

IM

Instant Messaging

How it works

by:

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How Instant Messaging Works

The Internet has revolutionized the way we communicate. E-mail has been the most rapidly adopted form of communication ever known. Less than two decades ago, not many people had heard of it. Now, many of us e-mail instead of writing letters or even calling people on the phone. People around the world send out billions of e-mail messages every day.

But sometimes even e-mail isn't fast enough. You might not know if a person you want to e-mail is online at that moment. Also, if you're e-mailing back and forth with someone, you usually have to click through a few steps. This is why **instant messaging** (IM) has become so popular.

With IM, you can keep a list of people you interact with. You can IM with anyone on your **buddy list** or **contact list** as long as that person is online. You type messages to each other into a small window that shows up on both of your screens.

Most IM programs provide these features:

- **Instant messages** - Send notes back and forth with a friend who is online
- **Chat** - Create a chat room with friends or co-workers
- **Web links** - Share links to your favorite Web sites
- **Video** - Send and view videos, and chat face to face with friends
- **Images** - Look at an image stored on your friend's computer
- **Sounds** - Play sounds for your friends
- **Files** - Share files by sending them directly to your friends
- **Talk** - Use the Internet instead of a phone to actually talk with friends
- **Streaming content** - Real-time or near-real-time stock quotes and news
- **Mobile capabilities** - Send instant messages from your cell phone



AIM, America Online's instant-messaging service, is one of the most popular IM utilities.

History of Instant Messaging

Before the Internet became popular, a lot of people were already online. The major online services, such as **America Online** (AOL), **Prodigy** and **CompuServe**, were the main way that ordinary people could connect and communicate with each other online. Online services provide the actual interface that you use when you're connected to the service, which creates a targeted experience for users.

In the early 1990s, people began to spend more and more time on the Internet. Creative software developers designed **chat-room** software and set up chat rooms on Web servers. In a chat room, a group of people can type in messages that are seen by everyone in the "room." Instant messages are basically a chat room for just two people.

Instant messaging really exploded on the Internet scene in November 1996. That's when **Mirabilis** introduced **ICQ**, a free instant-messaging utility that anyone could use. ICQ, shorthand for "I seek you," uses a software application, called a **client**, that resides on your computer. The client communicates with an ICQ server whenever you are online and the client is running.

In 1997, AOL, considered the pioneer of the online community, gave its users the ability to talk in real time with each other through chat rooms and instant messages. In June 1998, AOL acquired Mirabilis and ICQ.

The ICQ model is the basis for most instant-messaging utilities on the market today. In the next section we'll examine how these services work.



ICQ was one of the first IM applications.

Using Instant Messaging

Look at the steps below to understand exactly what happens with an instant-messaging service.

1. You go to the download page and get a copy of the free software client for your computer.
2. You install the software and open the client.
3. The client tries to connect to the server. It uses a proprietary protocol for communication.
4. Once the client is connected to the server, you can enter your name and password to log in to the server. If this is your first time on, you can sign up for an account and immediately begin using it. When the server verifies your name and password, you are logged in.
5. The client sends the server the connection information (IP address and number of the port assigned to the client) of the computer you are using. It also provides the user with the names of

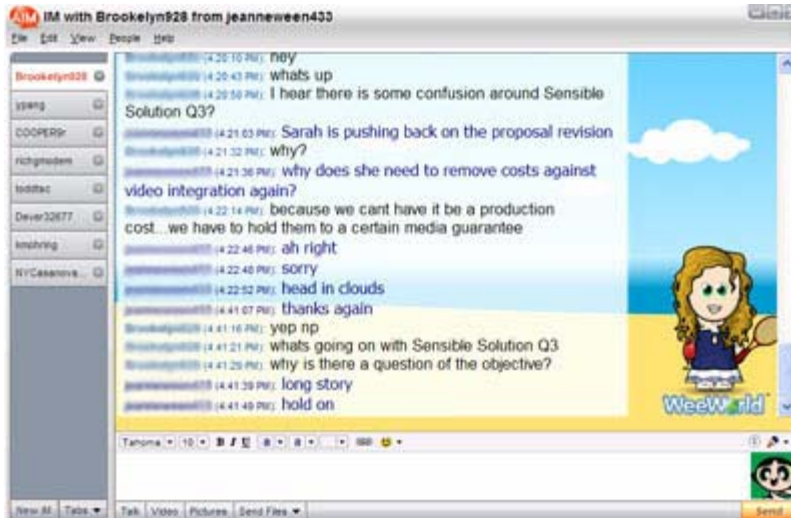


Gmail account holders can chat with each other using Google Talk.

