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Code length, validity and attempts: choosing length, expires_in and max_attempts

WhatsApp & APIs

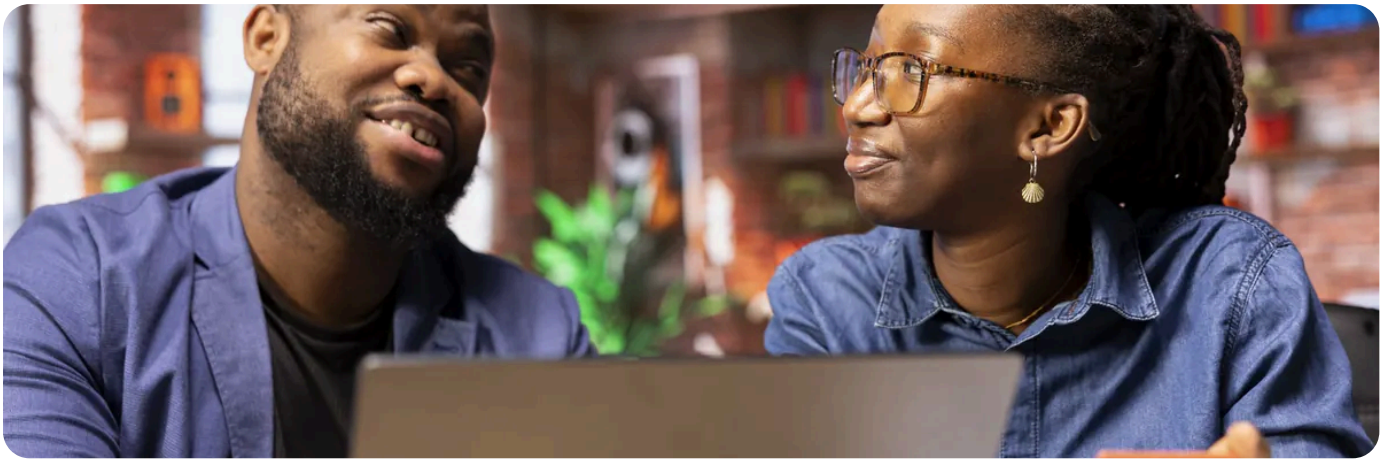
CODE	VERSION	COUNTRY · LANGUAGE
RLX-AO-KB-2640	v2026.11.13	Angola · English

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https://www.meu.interweb.ao/knowledgebase/2640

Code length, validity and attempts: choosing length, expires_in and max_attempts

WhatsApp & APIs Created on **November 13, 2026** 2 min read



The short answer: three fields decide how each code behaves: `length` (4 to 8 digits, 6 by default), `expires_in` (1 to 60 minutes, 5 by default) and `max_attempts` (1 to 10 wrong attempts, 5 by default). Send none of them and the defaults apply, which suit most cases. Change them when the use calls for it.

The three fields

Field	What it controls	Values	Default
`length`	How many digits the code has	4 to 8	6
`expires_in`	The minutes the code stays valid	1 to 60	5
`max_attempts`	Wrong attempts before the code fails	1 to 10	5

Length: the guesser's arithmetic

With 6 digits there are a million possible codes. With 5 attempts, someone typing numbers at random gets it right, on average, 5 times in every million codes. With 4 digits there are only ten thousand codes, and the same 5 attempts give 5 in every ten thousand: a hundred times easier. That is why 6 is the default: easy to type, hard to guess. Use 8 when the transaction is worth a lot; use 4 only when the risk is low and speed matters most.

Validity and attempts for each case

Case	length	expires_in	max_attempts
Confirming the number at sign-up	6	5 to 10	3 to 5
Second login step	6	5	3 to 5
Payment or transfer	6 to 8	5	3

Case	length	expires_in	max_attempts
Doorstep delivery	6	up to 60, close to arrival	3 to 5

These suggestions follow the good practice on the Verification SMS page: 6 digits, 5 to 10 minutes validity and 3 to 5 attempts. Validity of hours or days does not exist in this API, and that is a good thing: a code is for now, not for tomorrow.

Attempts do not come back with a resend.
`POST /v1/sms/otp/{id}/resend` sends a new code and the validity starts again, but wrong attempts already used stay used. With `max_attempts` at 3 and two failed, the resent code has a single attempt. To start from scratch, request a new code with `POST /v1/sms/otp`.

Put the validity in the text
with `{minutes}`, which we replace with the `expires_in` value: the customer knows to be quick. See **how to write the verification SMS**.

RECOMMENDED

Want to choose the length, validity and attempts of each code? See Verification SMS.

See Verification SMS →

SEE ALSO

- **SMS verification API: we generate, send and check the code, and your system keeps only the id** →
- **Verification code statuses: pending, verified, expired, failed and cancelled** →
- **Resending, cancelling and replacing a verification code: what happens to the old one** →
- **Writing the verification SMS: the code placeholder, your Sender ID and staying in one part** →
- **Limits against abuse: codes per number per hour and the wait between resends** →
- **Sending one-time codes (OTP) by SMS safely: expiry, attempt limits and logs** →

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