Sociability: Social Media for People with Disabilities – Skype

SOCI**ABILITY**: SOCIAL MEDIA FOR PEOPLE WITH A DISABILITY

GUIDE TO SKYPE

WHAT IS SKYPE?

Skype is a popular software application that uses the internet to make free audio and video calls. The application is free to use and it is free to make audio or video calls over the internet to other Skype users. Skype can also be used as an instant messaging application, allowing text messages to be instantly sent for free between Skype users. Skype also has a paid service where calls can be made from the Skype application to a standard telephone.

According to the *Skype Numerology blog,* 41.5 million people were on line concurrently on the 4th September 2012 . This period has seen the most phenomenal growth period in skype history. This is probably related to the Skype for windows Phone app version 1.0 being released.

WHY TRY SKYPE?

The popularity of Skype is based largely on the ability to make free audio and video calls worldwide between Skype users, providing a reasonably fast and stable internet connection is present. Skype is especially beneficial when used across large distances where phone calls can be expensive. Some mobile companies such as Vodafone Australia also provide Skype services that piggyback their 3G network allowing Skype calls effectively for free without incurring any voice or data charges.

For people with disabilities Skype also provides some significant benefits. One of the biggest is the ability for users of sign language, such as people who are Deaf, to make sign-based video calls for free. People who are Deaf or hearing impaired but do not use sign language often use the instant messaging feature.

SKYPE FEATURES

Here's a quick tour of the most common Skype features:

- Contacts: search for people you wish to call or message and add them into your personal contacts list.
- Voice call: make a voice call to a contact, like using the telephone.

- Video call: making a video call to your contact. This allows you and the contact to see and hear each other.

- Instant Message (IM): this feature allows you to send a short text message to your contact.

SKYPE ACCESSIBILITY ISSUES

The Skype application is available on many different devices including computers, smartphones and tablets. While not all versions of Skype are accessible, the current versions that run on the most devices generally work well with assistive technologies.

OVERCOMING SKYPE ACCESSIBILITY ISSUES: TIPS AND TRICKS

The research conducted by Media Access Australia and feedback from Skype users has provided a number of accessibility tips to help make Skype audio and video calls and send instant messages.

Skype for Windows - screen reader mode

Skype for Windows contains a feature to assist screen reader users. This feature, discussed in the Skype Help pages, is called 'screen reader mode' and can be turned on using the following instructions:

1) Select the 'Tools' pull-down menu

2) Go to 'Accessibility' and select 'Screen Reader Mode'.

This should greatly improve the compatibility of your screen reader with Skype.

Skype for Windows - keyboard navigation support

Skype for Windows contains a feature to assist people who rely on the keyboard for navigation. This feature, discussed in the Skype Help pages, is called 'keyboard navigation' and can be turned on using the following instructions:

1) Select the 'Tools' pull-down menu.

2) Go to 'Accessibility' and select 'Keyboard Navigation'.

This allows for the 'Alt' key plus a letter to view a particular menu item. The selections can be found in the Skype Quick Reference section.

SKYPE FOR MAC

User feedback has indicated that Skype on the Mac works well with the built-in accessibility tools found in Mac OS such as the VoiceOver screen reader.

Skype for the iPhone, iPad and iPod Touch

User feedback has indicated that the latest version of Skype for iOS-based devices such as the iPhone, iPad and iPod Touch is compatible with the built-in accessibility tools such as the VoiceOver screen reader.

Contacting Skype for help and other compatible devices

While the accessibility of Skype has been generally good on popular operating systems and devices, this is often not the case on other devices, especially customised devices that run a non-standard version of Skype or a customised Linux operating system that does not contain the necessary accessibility features. For specific information on the accessibility of Skype on your platform, refer to the Skype support website, support.skype.com, or contact Skype directly.

USING SKYPE FOR THE FIRST TIME

Downloading and installing Skype

Instructions on how to download and install Skype for your particular computer or device are available on skype.com.

Creating a Skype account

In order to make free Skype calls to other Skype users, you must first create an account. To create a Skype account:

1) Open Skype on your computer or device.

2) Select the 'Don't have a Skype name?' option. This will open a new window.

3) You will be prompted for your name. Enter your name in the box provided.

4) You will be asked for a username and password. Select your own username and password and enter it in the boxes provided.

5) Follow any additional instructions until it is confirmed that you have completed the process.

