The Start-to-Finish Guide to Text Messaging for Real Estate

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Nothing makes us happier than showing businesses and organizations how easy it is to use text messages to their advantage. Explore our other industry guides at simpletexting.com/guides. To keep up on the latest news about SMS and marketing in general, check out our blog.

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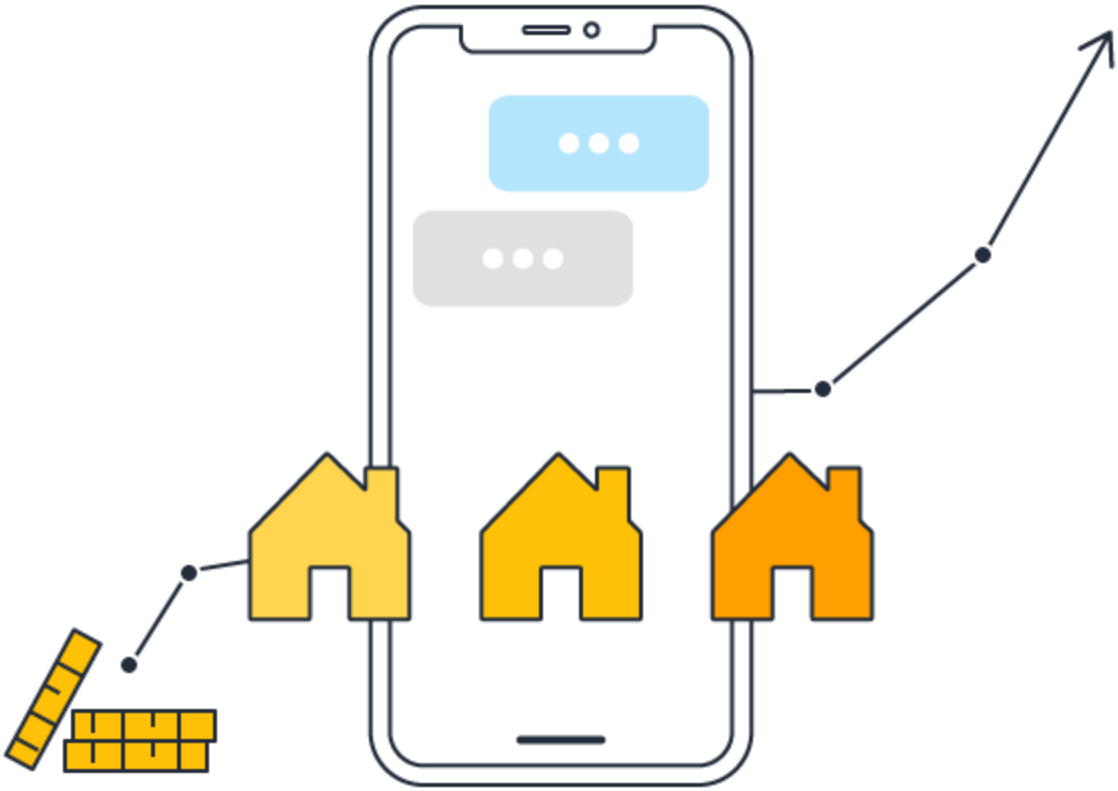
Just reach out to support@simpletexting.com.

Introduction

Okay, so you want to get better at selling real estate.



Maybe you're already pretty good. Or even great. But there's something in you that says, "Could I be doing more?" There are many marketing tools, software, and strategies at your disposal, some of which could help you sell property faster, and more efficiently. One of those tools is text marketing. If you've already read the real estate text marketing guide on our website, you'll be familiar with the statistics below. And if you haven't, we recommend starting there. It'll give you a quick overview of how you can use text messages for your business. This e-book will serve as a deep dive into exactly how to get started with your SMS efforts, and how to scale them. First, a quick review of why you should use texting in the first place.

Use text messaging because...

Calls and emails don't cut it anymore. Fewer people are answering their phones, and emails are often ignored. **A 2017 report from the National Association of Realtors found that 62% of all home buyers prefer their agent send property info via text message.**

Use text messaging because...

Not many real estate agents use SMS—which means if you do, you're setting yourself up with a serious competitive advantage. **A survey by the California Association of Realtors found that only 5% of realtors communicate by text.**

Now, before we jump in, let's start with some good news: text marketing isn't as hard as you think. A little direction and insider know-how is all you need to start growing your business.

By the end of this guide, you'll be ready to find more leads, close more deals, and promote yourself successfully, even during lulls in the market. Let's do this.

Setting Up Your Text Marketing Account

Ooooh, what does this button do?

If you're reading this guide, you've likely already signed up for an account with either SimpleTexting (that's us!) or another text marketing platform (no hard feelings!). The first time logging into a new software is exciting, albeit a bit overwhelming. You can do a lot more than just send and receive messages with an SMS platform.

Here's a list of things you should do to familiarize yourself with the features.

#1 Pick a Number

By default, all SimpleTexting accounts are set up with a shared short code: 555888. You don't have to stick with this number. There are a few other options that may work better for your business. Let's discuss some of the pros and cons of each.

Toll-Free Number

If you already have a toll-free number, we can text-enable it. This will allow you to receive calls and texts on the same line. Toll-free numbers are capable of sending mass texts, which is helpful for reaching large groups at once.

