

Greetings, Big Canoe iDiots,

During times such as this Pandemic, it's always good to keep in touch with our friends and family. Of course, there's always email, telephone, and texting. But somehow, these methods don't always give the personal connection that we need. As you may know, a visual connection works much better. This can be something such as FaceTime, WhatsApp, Skype video chat, Zoom, as well as others. Connecting using one of these gives both video and audio, and goes a long way towards filling the gap of connection lack.

So, I thought it might be good to possibly help you with your connections using a some of these methods.

- **FaceTime**

This is the tried and true App from Apple, and is available on up-to-date iPhones, iPads, and iMacs. To use this, the person(s) you are connecting with must have an Apple device, and their email and phone information need to be in your Contacts list. That's about all there is to it. To use it, you can either Click on the FaceTime App, and then enter the name or phone number of the person you are calling, or else click on the person's name in your Contacts list and then click on the FaceTime button at the top. Some basics here: Situate yourself with good lighting, and preferably get something to prop your device on. You can situate your phone or iPad either in a portrait or landscape mode. There's a small button at the bottom which allows you to reverse the video view to show something like your new car, your beautiful new kitchen, etc. Be sure to switch it back when you want your face to show on their phone again.

You may also setup a Group Facetime on your iPhone or iPad.

To use Group FaceTime:

1. Select Facetime App
2. Tap the Add button in the top right corner
3. Enter the names or phone number of the people you want to add
4. Tap Video
5. The others in your group message with have to acknowledge and accept the video call.

You can add up to 32 people to a Group FaceTime call.

- **WhatsApp**

WhatsApp has become the world's most popular text and voice messaging application, with over 1 billion users. It works on both Apple and Android devices, and is a free service that works worldwide, same as FaceTime. Important: as with FT, **all users must have this app installed on their devices**. This method of video conferencing can be used on your iPhone, Mac, or Android phone. In all cases, the App needs to be installed on your particular device.

To use WhatsApp:

After installing, click on WhatsApp.

- On some devices, you will be asked a series of set-up questions, including your phone number and country code, and whether or not you accept notifications. The app will then send you an SMS message to verify your phone number and country code when you type in your phone number. Also, allow WhatsApp to access your contacts and your photos.

- To start your video call on your iPad or computer, click on “Start a new chat”, or on your iPhone, click on the “pencil and pad” at the upper right corner.
- Enter the name of the contact (whose name must be in your WhatsApp Contacts list) you want to call. You can do this by either entering their name in the search field, or by selecting their name from this Contacts list.
- When the Contacts card shows up, click on the Video (or Audio only) button.

It’s also possible to make a group WhatsApp video call, but I’ll also save that for another day. If you really, really want to know how to do this, simply bring up YouTube and google “group video WhatsApp”.

- **Zoom**

Per their website, Zoom is a “*web-based video conferencing tool that allows users to meet online, with or without video. Zoom users can choose to record sessions, collaborate on projects, and share or annotate on one another’s screens, all with one easy-to-use platform. Zoom offers quality video, audio, and a wireless screen-sharing performance across Mac, iOS, Android, and Windows*”. Practically speaking, Zoom is a great way to enable several people to have a video meeting using almost any type of phone or computer.

Recently, there has been a lot of negative publicity about what is called “Zoombombing”. This is a form of harassment in which intruders hijack video calls and post offensive stuff. If a company hosts a meeting, or a public entity such as a school uses Zoom, there certainly exists the chance of a problem. But, for a private family or friends chat, I certainly don’t think there will be a problem. I believe that the problem could only arise if the invitation email falls into the wrong hands. The preventive here is to keep your email private, and delete the invite email soon after the session. In my personal opinion, avoiding Zoom because of these possible problems is a bit like “throwing the baby out with the bathwater”.

So, how do you use Zoom? To start with, you should register with your email address and a password (I have to admit that Zoom is not as user-friendly as FaceTime or WhatsApp, but the presentation and flexibility make it very much worth the extra effort).

A Zoom conference has to be initiated by a moderator (you?). After bringing the program up, you have the option of either scheduling an immediate meeting or one at a later time. After choosing the type of meeting, you then select “New Meeting”. Depending on the device used, you will see slightly different presentations. In any event, you want participants, so you have to invite them. Depending on the device used, the prompt to invite participants is a little different. But, it’s very intuitive and user friendly, so just look for the link to invite participants. When you click on this, you are offered a choice of notification methods. The usual way to invite participants is to select email. Selecting this brings up a boilerplate email message to send to meeting invitees. Enter their email addresses on this message. Don’t worry about the message ID and Password here, as all your invitees have to do is click on the link that is in your email message. If your invitee doesn’t have Zoom installed, the email message will include an invitation and prompt to install the app. As your invitees accept, there is a bit of adjusting needed usually, things such as “admit participant”, “allow video”, etc, but it’s very intuitive.

A major point here, if using the free version (and who isn't?), your meeting is limited to 40 minutes. However, this isn't a big problem as you can simply end the current meeting and immediately begin another one, with the same folks.

You can select different types of presentations, backgrounds, mute/unmute, etc, by using the options menu at the bottom of the picture. Experimentation is ok here.

Later on, you can start doing some fun things, such as changing your background. This will be a topic for a later session (unless you use Google or YouTube to learn how this is done).

Happy quarantine time!

Gary Cherry