

My Video Chat for Seniors



COVERS

FaceTime, Facebook Messenger, Google Duo, Google Meet, Microsoft Teams, Skype, WhatsApp, and Zoom



AARP[®]

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In this chapter, you discover the major video chat platforms—Zoom, FaceTime, Facebook Messenger, Skype, WhatsApp, Google Duo, Google Meet, and Microsoft Teams.

- Introducing the Major Video Chat Platforms
- Evaluating the Major Video Chat Platforms
- Which Video Chat Platform(s) Should You Use?
- Which Device(s) Should You Use for Video Chat?

2

Comparing Video Chat Platforms

All the video chat platforms discussed in this book do pretty much the same thing in pretty much the same fashion—although there are some differences between them. The question, then, is which video chat platform should you use—under which circumstances.

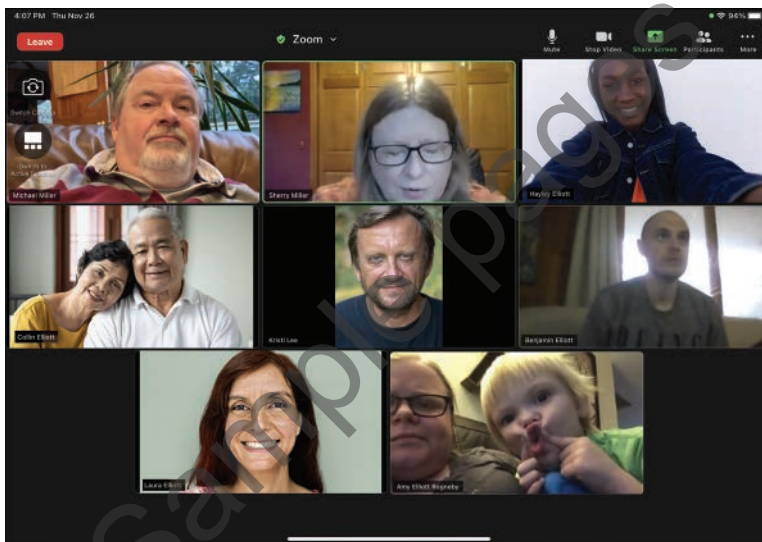
Read on to learn about the major video chat platforms: their main features, what devices they work on, their pros, and their cons. It'll help you choose which video chat platforms to use—and when.

Introducing the Major Video Chat Platforms

Which video chat platform you use when depends on the device you use, the number of people you want to chat with, how long you want to talk, and more. This section covers eight video chat platforms, all free and popular with individual users.

Zoom

Zoom is the most popular video chat platform today, used by about two-thirds of all people doing video chatting. Zoom started out targeting large businesses but gained popularity among individuals, schools, houses of worship, and other organizations with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Today people use Zoom to connect with friends and family, hold small group meetings, do distance learning, celebrate milestones such as birthdays and anniversaries, conduct business meetings, and much more.



A Zoom meeting on an iPad

One reason Zoom became so popular is because it's fully cross-platform. That means anyone on any device—Android or iOS (Apple) phone or tablet, or Chromebook, Mac, or Windows computer—can use Zoom, as long as the device is connected to the Internet.

Another factor is that Zoom is extremely easy to use. You simply set up an account and download the app. Then the organizer, or host, enters the phone number or email addresses of the invited participants, each of whom receives a text message or email with a link. To join the meeting, just click the link. The first time you use Zoom, you're prompted to install the Zoom app (Zoom calls it the "Zoom client," and it's free), but on subsequent uses, the app should launch

automatically. The meeting opens with all participants appearing in their own little box in the onscreen grid.

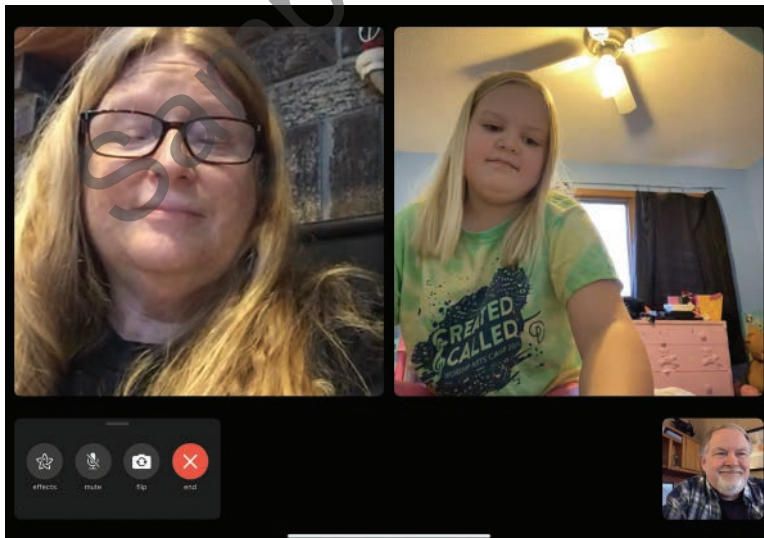
Zoom is also popular because you can share files or content so everyone can view and collaborate in real time. With the free version of Zoom, a meeting can hold up to 100 participants for 40 minutes. Learn more at www.zoom.us.