- everyone in your contacts list.
6. The server creates a temporary file that has the connection information for you and the list of your contacts. It then checks to see if any of the users in your contact list are currently logged in.
 7. If the server finds any of your contacts logged in, it sends a message back to the client on your computer with the connection information for that user. The server also sends your connection information to the people in your contact list that are signed on.
 8. When your client gets the connection information for a person in your contact list, it changes the status of that person to "online." You click on the name of a person in your contact list who is online, and a window opens that you can enter text into. You enter a message and click "send" or hit return to communicate with that person.
 9. Because your client has the IP address and port number for the computer of the person that you sent the message to, your message is sent directly to the client on that person's computer. In other words, the server is not involved at this point. All communication is directly between the two clients.
 10. The other person gets your instant message and responds. The window that each of you sees on your respective computers expands to include a scrolling dialog of the conversation. Each person's instant messages appears in this window on both computers.
 11. When the conversation is complete, you close the message window. Eventually, you go offline and exit. When this happens, your client sends a message to the server to terminate the session. The server sends a message to the client of each person on your contact list who is currently online to indicate that you have logged off. Finally, the server deletes the temporary file that contained the connection information for your client. In the clients of your contacts that are online, your name moves to the offline status section.

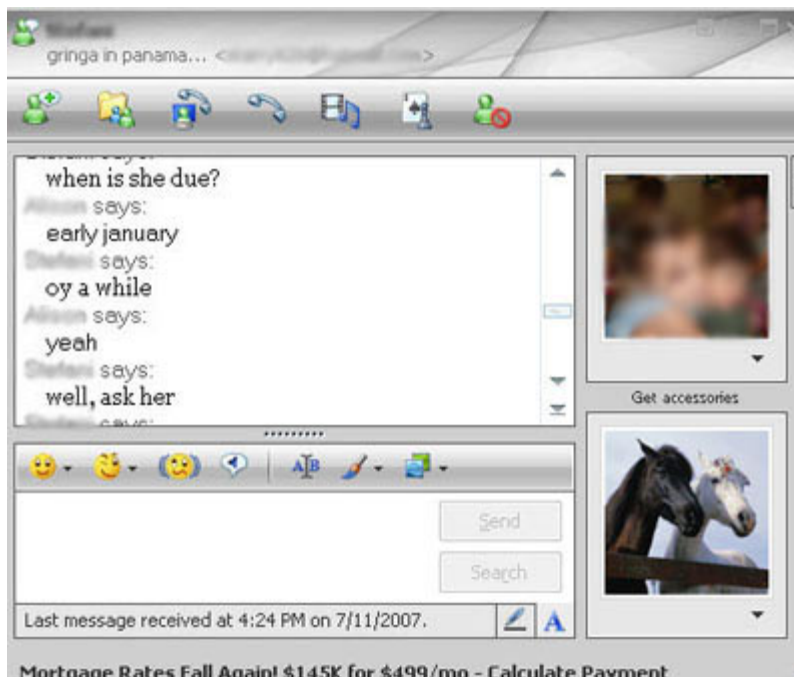
Instant Messaging Providers

Not long after AOL bought ICQ, **AOL Instant Messenger (AIM)** became the IM leader. In the past few years, though, a number of services have cut into AIM's audience. **Windows Live Messenger** (formerly MSN Messenger) and **Yahoo! Messenger**, in particular, have become widely used around the globe. Google recently introduced its IM system, **Google Talk**. Proprietary multiprotocol applications like **Trillian** and **Pidgin**, which allow users to IM on several services at once, are also rapidly gaining in popularity. According to a 2006 study by comScore, which measures Internet usage, about half of the online population uses IM.



Users of AIM can personalize their own "WeeMee" buddy icons.

