

Tech Tips for Seniors

Video Calls With Family and Friends

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Many of us have watched TV newscasts during the COVID-19 pandemic where people being interviewed are seen using cameras on computers located in their dens and living rooms.

Also, many newspapers use video-sharing apps that allow reporters and editors to communicate from their homes and at the sites of news stories with colleagues in their newsrooms.

But the technology isn't just for the media or business meetings. It is fairly easy to use for all of us who want to stay in touch with family and friends while "social distancing" is the rule of our daily lives.

There are several free "apps" that make video connections possible. Return to the Table of Contents for a list of these apps and instructions on how to make video calls:

- Skype (up to 50 people at a time)
- Zoom (up to 100 people at a time)
- Google Duo (up to 8 Google customers at a time),
- Google Hangouts with Google Calendar (up to 10 Google customers at a time)
- FaceTime (for up to 32 Apple device users at a time).

All of those video apps are available in Apple's App Store and in the Play Store on Android

devices. And they work on mobile devices as well as computers.

The Google apps require you to have a Google account; the FaceTime app works only on Apple devices.

Depending on the app, you can include several people on the same video call. All of the people you want to be on a video call with should be using the same app. If that isn't possible, a response to an E-mail invitation works just as well. And a good Wi-Fi connection is important in order to maintain the quality of the video connection.

An important thing to do is to include in your contacts list an E-mail address and a mobile phone number for the people with whom you want to share a video call. The various video apps will look inside your contacts list to connect you to one or more people at the same

time. The two Google apps, however, look inside only your Google Contacts app for a list of E-mail addresses and phone numbers.

It would be helpful to create a separate file with the E-mail addresses of a list the people you want to include in a group video session. Each E-mail address must be separated by a comma and a space.

If you are inviting someone using a mobile phone number, that person must be using a phone, not a computer, to accept your invitation. Phones AND computers can accept invitations sent to an E-mail address.

It would be ideal to make arrangements in advance for a video call. When you make a call to more than two people, all of them will receive a message alerting them to answer the invitation. If you are on the receiving end of a

call from someone who isn't in your contacts list, think twice before answering it.

If you are using either of the Google Hangouts, the best way to schedule a video call is to use Google Calendar. You must have a Google account to do this.

Instructions on how to get started are offered in detail with an Internet search for the video calling service you prefer (search on words such as "Zoom Instructions"). Instructions vary according to the type of device you are using to send invitations.

Article last updated: 4/17/20

If you have questions about any of this, feel free to make a "Technology Tips" appointment on Tuesday mornings at Generations. Just call the main number: 215-723-5841.

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