Zoom

Learn more about Zoom in Chapter 3, “Using Zoom,” and Chapter 4, “Getting More Out of Zoom.”

Apple FaceTime

If you have an iPhone or iPad, you’ve probably used FaceTime video chat. Chatting with FaceTime is as easy as making a phone call. FaceTime also works on Mac computers, although it’s not available for Android phones or tablets or for Windows computers.



Group FaceTime on an iPad

Apple, iOS, and iPadOS

Apple's iPhones run an operating system known as iOS. Apple's iPads run a similar operating system called iPadOS. In this book and elsewhere, both iPhones and iPads are often referred to as iOS devices.

If you have an Apple device, FaceTime shows up as a calling feature and taps directly into your device's contacts. With the tap of an onscreen button, you can initiate or answer a video call.

If you want to hold a group video chat, you use a feature that Apple calls Group FaceTime. This lets you hold chats with up to 32 participants with no time limits.

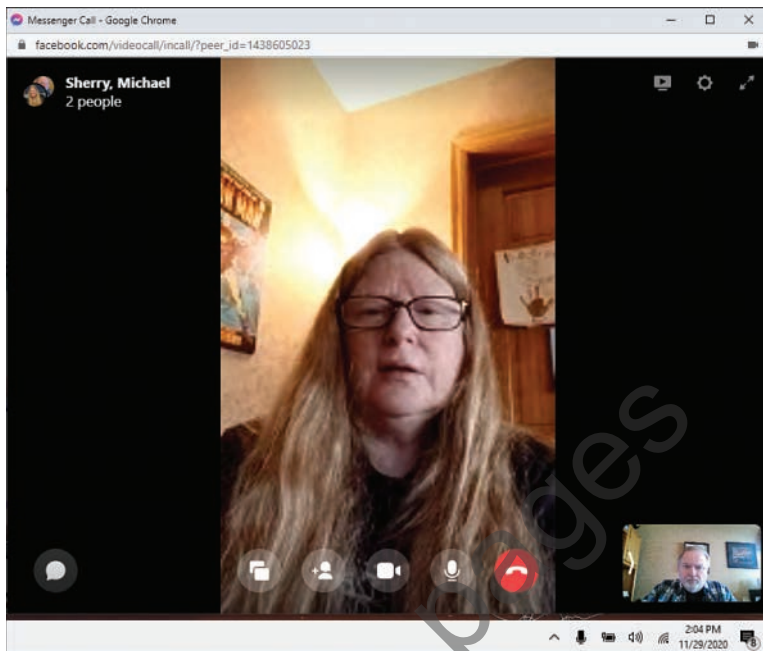
FaceTime is included for free with all Apple computers and devices, no additional installation necessary.

FaceTime

Learn more about FaceTime in Chapter 5, "Using FaceTime."

Facebook Messenger

Facebook Messenger is a messaging and video chat app from the Facebook social network. It's available to all Facebook members on all devices (Android and iOS phones and tablets, as well as Chromebook, Mac, and Windows computers). It is only available to people who are Facebook members.



Facebook Messenger on a computer

On a computer, you use Facebook Messenger from the Facebook website, in any web browser. On phones and tablets, you download the Messenger app separately from the Facebook app or use your phone's web browser. (Facebook also makes separate Facebook Portal devices that enable Messenger voice and video calls through a smart display or, in the case of the Portal TV device, your TV.)

Messenger lets Facebook users participate in audio and video calls with their Facebook friends. By default, all calls are person to person, although Facebook offers Messenger Rooms for group chat. A Room can have up to 50 participants; you can even invite people who don't have Facebook accounts to a Room. There is no time limit on Messenger video chats.