Time	Instant
Cost	$0
Calls	Yes

10-Digit Local Number

You can also set up your local, 10-digit number with our platform. Your leads will appreciate being contacted by a number with a familiar area code, and you'll be able to receive calls as usual. If you only plan on sending 1-on-1 messages, this option is for you. Why? Because with a 10-digit number you can't send out mass texts.

Time	Up to 3 Days
Cost	$0
Calls	Yes

Dedicated Short Code

This option isn't for most small businesses. However, if your company is looking to invest heavily in text messaging, it could be a good option for you. A dedicated short code is a 5- to 6-digit long number. But unlike 555888, you don't share this number with anyone. This means it'll be more recognizable, and you'll have the entire keyword universe at your disposal.

Time	4 to 6 Weeks
Cost	Over $1,000/Month
Calls	No

💪 **Action Item - Talk to Your Team**

You can start using your account right away with our shared short code. Still, it's a good idea to get together with your team, discuss how you'd like to use text messaging, and decide whether or not you'd like to use a number other than 555888. If you have any doubts, connect with our support team.

#2 Create Lists

A list is a group of contacts. In other words, the people you'll be messaging. By organizing your contacts into lists, you can send the right messages to the right people.

We recommend creating lists for:

- Buyers
- Renters
- Sellers
- Agents

Segmenting Your Lists

You should also segment your lists. The more you segment your audience, the more relevant your messages. The more relevant your messages, the

more likely they are to resonate with your leads. To segment your list, you'll need to [create a few custom fields](). Consider creating fields for the variables below.

Neighborhood	Zip code	%%neighborhood%%	5	XXXXX (USA)
Budget	Number	%%budget%%	3	number
Property Type	Text	%%property_type%%	15	text

💪 **Action Item - Make a List for Your Employees**

Just to get comfortable using SMS, make a list for your employees. This way you can quickly add some numbers and test out the platform. Go to *Subscribers* > *Add list*. Then, click *Add contact*. Add a few team members' contact information manually. (You can import your entire contact list later.)

#3 Set Up Your First Keyword

A keyword is a memorable word or phrase that leads can text in to your number to sign up for your messages. As soon as someone texts in the keyword, they'll receive a pre-written message and be added to the list of your choice. These are great for adding to sign riders, business cards, social media, brochures, and websites.

Pick a keyword that is:

- As short as possible
- Easy to remember
- Relevant to your business

💪 **Action Item - Try Keywords for Yourself**

To get comfortable with how keywords work, set one up as a test. Go to *Keywords* > *Add keyword*. Once you've created a keyword, text it to your number to test it out. With SimpleTexting, you get unlimited keywords. This opens up the door to using unique keywords for every one of your listings. We'll go into this on page 17.

#4 Send Out a Campaign

This is it. The moment you've been waiting for: sending your first message. If you've already done this, skip ahead to page 22 to read more about what kinds of texts you should be sending to get the most value out of your account. If you're unfamiliar with how to send a campaign, stick around.

Campaigns can include plain text, of course, but they can also have:

- Trackable links
- Custom fields (such as first and last name)
- Images

- Audio files

Many agents wonder how long their messages should be. It's best to be brief. Include all the relevant details, and cut down on fluff. 160 characters is the standard limit. Sometimes you need to include a few more important notes. With extended messaging, you can send up to 306 characters. And with MMS, you can include 1,600 characters of text, or photos and videos. Skip to page 25 to learn more about MMS.

💪 **Action Item - Send a Test to Employees**

Remember in the first step when you added a few employees to a test list? Try sending them a message. Keep it simple. Just say, "Hey there, Alfredo here. Trying out our new texting system." Go to *Campaigns > New campaign*.

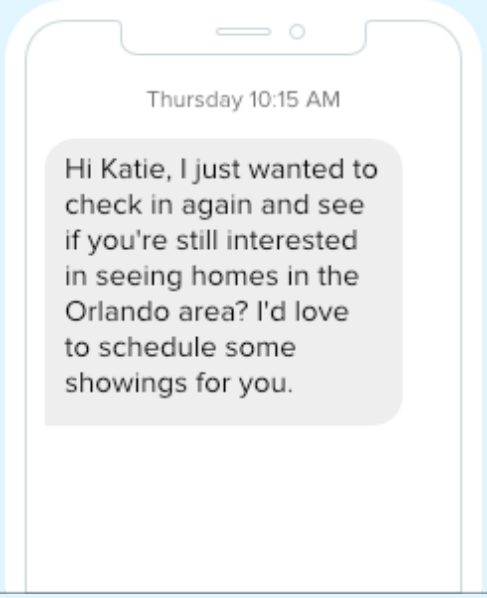
#5 Add Autoresponders

Every real estate agent knows that one of the worst things you can do is forget to follow up with a lead. Avoid this mistake with autoresponders. These are pre-written texts that go out a set period of time after someone joins your list. You can create a staggered series of autoresponders that go out days, weeks, or months after you add a contact.

💪 **Action Item - Create a General Autoresponder**

Familiarize yourself with autoresponders by creating one for general inquiries. Go to *Autoresponders > New autoresponder*. Then, write your message and assign it to a list.

