

## 5 free Skype alternatives for Windows desktop

You've probably made video calls via Skype. Very popular Skype does not mean it is the best. And more importantly, it is not the safest option.

You've probably made video calls via Skype. Skype is very popular, but does not mean it is the best option. And more importantly, it is not the safest option.

A security researcher who discovered a dangerous vulnerability in Skype could allow an attacker to access your entire PC. Here are the things you should know about security risks and the best free programs to replace Skype.

## 5 free Skype alternatives for Windows desktop

1. Skype security vulnerability
2. How to keep safe
3. 5 alternatives to Skype for free
  1. 1. Google Hangouts (<https://hangouts.google.com/>)
  2. 2. ooVoo.com
  3. 3. LINE.me
  4. 4. Tox.chat
  5. 5. ICQ.com

## Skype security vulnerability

Researcher Stefan Kanthak discovered a flaw in Skype in September 2017 and announced it in February 2018. It is a relatively simple way of exploiting it by abusing the update process. Skype. Although Skype is owned by Microsoft, Microsoft does not update it via Windows Update.

Instead, Skype sometimes runs its own update checker to see if you are using the latest version. When an update is available, Skype runs the executable file, located in the folder **C: WindowsTemp**, as the SYSTEM account. Unlike your own admin account, Windows uses the SYSTEM to run different service OSs. It has full access to everything on your computer. As you can imagine, there is a problem if some bad guy has access to this account.

Unfortunately, that's exactly what Skype is having. After the Skype update runs, it calls at least one DLL, a UXTheme.dll file. When the program needs a DLL, it first checks the folders closest to it. Therefore, if someone places a fake DLL file with the same name as **C: WindowsTemp**, Skype will use that file instead of the legitimate file in the System32 directory.

When the update runs a fake DLL, it will have full access to your system, since it runs with SYSTEM privileges. Because directory **C: WindowsTemp** is accessible by all users, anyone who enters your file system can create a

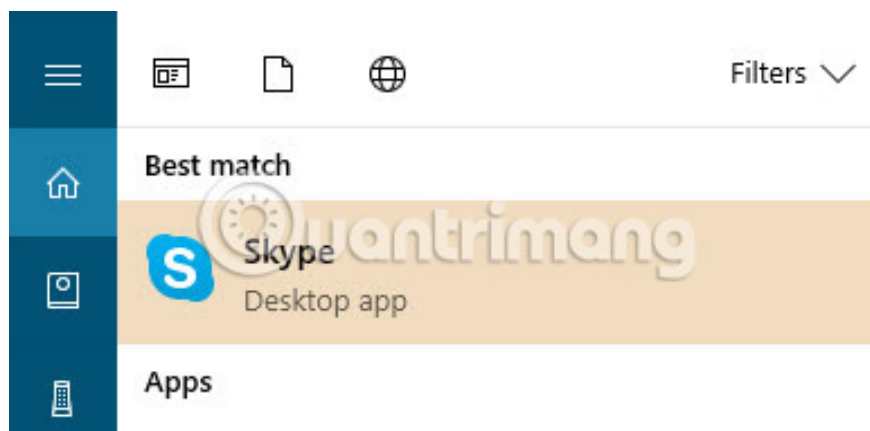
fake DLL file. The next time you update Skype, you may be attacked by ransomware software, stolen files or worse.

Microsoft is aware of this vulnerability (and even warned about it before), but, unfortunately, this error is still irreparable with a simple update. Microsoft's answer to Kanthak is as follows:

They (Microsoft) have determined that the fix will be done in the newer version of the product, not the security update [.] The installer will need a large code revision to prevent blocking DLL tampering, but all resources have been put into new application development.

## How to keep safe

Since Microsoft has not yet resolved this issue, it is safest to uninstall Skype from your PC. To check if you have installed the Skype version for your computer, type Skype into the Windows 10 Start menu. If you see the **Desktop app** under the entry, you have installed the vulnerable version.



