

Setting up a virtual journal club using WhatsApp

A 'virtual' journal club can enable colleagues to discuss issues of common interest even if they can't get together for a face-to-face journal club meeting

Journal clubs are a great way for colleagues to collaborate to improve patient care and reflect on practice. However, it can be difficult to find a time to get everyone together for a face-to-face meeting.

If you're experiencing this problem why not set up a 'virtual' group via WhatsApp? Not only can a WhatsApp group make it easier for people to participate, but it has a range of knock-on benefits:

- The discussion is available to be read by members who were unable to participate at the scheduled time;
- Members can circulate and store links and files relevant to the group discussion;
- The discussion can continue beyond the scheduled timeslot;
- The discussion can be archived or exported to use it as evidence of participatory CPD.

Once you've identified your journal club members, use this how-to guide to set up your WhatsApp journal club. The screenshots were taken on an Android phone; layouts may vary if you're using an iPhone or computer, but the steps are the same.

What is WhatsApp?

WhatsApp is a free messaging app for smartphones and personal computers. You can use it to share messages, photos, PDFs, videos and audio files over the internet anywhere you have an internet connection. Providing you have a wifi connection when you send a message it will not use your phone's data allowance.

How WhatsApp works

In order to use WhatsApp you need a smartphone, or a tablet with a sim card, an internet connection and a phone number.

The app uses your phone number as the username and your account is locked to the phone.

You can download the app for free from Google's PlayStore or from WhatsApp.com.

People you want to send messages to also need the app on to their phone or computer to connect with you, and you'll need to have their phone number stored in your device.

Creating your WhatsApp journal club

Appointing an administrator

Your WhatsApp group needs an administrator who will manage its membership.

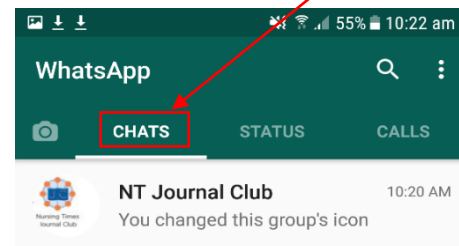
The administrator is the only person who can add or remove members, although other members of the

group can remove themselves if they no longer want to be involved.

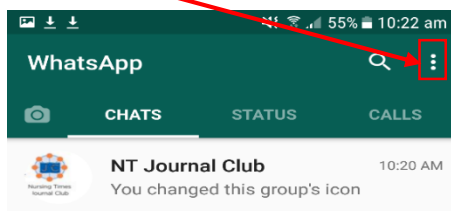
The administrator should have experience of using WhatsApp so they can support other members.

How to set up a group

Open WhatsApp and tap the **Chats** tab

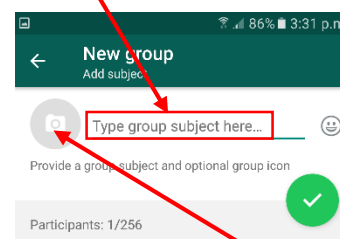


In the top right-hand corner of your screen tap the **Menu** icon then tap **New Groups**



This will take you to list of your contacts. Tap on the names of **all** the people you want to invite to join the group, then tap the green arrow on the bottom right-hand side of the screen.

A new screen will invite you to type in your group's **name** e.g. Ward B12 Journal Club;



If you want to add a **group icon**, click on the empty photo box and select a photo from your phone or an image from the internet – such as the Nursing Times Journal Club logo; this image will show up next to your group in your Chats list. Tap the green tick in the bottom right-hand corner and your group is set up.

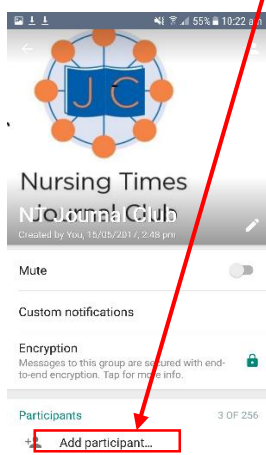
Adding new members

This can only be done by the group administrator:

Go to your journal club group in WhatsApp

Tap on the group name

On the next screen tap **Add a participant** to be taken to your contact list



Click on the contact you would like to join the group and they will be added automatically.

Leaving a WhatsApp group

Any participant can leave a group at any time by tapping the **Exit group** tab at the end of the journal club list of contacts. If they want to rejoin, they will need to ask the group administrator to send them another invitation.

Managing a WhatsApp journal club

Remember that any message sent via WhatsApp will go to all group members.

- **Purpose:** be clear about the purpose of the group and how often discussions will take place.
- **Leader:** appoint someone to lead each discussion – this doesn't have to be the administrator, and can rotate to a different group member each time.
- **Member support:** the person leading the discussion may need to offer support or advice to other group members, for example if a member feels nervous about participating. The discussion leader should also have appropriate skills to deal with difficult conversations, such as if a member posts an inappropriate comment.
- **Invitations:** before adding people to your group you should invite them, either face to face or by email, explaining the purpose of the group, why you are inviting them, how they can participate and how they will benefit. This gives them an opportunity to discuss any concerns they may have, for example about using a social media app for a work-related activity. When setting up the group, only add people who have agreed to join.
- **Guidelines:** develop guidelines for the group and post these in your first chat. These might include routine information such as how often the group holds discussions and how discussion leaders are selected; you may also want to

include reminders about patient confidentiality, links to Nursing and Midwifery Council guidance on using social media and the NMC Code, and rules of group etiquette. You can remind the group of the guidance when new members join.

- **Discussion times:** it may be helpful to choose a convenient timeslot to start discussions (30 minutes should be enough if members read the selected article beforehand), then allow participants to add further comments for a specified period after this. This means they can still participate if they aren't available for the initial discussion; they can also add information, links, documents or reflections after the discussion. To avoid multiple discussions happening simultaneously it is a good idea to formally end discussions about one article before starting the next.
- **Leavers:** if a member leaves the group it may be useful to find out why, for example, if the group is not meeting their needs or is taking up too much of their time.
- **Etiquette:** if a member posts an inappropriate comment that breaches group etiquette, contact the member directly from your contact lists to request the comment is deleted. If there are concerns about a member's behaviour the administrator can remove them from the group.

Levels of participation

The following considerations will help to ensure people enjoy participating in your journal club:

- Remember that messages arrive on members' phones, so post at appropriate times of the day
- Think about how often you post messages – especially outside the agreed discussion timeslot
- While members should be encouraged to take part in discussions avoid putting pressure on individuals. Some may prefer to follow discussions without commenting, particularly if they are new to the group. This is OK!
- If you are leading the group be careful not to dominate the discussion yourself, and ensure no other members do so either – give everyone the opportunity to express their ideas and opinions
- Constant message alerts can be irritating to others – particularly if they are happening every few seconds so members should consider turning them off during scheduled discussion timeslots
- Members should avoid using the group chat for one-to-one discussions or to discuss unrelated issues – if this happens remind them to contact each other directly.