

How to use RelaySMS

TO POST ONLINE WITHOUT AN
ACTIVE INTERNET CONNECTION

No internet? No problem.

With RelaySMS, you can communicate on your favorite online platform - even during an internet shutdown.



RelaySMS is a project of SMSWithoutBorders being developed by Afkanerd, an African-based team of human rights technologists dedicated to researching, developing, and promoting secure and accessible communication tools that function without an internet connection.

By using RelaySMS, individuals help build local community resilience and discourage the use of internet shutdown as an effective means of suppression.

smswithoutborders.com

Turn offline into online with RelaySMS.

In this short guide, you'll familiarize yourself with the basics of RelaySMS and learn how to use the app to stay connected on your favorite online platforms—even during an internet shutdown.



What is RelaySMS?

RelaySMS is a free, open-source, secure messaging app that allows users to continue to communicate on their favorite online platforms—like Gmail or Twitter—even in the absence of an active internet connection.

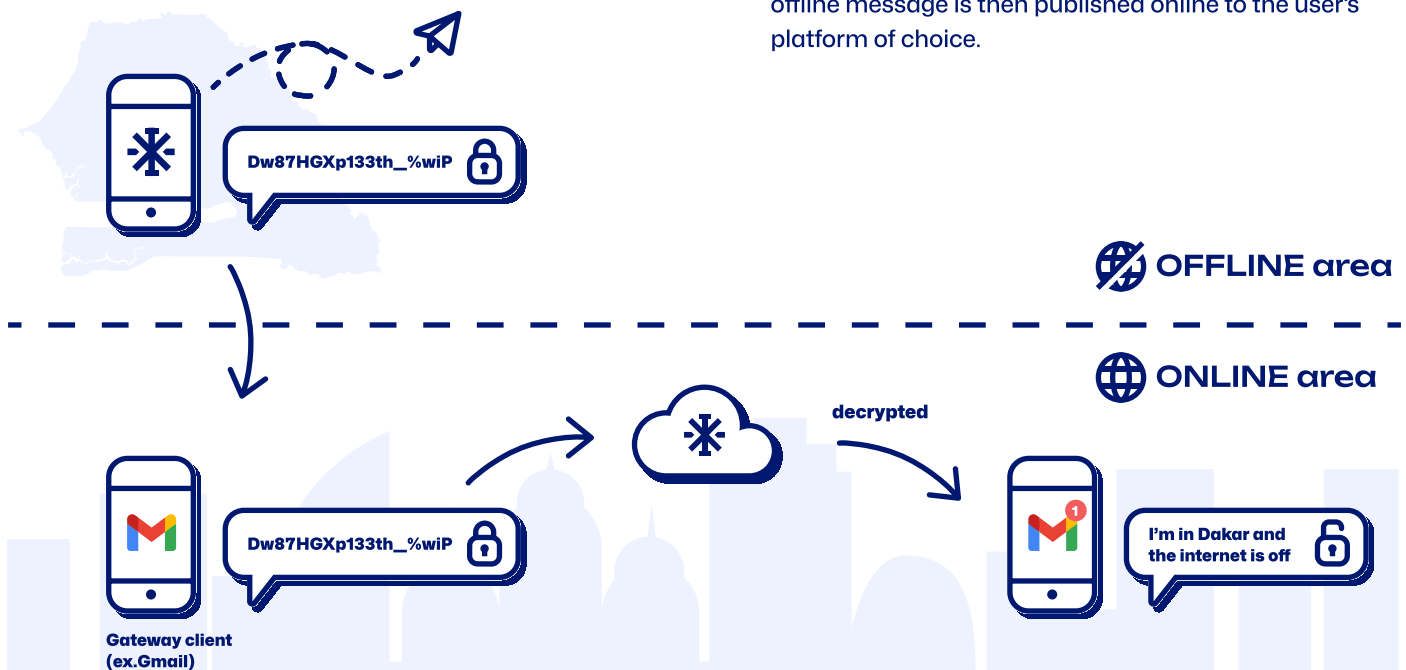
Who should use RelaySMS?

Anyone experiencing poor internet connectivity or living in a region prone to internet shutdowns should use RelaySMS to circumvent shutdowns and stay connected. The majority of RelaySMS users currently live in Africa and India—but the app is available for use all around the world. Users can download the app for Android in Google Play or iOS in the App Store.

How does RelaySMS work?

Designed by an expert team of technologists who had grown tired of internet shutdowns disrupting their ability to communicate, RelaySMS utilizes SMS messaging (aka “text messaging”) to route offline messages back online. After setting up RelaySMS on your phone, you can seamlessly connect and send messages on your preferred online messaging platforms without using any data at all (standard SMS rates will apply).

The key to RelaySMS lies in its use of Gateway Clients. These devices operate in areas with an active internet connection, allowing them to receive an SMS message from an offline RelaySMS user and then forward it to an online server where the user has already saved their platform permissions. Access granted, the initially offline message is then published online to the user's platform of choice.



Gateway Clients: Your Communication Satellites

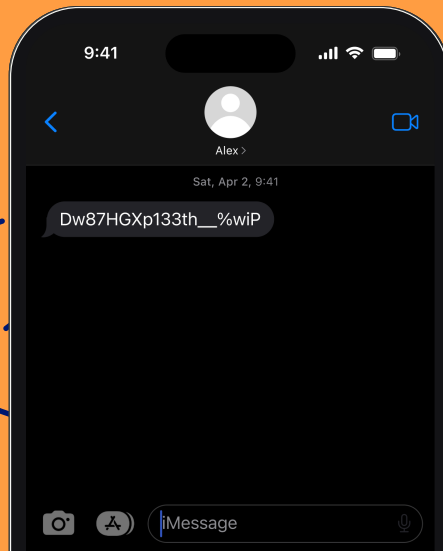
You can think of Gateway Clients as *satellites*—or *relay points*—that take your offline text messages and route them to the online platform of your choice.