The major IM utilities use a **proprietary protocol** that is not understood by other instant-messaging services, so users of one service are usually blocked from contacting members of another. A key reason for AIM's initial popularity is that it allowed AOL subscribers to communicate with nonmembers. One of the provisions of the AOL-Time Warner merger in 2001 was that AOL would allow access to the AOL community and AIM protocol, but since then other instant-messaging utilities have provided more accessibility. Microsoft and Yahoo! joined forces in 2006 to allow their users to communicate with each other on one service.



Windows Live Messenger and Yahoo! Messenger subscribers can communicate with each other on one service.

It is important to note that instant messaging is not considered a **secure** way to communicate. Messages and connection information are maintained on servers controlled by the provider of your IM utility. Most utilities do provide a certain level of encryption, but they are not so secure that you should send any confidential information through the system. There have been reported cases of IM user logs being captured and used by nefarious sorts, and hackers have been known to instant-message virus-infected files. Voice Over Internet Protocol is thought to be more vulnerable to infiltration than text-based instant-messaging.

New Instant Messaging Innovations

IM capabilities have greatly expanded in recent years. Most services offer file-sharing, and AOL, Yahoo!, Google and MSN have integrated IM service with e-mail service, so users can receive e-mail notifications while instant messaging. Many providers also allow users to IM and file-share from their cell phones and mobile devices, allowing access to their services any place, any time. A Google Talk user can archive IM conversations and also drag files and folders directly onto the chat window, with photos showing up instantly in their friend's chat window. Windows Live Messenger allows instant-messaging between Xbox 360 gamers. Personalization capabilities have exploded, with IMers able to customize personal icons, screen interfaces and greetings.



Elvis fans can find plenty of buddy icons on AIM.

Most IM programs, including Windows Live Messenger and Google Talk, allow users to talk just as you would over a telephone, and some offer video-chat capabilities. (For more information, see our article on Voice over Internet Protocol technology.)

Several free utilities combine various services. Trillian provides a centralized location for AIM, ICQ, Windows Live, Yahoo! Messenger and IRC contacts. All contacts are shown in the same window, with different-colored circles representing each service. Trillian's "metacontact" feature displays one entry in the contact list for people with multiple IM memberships, and it's the only multiservice client that offers video-chat capabilities (although you'll have to shell out \$25 for a Pro membership).

Users of Pidgin can IM, transfer files and share photos with contacts in AIM, ICQ, IRC, Google Talk, Windows Live Messenger and Yahoo! Messenger. Its "Buddy Pounce" feature sends notifications when selected contacts change their online status or send IMs. Universal IM providers **Meebo** and **eBuddy** are Web-based, meaning they don't require a software download. eBuddy also offers a version of its service for cell phones. Friends IMing on

Qnext, which works with all the major IM providers, can listen to each other's music files without having to download them.

The future of instant messaging is very bright. All of the utilities described in this article continue to be updated by their owners, and IM providers continue to collaborate on allowing more interfaces between users of their services. Business users can now have virtual conferences and collaborate on projects very easily. If you have not tried IM, you're missing out on a whole new world of communication.

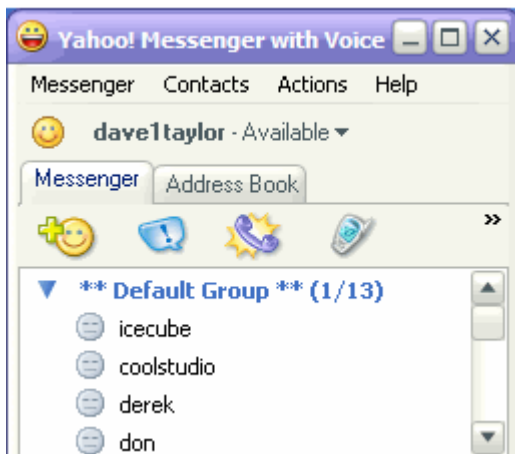
The most popular Instant Messengers

Yahoo Messenger



Yahoo! Messenger is a popular instant messaging client and protocol provided by Yahoo!. Yahoo! Messenger is free of charge and can be downloaded and used with a generic "Yahoo! ID", which also allows access to other Yahoo! services, such as [Yahoo! Mail](http://mail.yahoo.com/), where users can be automatically notified when they receive new email. Yahoo instant messenger also includes a security feature which allows the user to be "invisible" to whoever they choose.