Please note that these instructions may differ slightly depending on the type of computer or device that you are using. Additional information can be found in the Starting Skype section on the Skype website.

Signing into Skype

To sign into Skype

1) Open Skype on your computer or device.

2) Enter your username in the 'username' box.

3) Enter your password in the 'password' box.

4) Select the 'Sign in' button.

Adding contacts

To add a contact into Skype:

1) Open Skype on your computer or mobile device.

2) Sign into Skype.

3) Go to the 'Contacts' menu and select 'Add a contact'.

4) You will be presented with a search box. Enter in the name, username or email address of the contact you are searching for, then select the 'Add' button.

5) Your search results will appear. Select the person you are searching for followed by the 'Add contact' button.

Please note that these instructions may differ slightly depending on the type of computer or device that you are using. Additional information can be found in the Add Contact section on the Skype website.

Making a voice call to a contact

To make a voice call in Skype, you will need to use a computer or device that has a microphone and speaker. To call a contact:

1) Open Skype on your computer or device.

2) Sign into Skype.

3) Find the person you wish to call on your contacts list. This should be visible as soon as you sign into Skype.

4) Check that the person has a 'tick' next to their name or is indicated as 'online'. This means that the contact can be called.

5) Select the contact.

6) Select the 'Call' button.

7) After a short pause you should hear a dial tone. If the person is available, they should answer your call and you can start talking.

Please note that these instructions may differ slightly depending on the type of computer or device that you are using. Additional information can be found in the Calling Someone Who's On Skype section on the Skype website.

Making a video call to a contact

To make a video call in Skype, you will need to use a computer or device that has a microphone, speaker and a video camera such as a webcam. To call a contact:

1) Open Skype on your computer or device.

2) Sign into Skype.

3) Find the person you wish to call on your contacts list. This should be visible as soon as you sign into Skype.

4) Check that the person has a 'tick' next to their name or is indicated as 'online'. This means that the contact can be called.

5) Select the contact.

6) Select the 'Video Call' button.

7) After a short pause you should hear a ringing tone. If the person is available, they should answer your call and you can see the person and start talking.

Please note that these instructions may differ slightly depending on the type of computer or device that you are using. Additional information can be found in the Making a Video Call section on the Skype website.

Instant messaging a contact

In addition to phone and video calls, it is also possible to communicate with your contact by typing an instant message. This is particularly useful when using an unreliable internet connection. To use the instant messaging feature:

1) Open Skype on your computer or device.

2) Sign into Skype.

3) Find the person you wish to call on your contacts list. This should be visible as soon as you sign into Skype.

4) Check that the person has a 'tick' next to their name or is indicated as 'online'. This means that the contact can be called.

5) Select the contact.

6) Select the conversation box and start typing. Once you have finished your message, press Enter. Your message should appear in the conversation window.

7) Messages typed by your contact should also appear in the window. To reply, type in another message and press Enter. Continue this process to continue the conversation.

Please note that these instructions may differ slightly depending on the type of computer or device that you are using. Additional information can be found in the Sending Instant Messages section on the Skype website.

SKYPE ACCESSIBILITY QUICK REFERENCE
General resources

- [Skype accessibility help for Windows](#)

- [Skype support](#)

- [Contact Skype](#)

- [Download Skype](#)

- [Adding a contact](#)

- [Calling someone who's on Skype](#)

- [Making video calls](#)

- [Instant messaging in Skype](#)

SKYPE FOR WINDOWS – KEYBOARD SHORTCUTS

The keyboard shortcuts that can be enabled in Skype for Windows are as follow

Alt + S shortcut for Skype, Alt + for Contacts, Alt + O for Conversation ,

Alt + A for Call , Alt + V for View, Alt _ T for Tools and finally Alt + H   for Help

Information on how to enable these keyboard features can be found in the Overcoming Accessibility Barriers section above.

This factsheet is distributed with kind permission of Media Access Australia and ACCAN. Mada wishes to fully acknowledge the work of MAA and ACCAN and their support to Mada and accessibility efforts worldwide. Original copyright for the materials belongs to MAA and ACCAN, all references to tools and websites for Arabic users are updated by Mada, Qatar Assistive Technology Center.

For further information or an individual assessment contact:

Mada Qatar Assistive Technology Center
Tel: 44594050
Fax: 44594051
Email: info@mada.org.qa