

Chat with Friends, Family, and Co-workers using IM

Hey! You don't have to be an America Online subscriber to instant message (IM) with friends, family and co-workers.

Several instant messaging applications allow you to keep in quick, real-time contact with your pals, whether you're using an office network or your local home Internet connection.

In this article, we'll go over some of the benefits and drawbacks of the more popular IM applications. You decide which one is best for you!

America Online's Instant Messenger (AIM) continues to be the most popular of the instant messaging applications.

You do not need to be a member of AOL to use AIM. You will need to download the software, install it on your computer, and register for the service.

AOL just released version 5.0, which requires Windows 98 or higher. If you run Windows 95, you'll want AIM version 4.8.

AIM enables instant messaging only with other AIM users. You will not be able to IM buddies who use other services, such as Yahoo Messenger.

Download AIM at www.aim.com.

MSN Messenger from Microsoft allows text chat and voice conversations—and is compatible with most versions of Windows.

The 4.6 release came out in early 2002 and lets you organize your contacts into groups. However, MSN Messenger allows IM only with other users of the service.

The Windows Messenger, also from Microsoft, allows video conversations. But this more robust service is only available for computers with the Windows XP operating system.

To download the latest release of the MSN Messenger, visit <http://messenger.msn.com/download/download.asp>.

Yahoo Messenger 5.0 is the IM service you want if video is an important part of your chat.

Yahoo's IM application is more sophisticated than AIM because of its video chat feature.

Version 5.5, currently in beta testing, introduces Super Webcam, new emoticons, and an increased number of "IMVironments" (Yahoo's cute name for custom themes that you can add as backgrounds to your messaging window).

To download the most recent version of Yahoo Messenger, visit <http://download.com.com/3000-2150-10029188.html>.

Trillian gives you a way to IM with friends and family—no matter which IM client they use. Trillian ties them all together!

Trillian integrates the other IM services. If you want to use more than one IM client, Trillian is what you need to bring everything together. The software's interoperability is its strength. Once you've downloaded and installed Trillian, you can uninstall the other client softwares—saving you space on your hard drive.

Trillian does not allow multiparty chat, except with MSN buddies. In addition, the service doesn't enable PC-to-PC audio calls.

Trillian comes in both a free and a fee-based version.

Trillian Pro, which retails for \$25, provides a more robust interface and hundreds of features that the free client doesn't offer.

To choose the version you want, visit <http://www.trillian.cc/trillian/index.html>.