BOOKING APPOINTMENTS BY DM FROM TIMES THAT ARE REALLY FREE

Answer the price, offer the nearest free times for the service as buttons, book the tapped one and confirm it in the same chat, with reminders through their own flow.

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"Any time Friday?" is a booking waiting to happen, and a slow answer loses it. A booking link sends people to another page, where many of them stop; a person checking the diary by hand answers an hour later. A booking flow answers in the chat: the price and what is included, then the nearest free times for that service as buttons, straight from Bookings, and one tap books the time. The confirmation goes out in the same chat, with a link to change or cancel. This guide sets it up step by step: Bookings first, then the flow, then the confirmation, reminders and what happens when nothing is free.

Key points

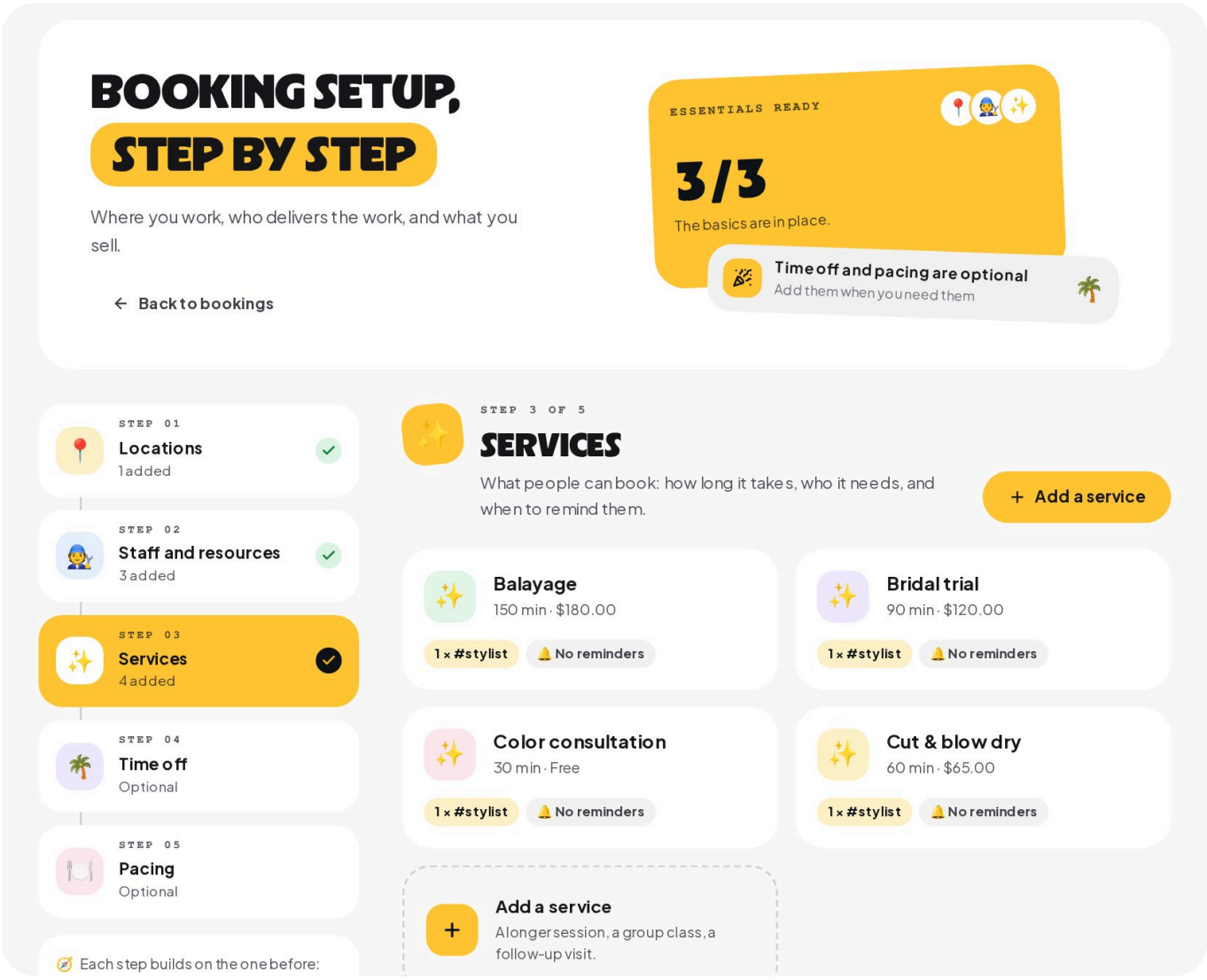
- Bookings holds your locations, the people and resources each service needs, their shifts and time off, and each service's length, buffers, price and reminders.
- The times step offers only times that are really free, from anyone free in the group the service needs, and on Instagram, Messenger and Telegram they come as buttons.
- The tapped time is checked again at the moment of booking, and it is booked as pending, awaiting your OK, or as confirmed, as you choose in the step.
- The Send booking details step sends the confirmation with the date, the time and a link to change or cancel.
- Reminders go out through a flow with the Booking reminder due trigger, on a channel where the customer can still be reached.