<http://messenger.yahoo.com/>



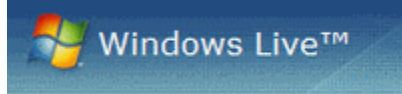
- **Cross-platform:** Win, Mac, Unix
- **Web-based access:** YES
- **Multi-network:** YES
- **VoIP:** YES
- **Video:** YES
- **PSTN:** NO
- **SMS Enabled:** YES
- **File sending:** YES
- **History (text chat recording):** YES
- **RSS Support:** NO
- **Open-source/Proprietary:** P
- **URL/download:** <http://messenger.yahoo.com/>
- **Cost:** Free

Our review:

[Instant Messaging Integrates Telephony And PC-To-Phone Calls: Yahoo Messenger With Voice Is Here](#)

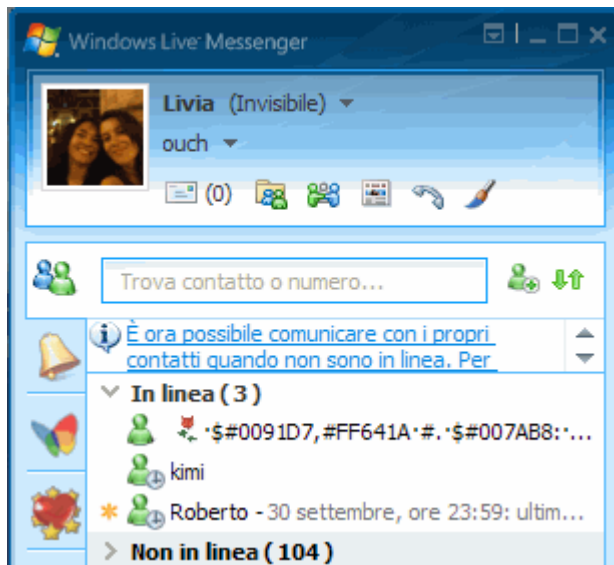
March 23, 2006

Windows Live Messenger



Windows Live Messenger is the next-generation MSN Messenger. Along with everything you already know about MSN Messenger, there are brand new features that provide you with new ways to connect and share files with your contacts. As always, it's free to download Messenger and use most of its features.

<http://messenger.msn.com/>



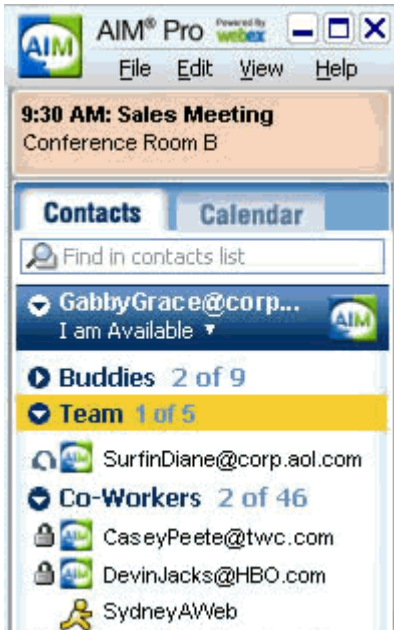
- **Cross-platform:** Win, Mac
- **Web-based access:** YES
- **Multi-network:** YES
- **VoIP:** YES
- **Video:** YES
- **PSTN:** NO
- **SMS Enabled:** YES
- **File sending:** YES
- **History (text chat recording):** YES
- **RSS Support:** NO
- **Open-source/Proprietary:** P
- **URL/download:** <http://get.live.com/messenger/>
- **Cost:** Free

AIM Pro



AIM Pro is the advanced version of AIM. With this IM you can experience high level quality and robust communication. It includes the familiar features of the AIM service, and adds powerful new features for busy professionals.

