

How to use Skype's new free video call feature, even if you don't have an account

Skype's free Meet Now group chat feature is here to compete with Zoom, but there's a catch.

Skype stepped up its service with a brand new feature called Meet Now that lets you start a video chat or meeting without having to sign up for an account or download the app to your desktop. This is Skype's way of competing with Zoom, which saw a massive surge in users after coronavirus lockdowns and quarantines started -- but has recently faced a number of security issues, including uninvited guests "Zoombombing" meetings.

Skype is owned by Microsoft, which has its own video chat platform for businesses called Microsoft Teams. But Skype's Meet Now tool seems to be aimed at both consumers who want to chat with friends and family and small businesses looking for a cheaper solution.



However, there is a catch. Meet Now is great for using on a laptop or desktop browser (it's supported by the Microsoft Edge and Google Chrome browsers, but not Firefox). However, if you're using it from a phone, you still need to download the Skype app -- though you don't need a Microsoft account, according to a company representative.

All of Skype's usual meeting features will work on Meet Now calls, including the ability to share your screen, record a call, turn on the background blur feature and use the chat function.

The meeting links have no expiration date, so you can create them ahead of time and have people join any time, according to Skype. As long as you have the link, you can start the call, whether you created it or are just a

participant. Links can be used again in the future -- once you have it, you can use it to join the chat any time you want.

How to use Skype Meet Now to video chat

Go to Skype's new Meet Now landing page.

Click **Create a free meeting**. A box will pop up with a unique link, and the ability to **share it** by copy and pasting, or through Outlook or Gmail.

Start your call from that same box by clicking **Start call**. This works like other Skype calls, in that you won't be able to see anything until the other person logs in.

When the call opens, you'll be asked to **join as a guest**, or to **sign into your Skype account** if you have one.

If you click join as a guest, you'll be asked to enter your name, and hit join. You'll be taken to a page with the other members you invited, where you can send messages through chat, or start the call. Skype will prompt you for permission to use your camera and microphone.

If you sign into your Skype account, you'll see the chat box and the ability to start the call through the Skype app.

Learn more about how Skype and Zoom match up, and about other Zoom alternatives for video chatting.

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