HOW THE FLOW WORKS

Step	What happens	Built with
1. The question	"How much is a cut?" or "Any time Friday?"	A keyword or DM trigger
2. The answer	The price, the length and what is included	Send DM with a Book button
3. The service	Which service, as buttons	Ask a question
4. The times	The nearest free times for that service	Offer times in the chat
5. The booking	The tapped time is booked	Book the time they picked
6. The confirmation	The details and the change link	Send booking details

STEP 1: SET UP BOOKINGS

Open **Bookings**, then the set-up. It asks for five things in order: locations, staff and resources, services, time off and pacing. The first three are the essentials.



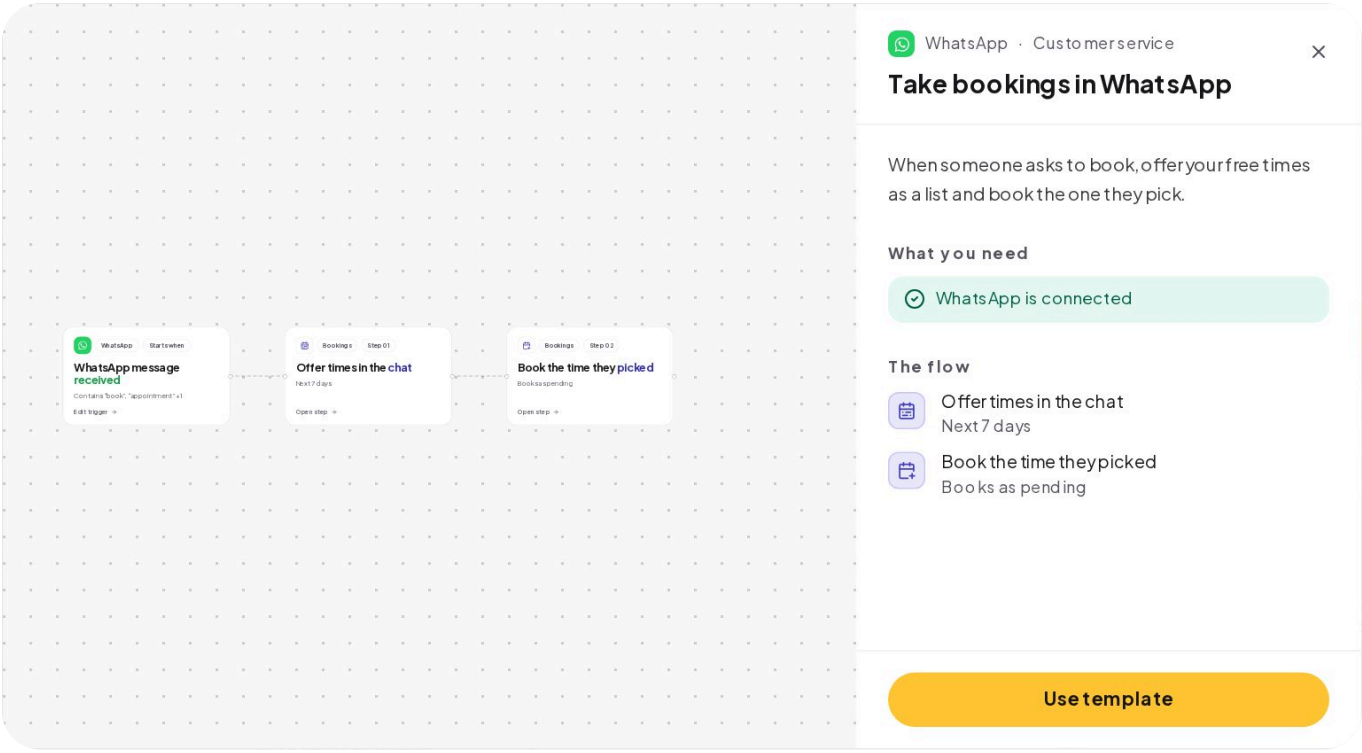
Locations, staff, services, then the optional time off and pacing. Example services from a demo workspace.