<http://aimpro.premiumservices.aol.com/>



- **Cross-platform:** Win
- **Web-based access:** NO
- **Multi-network:** NO
- **VoIP:** YES
- **Video:** YES
- **PSTN:** NO
- **SMS Enabled:** NO
- **File sending:** YES
- **History (text chat recording):** NO
- **RSS Support:** NO
- **Open-source/Proprietary:** P
- **URL/download:** <http://aimpro.premiumservices.aol.com/>

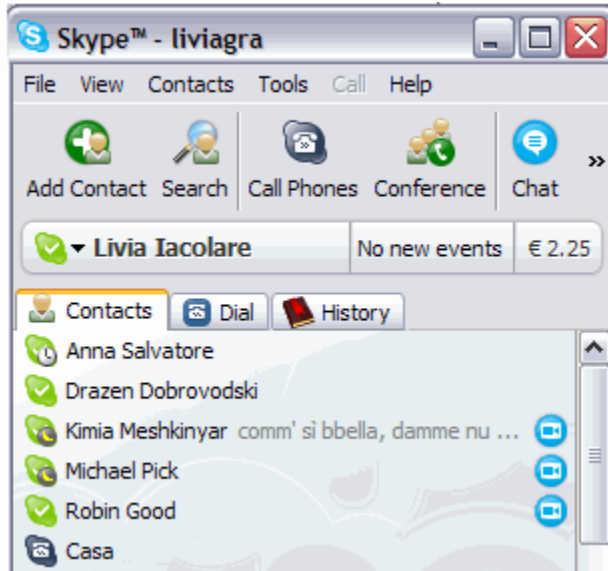
- **Cost:** Free

Skype



Skype is a software that lets you make free PC to PC calls to anyone else on Skype, anywhere in the world. And even though the calls are free, they are really excellent quality. If

you and your friends, family or business contacts are using webcams, you can also make free video calls. You can even call landlines and mobile phones at [really cheap per minute rates](#) (and there's no setup or subscription fee). Skype is available for Windows, Mac and Linux (video calls are currently available only to Windows and Mac users). Free download. <http://www.skype.com/>



- **Cross-platform:** Win, Mac, Linux, Pocket PC
- **Web-based access:** NO
- **Multi-network:** NO
- **VoIP:** YES
- **Video:** YES
- **PSTN:** YES
- **SMS Enabled:** YES
- **File sending:** YES
- **History (text chat recording):** YES
- **RSS Support:** NO
- **Open-source/Proprietary:** P
- **URL/download:** <http://www.skype.com/>

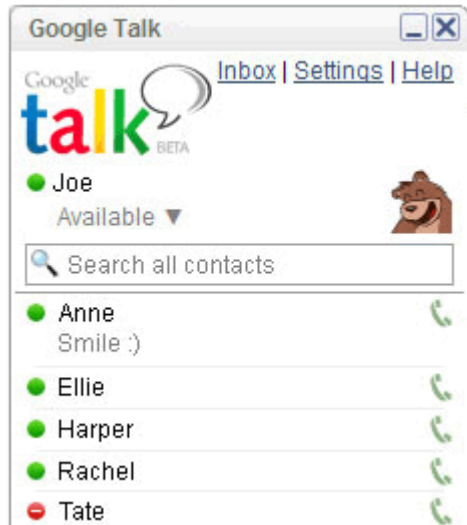
- **Cost:** Free

Google Talk



Google Talk enables you to call or send instant messages to your friends for free, anytime, anywhere in the world. Google Talk allows you to get in touch with an IM, email, or a call (only between Google Talk users) and supports files transferring. Google Talk requires Windows XP/2000 but Mac and Linux users can connect to Google Talk using other IM clients. Free download.

<http://www.google.com/talk/>



- **Cross-platform:** Win
- **Web-based access:** NO
- **Multi-network:** YES
- **VoIP:** YES
- **Video:** NO
- **PSTN:** NO
- **SMS Enabled:** NO
- **File sending:** YES
- **History (text chat recording):** YES
- **RSS Support:** NO
- **Open-source/Proprietary:** P
- **URL/download:** <http://www.google.com/talk/>

- **Cost:** Free

ICQ



ICQ ("I Seek You") is a program you can download that will let you know when friends and contacts are also online on the Internet. The most updated ICQ version (5.1) features instant messaging, SMS, voice and video chat, as well as games, customizing tools and other ICQ extras. Windows only. Free download.

