

# Discord is the one app you need to be using — here's what you need to know

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## CNN —

Over the past year or so, I've lived most of my social life on Discord — and I don't think I'm alone. The popular chat app has become an invaluable tool in the wake of the pandemic, providing a seamless place to communicate over text and voice in a world where many of us are spending all of our time at home.

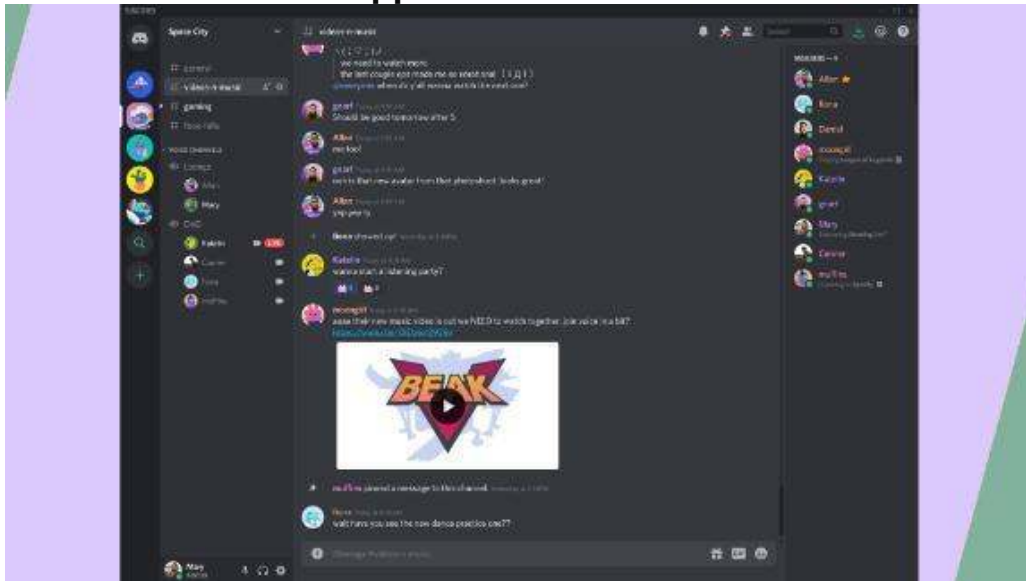
Discord is now host to more than 140 million users, and [rebranded](#) in 2020 with the simple tagline “Your Place to Talk” — shedding its former identity as an app designed mainly to help gamers communicate while competing in popular PC titles. According to the company, about 70% of active Discord users in 2020 reported that they use the platform for nongaming purposes, or a mix of gaming and everyday use. I've personally used the service to host online game nights and movie watch-alongs, attend work briefings and even conduct interviews for this very website.

“Today, there are millions of diverse communities on Discord, from families staying in touch to study groups doing homework together, communities

gathering around a hobby and teams collaborating on the production of podcasts,” said a Discord spokesperson.

But as versatile as Discord is, those coming from services such as Skype and Slack might find there to be a bit of a learning curve. And there are a ton of hidden features and tools for making the most out of the platform that existing users might not know about. Here’s how to get started on Discord, from the basics of making a server to some cool ways you can take advantage of what’s rapidly becoming the internet’s favorite place to hang out.