- **Locations**, each with its time zone and opening hours.
- **Staff and resources**: the people who deliver the work, with their shifts, and the chairs, tables or rooms a booking takes up, in groups such as stylist or table.
- **Services**: what people can book, how long it takes, the setup and cleanup buffers, who it needs from which group, the price and up to five reminder times.
- **Time off**: holidays and days off, so nobody is offered a time that does not exist.
- **Pacing**: an optional limit on how many people or bookings start in each period, mostly for restaurants.

Only times that are free across all of this are ever offered in the chat.

STEP 2: START FROM A BOOKING TEMPLATE

Open **Automations** and search the gallery for "booking". **Take bookings in WhatsApp** shows the core of the flow: when someone asks to book, it offers your free times as a list and books the one they pick.



Offer times in the chat for the next 7 days, then book the one they picked.

The same two steps work on Instagram, Messenger and Telegram, where the times come as buttons instead of a list. Use the template as the model, and build the flow on the channel your customers write on most.

STEP 3: ANSWER THE QUESTION FIRST

Most bookings start with a question about the price. Answer it before you offer times:

> "A cut and blow dry is $65 and takes about an hour. Want to book? Tap a service below."

with buttons for your top services. Each tap leads to the times step for that service. A price answered in the first message is often the difference between a booking and "I'll think about it", so never make people ask twice.

STEP 4: OFFER THE FREE TIMES

The **Offer times in the chat** step needs three settings:

- **The service**, so the length, the buffers and the people it needs are known.
- **How many days ahead** to look, seven by default.

- **How many times** to offer, up to eight. Three to five are easier to choose from.

For bookings with a party size, such as a table for four, the step's party size is a fixed number. Ask the size with buttons first, and give each answer its own times step with that size.

When nothing is free in the days you set, the step takes its other path. Use it to offer the next week, a waiting message or a hand-over to your team, so nobody is left with silence.