Your message can look something like this:



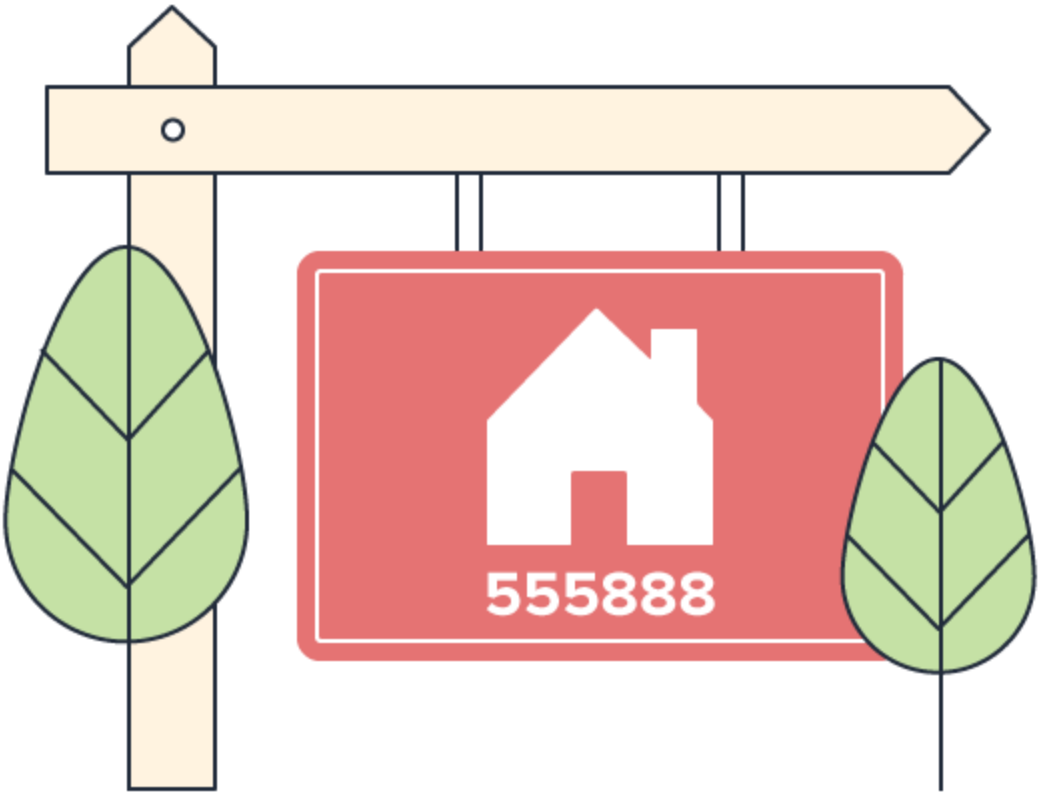
#6 Give Your Team Access

Now that you understand the basic features, show your team how to use them. Once they're ready, give everyone their own login. You can create sub-accounts for each agent, and give each one access only to specific lists.

If you have an agent that specializes in a certain property type or area, only give them access to message the list of contacts relevant to that specialty.

Gathering Leads

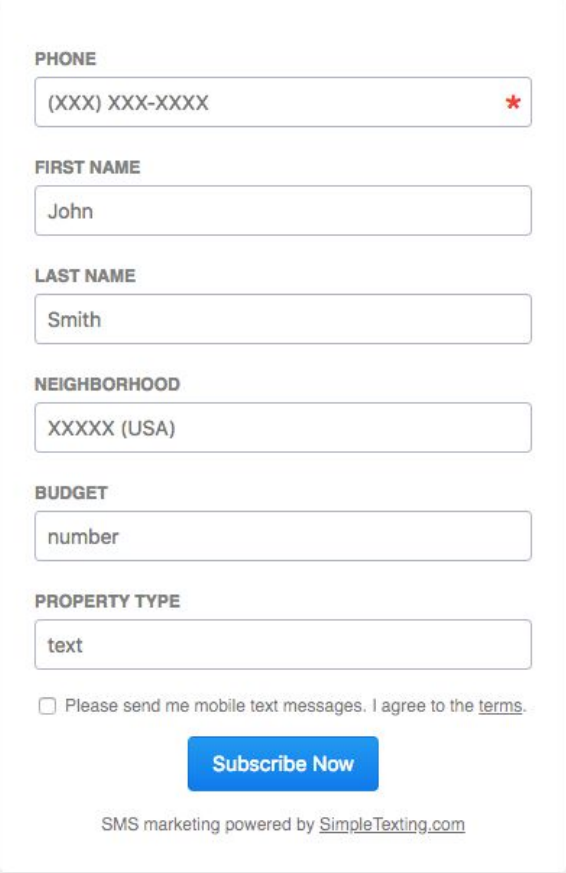
How do I find people to text in the first place?



Working in the real estate industry can be unpredictable. Sometimes you're flooded with clients, and other times there's a sudden fluctuation or spike in interest rates, and suddenly your leads go cold. For this reason, it's important for realtors to have a solid pipeline of leads. The key to keeping this momentum is having multiple sources. The goal is to use all of the tactics below, without relying on any one in particular.

Web Forms

Open houses and networking events are great, but most home buyers are doing their searching online. Make sure your website is as user-friendly as possible, and add a sign-up form for prospective buyers interested in receiving text message updates. Use this as a chance to collect all the information you need to properly categorize your buyers. Ask for budget, neighborhood and property type. This way you'll be able to send relevant listings later.