## What is the Discord app?

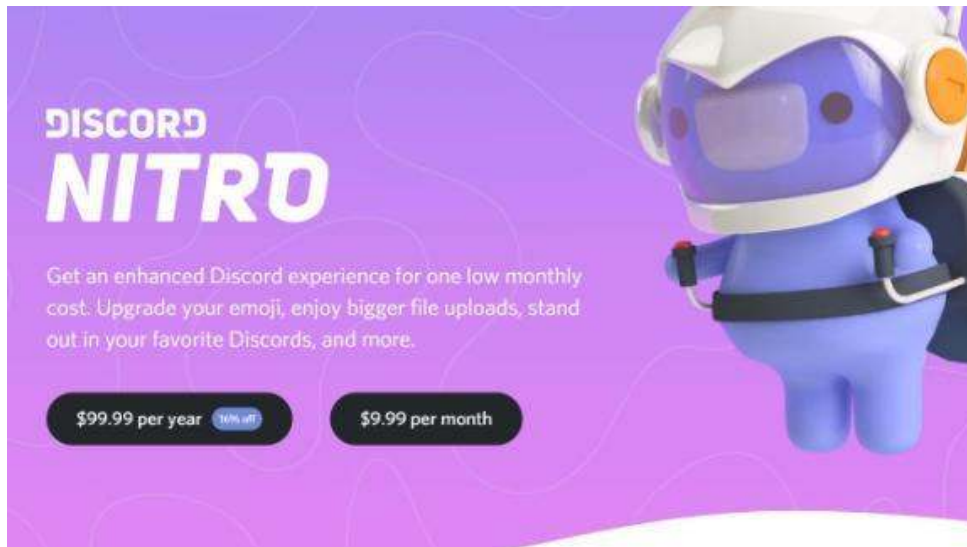


Discord first launched in 2015 as a means for people to easily communicate while playing PC games together. The service allows users to create servers, which can consist of a variety of text and voice channels. A typical server might have dedicated chat rooms for specific topics (such as “general chat” and “music discussion”) as well as voice channels for specific games or activities. The service’s high-quality, low-latency voice chat makes it a popular tool for Twitch streamers and podcasters, and it’s also grown to support large video chats to keep up with the Zoom generation. Discord also points out that the platform has “no feed, no algorithm, no likes and no way for anything to go viral,” for those burnt out on traditional social media apps.

You can use Discord on pretty much any device you own — there are dedicated [Discord desktop apps](#) for Windows and Mac as well as [iOS](#) and [Android](#) apps for chatting and calling on the go. It also works in a web browser if you’d rather not download anything. You can connect your Discord app to a number of popular services, including Twitch and Spotify,

so your friends can easily see what you're up to. While there isn't a dedicated Discord Xbox app, you can link your Discord and Xbox accounts so that people can see what you're playing on your [Xbox Series X](#) or [Xbox Series S](#). You don't need much besides your computer or phone to use Discord, but it helps to have a good microphone (such as the [Blue Snowball](#)) for chatting, and a solid webcam (like the [Logitech C920](#)) for video calls on your PC.

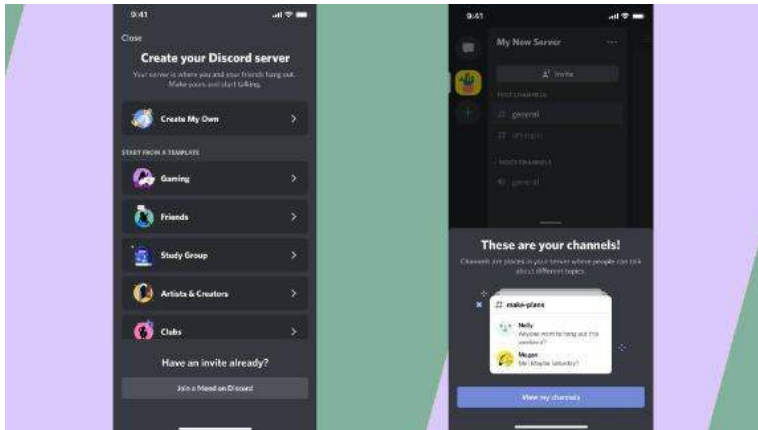
### What about Discord Nitro?



Discord is free to use, but if you want to get even more out of it, you can sign up for [Discord Nitro](#). This premium subscription tier (\$9.99 per month, or \$99.99 per year) gets you benefits such as bigger upload size limits, HD video for streaming and screen-sharing, animated avatars and custom emojis.

Nitro subscribers also get two Server Boosts, which are essentially tokens that you can spend on a server to make it even better. Boosted servers get perks such as additional emoji slots, higher audio and video quality and animated server icons, depending on how many boosts they've received. You can also buy Server Boosts separately at \$4.99 per month.

### How to set up or join a Discord server



If you're looking to create a space to communicate with your friends, classmates or co-workers, setting up a Discord server takes only a few seconds. Just click the "Add a Server" icon at the bottom left of the app (look for the big plus sign) and follow the prompts that appear. You can start from scratch, though Discord also offers a variety of useful templates, such as Gaming, Study Group and Artists & Creators.

From there, it's time to get some people in your Discord and personalize your server a bit. The app does a good job pointing out the basics, but you'll want to start by sending some invites to friends (you can do this at any time by clicking on your server name at the top left and selecting "Invite People"). You can also add voice and text channels by clicking the plus icons on the left side of the screen — this is handy if you, say, want to have dedicated text channels for discussing music or movies, or voice channels for playing a specific game.

Once you've got those basics down, you'll be sharing GIFs, memes and photos and chatting away in voice channels in no time. If you want to dive deeper, Discord's [Getting Started](#) guide has even more great advice for taking advantage of various server features.

Not interested in making your own server? There are plenty of public servers out there that may be relevant to your interests. If you click the Explore Public Servers icon at the bottom left of the app, you can browse a ton of cool communities, from official servers for games like Minecraft and Fortnite to communities dedicated to things such as game development and language learning.

Other interesting communities highlighted by Discord include a [beatboxing server](#) where people practice and compete, a server dedicated to [discussing Wall Street trading](#) and the official server of the [NBA's Sacramento Kings](#). Joining these communities is a great way to connect with fans of your favorite game or hobby, or get advice and trade tips with like-minded folks.