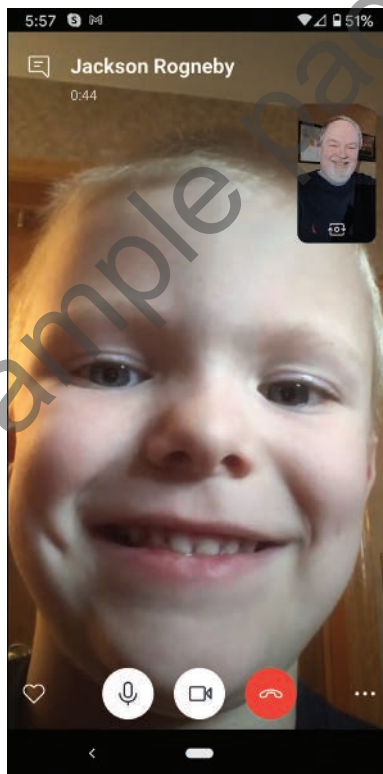
Because of how easy it is to use—and how many people use Facebook every day—Facebook Messenger is increasing in popularity, especially among older users. Learn more at www.messenger.com.

Facebook Messenger

Learn more about Facebook Messenger in Chapter 6, “Using Facebook Messenger.”

Skype

Skype was one of the first video chat platforms. Like Zoom, it’s available across most major platforms—Android and iOS phones and tablets, as well as Mac and Windows computers (but not Chromebooks). I have an Android phone, and I use Skype almost daily to chat with one of my granddaughters who has an Apple iPhone.



Skype on an Android phone

Microsoft, Skype, and Teams

Skype is owned by Microsoft, which also offers the newer Microsoft Teams chat platform discussed later in this chapter. Microsoft has transitioned all Skype business users to the Teams platform but maintains the Skype platform for consumer users.

Like all the other services discussed here, Skype video chats are completely free. Learn more at www.skype.com.

Skype

Learn more about Skype in Chapter 7, “Using Skype.”

WhatsApp

WhatsApp is a mobile-based messaging and video chat platform that is extremely popular among school-aged kids but is also gaining popularity among more mature users. It's actually more popular outside the United States, with a huge following in Latin America, India, and parts of Asia and Europe. The app is available for both Android and iOS devices.



The WhatsApp app on an Android phone

WhatsApp started out as a messaging platform for younger users and still is used by many to send text messages and photos to friends. (It includes lots of stickers and emoji that the kids seem to like.) The platform has added voice and video chat, as well, which makes it a popular choice, especially for those already using it for texting.

Know, however, that when it comes to voice and video chatting, WhatsApp is strictly for mobile phone users. You can voice and video chat on Android and iOS devices but not on the web-based version of the service, which is limited solely to text messages.

By default, WhatsApp video chats are one to one. You can, however, add up to eight total participants to a group video call with no time restrictions. If you want to include even more participants, you can shift from WhatsApp to Messenger Rooms in the Facebook Messenger app. (WhatsApp is owned by Facebook and shares the Messenger Rooms technology.)

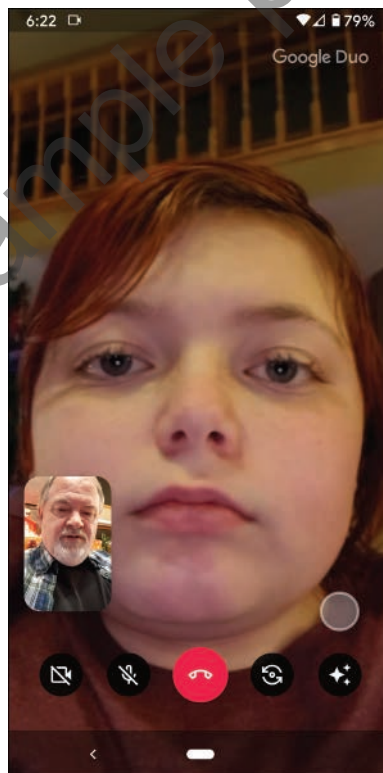
WhatsApp is a free service, like all the other video chat platforms discussed here. Learn more at www.whatsapp.com.

WhatsApp

Learn more about WhatsApp in Chapter 8, “Using WhatsApp.”

Google Duo

Google Duo is a newer video chat platform from Google, designed to compete with Apple FaceTime for both iPhone and Android smartphone use. You'll find Google Duo preinstalled on many Android phones (including Google's line of Pixel phones). You can also download the Duo app for free from the Google Play Store for Android devices or Apple's App Store for iPhones and iPads. There's also a web version available, so you can use it on your Chromebook, Mac, or Windows computer.