Lawn Signs or Riders

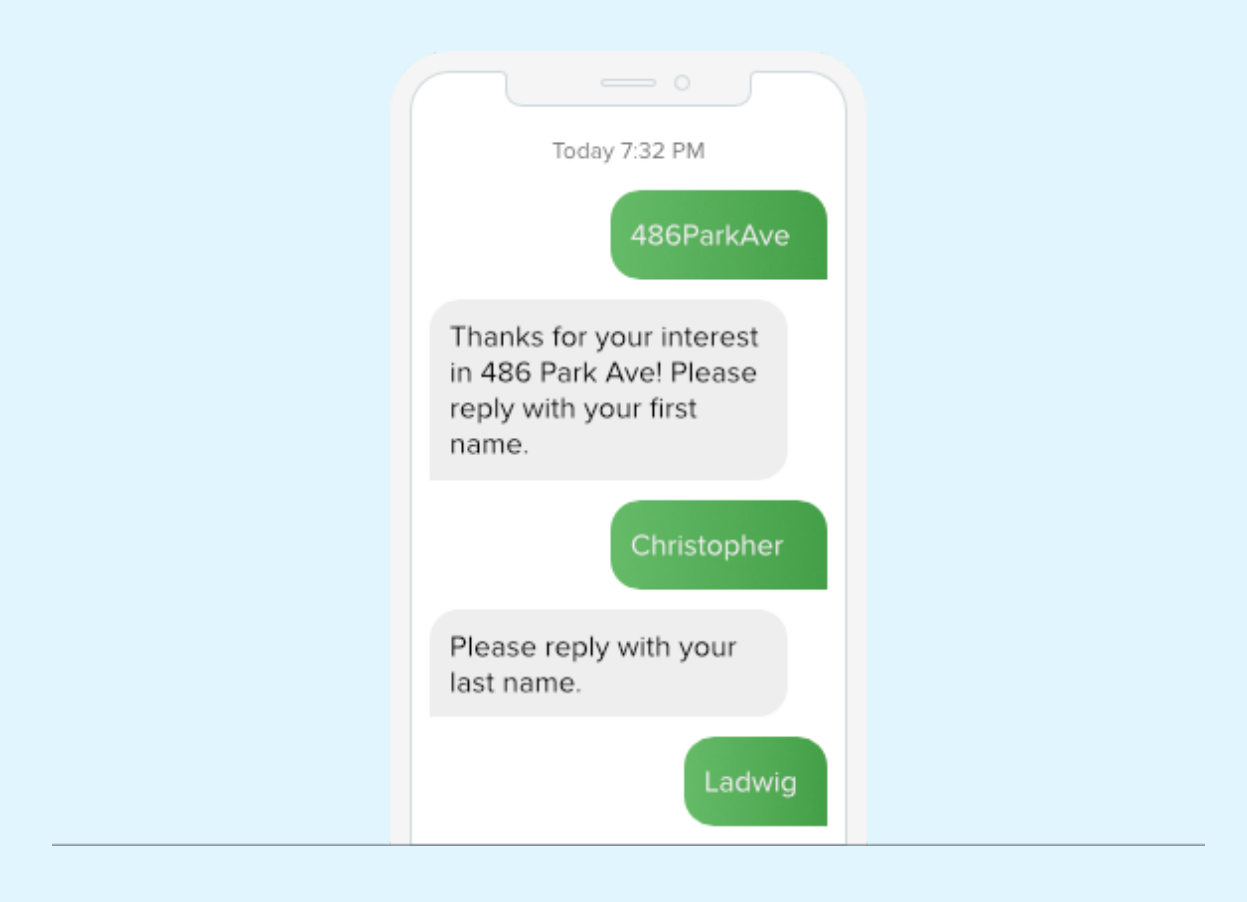
“Coming Soon” signs build anticipation before a home even hits the market. "Sold" signs can help you gather leads from buyers who missed out on the property, and want to connect with you to make sure it doesn't happen again.

#1 Create a keyword for each property that you list. Make it something specific to the listing, such as the street name and house number.

#2 After a property is sold, you can continue to send pertinent messages to those who texted in the keyword. For example, you may want to send links to similar listings. Some agents prefer to create a separate keyword for their "sold" signs, to keep their lists organized.

Collecting Data from Interested Buyers

Once someone has texted in to your property-specific keyword, use our data collection feature to collect more information about them. It's best practice to ask for the contact's first and last name so that you can personalize your messages later on.



Reaching Out to Buyers Personally

The data collection tactic above is useful for gathering preliminary info. It goes without saying, however, that purchasing a home is an extremely

personal decision. That's why it's a good idea to combine texts with phone calls. If you've text-enabled your toll-free or 10-digit number (see chapter one), you can place a call from the same number you use with your SimpleTexting account. Here's what that would look like.

💪 **Action Item - Combine Texts With Phone Calls**

#1 Someone sees your "For Sale" sign

#2 They text your keyword to your number

#3 You get a notification on the SimpleTexting app

#4 They're automatically asked for their name

#5 You call them and discuss further details

It's the immediacy that makes this tactic so effective. A buyer sees your home, and you contact them as soon as you find out they're interested. No delays. We send you an email (or text, if you'd like) the moment someone texts in your keyword. And if you have our mobile app installed on your Android or iPhone, you can enable push notifications as well.

Open Houses

Nothing can ever replace face-to-face interaction. Hosting an open house is a lot of work and texting can help you get the most value out of your time. Use SMS to simplify the sign-in process and collect more info from guests. There are a few reasons this sign-in method is so effective—the main one

being that it only takes people a few seconds to send a text. Plus, agents don’t have to decipher illegible handwriting or deal with manually entering info to their CRM.

As we mention above, you can use data collection to gather information when someone texts in your keyword. At an open house, you should collect names and emails at a minimum. Use our Mailchimp Sync feature or Zapier to pass the collected emails to whatever email marketing platform you use.

