

Staying Connected Through Technology

A quick guide to available group communication apps

In order to do our part in “social distancing,” many of us are avoiding meeting in person and instead, turning to technology for meetings, small groups, general check-ins, and even church worship services.

However, it can be difficult to know which app or service is best for any given situation or group. To help out, we’ve compiled a list of available services and apps that are free to use. We provide a short description of the app, links for download, and links to how-to instructions for setup and use.

But how do I know which app to use with MY group?

Since everyone has different devices, and varying degrees of understanding of technology use, it would be best for the group leader to determine the best app based on their specific group. Things to ask would be: what type of smartphone does your group have access to (Apple, Android, etc); do they have access to a computer with a camera and microphone. Maybe poll them and see if the large majority are already using one or more of the apps listed below. If you have “technology-challenged” individuals in your group, you may need to spend some extra time in advance ensuring they’re set up and understand its use.

THE SIMPLEST OPTION (if you have an Apple device)

FACETIME | *For Apple device users (iPhone, iPad, iPod, and Macs)*

Apple’s FaceTime allows up to 32 simultaneous devices* (iOS12 or higher) to be connected to a single call! You can video-call, audio-call, or both at once. Each user can decide whether to turn their video on. Using Facetime is as simple as making a phone call!

App Download: Already native and installed to your Apple device! | [AppStore](#)

How To Set Up: [Group Call Instructions](#); [Group Call Features](#)

**Requirements: To support group-calling, device operating systems must be iOS12 or higher for mobile, and macOS Mojave 10.14.3 or later for desktop.*

THE SIMPLEST OPTION (Regardless of device)

SKYPE | For iOS, Android, Windows and Mac users

Skype offers video and audio calling (as well as text/chat) which allows up to 50 users on the same audio call (video call user limit is device dependent). While most of this takes place using the Skype app with a free account, Skype also offers a web-based option that requires no software nor account.

No Software/Signup Option: The meeting host can set up a very simple meeting link that doesn't require anyone to download any software, nor create an account! Just create a meeting, and send everyone the link to join. Details here: <https://www.skype.com/en/free-conference-call/>

App Download: [Android](#) | [iPhone/iPad](#) | [Desktop](#)

How To: [Group Call on iPhone](#) | [Group Call on Android](#) | [Features](#) | [Get Started](#)

**Requirements: To use the apps on a mobile device or desktop, users need to create a Microsoft account for free.*

OTHER OPTIONS

GOOGLE HANGOUTS (Free) | For iOS, Android, Windows and Mac users

Google Hangouts is similar to Skype. You can host up to 15 users at a time. If you're using the Hangouts app on mobile, you'll need a google account. However, also similar to Skype, you can create a meeting link for others to join without an account. Only the host needs a Google account if using a laptop / desktop to join the meeting.

No Software/Signup Option: The host can set up a meeting at <https://hangouts.google.com/>

App Download: [Android](#) | [iPhone/iPad](#) | [Desktop](#)

How To Set Up: [Hangouts Help Center](#), [Hangouts Overview Video](#)

**Requirements: Host needs to have a gmail account. Or, to use the apps on a mobile device, users need to create a Google account for free.*

WHATSAPP | *For any smartphone users (iOS and Android, etc.)*

WhatsApp works on multiple devices, and allows you to make group video or audio calls with up to 4 devices at a time. You'll need to all the app to sync your contacts for best results.

App Download: [Android](#) | [iPhone/iPad](#) | [Desktop](#)

How To Set Up: [Making Video Calls](#)

**Requirements: Everyone must have WhatsApp downloaded on their device, and create an account.*

ZOOM | *For iOS, Android, Windows and Mac users*

Zoom is a professional solution often used for business. However, they do offer free video chat hosting up to 100 users, set to a time-limit of 40 minutes per meeting. You can use Zoom on any device, but downloaded software is required and there are a few steps to take before you're on a call. A host will need to set up the meeting and send an invite link to intended participants.

App Download: [Android](#) | [iPhone/iPad](#) | [Desktop](#)

How To Set Up: [Details](#) | [Host Setup](#) |

**Requirements: Everyone must have the app downloaded on their device or computer. No account is required*