<http://www.icq.com/>



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- **Web-based access:** NO
- **Multi-network:** NO
- **VoIP:** YES
- **Video:** YES
- **PSTN:** NO
- **SMS Enabled:** YES
- **File sending:** YES
- **History (text chat recording):** YES
- **RSS Support:** NO
- **Open-source/Proprietary:** P
- **URL/download:** <http://www.icq.com/>

- **Cost:** Free

Gizmo Project



An internet telephone. As simple as an instant messenger. You can make free calls to all Gizmo users and features free voicemail and conferences calls from your desktop. Gizmo also provides inexpensive add-ons that let you make and receive phone calls from any mobile and landline phone. At the moment you can [make free calls to 60 countries](#). It works on Windows, Mac and Linux. Free download.
<http://www.gizmoproject.com/>



- **Cross-platform:** Win, Mac, Linux
- **Web-based access:** NO
- **Multi-network:** YES
- **VoIP:** YES
- **Video:** NO
- **PSTN:** YES
- **SMS Enabled:** NO
- **File sending:** NO
- **History (text chat recording):** NO
- **RSS Support:** NO
- **Open-source/Proprietary:** P
- **URL/download:** <http://www.gizmoproject.com/>

- **Cost:** Free

Apple iChat



iChat is an instant text messaging application, supporting [AOL Instant Messenger](#) and [Jabber Instant Messenger](#) clients. You can transmit any kind of file from a web address to a photo by simply dragging it into your chat. iChat allows you to participate in audio conferences with up to 10 participants. Only for Macintosh.

<http://www.apple.com/ichat/>



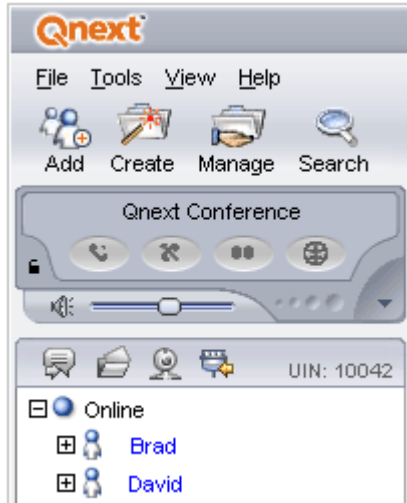
- **Cross-platform:** Mac
- **Web-based access:** NO
- **Multi-network:** YES
- **VoIP:** YES
- **Video:** YES
- **PSTN:** NO
- **SMS Enabled:** NO
- **File sending:** YES
- **History (text chat recording):** NO
- **RSS Support:** NO
- **Open-source/Proprietary:** P
- **URL/download:** <http://www.apple.com/ichat/>

- **Cost:** Free with Mac OS X

Qnext



Qnext is a [Java](#)-based [P2P](#) client that provides instant messaging, audio chat, video conferencing, music streaming, file transfer and file sharing. It can interact with existing instant messaging networks such as [Windows Live Messenger](#), [AIM](#), [Yahoo Messenger](#) and [ICQ](#) or used privately. This universal instant messenger keeps you connected to all popular IM's, you can also talk online anywhere around the world for free, host a live video conference or transfer files of any size with complete security. Free download. <http://www.qnext.com/>



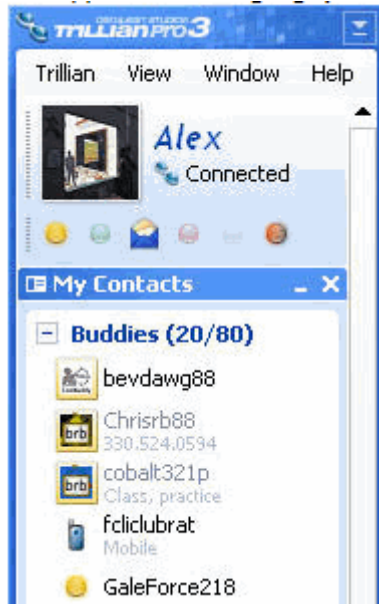
- **Cross-platform:** Win, Mac, Linux
- **Web-based access:** NO
- **Multi-network:** YES
- **VoIP:** YES
- **Video:** YES
- **PSTN:** NO
- **SMS Enabled:** NO
- **File sending:** YES
- **History (text chat recording):** YES
- **RSS Support:** NO
- **Open-source/Proprietary:** P
- **URL/download:** <http://www.qnext.com/>