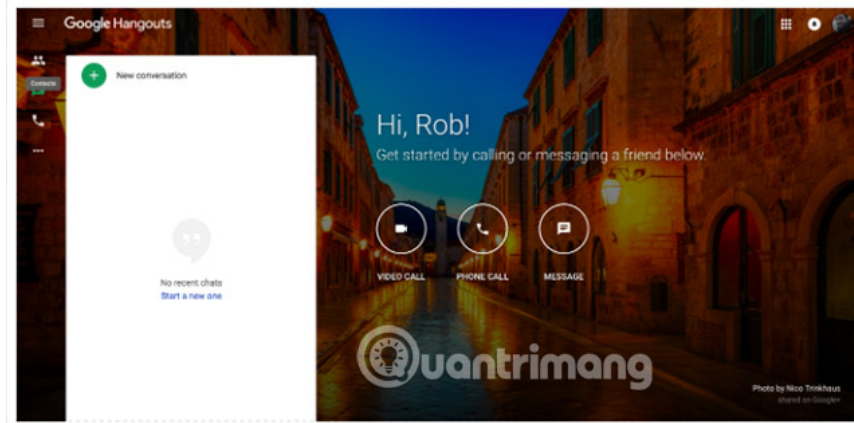
A reliable Microsoft Store application appears, meaning you have a UWP version of Skype. This lucky version is not vulnerable to attack. This is because it updates through Microsoft Store, not an independent update. Although the application has received mixed opinions, this is an appropriate option if you need to access Skype.

If you don't want to use the UWP version of Skype or don't have Windows 10, you can use the shortened web version of Skype. It's nothing too fancy, but still full of the functions you need.

Are you completely bored with Skype and want to use this vulnerability as an excuse to give it up? You can replace it with one of the options below and nothing to worry about.

## 5 alternatives to Skype for free

1. **Google Hangouts** (<https://hangouts.google.com/>)



As the most popular service after Skype, Hangouts can do everything, just like what Skype allows you to do. Search for someone by their email address or phone number, start chatting with them via text message, audio call or video chat. You can add a group of 10 people and your Google contacts will automatically update and organize.

Using Hangouts, you can even make calls to mobile or landline phones that do not use the service. They are almost always free in the United States and Canada but have different rates in other countries. If you have many friends who are not Apple users, this is a great option for you.

The only problem with Hangouts is that the official version for the desktop is not great. Previously, the Chrome app called Common Hangouts was the best way to use this service, but Google removed the application and redirected to the current Hangouts site.

Therefore, you can only use the program as a Chrome application, or try using an alternative solution like Franz (meetfranz.com), allowing you to use Hangouts and other services, all from a program. YakYak is also a third-party desktop application that replaces Hangouts.

Google also plans to split Hangouts into two separate services, aimed at business customers. Maybe Hangouts will still be for home users but that's something to consider.

## **2. ooVoo.com**



ooVoo is one of the favorite tools for making free group calls, a great feature on Skype. If you are an extrovert, you will love limited to 12 people on ooVoo's video calls. It also has a lot of features to support direct messaging. ooVoo prides itself on high audio and video quality throughout the call.

You can record video calls to watch later or leave a picture or video message. Groups can even watch YouTube videos together if people are using PC apps. ooVoo offers in-app purchases. Base service is always free.