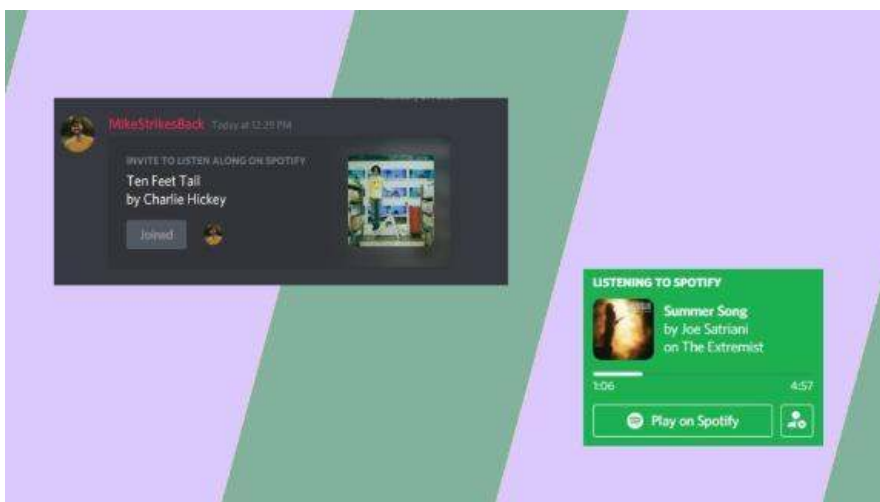
**Fun and useful ways to utilize Discord - Host a virtual game night**



Discord allows you to share your screen with anyone in your voice channel, which has a variety of handy uses from collaborating on visual projects to running team meetings. But the most fun way to use this feature is to host a [virtual game night](#) — particularly with the excellent Jackbox Party Pack games on PC. Since these interactive trivia games only require one person to own them (with everyone else playing via their phones), you can broadcast your Jackbox gameplay to your channel to let friends and family participate in irreverent trivia games like Quiplash and Fibbage no matter where they are.

Sharing your screen on Discord is as simple as clicking the “Screen” icon at the bottom left of the app when you’re in a voice channel. If Discord detects you’re playing a game, you’ll see an additional option to stream that title directly to your channel, which gives you finer control over things such as resolution and frame rate. You can stream to up to 50 people on Discord, so even big groups can get in on the fun.

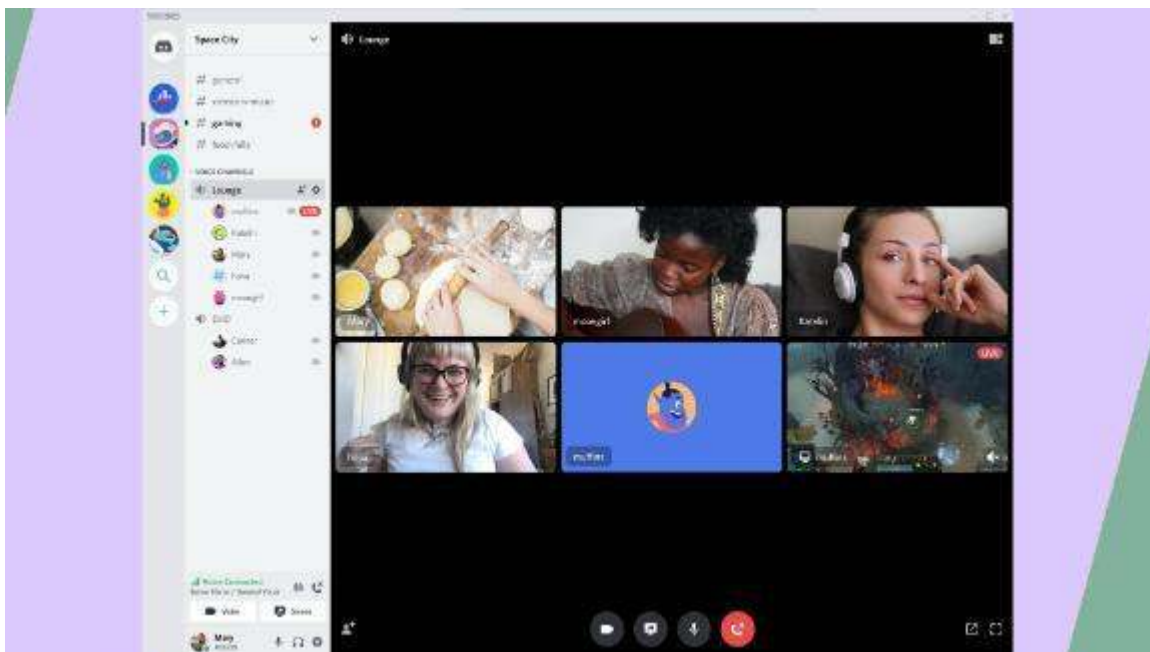
## Listen to music with friends



Want to get a virtual jam session going? Discord makes it easy to listen to [Spotify](#) tracks with your friends. Once you’ve got some tunes going on Spotify, you can press the + icon at the bottom of any text channel and invite that channel to rock out alongside you. And if you see that anyone in

your server is listening to music on Spotify, you can join their session by clicking on their username and selecting the “listen along” option. Playback is synced up between everyone listening, making this a great tool for dissecting the latest Taylor Swift record in real time.

