



Popular Free Video Conference Platforms for Personal Use Compared



ZOOM VS GOOGLE HANGOUT VS GOOGLE DUO VS SKYPE VS FACETIME VS FACEBOOK MESSENGER

In this era of social distancing, video conferencing has shifted from being important to being essential. Even if we're stuck at home, we can connect face-to-face with co-workers, family members, friends, instructors and students.

However, not all video conferences are made equal. To discover the advantages and limitations of various options, Yann and I have examined seven popular solutions that are geared towards personal use: [Zoom](#), [Google Hangout](#), [Google Duo](#), [Skype](#), [Facetime](#) and [Facebook Messenger](#) (note: since the business requirements are significantly different for enterprise-grade platforms, at this time we aren't focusing on platforms like GoToMeeting, Microsoft Teams, Zoom Meeting and join.me).

Below you'll find the results of our analysis, which focus on aspects such as video quality, security, and compatibility. If you prefer to sit back and watch us, [here's the video!](#)



ZOOM COMBINES CLOUD VIDEO CONFERENCING, SIMPLE ONLINE MEETINGS, AND GROUP MESSAGING IN ONE EASY-TO-USE PLATFORM.

WHAT WE LOVE

EASY TO USE: Zoom is very easy to use. Simply download the application and you're ready to go.

NO ACCOUNT NEEDED: Compared to other platforms (like Facetime and Skype), you don't need to create an account to use Zoom.

100-PERSON LIMIT: Zoom offers an impressive 100-person limit on calls. Up to 49 people can be visible at one time, which turns the call window into a giant mosaic of humanity.

WHERE IT NEEDS IMPROVEMENT

SECURITY: Unfortunately, the words "privacy disaster" describe Zoom at this point. To start with, it was revealed that user personal information was being mined to target ads. In addition, Zoom apparently installed a hidden web server on user devices, which allowed users to be added to calls without their consent. A bug was also discovered that enabled hackers to hack into a user's webcam and mic.

TIME LIMIT: We were disappointed to find out that with the free plan, Zoom calls are limited to 40 minutes.

AVAILABLE PLATFORM

Zoom is available for Windows 10, Mac, Linux, Web, iOS, and Android, and it has plug-ins for Chrome, Firefox, and Outlook.

REQUIREMENTS

To launch a Zoom call, you need to enter an email address and password. But if someone sends you a Zoom call invite, simply click on the invitation and launch the app.

SECURITY

By default, Zoom encrypts in-meeting and in-webinar presentation content at the application layer using TLS 1.2, with Advanced Encryption Standard (AES) 256-bit algorithm for the Desktop Client. However, be advised that Zoom does not feature end-to-end encryption.

WHO IT'S FOR

If you're chatting with friends and family, and you're careful not to reveal any sensitive personal data, then Zoom should be ideal for you. However, because of the security concerns we cannot recommend it for large organizations.



GOOGLE HANGOUTS OFFERS USERS A SIMPLE, FAST AND EASY PLATFORM TO CHAT AND HAVE VIDEO CALLS WITH INDIVIDUALS OR GROUPS

WHAT WE LOVE

INTERFACE: Google Hangouts' interface is very neat and easy to navigate on all their platforms. It's also great that you can see who's available for a chat.

ARCHIVING: Google Hangouts will save and archive chats, which makes it easy to review anything at a later date.

VIDEO QUALITY: Google Hangouts offers good video quality. It's not as great as Skype or Zoom, but it's better than Facebook

WHERE IT NEEDS IMPROVEMENT

ONLINE STATUS: The Google Hangouts mobile app doesn't display status messages or who is currently online (which is not an issue with the web app).

PRIVACY CONCERNS: If someone adds you to their Google Hangout, there is no way for you to delete your profile.

AVAILABLE PLATFORM

Google Hangouts is available for Windows 10, Mac, Linux, Chrome OS, Web, Android and iOS, and it's integrated with Google apps and G Suite.

REQUIREMENT

You need a Google account to access Google Hangouts.

SECURITY

Google Hangouts encrypts conversations but doesn't provide end-to-end encryption. Instead, messages are encrypted "in transit". This means that messages are only encrypted between your device and Google's servers. Once they are on a server, Google has access to them.

WHO IT'S FOR

Google Hangouts is a good option for personal use and smaller businesses.



GOOGLE DUO IS A SIMPLE MOBILE APP THAT'S EASY TO USE, RELIABLE, AND OFFERS HIGH QUALITY VIDEO CALLING.

WHAT WE LOVE

FAST AND RELIABLE: Google Duo was built for fast and reliable video calling. Whether you're on Wi-Fi or using cellular data, Google Duo will always maximize the call strength and bandwidth.

RECORD A MESSAGE: A really neat feature of Google Duo is that if you call someone and they don't pick up, you can just leave them a short video.

SMILE! KNOCK KNOCK IS ON: This cool feature lets you see a live video of your caller before you answer, and vice versa. Note: the first time you make a call with Google Duo, it will say, "Smile! Knock Knock is on", which means that the person you're calling will see you appear on their screen while the phone is ringing.

WHERE IT NEEDS IMPROVEMENT

MISSING FEATURES: Google Duo for mobile offers a much richer set of features vs. the web platform, which is quite limited.

AVAILABLE PLATFORM

Google Duo is available for iOS, Android, and Google Chrome. There is also a web version.

REQUIREMENTS

No account or subscription is necessary, and you can sign up with a phone number.

SECURITY

Duo uses end-to-end encryption for calls. Only people in a call can know what's said or shown, and Google can't see, hear, or save your call's audio and video.