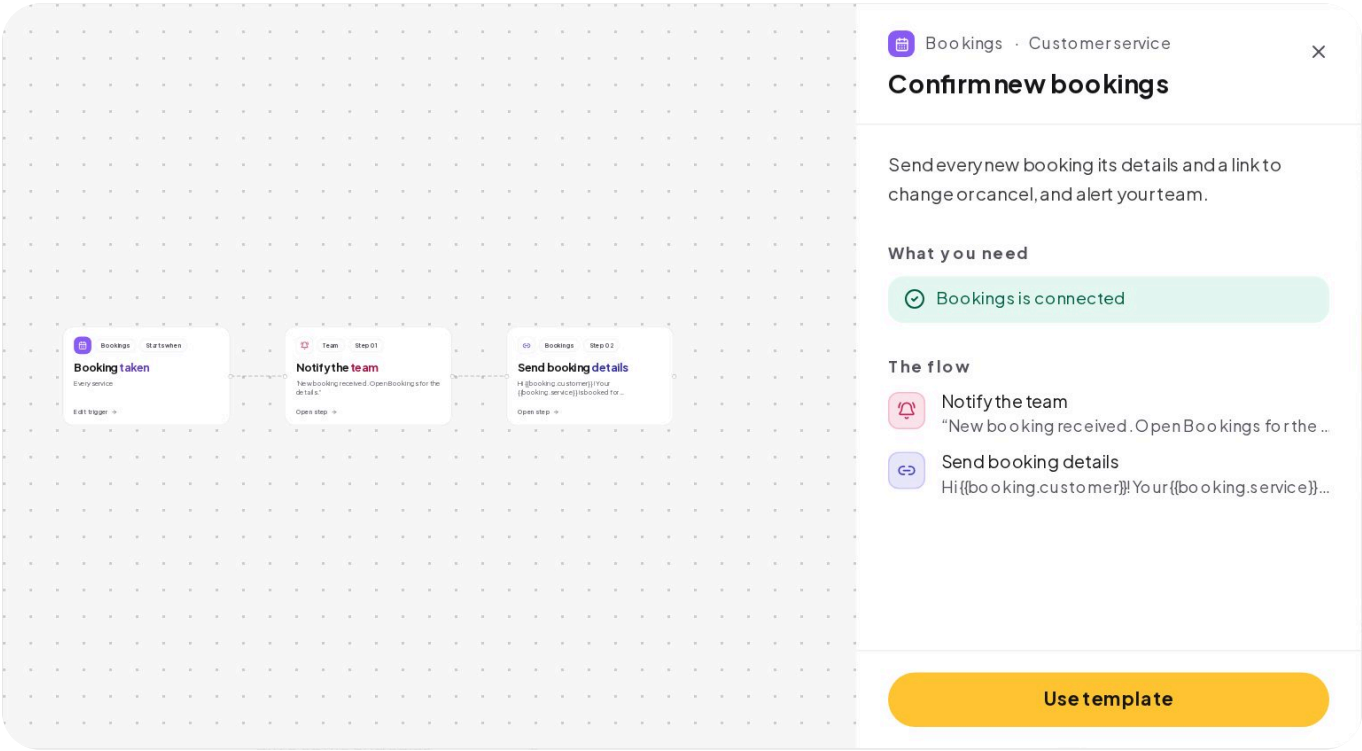
STEP 5: BOOK THE TAPPED TIME

The **Book the time they picked** step reads the reply and books it. The tap carries the exact time; a typed "14:00" is accepted only if it matches one offered time, so a booking never lands on the wrong day. The time is checked again at the moment of booking, and if someone else took it a second earlier, the step takes its other path, where the flow can offer fresh times.

The step books as **pending** by default, which shows in Bookings as awaiting your OK, or as **confirmed**, if you would rather not check each one.

STEP 6: SEND THE CONFIRMATION

Right after the booking, a **Send booking details** step sends the confirmation in the same chat. The **Confirm new bookings** template shows the pattern: it alerts your team and sends the customer their booking.



Confirm new bookings: tell the team, send the details and the change link.

The message uses the booking's variables: the customer, the service, the date, the time and a link to change or cancel. A complete confirmation is the message every customer who books in the chat gets, so put