Paid Ads

Passively collecting phone numbers isn't enough to ensure a stable pipeline of leads. Successful agents invest in paid advertising. Websites like Zillow and Trulia offer advertising options, and it's also worth looking into Facebook. Create ads targeted toward people who display interest in buying a home, and are in the areas you specialize in.

Suppose you’re a realtor in San Diego, and you specialize in the areas in and around the Poway, Rancho Bernardo, and Scripps Ranch areas—mostly upper middle-income neighborhoods with Household Incomes (HHI) above

$100,000 per year. You can create a lead ad that shows just to them! The ad will collect their phone number and contact info, and you can text them when you're ready. You can also automate the follow-up process with these leads by setting up autoresponders like we described in chapter one.

LinkedIn

Ask yourself what kind of LinkedIn groups your target audience would frequent, then join those groups. It could be one for first-time homebuyers, for example. With this lead generation tactic, don't make the mistake of jumping into the group then immediately going for a sales pitch. Instead, spend plenty of time contributing to the conversation in the group before sharing your contact information or asking people to subscribe to your texts.

There are plenty of ways to generate leads out there, and some will work better for you than others. Of course, no one knows your business better than you do. Think about how you currently find potential buyers, then ask yourself where in their journey it would be helpful to receive a text message.

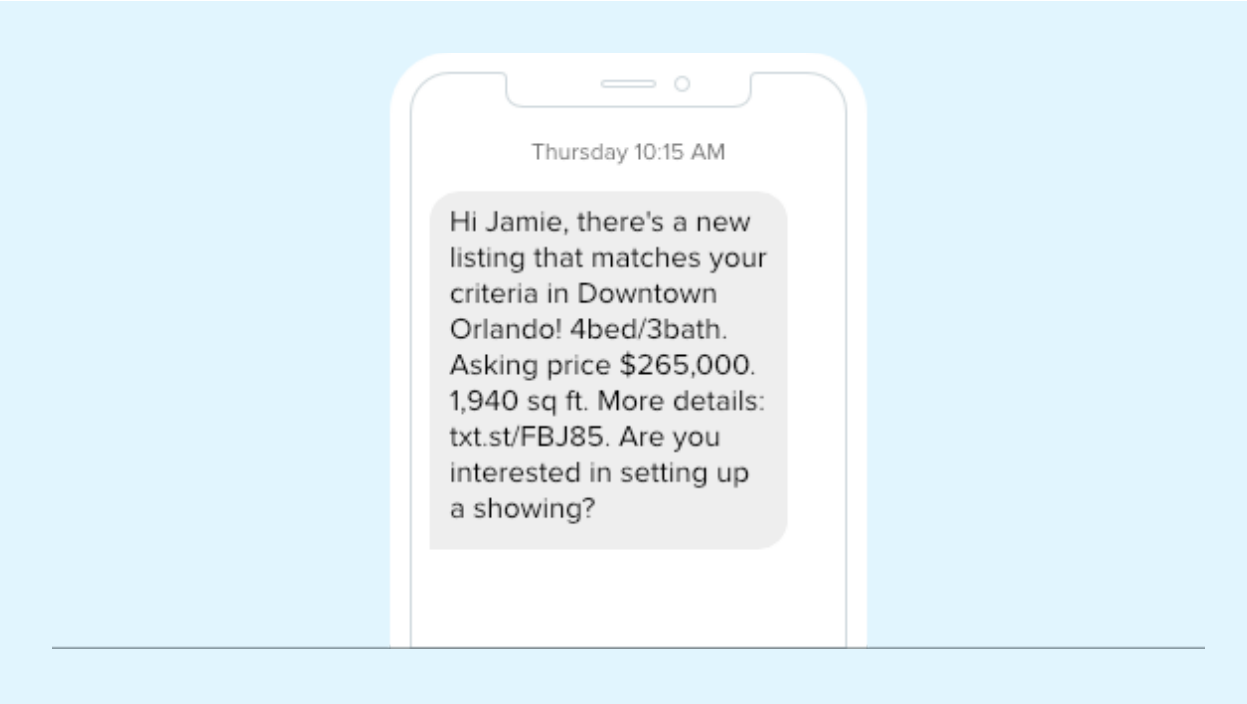
Messaging Leads

What should I say anyways?

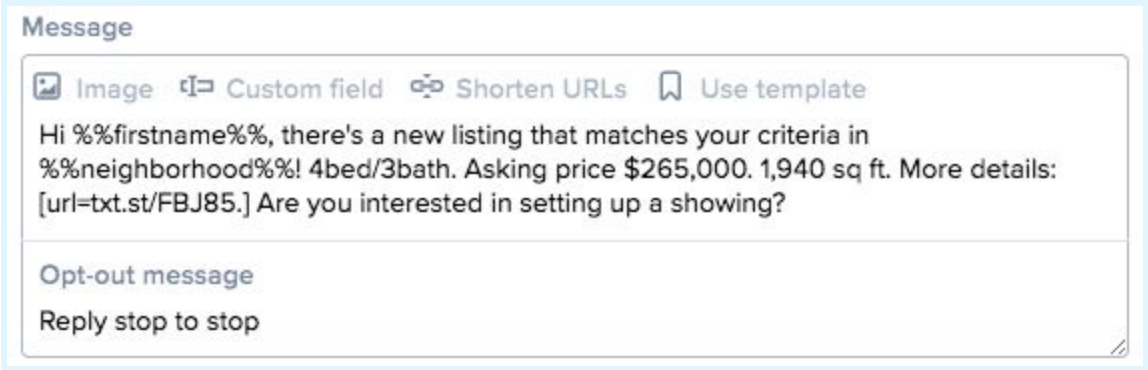
We can't overstate the importance of generating strong leads. But the next step is equally as essential: sending the right messages. These are a few of the ways our real estate partners have seen success with text messaging.

