

Make Text Messages More Convenient: Receive, Read and Reply on Your PC!

This article shows you how to:

- ✓ Set up and use the Your Phone app in Windows 10
- ✓ Read and reply to text messages on your PC
- ✓ View the latest photos you’ve taken on your phone

When you’re working at your PC, perhaps you miss text messages because your phone is in a different room, or you forget to reply because you’re wrapped up in what you’re doing. Wouldn’t it be handy if text messages popped up on your PC’s screen when they arrived – and if you could use your familiar keyboard to reply to them?

Well, with the Your Phone app in Windows 10, you can! Just follow the straightforward steps in this article to set it up.



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In this article, I'm going to assume you're using an Android phone. (In case you're unsure, that's pretty much any modern smartphone that isn't made by Apple.) However, if you are using an Apple iPhone, you can follow the same steps and try your luck, but note that features such as text messages and notifications may not work. The Your Phone app we'll be using is continually evolving, and its support for Apple phones is improving, but it does tend to favour Android users.

Task 1: Set Up the Your Phone App on Your PC

Cortana links phone and PC for reminders

Microsoft has been working for some time on bringing smartphones and Windows 10 closer together. For instance, there's a Cortana app available for Android and iPhone which allows you to receive reminders when you're out and about, even if you set up those reminders using Cortana on your PC (and likewise set up reminders on your phone and see them when sat at your PC).

Until recently, though, true interaction between phone and PC was almost zero, at least in the most important areas. If your phone goes bingley-bong, you still have to pick it up and unlock it to see what it's trying to tell you.

The Your Phone app takes this further

But with the arrival of the Your Phone app in the Windows 10 October 2018 Update (version 1809), your PC is starting to become a kind of 'master screen' for your phone – a more convenient way to deal with your phone when you're at home.

Text messages, photos and notifications

It just takes a little setting up, first on your PC and then on your phone. After doing that, any text messages you then receive will pop up on your PC just like Windows 10's usual

notifications, complete with a 'Reply' box for typing and sending replies. You'll also be able to send new texts straight from your PC just by choosing one of your phone's contacts and typing. You should also receive other notifications from your phone, letting you see straight away whether they need immediate attention, and be able to view the most recent photos you've taken.

If you think you'd find this useful, just follow the steps below to get on with the first job – setting up the Your Phone app on your PC:

Set up the Your Phone app

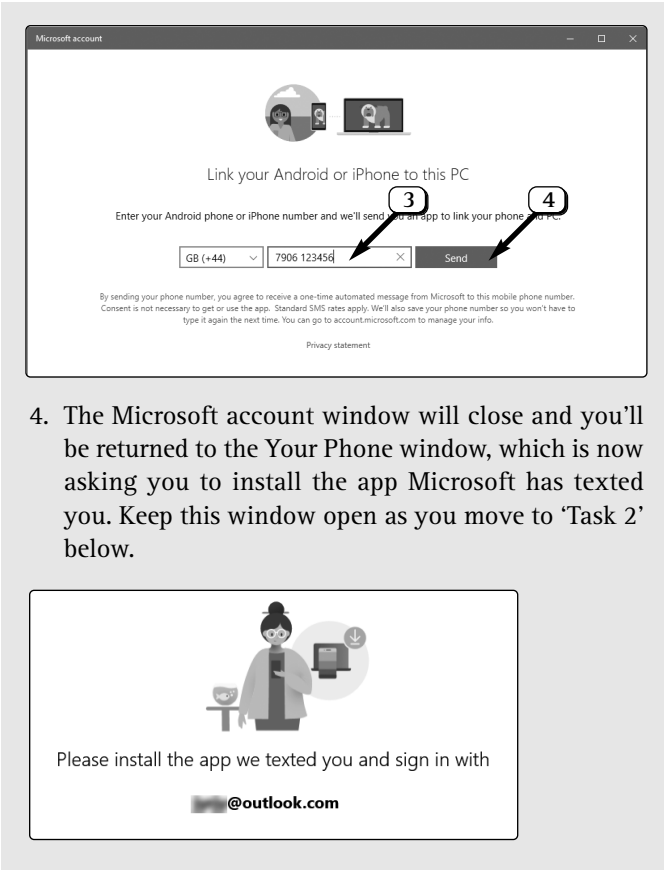


1. Open the Start menu, scroll to the bottom of the app list at the left (to reach the 'Y' section) and click on **Your Phone** to start it.
2. Click on **Android** (1) (or, of course **iPhone** if that's what you're using) and then click **Continue** (2).