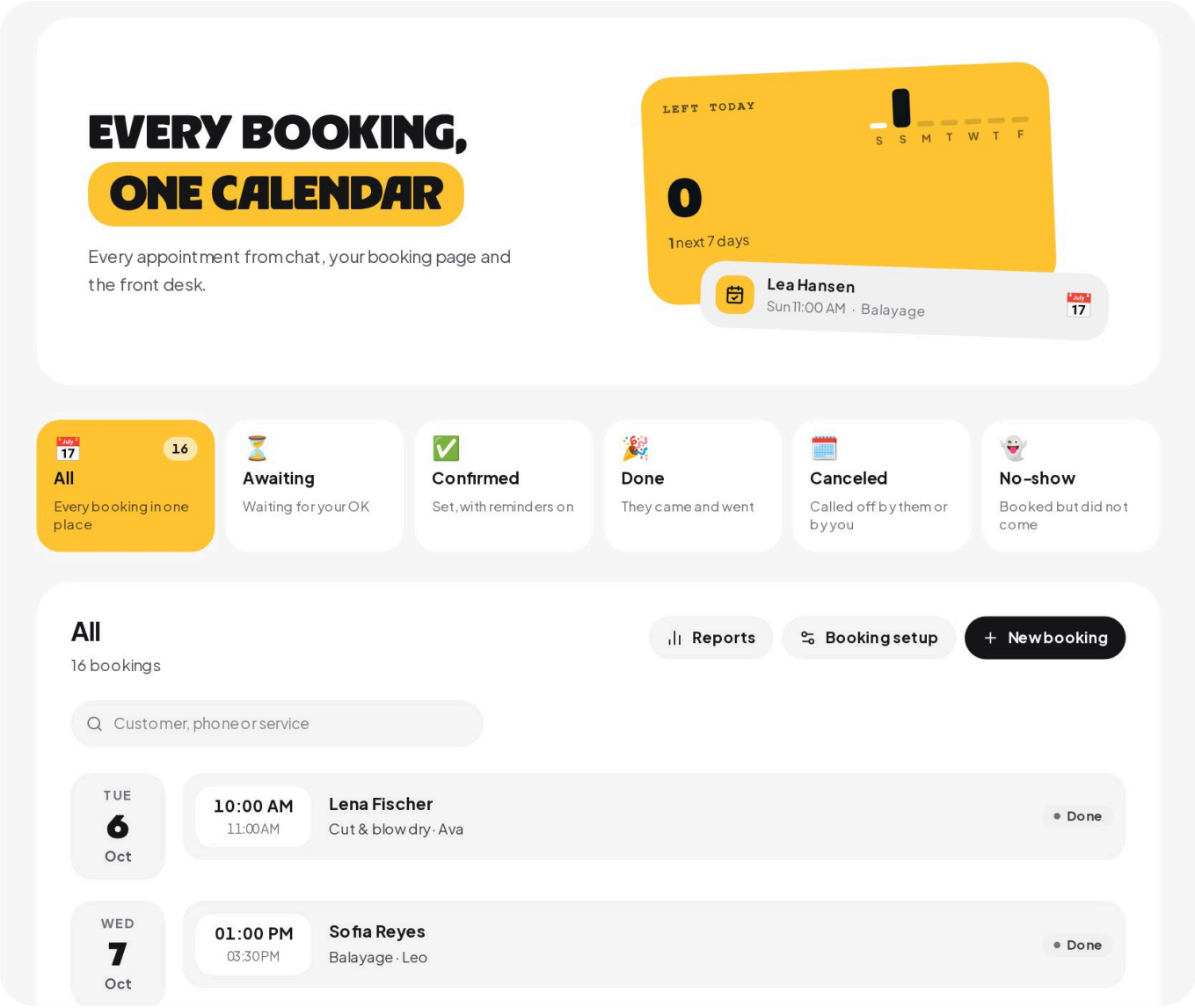
everything in it: the address, what to bring, how to cancel.

STEP 7: ADD REMINDERS AND THE FOLLOW-UPS

Bookings come with their own triggers, each a small flow:

- **Booking reminder due** runs at each reminder time set on the service, such as a day before or two hours before. The **Booking reminders** template sends the details with a reschedule link. Without a flow on this trigger, no reminder is sent.
- **Booking completed** runs when you mark a visit done, for a thank-you and a review link.
- **Customer did not show** runs when you mark a no-show, for a friendly message with a new time.
- **Booking canceled** and **Booking moved** run when a booking is canceled or moved, for a win-back message or an updated confirmation.

Reminders go out in a conversation the customer already has with you, on the first channel in your chain where they can still be reached. On Instagram and Messenger, a channel whose 24-hour window has closed is skipped; WhatsApp can use an approved template instead. ChatinFlow never opens a new conversation on a channel the customer has not used.



Today's bookings on one calendar, with every status from awaiting to no-show. Demo workspace.