#1 Alert Buyers of New Listings

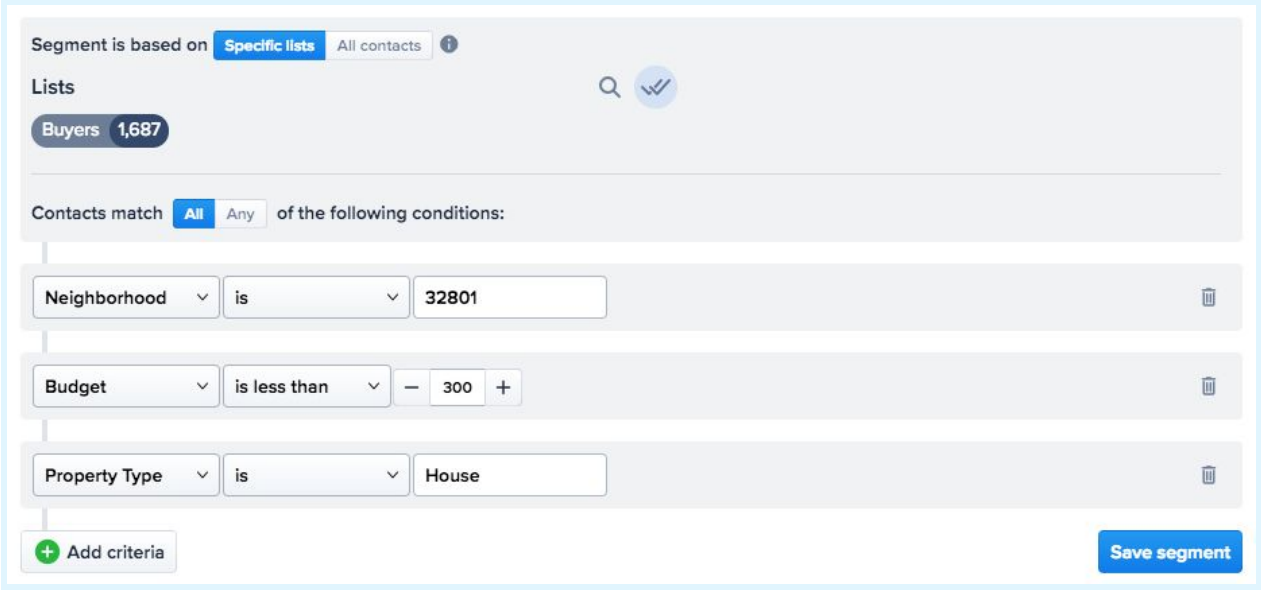
One of the main benefits of texting is that it's fast. With SimpleTexting, you can send out a message immediately. Plus, if your contacts are like most people, they'll read the message right away (and respond immediately if they're interested). It's this speed that makes SMS perfect for sending new home alerts. Home buyers will appreciate finding out about attractive listings, and you'll love the convenience of being able to hear back without delay. Here's an example:



Notice the way the text message is personalized with the buyer's name and neighborhood choice. Customizing messages is an easy way to ensure a response. Even if you're sending hundreds of SMS alerts, you don't have to customize each one manually. This can be done automatically with custom fields.