- **Cost:** Free

Trillian



Trillian is a fully featured, stand-alone, skinnable chat client that supports [AIM](#), [ICQ](#), [Windows Live Messenger](#), [Yahoo Messenger](#), and [IRC](#). It provides capabilities not possible with original network clients, while supporting standard features such as audio chat, file transfers, group chats, chat rooms, buddy icons, multiple simultaneous connections to the same network, server-side contact importing, typing notification, direct connection ([AIM](#)), [proxy](#) support, encrypted messaging ([AIM/ICQ](#)), SMS support, and privacy settings. There are a free basic version and a pro version. Free download. <http://www.ceruleanstudios.com/>



- **Cross-platform:** Win
- **Web-based access:** NO
- **Multi-network:** YES
- **VoIP:** YES
- **Video:** YES
- **PSTN:** NO
- **SMS Enabled:** NO
- **File sending:** YES
- **History (text chat recording):** YES
- **RSS Support:** NO
- **Open-source/Proprietary:** P
- **URL/download:** <http://www.ceruleanstudios.com/>

- **Cost:** Free / \$25 Pro Version

Gaim



Gaim is an instant messaging client for Linux, [BSD](#), MacOS X, and Windows. It is compatible with [AIM](#), [ICQ](#), [Windows Live Messenger](#), [Yahoo! Messenger](#), [IRC](#), [Jabber](#), [Gadu-Gadu](#), [SILC](#), [Novell GroupWise Messenger](#), [Lotus Sametime](#), and [Zephyr networks](#). Gaim users can log in to multiple accounts on multiple IM networks simultaneously. Gaim supports many features of the various networks, such as file transfer, away messages, and typing notification. It also goes beyond that and provides many unique features. A few popular features are Buddy Pounces, which give the ability to notify you, send a message, play a sound, or run a program when a specific buddy goes away, signs online, or returns from idle; and plugins, consisting of text replacement, a buddy ticker, extended message notification, iconify on away, spell checking, tabbed conversations, and more. Free download. <http://gaim.sourceforge.net/>



- **Cross-platform:** Win, Linux
- **Web-based access:** NO
- **Multi-network:** YES
- **VoIP:** NO
- **Video:** NO
- **PSTN:** NO
- **SMS Enabled:** YES
- **File sending:** YES
- **History (text chat recording):** NO
- **RSS Support:** NO
- **Open-source/Proprietary:** P
- **URL/download:** <http://gaim.sourceforge.net/>

- **Cost:** Free

Ineen



Ineen is free to download and allows you to make free pc calls and supports video conferencing (maximum four participants) and audio conferencing (up to 10 people). You can transfer calls to other Ineen users and also record them. Ineen works on Windows and Mac. Free download.

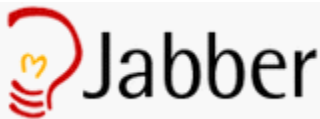
<http://www.ineen.com>



- **Cross-platform:** Win, Mac, Pocket PC
- **Web-based access:** NO
- **Multi-network:** NO
- **VoIP:** YES
- **Video:** YES
- **PSTN:** NO
- **SMS Enabled:** NO
- **File sending:** NO
- **History (text chat recording):** NO
- **RSS Support:** NO
- **Open-source/Proprietary:** P
- **URL/download:** <http://www.ineen.com/>

- **Cost:** Free

Jabber



Jabber is an open, secure, ad-free alternative to consumer IM services like [AIM](#), [ICQ](#), [Windows Live Messenger](#), and [Yahoo](#), conceived for Linux users. You can use Jabber to talk with other people who use Jabber and participate in Jabber chat rooms. You can also chat with users of some other IM services. Jabber developers have created software for gateways to [AOL Instant Messenger](#), [ICQ](#), [Windows Live Messenger](#), and [Yahoo! Messenger](#). Depending on which Jabber client you use, you can also transfer files, receive headlines, and so on. The Jabber network is server-based (i.e. clients do not talk directly to one another) but decentralized; there is no central authoritative server, as there is with services such as [AOL Instant Messenger](#) or [Windows Live Messenger](#). Free to use.
<http://www.jabber.org/>

