

Signal now lets you keep your phone number private with the launch of usernames

Description

Signal is launching usernames, the company [announced](#) today. Up until now, you have had to give someone your phone number to chat with them on Signal. Now, you can create a unique username that you can use instead. Usernames are currently launching in beta, and will be rolling out to all users in the coming weeks. Signal still requires a phone number when registering for the app.

As end-to-end encrypted messaging apps go, Signal stands apart as one with the strongest security and privacy features. By allowing users to now keep their phone numbers private, Signal is closing one of the few loopholes that could allow access to a victim's messages — where hackers hijack the phone number at the phone carrier level used to register with Signal.

Usernames in Signal do not function like usernames on social media platforms, the company says. For example, Signal usernames are not logins or handles that you'll be known by in the app. Instead, they're just a quick way to connect with someone on the app without sharing your phone number.

If you create a username, your profile name will still display whatever you set it to, and won't show your username. People you message on the app also can't see or find your username unless you have shared it with them. If someone wants to talk to you on the app, they will need to know your exact username because Signal doesn't provide a searchable directory of usernames like X and Instagram do. Or, you have the option to generate a QR code or link that directs people to your username.

Once you create a username, your phone number will no longer be visible in Signal to anyone running the latest version of the app if they don't already have it saved in their contacts. When you message people either directly or in group chats, your phone number won't show up, as users will only see your profile name and image. However, if you still want people to see your phone number when you message them, you can change the default setting in your "Phone Number" settings.

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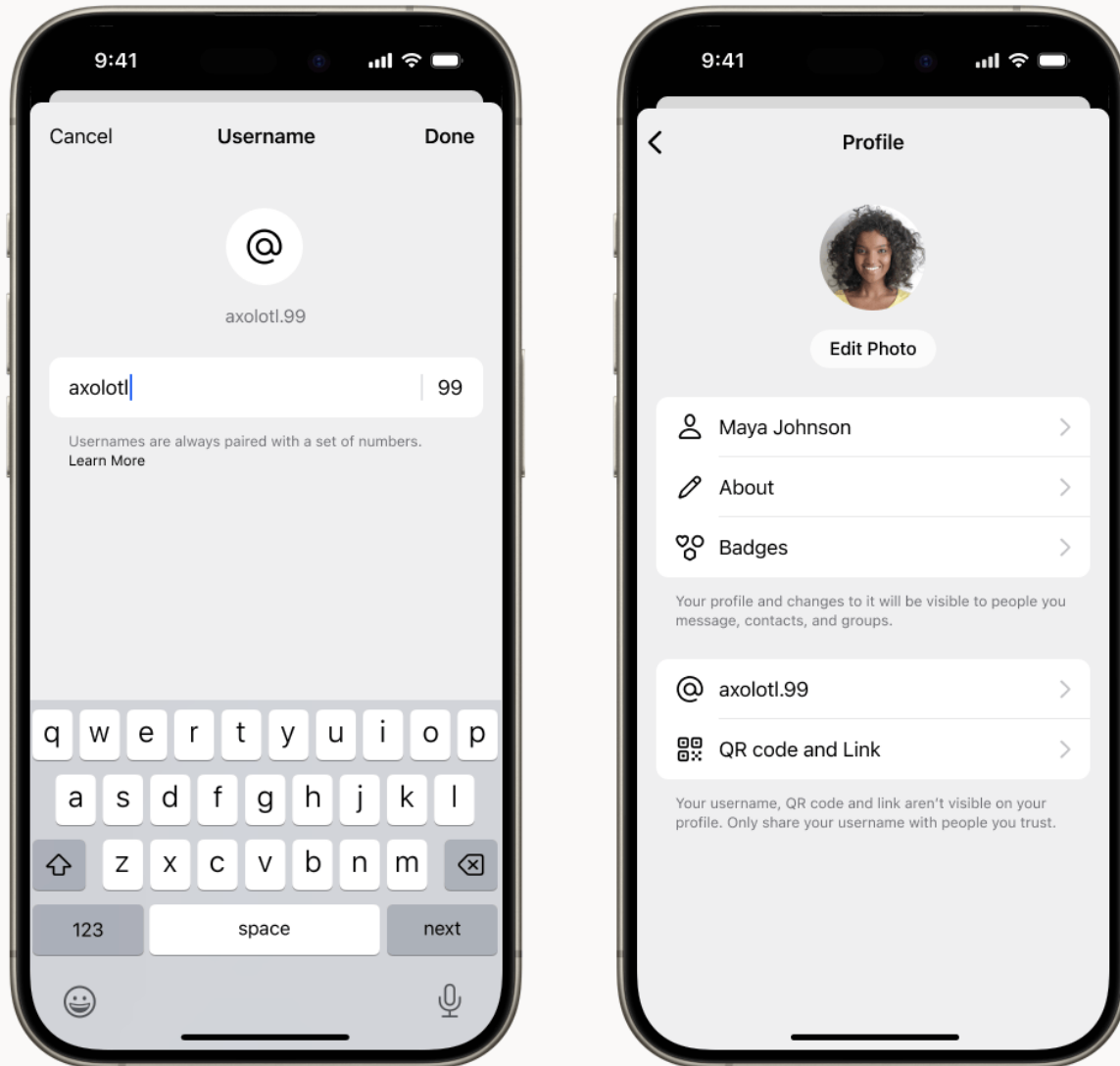


Image Credits: Signal

To create a username, you need you go into your “Profile” settings. From there, you need to choose a unique username that has two or more numbers at the end of it. You can change your username as often as you want, and you also have the choice to delete your username altogether if you don’t want one anymore. The company says it created usernames to be easily changeable so that you can choose to make a specific username for things like a conference or a group trip, and then change it once it’s over.

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To start chatting with someone via their username, you need to open the “New Chat” screen in the app and type in their username.

Signal is also introducing a new privacy setting that will let you control who can find you on the app with your phone number. Up until now, anyone who had your phone number, whether they got it on social media or a business card, has been able to find you on Signal. Now, you can restrict this by going into your settings and navigating to the “Who can find me by my number” setting and selecting “nobody.”

If you select the “Everybody” option, this means that anyone who has your phone number can type it into Signal and send you a message request, which you can of course reject or block.

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Author

susantwain1