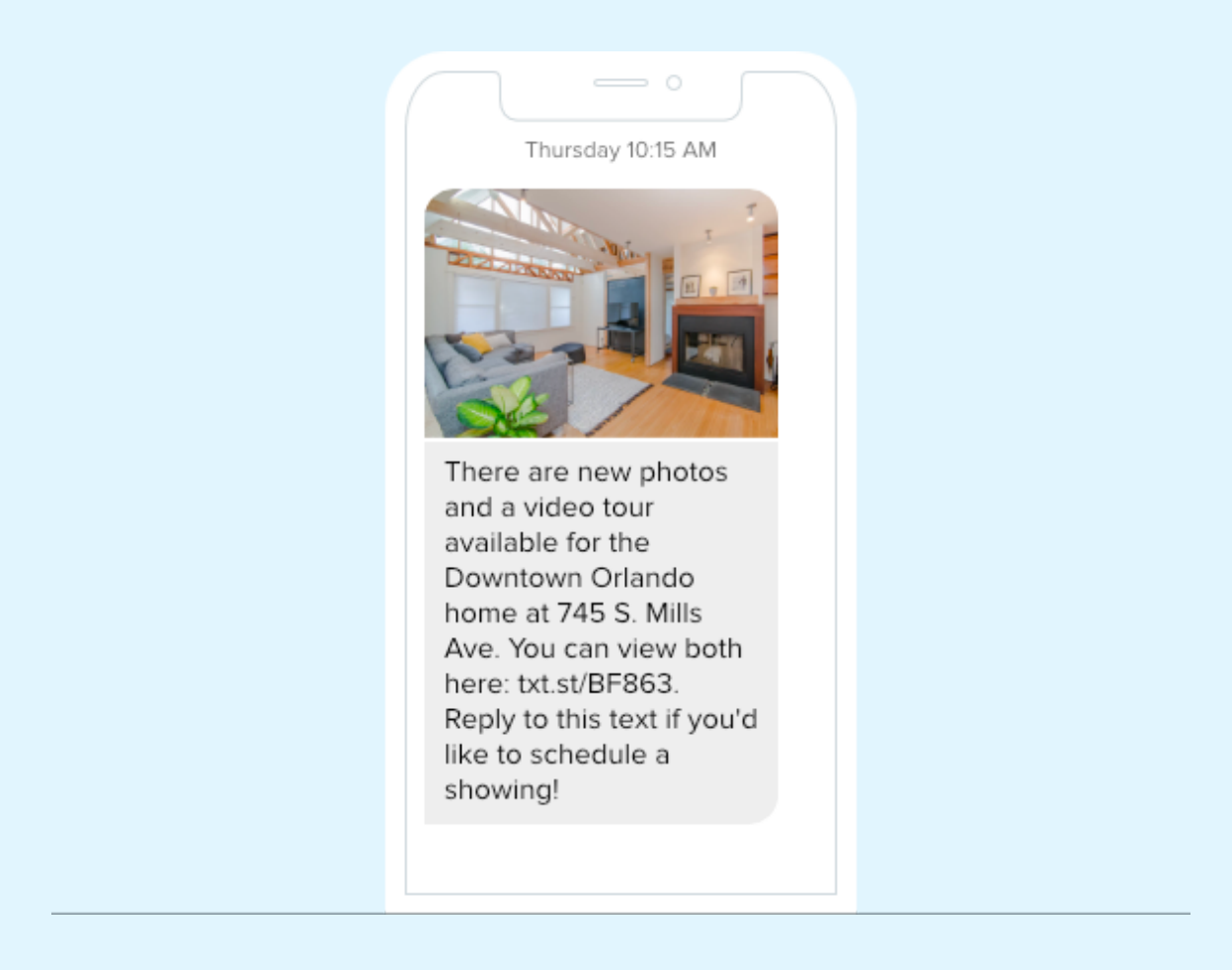


Earlier we talked about the importance of segmenting your list. The text above shows why. You wouldn't want to send a Downtown Orlando listing to someone in West Palm Beach. And you wouldn't want to send a $265,000 home to a buyer looking in the $400,000-$500,000 range. That's why just having a list for buyers isn't enough. Here's the segment that the example message would go to:



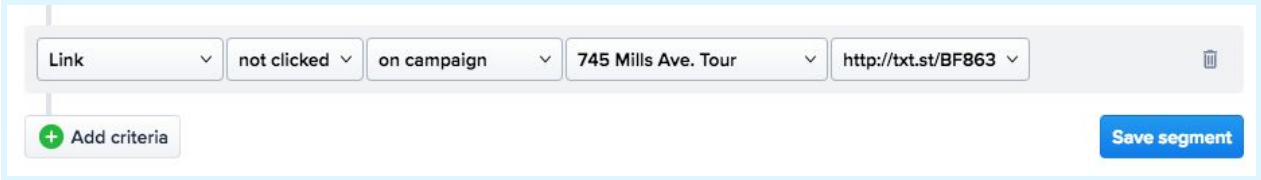
#2 Send Property Photos

Our platform doesn't limit you to words alone. A beautiful photo of a property can play a huge role in driving the decision to schedule a showing. Send video walkthroughs and photos using our multimedia messaging service (MMS). MMS comes with all SimpleTexting plans.

