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1 How to Skype With Loved Ones

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Video chat offers a great way to stay connected with loved ones from a distance—but how does Skype work? Follow this step-by-step advice.



Every Sunday morning at 8:30 a.m., Peter Worsley of Santa Barbara, Calif. sits down for a face-to-face conversation with his son, David, who lives 130 miles away in Huntington Beach—and neither leaves home. Their weekly chat takes place online, via Skype.

Skype is a software application that allows you to use your computer, tablet or smartphone to place and receive video calls.

"It's so easy," says Worsley, 84, a retired marketing professional. "All I do is turn it on, and when I see David's name come up in my contact list, I click on it and have a video conversation."

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While video calling has been available since 2003, Skype has become more popular in recent years, with more than 300 million users worldwide. The app is ideal for older adults who live far away from their loved ones or who are unable to get out often to see them.

"It feels like the person you are calling is in the room," says Lisa Larson-Katley, founder of the tech training website [LearnFromLisa.com](#). "It's the closest thing we have today to the videophone we were promised back in the '60s and '70s."

Ready to tackle something new and connect with your friends and family? Follow these steps to make your first call.

Download Skype first

Before you can start using video chat, make sure you have the right items. You will need:

- A high-speed Internet connection
- A computer, tablet or smartphone with a built-in camera (webcam)
- Headphones if you have difficulty hearing

Next, it's time to [download Skype](#). Many computers come pre-loaded with the application, so you may already have it on your computer. If you don't already have it, go to [Skype.com](#). Click "Downloads" on the top navigation and then choose the version that's appropriate for your Mac or PC. If you're on a smartphone or tablet, visit the application store on your device and search for "Skype."

If you're not used to downloading apps, consider asking for help. "Downloading Skype to your computer is probably the hardest part," says 16-year-old Sara Zaghi of Tarzana, Calif., who helps seniors learn technology twice a month as president of her high school's "Do Something" club. "If you're not good with computers, ask someone to help set it up for you. Once it's set up, it's really easy to use."

When you open the app for the first time, you'll need to create a username and password. Skype will walk you through the steps to create your account. Note: If you already have a Facebook profile or Microsoft Messenger, Hotmail or Outlook account, you don't have to create a separate account for Skype—you can just sign in with the username and password you use for one of those accounts.

How to Skype for free

Once you've created a Skype account, you're ready to video chat. Here's how to make your first call:

1. Click the Skype icon on your home screen or in your "Applications" folder.
2. Log in using the username and password you already created.
3. When you log in for the first time, the program will give you the option to add a profile picture. You can click "Browse" to upload an existing photo from your computer or "Take a Picture" to take a new photo with your webcam.
4. To test the quality of your microphone, find "echo/sound test service" on your list of contacts. Click on it, choose "Call" and follow the instructions.
5. Add friends and family members to your list of contacts. Select "Search address book" on the Skype home screen to automatically search for contacts in your email and social media accounts. You can also select "Contacts" on the left side of the screen, click "Add a contact" and search for people by their full name, Skype username or email address. When you add someone to your contact list, Skype will send that person a contact request. When they accept your request, they'll be added to your list.
6. Select a name from your contact list and click "Video Call" to initiate a video chat. You can also place a call, or send an instant message or text to their phone. Note that Skype software, video calls and instant messages are free. However, if you need to Skype call or text someone's phone (and not their Skype account), you must purchase credits by clicking "Add Credit."

Scheduling these chats ahead of time will ensure that the person you are calling is available to accept your call.

Worsley says he looks forward to his scheduled phone dates with his son. "We're a close family," he says. "Since he lives four hours driving-distance from us, it's great to talk and see his face at the same time."

PUBLICATION DATE: APRIL 1, 2014

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Keywords: technology, articles, relationships

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