3. Now a 'Microsoft account' window (pictured on the next page) will open to prompt for your mobile phone number. Click in the phone number box (3) and type your number without the leading '0', then click the **Send** button (4).

Enter your mobile phone number



Ready to set up
your phone

Task 2: Install the Your Phone Companion App on Your Phone

Microsoft has
sent you a text

No sooner have you finished the task above than you should hear your phone jingling to tell you a text message has arrived. Now you're ready to follow the second half of the job – installing the required app on your phone. Here's what to do:

1. Grab your phone and open the text message you've just received from Microsoft.
2. Tap the link in that message and it should open your phone's app store and take you to a page containing the Microsoft app you need – an app named Your Phone Companion.



If you have trouble getting the link in that text message to work, don't struggle with it. Instead, just open your phone's store app (the 'Play Store' app in the case of Android phones) and search for the Microsoft app named 'Your Phone Companion'.



3. Tap the **Install** button to install the app.
4. When the installation is complete, tap the **Open** button to launch the Your Phone Companion app.
5. First, the app will prompt you to sign into your Microsoft account. As noted at the end of Task 1, this must be the same Microsoft account you use on your PC. Tap the **Sign in with Microsoft** button and sign in using the email address still shown in the Your Phone window on your PC and the corresponding password.

Install and open the app

Sign in with the same Microsoft account

If you use other Microsoft apps on your phone, you might see that you're signed into the Your Phone Companion app already. If so, make sure it really is the same account (you probably only have one anyway). If it isn't, tap on **Sign in with a different account**; otherwise tap on **Continue**.



Confirm the permission requests

6. Now the app will ask you to confirm a number of permissions it needs. Begin by tapping on **Continue** and then work through the four permission pop-ups that appear, tapping **Allow** for each.
7. This brings you to a 'Let's stay connected' screen. Click **Continue** and then click **Allow** one more time when prompted about optimising battery usage.
8. Next you'll see a prompt to set up the Your Phone app on your PC. You've already done that, of course, so tap **My PC is ready**.
9. Finally, tap **Allow** to make the connection between your phone and your PC, and then tap **Done**.

Finished!

Task 3: Tweak a Few Settings to Get Things Working

If you followed my tip to keep the Your Phone window open on your PC's screen, you'll have noticed that it's stopped prompting you to install the app and it now shows a 'See texts' button. Before we explore further, let's tweak a couple of settings to help get the best from these new apps.

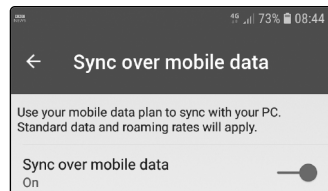
Are you using mobile data on your phone?

Not using Wi-Fi?

Quite likely you keep your phone connected to your home's Wi-Fi when it's within reach. If you don't, however – you keep it using its mobile data connection – things won't work as intended without a tweak.

Allow Your Phone Companion to use mobile data

On your phone, the Your Phone Companion app you -'ve just installed needs to be told to work via the mobile data connection. Tap the cog icon in the top-right

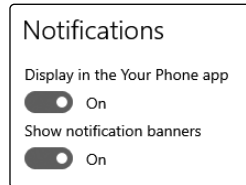


corner of the app to open the Settings page, then tap **Sync over mobile data** and tap the On/Off switch to turn it on.

Ensure you see phone notifications on your PC

Besides notifications about text messages, it's useful to see your phone's other notifications on your computer. Assuming you'd like to do that, it takes a couple more tweaks.

Starting on your PC, at the bottom-left of the Your Phone window, click the cog icon to open its Settings page. Scroll down to the 'Notifications' section and switch on the two options in that section.



Confirm
you want to
see other
notifications

Next, at the left of the window, click the **Notifications** icon (the bell-shaped icon) and then click **Open settings for me**.

Switch back to your phone and you'll see that the 'Notification Access' page is open. Find 'Your Phone Companion' in this list and tap the switch beside it to turn it on, then tap **Allow**. Almost instantly, on your PC you'll see that the Your Phone app now says that future notifications will appear here. (More helpfully, because we switched on **Show notification banners** above, they'll also appear at the bottom-right of your screen for a few seconds, and then move to the Action Centre panel, just like notifications that come directly from your PC.)

