



Staying Connected while Physically Distancing

Purpose. Physical distancing does not have to equate to social isolation. With a variety of technologies, virtual socializing is easier than ever before. Use video calling to socialize with family and friends, host a happy hour or dinner party, play games, have a workshop, do an at home workout, etc. With a little creativity, the options are endless!

Video Calling:

Skype (*iOS, Android, Mac, Windows, Linux, web*). With Skype you can host a video call with up to 50 people for four hours at a time.

Pros: Many callers

Cons: Better on mobile, chat options are limited

Cost: Free

Facebook Messenger (*iOS, Android, Mac, Windows*). Facebook Messenger supports up to 8 people at a time.

Pros: Easy to use, no time limit

Cons: Requires a Facebook account, limited participants per group

Cost: Free

WhatsApp (*iOS, Android, Mac, Windows, web*). Popular for its ability to host group chats of up to 256 people, WhatsApp can also be used for video calling.

Pros: Focused on security and privacy

Cons: Only supports four people at a time

Cost: Free

FaceTime (*iOS, Mac*). Up to 32 devices can participate in a video call using FaceTime.

Pros: Easy to use, built-in if you have an Apple device

Cons: Apple devices only

Cost: Free with Apple devices

Zoom (*iOS, Android, Mac, Windows*). Host gatherings with up to 100 people.

Pros: Reliable, lots of bells and whistles including chatting, screensharing, splitting into smaller groups ("breakout rooms"), and using a virtual whiteboard

Cons: 40-minute limit for free version, considerable background data collection

Cost: Free for basic package

Houseparty (*iOS, Android, web*). Video calling with a unique twist using incorporated games.

Pros: Built in games

Cons: Maximum of 8 people

Cost: Free, game add-ons cost extra

Community Technology Resources

1) **Xfinity/Comcast and Spectrum/Charter cable** services have opened up ALL of their WiFi hotspots to both current customers and non-customers.

Spectrum: <https://broadbandnow.com/Charter-Communications>

Xfinity: <https://hotspots.wifi.xfinity.com/>

2) Comcast "Internet Essentials"

Comcast will provide 60 days of free internet services for any student who qualifies for their [Internet Essentials program](#).

3) Spectrum/Charter Free Internet

Charter will offer free [Spectrum broadband and Wi-Fi access](#) for 60 days to households with K-12 and/or college students who do not already have a Spectrum broadband subscription and at any service level up to 100 Mbps.

Discord (*iOS, Android, Mac, Windows, Linux, web*). This is a popular resource for gaming-related communications. While Discord can be used for simple video chat, it is much more focused on voice chatting.

Pros: Useful for voice chatting

Cons: Not video-focused, somewhat confusing interface

Cost: Free

Other Resources for Virtual Socializing:

Netflix Party (*web*). Host long distance movie nights or TV watch parties.

Pros: Synchronized watching with chat room

Cons: Only available on Chrome browsers on desktop or laptop computers

Cost: Free

JQBX (*iOS, Android, Mac*). Play or listen to music with friends, host a virtual dance party, cheer or boo for songs.

Pros: Synchronized listening with chat room

Cons: A Spotify Premium account is required

Cost: Free with Spotify Premium

Jackbox Games and Party Packs (*Steam (PC/Mac/Linux), Playstation 4, Xbox One, Nintendo Switch, Apple TV & iPad, Amazon Fire TV, Humble (PC/Mac/Linux), Fanatical (PC/Mac/Linux), Epic Games (PC/Mac), Comcast Xfinity, Mac App Store, Android TV*). Jackbox allows owners of the games or party packs to host games. Players can join at jackbox.tv using a room code.

Pros: Fun and easy to learn games

Cons: Each game has a minimum and maximum number of players, you will need to find a way to share the screen for players and talk to one another (Read [this article](#) for suggestions!)

Cost: \$20.99 - \$29.99 per Party Pack (5 games each); [Jackbox is offering Drawful 2 for free on Steam and Apple TV, and 99% off on the Nintendo Switch for three weeks beginning on March 20th](#)

Tabletop Simulator (*Steam (PC/Mac/Linux)*). Use a virtual table to play tabletop games with up to 10 people. The base game has 15 classics ready to go, including Checkers, Chess, Dominoes, and Mahjong. You can even flip the table!

Pros: Feel like you're playing in person by playing with boards, cards, dice, and objects that you can pick up, deal, roll, and toss

Cons: You need a Steam account, requires time to learn all the features

Cost: \$19.99 on Steam

There are many other games you can find online to play with friends for a variety of costs, though many can be found for free. Some options include: [Settlers of Catan](#), [Dominion](#), [Ticket to Ride](#), [card games](#), [Pandemic](#), [Minecraft](#), [Monopoly](#), and so many more!