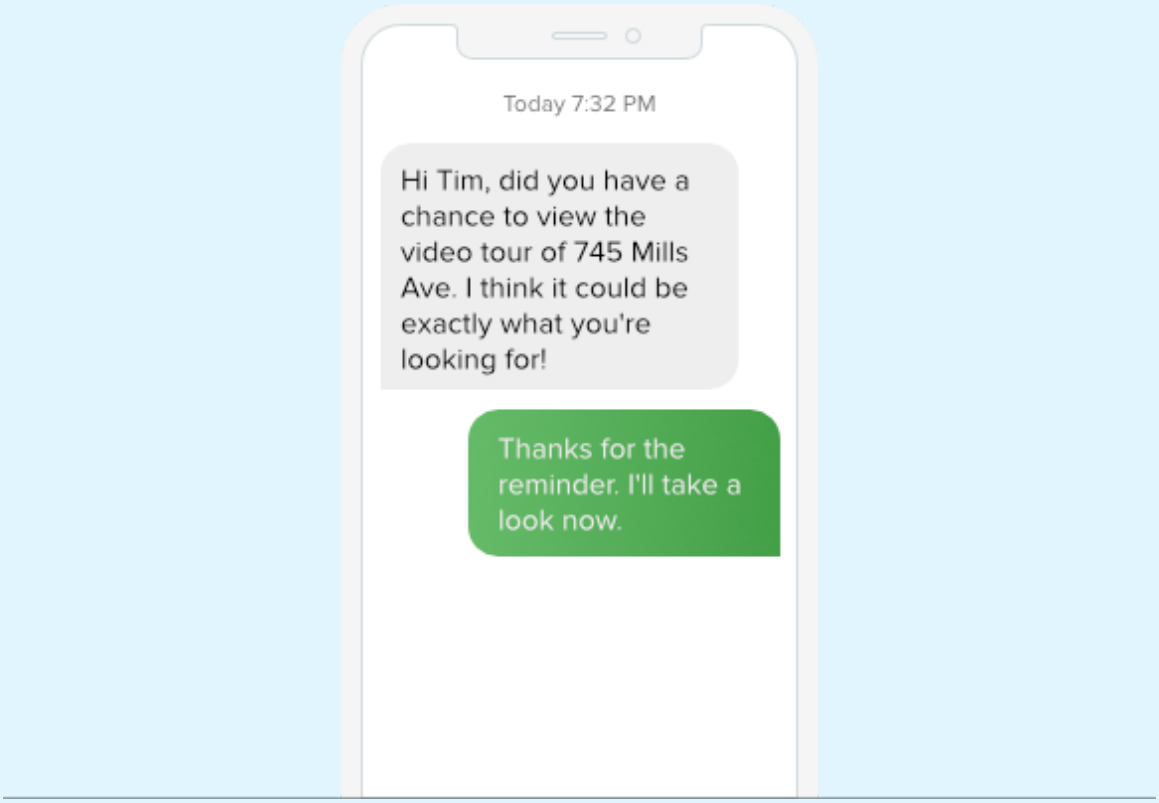


#3 Track Links and Follow Up

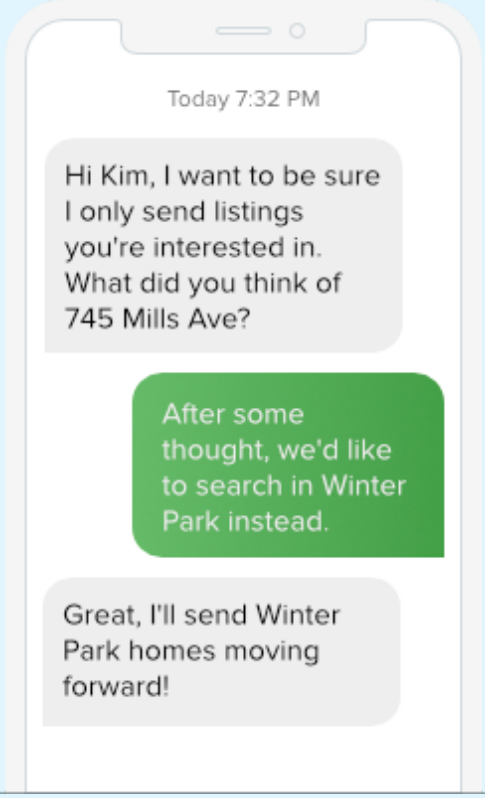
98% of text messages are read. And the average click-through rate of SimpleTexting customers is 17%. Compare this to the average click-through rate of real estate emails: 1.8%. With SimpleTexting, you can track whether or not a contact clicked on your link. Create a segment for those who did, and another for those who didn't.



Your messages may look something like this:



Message Sent to Contacts Who *Didn't* Click



Message Sent to Contacts Who *Did* Click

#4 Schedule Showings

Successful marketing is about providing value, and getting consumers to take action. Every text message you send should both provide information to your lead, and have a call to action. In the examples above, we displayed two kinds of CTAs. One asked for feedback on a home, and the other two asked the buyer if they'd like to schedule a showing. The latter is the most common CTA we see realtors send using SMS. And here's why: it's an easy yes or no question. Plus, if you've ever tried to schedule a meeting by email you know how frustrating delays in responses can be. Because texting

allows for quick back-and-forth conversation, it's the ideal medium for scheduling showings. Here are two methods you can use:

One-on-one Replies

This one is a no brainer. If someone replies to your listing alert saying they'd like to schedule a showing, ask what time and day they're available, then check your calendar.

Calendly Links

This is a third-party tool that we use here at SimpleTexting to simplify scheduling meetings. It works great for busy agents too! You let Calendly know your availability preferences and it'll generate a link that you share with buyers. Send this link via text. When a buyer clicks it, they'll only see your available time slots. They can then book one directly on Calendly.

#5 Schedule Showing Reminders

Make sure the potential buyer is on time and in the right spot. Use our scheduled text feature to send a text a few hours before the showing with the time, address and any other details your lead may need to know.

#6 Simplify the Documentation Process

If all has gone according to plan, then your client loved the home and they're ready to move forward. Now begins the tedious paperwork process. You can use autoresponders to take care of some of this busy work. Send texts to remind clients when they need to supply information, sign a form, or provide other feedback. For example, you can specify that a message is sent to your client 5 days ahead of the necessary return date of a form.

Bringing It All Home

What do I do next?

As convenient as text messages are, it goes without saying that the entire home buying process can't be conducted over SMS. There will still be meetings to be had and emails to be sent. As you continue to use texting, you'll quickly find when and where it's most convenient. Just because a buyer has placed an offer, and the seller has accepted, doesn't mean you need to delete their contact information from the platform. Your client is already used to receiving texts from you, so use our mobile app and the Inbox feature to have one-on-one conversations.

Send quick updates on how the inspection or appraisal is going. Let your clients know you're working diligently for them. Buying a home is stressful for anyone. Consistent, quick communication helps reduce some of the anxiety. And by connecting with your clients in the way they prefer—texting—you help build a positive reputation for yourself. It's this positive reputation that will help you continue to land leads, and ultimately, close deals.

💪 **Action Item - Try Us Free**

Haven't signed up for a SimpleTexting account? Curious about how it works? Sign up for a free 14-day trial at SimpleTexting.com. We'll set you up with a free keyword of your choice, and even give you 50 messages at no cost. No credit card required. No strings attached. Have any questions? Email us at support@simpletexting.net.