Is RelaySMS secure?

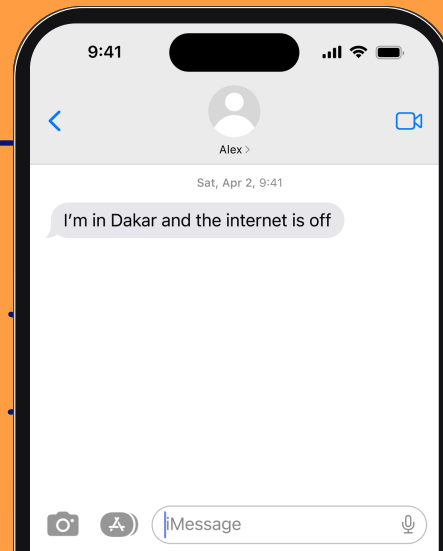
Yes! User security is paramount to the RelaySMS team. Messages sent via the app are always encrypted and all tokens saved for online platform access are protected through the use of Signal's Double Ratchet Algorithm which ensures continuous, end-to-end confidentiality.



Encrypted Message (Sent)



Decrypted Message (Published)



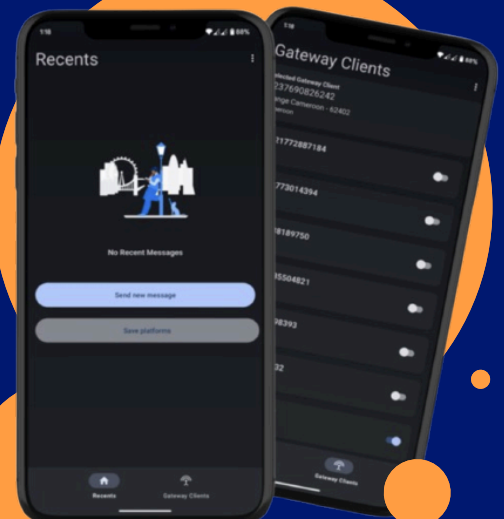
A note on RelaySMS encryption:

SMS messages are traditionally less secure than other forms of messaging because the information they communicate is sent in plaintext—meaning text messages can be read by mobile service providers or intercepted by malicious third parties exploiting network vulnerabilities.

RelaySMS neutralizes this risk by sending your messages in encrypted form. From the app to your text message to your designated Gateway Client, what you write is completely secure because it is completely scrambled. So while the message you send to the Gateway Client will look illegible (sample text: "Dw87HGxp133th_%wiP"), it will also be completely safe and only decrypted once it reaches the RelaySMS server for publication online (sample tweet: "I'm in Dakar and the internet is off").

Take these simple steps ahead of time to ensure you stay connected when it matters most.

Operating RelaySMS is easy—but you should make sure you understand how to use it before you need to use it during an internet shutdown. Review the following information to know what to do with the app before, during, and after you lose internet connection.



What to do **BEFORE** an internet shutdown.

The steps below require internet access. For further help or answers to additional questions, review the [Android tutorial](#) or [iOS tutorial](#) online at docs.smswithoutborders.com.



1. **Download** the RelaySMS app for Android or iOS on Google Play or the App Store.



2. **Register** and verify your RelaySMS account via phone number or other RelaySMS-approved registration.



3. **Configure** your account preferences by saving access to your favorite online platforms like Gmail, Twitter, or Telegram.



4. **Designate** your default Gateway Client(s) and add them to your contacts (optional).



5. **Compose** and send a sample message—keeping in mind that the encrypted text you send will be scrambled to ensure it remains secure throughout the relay process.



6. **Confirm** the publication of your sample message by logging onto the platform you sent it from and seeing what the text looks like once decrypted and published online.

A note on selecting the best Gateway Client:

Because RelaySMS relies on sending SMS messages to Gateway Clients (and standard SMS rates will apply), it's important to select the right Gateway Client to ensure the cheapest and most-reliable messaging service. Always try to select a Gateway Client that is in your same country and on the same service provider. International rates may apply if you select a Gateway Client outside your country (something that may be necessary to do if an internet shutdown affects your entire nation).

What to do **DURING** an internet shutdown.

Once you've set up RelaySMS on your phone you can send an email or publish a tweet in the absence of an active internet connection. During a shutdown, simply open the RelaySMS app, compose a message on one of your saved platforms, and send it out via the Gateway Client of your choice. If you believe the internet may be out across your entire country (such as during a tense election or period of unrest), you may want to select an international Gateway Client to ensure your message gets published online.

A note on receiving messages:

RelaySMS's messaging service is currently a one-way street—meaning you can send out messages, but not yet receive them. Fortunately, the developer team is hard at work building a RelaySMS solution that allows for two-way traffic. Be sure to check relay.smswithoutborders.com to stay up-to-date on all the latest developments.

What to do **AFTER** an internet shutdown.

When the internet comes back on, you may want to log onto your online platforms to confirm the publication of your offline messages and see if anyone has responded to you. In the future, RelaySMS will include confirmation-receipts for sent messages and the ability to receive incoming messages, but for now these additional steps are necessary to continue your critical conversations.