### 3. LINE.me



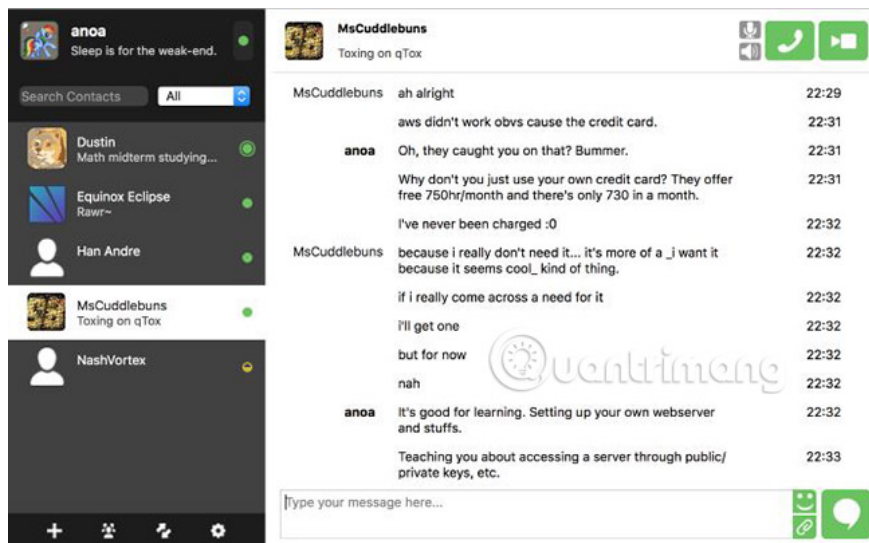
LINE is another messaging application that allows you to easily follow your friends. In addition to Windows desktop, it is also available for all mobile devices. As you would expect, the service offers free video calls, voice calls and text messaging. If you want your chats to be interesting, you can choose from thousands of animated stickers. However, most of them must be purchased in the LINE store.

If you share a lot of things in your conversations, LINE supports a number of media formats that even Skype doesn't have. You can leave a message to someone later or even give your location if needed. LINE also

promotes the "official account" of celebrities, although there is no guarantee that your favorite videos will be available here. Watching ads allows you to make short international calls for free.

LINE has a good set of features and is worth a try, if you are looking for something a little different than usual.

#### 4. Tox.chat



Tox is an app worth considering if you are looking for a safe alternative to Skype. It is not created by a corporation. Instead, it is an open source tool made by "people who are fed up with existing options, are monitoring, censoring and preventing us from innovating".

You might think that such an application would have an ugly interface or a confusing setting, but Tox isn't like that. Please install **qTox** (full featured application) or **uTox** (lighter version) and start chatting. Tox is completely free and without any ads. Chat, making voice calls and secure video calls means no one can follow you. You can even share your screen and unlimited commercial files.

Moreover, Tox will automatically exit the user's system, so no server will allow malicious software to attack users. This may be a new app for you, but Tox is definitely worth considering if you value privacy and freedom in your application.

#### 5. ICQ.com



ICQ has been available since 1998, but please be assured that it is still updated for use at this time.

It is a simple messaging application that does not cause any disturbance. The application encrypts your calls and of course you can chat in groups. If someone sends a voice message, you can convert the voice message into text if you can't hear it at the time. Live chat allows you to chat with people on topics like travel or dating.

You can even message people in the contact list but don't use ICQ. The application will turn your message into a free text message. ICQ also supports large file transfers up to 4GB. If you have some friends who also use this service, you'll find something interesting here.

You should abandon the desktop version of Skype and use any alternatives on this list. There is no reason to keep potential security risks on your system. When Microsoft releases a fix version for Skype, you can reinstall that version later. But now, link to the Modern or Web version of Skype, or choose an alternative.

Other options also offer similar features. Chances are that one of these 5 apps will meet your messaging needs, after you give up Skype. Of course, a service is only really good when many people use it. So even if you love one of these apps, you'll have to convince your friends to join.

What messaging service did you install on your PC? Let us know what makes it your favorite choice and suggest other applications that the article missed in the comment section below!

See more:

1. Tips should know if you're using Skype
2. What to do when Skype video doesn't work?
3. How to turn off or show the Preview URL link on Skype

You finished reading the article "**5 free Skype alternatives for Windows desktop**" edited by the [TipsMake](#) team. We hope this article has provided you with many useful tech tips and tricks. You can search for similar articles on tips and guides. Thank you for reading and for following us regularly.