CHOOSING PENDING OR CONFIRMED

Choose	When	What happens
Pending	You check each booking first, such as referrals, deposits or new clients	The booking shows as awaiting your OK, and a Booking confirmed flow can tell the customer once you accept it
Confirmed	Your calendar is the source of truth and every free time is really bookable	The booking is final at once, and the confirmation goes out in the same flow

Most service businesses start with pending for first-time customers and confirmed for regulars, using a tag or a condition in the flow to send each down the right path.

Making the times feel personal

People book more when the offer feels like a person wrote it, even when it did not:

- **Name the day the way people say it**, such as "tomorrow at 10:00" rather than a date format.
- **Offer the nearest times first**, then "more times" as a last button.
- **Say how long it takes** next to the service, so the time they pick fits their day.
- **Confirm in one message**, with the service, the day, the time and the place.

Linking the booking to the rest of the workspace

A booking from the chat is more than a calendar entry:

- **The contact** who booked is the same one you see in the inbox and in Audience, so tags, segments and later broadcasts can follow the booking.
- **A tag**, such as booked-first-visit, lets you send a different follow-up to first-timers.
- **The booking reports** show the no-show rate and how full each person's diary was against the hours they could work.
- **A Buy button** before the booking can take a deposit for long services, with the money going straight to your Stripe or PayPal account.

A worked example: a physiotherapy practice

A practice gets "do you have anything this week?" messages on Instagram every day.

1. **Bookings** has one location, three physiotherapists in the group physio, and two services: a first assessment of 60 minutes with a 10-minute cleanup buffer, and a follow-up of 30 minutes.
2. **The flow** answers "This week" or a price question with both services as buttons and their prices.
3. **The times step** offers the next five free times for the tapped service, from any of the three physiotherapists.
4. **The booking** is made as pending; the front desk confirms it in Bookings, which is where the practice checks referrals.
5. **The confirmation** sends the address, what to wear and the change link.
6. **A reminder flow** on Booking reminder due sends the details the day before to patients it can still reach.

Messages to copy

The price answer. "A first assessment is $80 and takes an hour; follow-ups are $50 for 30 minutes. Want to book? Tap one."

The times. "Here are the next free times for a first assessment. Tap one to book it."

Nothing free. "This week is full, sorry! Want me to show next week, or have the team call you?"

COMMON MISTAKES

- **Services without buffers.** Back-to-back bookings with no cleanup time make every afternoon late.
- **Shifts only in your head.** If a day off is not in Bookings, the chat will offer it.
- **Too many times.** Eight buttons are harder to choose from than four.
- **No other path on the times step.** When nothing is free, the customer gets silence.
- **Counting on reminders two weeks out on Instagram.** The window closes; make the confirmation complete.

TERMS IN THIS GUIDE

- **Service.** What people can book, with its length, buffers, the group it needs, price and reminder times.
- **Group.** A set of people or resources, such as stylists or tables; a service asks for a group, and any free member can take the booking.
- **Buffer.** Setup or cleanup time around a booking that is not offered to anyone else.
- **Pending.** A booking awaiting your OK, the default for bookings made in the chat.
- **Booking reminder due.** The trigger that runs at each reminder time set on a service.
- **24-hour window.** The time after a customer's last message when a business can reply freely on Instagram and Messenger.

QUICK ANSWERS

Can customers reschedule themselves?

Yes. The confirmation and the reminders carry a link to change or cancel, and when the booking moves, its reminders move with it.

Can I take a deposit before the time is held?

Yes. A Buy button can take a fixed deposit through your own Stripe or PayPal account, with the money going straight to you.

Do bookings from the chat and from the front desk share one calendar?

Yes. Every booking lands on the same calendar in Bookings, with the same statuses.

SOURCES

- **Messenger Platform and IG Messaging API policy**, Meta for Developers, on the 24-hour window for replies and reminders.
- **Template fundamentals**, Meta for Developers, on WhatsApp templates for messages outside the window.

DO IT IN SECONDS, FREE

chatinflow.com/flows/bookings-from-dms