



# What is SMS Grouper?

## (and How is SMS Grouper Different than Hustle?)

March 11, 2019

### What is SMS Grouper?

SMS Grouper is an inexpensive, customizable, and powerful texting platform for political organizing. SMS Grouper is designed to help you do two things:

- 1) Efficiently **build a “textable” database** of contacts, and
- 2) Quickly and easily **text contacts** (all at once, or in groups or subsets).

### What tools does SMS Grouper have for building a contact list?

SMS Grouper is **designed to help you build a contact list**. Hustle and other peer-to-peer texting platforms like Relay (now called ThruText), in contrast, are primarily designed to help you send texts to numbers that you already have or that someone else provides.

At sign-up, you will receive a **permanent 10-digit text number**. Here’s what you can do with this number and your SMS Grouper account:

- 1) **Include your text number on business cards or flyers**. Anyone sending a text to this number will be added to your contact list.
- 2) Quickly **create a link to post on Facebook, Instagram (and other social media)**. When people click on this link, they will be invited to join your contact list.
- 3) **Send a link via email**. When someone clicks on the link, they will be invited to join your contact list.
- 4) Set up **key words** and have people (for example, at an event or in a group setting) text these key words to your 10-digit number. Contacts will be automatically tagged with these key words in your database.
- 5) Set up a **customized series of “intake” questions** to collect information from new contacts. As individuals respond to these texts, this information is saved to your database.
- 6) Collect information in person with the **Canvas Tool**. This form allows anyone, with only 2 or 3 minutes of training, to use their personal phone or other mobile device to add contacts to your database.



- 7) Jump-start your list by **uploading personal contacts from address books** on phones and other mobile devices using our custom import app. You can also have other individuals upload contacts from their address books. You can review (and then accept or reject) all submissions.
- 8) You can quickly and easily **upload existing lists of contacts**, either in Excel spreadsheets (xls,xlsx, or csv) or vCard files.
- 9) You can use your custom **QR code** to direct potential contacts to your registration link.
- 10) **You can associate autoreply texts that include links to images, PDFs and other media files with key words.** For example, you could tell potential contacts to text the word “events” to your permanent 10-digit number. In response to texts, SMS Grouper could be configured so that it would automatically reply with a text that includes a link to a list of upcoming events.

### How is SMS Grouper different than Hustle?

SMS Grouper is different than Hustle (and similar companies, like ThruText) in two important ways.

- 1) First, SMS Grouper is designed to help you build a “textable” list of contacts. Hustle assumes that you already have a list of cell numbers. Although you could use SMS Grouper to build your contact list and then use Hustle to send texts to these contacts (see the paragraph below that addresses this question), there are advantages to using SMS Grouper to do both.
- 2) Second, when SMS Grouper is used to send texts, these texts are sent directly from our server using your permanent text number. Message identification and control is key to building and maintaining your brand. In contrast, Hustle (and ThruText) messages are sent from volunteer mobile devices, using volunteers’ data plan, with volunteers’ phone numbers attached.

Note: Although volunteers may have “unlimited” texting as part of their cell plans, there is no such thing as free texting for political candidates, organizations, businesses, or other commercial entities. This is one reason that cell phones haven’t been overtaken by spam in the same way that email accounts have.

### If Hustle is “free” (after paying an initial per-contact fee), but there is a per-text charge for using SMS Grouper, why not just use Hustle?

Here are some reasons to use SMS Grouper:



- 1) With SMS Grouper, you get a permanent 10-digit number, and because texts are always sent from this number (instead of being forwarded by different volunteers), contacts can add this number to their contact lists (and texts will be recognized as coming from you, instead of appearing to come from random unknown numbers).
- 2) Sending a text with SMS Grouper is as simple as writing a text and hitting “send,” regardless of the number of cell numbers involved (e.g. 100 or 10,000). There is no need to coordinate volunteers to forward texts.
- 3) Because Hustle exploits what is viewed by some in the industry as a “volunteer” loophole to send large numbers of texts using personal cell plans--plans that weren’t designed for this kind of mass texting—texts sent using Hustle are sometimes perceived as “spam.” Direct texting to contacts who can opt out at any time by replying with the word “stop” (a standard industry practice) is viewed by some as more professional.

### Using concrete numbers, what is the cost difference between Hustle and SMS Grouper? Can you give me an example?

This is harder to answer than it might seem, because of the different variables involved. Here is a plausible comparison, however, with our cost assumptions made explicit.

*Susan, a political candidate, has a list of 2,000 “textable” contacts. She wants to send an average of 500 texts per week to different groups and subsets of these 2000 contacts over a three month period (a total of 13 weeks).*

Let’s assume that Hustle charges \$.07 per contact when the contacts are uploaded. Let’s also assume that once these contacts are loaded, they can be sent unlimited texts. Under these conditions, Susan’s total cost for Hustle would be \$140.

Let’s assume this same candidate is signed up for SMS Grouper at \$19/month. The first 500 texts each month are included in the monthly subscription, but every text after 500 is billed at \$.02 per text. At an average of 500 texts per week for 13 weeks, Susan would send 13,000 texts. 1,500 of these texts would be free (500 per month over three months). Susan would pay \$.02 per text for the remaining 11,500 texts, or \$230. Susan would also pay \$57 in subscriptions fee, for a total of \$287.

*Although Susan would pay more for SMS Grouper (\$287 vs. \$140), Susan would have access to all of SMS Grouper’s tools for growing her list during this time period (a permanent text number for print materials, a link for email and social media, key words, customized intake questions, SMS Grouper’s Canvas Tool, easy uploading of address book contacts, a QR code, autoreply texts with embedded links, etc.).*



## SMS Grouper makes it easy to export contact lists. Why can't I use SMS Grouper to build their contact lists, export these lists, and then use Hustle to send mass texts?

You can. Using both SMS Grouper and Hustle (in combination) would give you access to all of SMS Grouper's features for building contact lists: a permanent text number for print materials, a link for email and social media, key words, customized intake questions, SMS Grouper's Canvas Tool, easy uploading of address book contacts, a QR code, autoreply texts with embedded links, and more. When you want to send texts, you can export your contact list, upload it to Hustle or another peer-to-peer texting platform, and then use volunteers to forward texts.

## Are there other texting companies that do what SMS Grouper does?

SMS Grouper was built for Democratic and/or progressive political candidates and activists with modest budgets (for example, candidates for school board, city council, different county offices, state legislature candidates, etc.). We aren't aware of any other companies that specifically target this market. Remind (formerly, Remind 101) is a similar program in certain respects for the K-12 education market. There are other texting companies that sell their services to larger institutions (e.g. universities), and there are companies that use 5-digit text number (or short-codes). These kinds of services often start as several hundred dollars per month, however, often beyond the fiscal means of most users. There are a few other texting companies currently targeting the small business market.

## I would like to know more, do you have a website?

Yes: <https://smsgrouper.com>. Here's a link to a flyer: <https://smsgrouper.com/d/128>. Contact us directly for more information.

## I have more questions, who can I contact?

Call (or text) Cassie Boyd at [Cassie, can you set up a Google Voice number?]. You can also email Cassie at [cassie@smsgrouper.com](mailto:cassie@smsgrouper.com).