Allow
notification
access on
your phone

Send, Receive and Reply to Text Messages in Windows 10

That's got everything set up. From now on, you don't need to use the Your Phone Companion app you installed on your phone: that runs automatically in the background to maintain the connection between your phone and PC, but you can ignore it.

You no longer
need to use the
phone app

Switch to the **Messages** section

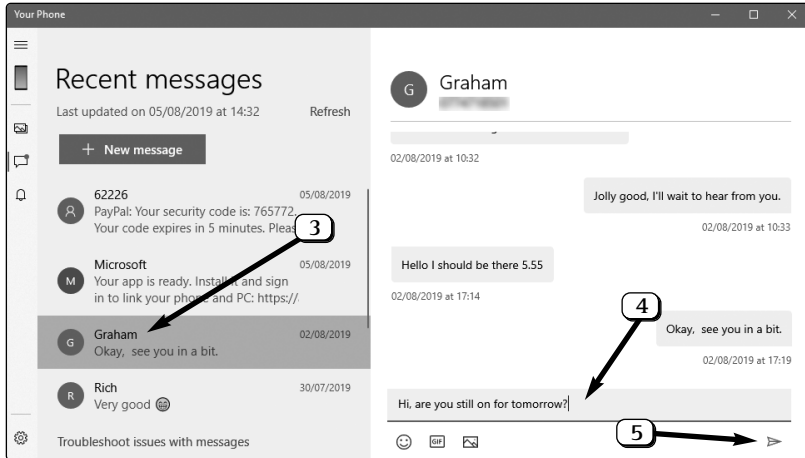
Now let's turn our attention back to the Your Phone app on your PC. At the left of the window, click the **Messages** (speech-bubble) icon **(1)** and then the **See texts** button in the centre of the window. Within a few seconds, you should see a list of your most recent text message conversations at the left of the window. If nothing happens, click on **Refresh** **(2)**.



If there's a catch to the Your Phone app, it's that it doesn't show a full history of your text message conversations: it just lists the handful of contacts you've texted most recently and, of those, just the latest messages. Despite that, as I'll explain in a moment, you can still use it to text anyone in your phone's contacts list, even if you can't currently see their name in the list.

Send a message to a contact in this list

Now let's look at one of the ways you can send messages from your PC. Start by clicking someone's name in the list at the left **(3)**. On the right, you'll see the last few messages you've exchanged with that person, along with their date and time. Now click in the **Send a message** box at the bottom and type your message **(4)** to the contact you selected.



When you're ready to send it, click the blue **Send arrow** (5). Although you won't be aware this is happening, the message is transferred to your phone to be sent (and your message will appear in your phone's messaging app as if you'd used your phone to compose it).

Click the Send arrow

What if the person you want to contact doesn't appear in that short list of most-recent contacts? No problem: instead, click on **New message** (6).

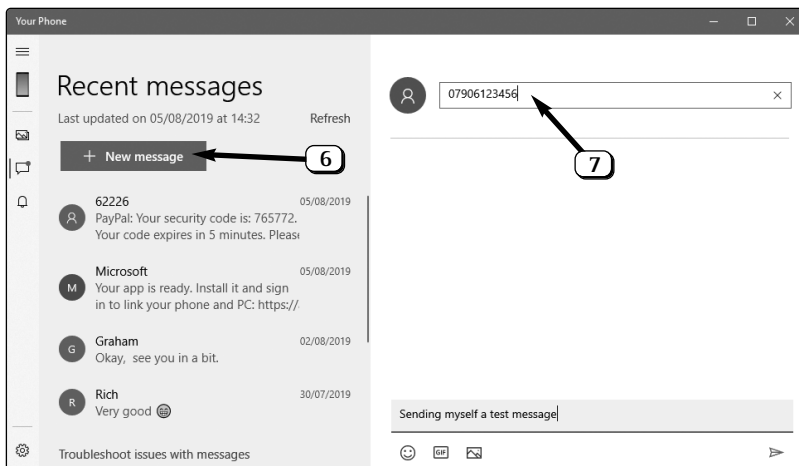
Compose a new message

This gives you a largely-blank page at the right, and it's straightforward to use. Click in the **To box** (7) at the top and do either of the following:

- Start typing the name of one of the contacts you have in your phone's contacts list. A drop-down list will appear showing all your contacts, and you can either keep typing until the correct contact appears, or scroll down the list to find and click the correct contact.
- Type a phone number. You might do this for a new contact, or you might like to type your own number here now to send yourself a 'test' message.