WHO IT'S FOR

Google Duo is a solid, easy-to-use, secure, and convenient video call application. It's a great option for connecting with friends and family.



SKYPE IS A VERY POPULAR VIDEO CALL SERVICE THAT NOT ONLY OFFERS FREE GROUP VIDEO CALLING, BUT ALSO SUPPORTS CALLING TO STANDARD PHONES, LIVE TRANSLATION, TEXT CHATTING, AND MUCH MORE.

WHAT WE LOVE

CHAT: Skype offers a great chat experience. You can even send photos, files, and video messages.

SKYPE'S VOIP: One of Skype's best features is the ability to set up a Skype Number, which is like having a regular landline number — but at a much lower price. Skype Number costs about \$2.99/month for unlimited domestic calling. However, you cannot make emergency calls.

TRANSLATE: Another impressive feature is Skype Translate. Simply speak and hear real-time spoken translation offered in nine different languages, including: English, French, Arabic, Chinese, German, Portuguese and Italian. Don't expect perfect translation, but the tool can usually get your meaning across enough for basic understanding.

WHERE IT NEEDS IMPROVEMENT

TRYING TOO HARD: Skype might be trying to do too much, and should concentrate on video calls instead of spreading itself too thin.

AVAILABLE PLATFORM

Skype is available for Android, Android Wear, iOS, Apple Watch, Windows, Blackberry, Linux, and Xbox.

REQUIREMENTS

You need a Microsoft account, or you can sign in with Facebook.

SECURITY

Skype provides end-to-end encrypted messaging service.

WHO IT'S FOR

Overall, Skype is a solid choice for all small and mid-sized companies since it's one of the best products out there for large groups.



FACETIME MAKES AUDIO AND VIDEO CALLS FROM YOUR IPHONE, IPAD, AND OTHER IOS DEVICES EASY AND EFFORTLESS.

WHAT WE LOVE

APPLE WATCH: You can easily make FaceTime Audio calls using Apple Watch.

FACETIME AUDIO: FaceTime supports a call component called FaceTime Audio, which allows you to talk with other users who have Apple devices, and route calls over data or Wi-Fi.

LIVE PHOTOS: You can take live photos while you're having a FaceTime video chat with friends and family.

WHERE IT NEEDS IMPROVEMENT

APPLE ONLY: One of the big drawbacks to FaceTime is that it's exclusive to Apple hardware. Windows and Android users are out of luck.

AVAILABLE PLATFORM

FaceTime is built into and available on every iPhone, iPad, Mac, and iOS device.

REQUIREMENTS

You need iOS 10.0 or later.

SECURITY

Apple is a privacy advocate so you can be certain that the company will never sell your information to any third parties. The audio/video contents of FaceTime calls are secured with end-to-end encryption, so no one except the sender and receiver can access them. FaceTime uses Internet Connectivity Establishment (ICE) to establish a peer-to-peer connection between devices.

WHO IT'S FOR

FaceTime is the great video calling app for Apple users who want to stay connected with friends and family. It's also a good alternative for making international calls when no long-distance plan is available (or costs too much).



FACEBOOK MESSENGER ALLOWS YOU TO INSTANTLY REACH THE PEOPLE YOU CARE ABOUT. IT IS A FAST, FREE, AND RELIABLE WAY TO STAY IN TOUCH.

WHAT WE LOVE

MESSENGER ROOMS: You can now create a room directly from Messenger or Facebook and invite your friends to join your video call. Rooms will soon hold up to 50 people with no time limit.

“LIVE WITH” FEATURE: If you’ve already started a video call and realized you forgot to invite someone, no problem at all – you can add another person into your live video using the “Live With” feature.

AUDIO ONLY: If you have restricted data or a spotty connection, you can choose to listen to the audio only.

WHERE IT NEEDS IMPROVEMENT

UNRELIABLE VIDEO QUALITY: The quality of Facebook Messenger video calls isn’t always reliable. Sometimes, the video will suddenly freeze or become very pixelated.

LIMITED FEATURES: Facebook Messenger mobile app is a pretty basic video messenger application. There’s no file sharing feature, screen sharing, message recording, and so on.

AVAILABLE PLATFORM

Facebook Messenger is available for iOS, Android, Windows, and Mac.

REQUIREMENTS

You need a Facebook account to access Facebook Messenger, and you’ll also need to be Facebook friends with the person you’re trying to call.






SECURITY

Facebook offers end-to-end encryption across all its applications, but be careful as only one to one chats are end-to-end encrypted, so group conversations are not as secure.

WHO IT’S FOR

Facebook Messenger is a good option for chatting with friends and family.

HERE IS A TABLE FOR A QUICK OVERVIEW OF SOME ADVANCED OPTIONS SUPPORTED BY THE DIFFERENT FREE VIDEO CONFERENCE PLATFORMS .

	 Zoom	 Google Hangouts	 Google Duo	 Skype	 Facetime	 Facebook Messenger
Attendee Limit	100	25*	12	50	32	50
Instant Messaging	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Screen Sharing	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Time Limit	1:1 - Unlimited Group: 40 minutes	No Limit	No Limit	4 hours/call 100 hours /month	No Limit	No Limit
Session Recording	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Video Streaming	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
File Transfer	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Remote Control	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Live Chat	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Raise Hand	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
User ID	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Voice Call	\$	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

* The 10 participants who are currently most active on a group Hangout will be displayed at the bottom of the Hangout screen.

As always, please let us know your thoughts by using the comment feature of the blog. You can also visit our forums to get help and submit feature requests, you can find them [here](#).