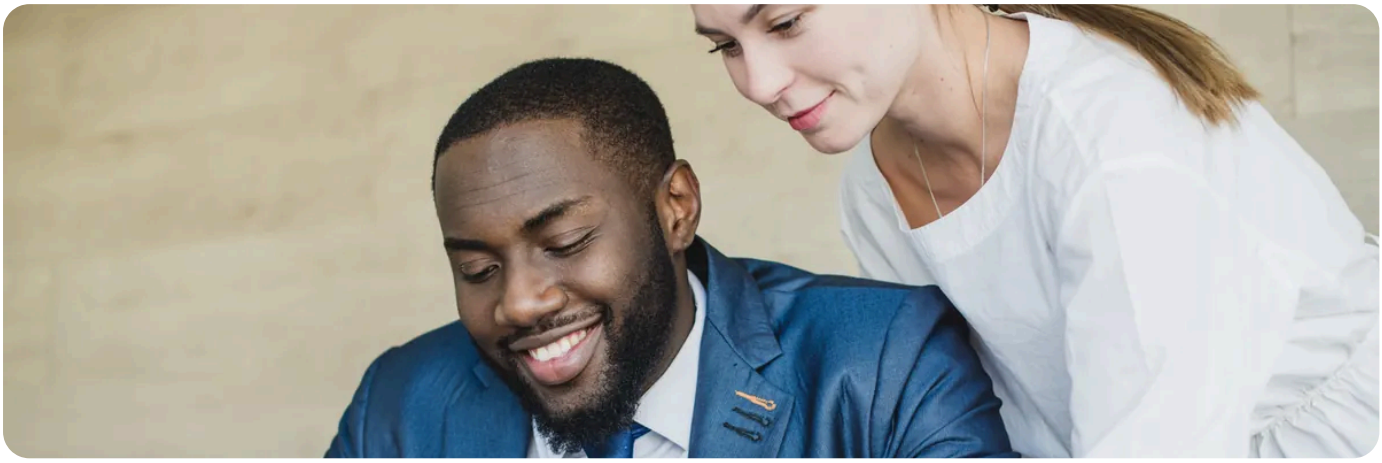
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What Evolution API is, and when to use it instead of the official API

Choosing a WhatsApp Option Created on **October 10, 2026** 3 min read



Evolution API is an open-source program that puts a web interface (a REST API) in front of a WhatsApp number. You install it on a server of your own, and from then on your applications send and receive messages through HTTP requests, without going through the phone. It is not a Interweb product, nor something anyone sells you a licence for: it is a third-party project that runs on a **VPS with root access**.

The next question is nearly always “can I use this instead of Meta’s official API?”. You can, with your eyes open: Evolution API supports **two ways of connecting**, and only one of them is official.

The two integrations

	Baileys (QR code)	Meta’s official Cloud API
How it connects	It imitates WhatsApp Web. You scan a QR code with the phone, the way you would link a computer.	It talks to Meta’s official platform, through an app on your developer account.
Official?	**No.** The library is not Meta’s and Meta does not endorse it.	Yes. It is the route Meta provides for businesses.
Risk	The number can be restricted or banned. There is no guaranteed appeal.	It follows Meta’s rules and limits, which makes it more predictable.
Messages you start	No approved templates: you can send what you like, and the risk is yours.	Outside the 24-hour window, only with templates approved by Meta.
Cost of getting started	No developer account and no template approval.	Needs a developer account, a number and setup. The prices are Meta’s.

When Evolution API makes sense

1. **You want a single entry point.** One simple API that n8n, a website or your own system calls, whichever integration sits underneath.

2. **You want to try before you decide.** Linking a test number by QR is quick, and it shows you what your automation really needs.

3. **You want the official Cloud API with a layer on top.** Evolution API can also talk to it, and keeps your messages in one place.

4. **You have a server and know how to run it.** You need Docker, a database, and the habit of keeping it all up to date. If that does not appeal, the official API costs less technical work.

Baileys is not official.
If the number is your company's, the one customers know, do not link it by QR to an automated service unless you accept that you may lose it. Meta has rules about automation and unsolicited messages, and enforces them. For the wider picture, see **the risks of WhatsApp for business**.

What you need to run it

According to the project's documentation, Evolution API runs on **Docker and Docker Compose**, with a **PostgreSQL or MySQL** database. Many guides add a **Redis**. You need a persistent volume for the instances, or the sessions are lost at the first restart. It is not for shared hosting, which has neither Docker nor root. For the step by step, see **installing Evolution API with Docker Compose**.

Before choosing the server, read **managed or unmanaged VPS**. On an unmanaged VPS, installing and maintaining Evolution API is down to you, and Interweb support does not install or repair third-party software. The line is drawn in the **Support Policy**.

RECOMMENDED

Need a server with root access for Evolution API? Have a look at our VPS plans.

See VPS servers →

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Baileys or the Cloud API: the risk and the rules →

The WhatsApp Cloud API: advantages, disadvantages and who it is for →

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