Pick one of your contacts...


...or enter a phone number



Type your
message



Now just click in the **Send a message** box at the bottom, type your message and click the blue **Send** arrow to send it.

If you want to include an emoji in your text, the smiley-face icon below the message box lets you do it: either click that icon or press  +. (full stop). In the emoji panel that appears, you can browse through the little pictures using the seven sections at the bottom. Alternatively, type a word to search for a matching emoji and when you click one to insert it into the message, it will replace the word you typed.

The **GIF** button lets you attach an animated picture to your message: type a word into the search box at the top of the panel to find a suitable GIF then click it to attach it.

The **Attach Image** button allows you to attach one of the 25 most-recent photos you've taken with your phone, or you can click **Browse this PC** to select a picture from your computer.

Receiving text messages on your PC

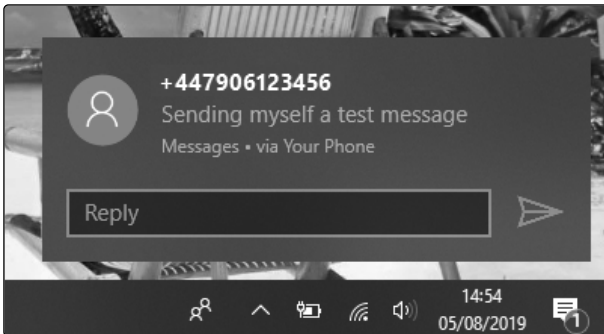
You don't have to keep the Your Phone app open on your PC: the system is managed by Windows 10 itself, so unless you actually need to use the app itself, feel free to close it.


You can close the Your Phone app

That means you'll receive text messages on your PC whether or not the Your Phone app is open, just as you'd hope. If you'd like to put this to the test, you could send yourself a test message now (as I suggested at the bottom of page 9), or ask someone to text you back, or use your phone to send yourself a text message.

There's a short delay between the message arriving at your phone and being passed to your PC, but it's just a matter of a few seconds. You'll see a familiar notification box at the bottom-right of your screen showing the name (or number) of the message's sender and its text.

Messages appear in a notification box



If you want to send a reply, just click in the Reply box, type your message and click the arrow to the right to send it. Although there's no emoji button, you can still include an emoji in the normal way by pressing  +. to display the emoji panel. (If you want to include a GIF or attach a photo, you can open the Your Phone app and reply to the message from there instead.)

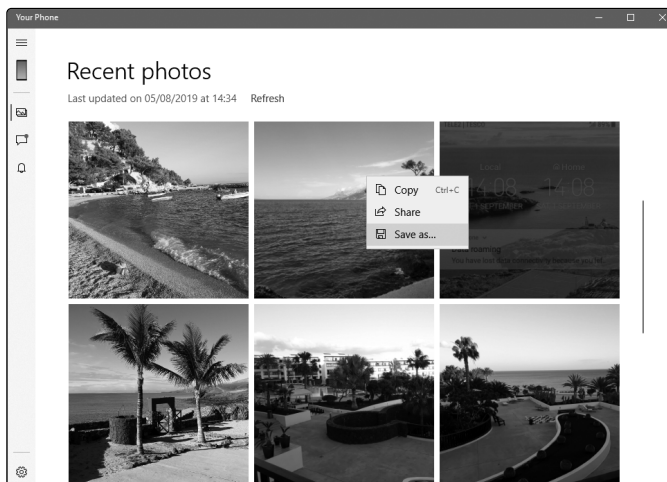
You can use this box to send a reply

See Your Phone's Latest Photos on Your PC

Your 25 most recent photos

Besides text messages, the Your Phone app has one extra trick up its sleeve: it can display the latest photos you've taken with your phone. For some reason it limits this to just the latest 25 pictures, but it's still a useful feature.

To see them, click the **Photos** icon at the far-left of the app. Within a few seconds, you should see your photos appear. (If you don't, click **Refresh** at the top of the page.) Initially, their quality looks atrocious, but give the app a little longer and they'll look as they should.



Copy, share or save one of your photos

You can click a photo to see it at full size in your PC's default photo-viewing app. Usefully, too, you can right-click a photo for more options. Choose **Copy** to copy a photo (at full size) to the clipboard to paste elsewhere, **Share** to use another app on your PC to open the photo or send it to someone, or **Save as** to save a copy of the full-size photo to a folder on your PC.