## Get your video chat on



Discord currently supports video chat for up to 25 participants, and while it’s not quite as robust as Zoom or Google Meet, it’s more than capable for small work meetings, virtual happy hours, yoga classes or anything else involving a bunch of talking heads on a screen. To join video, simply hit the Video icon at the bottom left of your screen while in a voice channel.

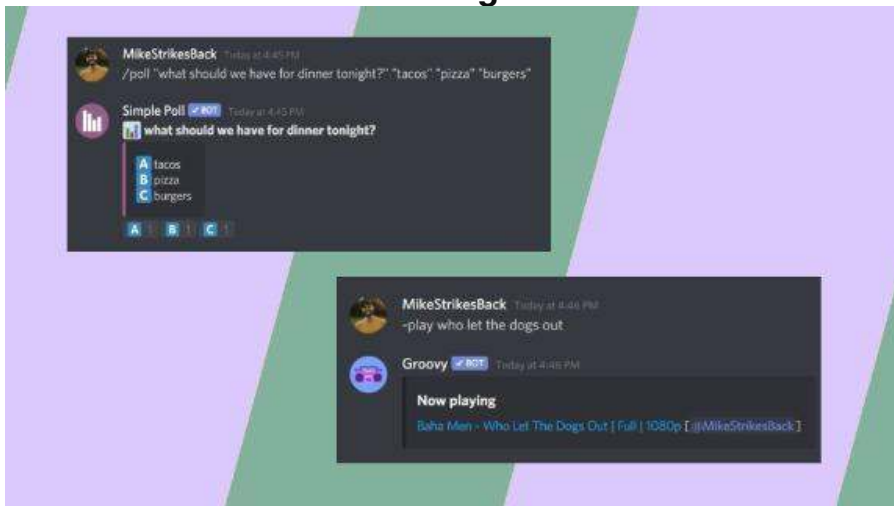
## Grow your Twitch community





If you're a [Twitch streamer looking to build a community](#), you pretty much need to be on Discord. Having a Discord server for your channel gives all of your viewers a centralized place to hang out, and allows you to communicate with them even when you're not live. Better yet, Discord bots such as [Streamcord](#) will automatically notify your server when you start broadcasting, making it easier to promote your streams.

### Discord bots worth checking out



Discord has plenty of cool features out of the box, but it really comes alive when you start adding bots to the mix. These third-party tools can add a ton of extra functionality to your server, from automated alerts and music requests to entire text-based games you can play within your chat room. We've highlighted a few handy and fun bots worth checking out below, but you can also visit [top.gg](https://top.gg) for a comprehensive list of the most popular options out right now.

**MEE6**: One of the most popular Discord bots out there, MEE6 is an all-in-one tool that can automatically moderate your chat rooms and keep trolls at bay, provide alerts from your favorite Twitter, YouTube and Reddit pages, record voice chats, create custom commands and a whole lot more.

**Groovy**: While Discord's Spotify integration works well, Groovy allows for more of a communal, jukebox-like listening experience. This bot allows everyone in your server to request songs to be played in your voice channel, with easy chat controls for things like skipping and pausing tracks.

**Sesh**: Discord is a great place to plan out gaming sessions or movie watch parties, but what if you want to turn those plans into concrete calendar invites? Sesh lets you do just that, with intuitive chat commands that allow you to create an event in seconds and add it to your calendar app of choice.

**Epic RPG**: One of the coolest things about Discord bots is that they can allow you to play entire games via text. Epic RPG is one such bot, providing a full role-playing game experience that allows you to create a character, explore dungeons, battle friends and more just by simply typing commands in your text channel.

**Simple Poll**: Simple Poll is one of the most popular Discord poll bots out there, allowing you to create all types of polls with a few lines of text. This comes in handy in all kinds of ways, whether you want to ask your Twitch viewers which game they'd like to see on your stream or simply poll your friends over what to get for dinner.

### **Bottom line**

Discord is quickly becoming the internet's primary meeting place, whether you need a virtual space to collaborate, create or just geek out with friends over your favorite games. A Discord server can be anything you want it to be — from a virtual classroom to a place to swap art and music ideas — and getting started on the platform is a breeze. And since it's free, there's no reason not to try setting up your own server or browsing the service's multitude of public communities. You might just find your new favorite place to hang out.