Google Duo on an Android phone

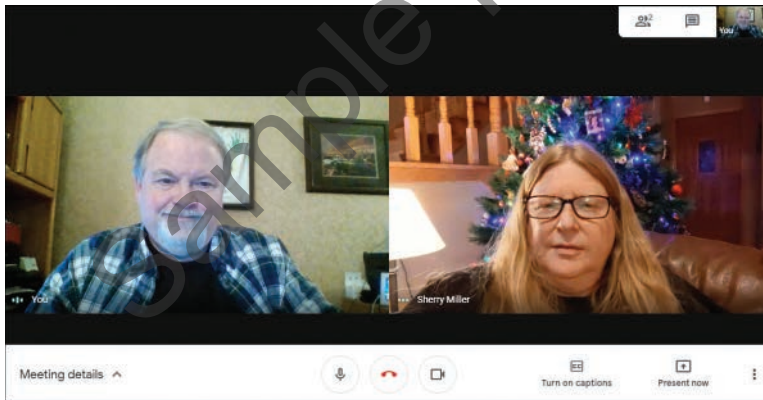
Duo is primarily designed for one-on-one video calls (and in the Android and iOS apps is integrated with your phone's calling app). You can, however, set up group video chats with up to 32 participants with no time limits. Google Duo is free, although you need a Google account to use it. Learn more at duo.google.com.

Google Duo and Google Meet

Learn more about Google Duo and Google Meet in Chapter 9, "Using Google Duo and Meet."

Google Meet

Also from Google is Google Meet. Unlike Duo, Google Meet is designed for larger video meetings of up to 100 participants for up to 60 minutes.



Google Meet on a Windows computer

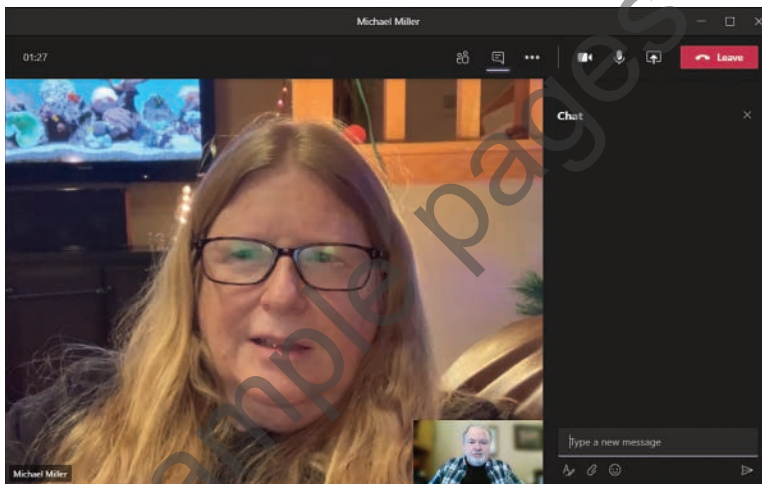
Google Meet was originally designed for secure business meetings. During the early weeks of the COVID-19 crisis, however, Google reengineered it to be more consumer friendly (and to compete more directly with Zoom). Today, Google Meet is free for consumers to use; all you need is a Google account.

Google Meet is available for all devices and platforms, including Android, iOS, Mac, Windows, and Chrome OS. Google also offers paid accounts with additional features, including no 60-minute time limit on chats.

Learn more at meet.google.com.

Microsoft Teams

The final video chat platform in our sights is Microsoft Teams. Teams is actually a collaboration platform targeted at businesses as part of the Microsoft 365 offering.



Microsoft Teams on a Windows computer

The business version of Microsoft Teams includes text messaging, voice and video calling, video conferencing, and file sharing between Microsoft's Office apps; the cost is a minimum of \$5 per user per month. There is also a free version of Microsoft Teams designed for consumers that focuses on messaging and audio and video chat.

This free version of Microsoft Teams includes one-on-one and group voice and video chats. It's available on all platforms, including Android and iOS as well as via web browser on Windows, Mac, and Chromebook computers. Group video chats can have up to 250 participants and last up to 24 hours, making Teams a good choice for all-day meetings or chats. Learn more at www.microsoft.com/microsoft-365/microsoft-teams/group-chat-software.

Microsoft Teams

Learn more about Microsoft Teams in Chapter 10, “Using Microsoft Teams.”

>>> *Go Further*

OTHER VIDEO CHAT PLATFORMS

The eight video chat platforms discussed in this chapter are the most popular among home users, but they're not the only platforms vying for eyeballs. There are a number of video chat platforms targeted at the business or enterprise market that have millions of individual users. These platforms typically offer more functionality than mere video conferencing, including enhanced security, real-time collaboration and file sharing, and integration with Microsoft Office and other apps.

Among the most popular of these enterprise-level video communications platforms are

- BlueJeans (www.bluejeans.com)
- Cisco Webex (www.webex.com)
- GoToMeeting (www.gotomeeting.com)
- Wickr (www.wickr.com)

As noted, these platforms are not designed for casual consumer use and have few home users.

Evaluating the Major Video Chat Platforms

What are the differences between all these video chat platforms and how do they compare? Refer to Table 2.1 for a breakdown of the details of each of the major video chat platforms.