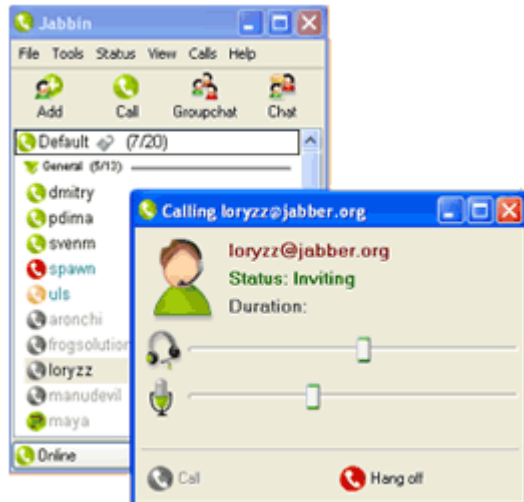


- **Cross-platform:** Win, Mac, Linux
- **Web-based access:** NO
- **Multi-network:** YES
- **VoIP:** YES
- **Video:** NO
- **PSTN:** NO
- **SMS Enabled:** NO
- **File sending:** YES
- **History (text chat recording):** YES
- **RSS Support:** NO
- **Open-source/Proprietary:** O
- **URL/download:** <http://www.jabber.org/>

- **Cost:** Free



Jabbin is an open source Jabber client program that allows free PC to PC calls using the [VoIP](#) system over the Jabber network. Jabbin also provides instant messaging functions. You can configure Jabbin to connect to the [Google Talk](#) service. Jabbin is currently available for Windows and Linux (Mac version is in development). Free download. <http://www.jabbin.com>



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- **VoIP:** YES
- **Video:** NO
- **PSTN:** NO
- **SMS Enabled:** NO
- **File sending:** YES
- **History (text chat recording):** YES
- **RSS Support:** NO
- **Open-source/Proprietary:** O
- **URL/download:** <http://www.jabbin.com/int/>
- **Cost:** Free

Meebo



Meebo is a cool cross-platform, multi-protocol, [Ajax](#)-based IM and [presence awareness](#) aggregator. The one-page application allows anyone on any computer platform to access and log in to [Yahoo Messenger](#), [Windows Live Messenger](#), [AOL IM](#) and [ICQ](#) from one unique interface. Similar to desktop applications like [Trillian](#) and [Gaim](#), [Meebo](#) provides a single buddy list that is automatically populated upon signing into the meebo web site. Free to use.

<http://www.meebo.com>



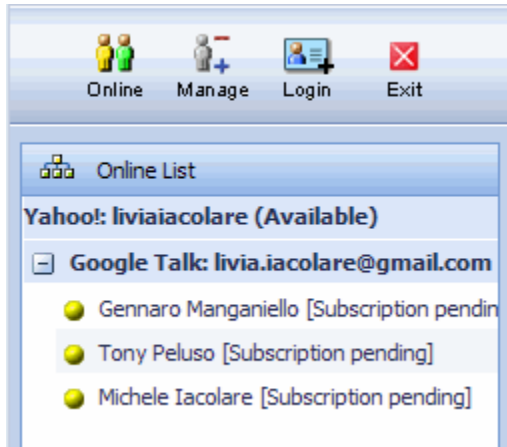
- **Cross-platform:** Web Based
- **Web-based access:** YES
- **Multi-network:** YES
- **VoIP:** NO
- **Video:** NO
- **PSTN:** NO
- **SMS Enabled:** NO
- **File sending:** NO
- **History (text chat recording):** NO
- **RSS Support:** NO
- **Open-source/Proprietary:** P
- **URL/download:** <http://www.meebo.com/>

- **Cost:** Free

KoolIM



KoolIM is a web-based IM service that aggregates multiple messengers on one page - [AIM](#), [Windows Live Messenger](#), [Yahoo! Messenger](#), [Google Talk](#), [ICQ](#) and [Jabber](#). Registered users can take advantage of managing their accounts and more. <http://www.koolim.com>



- **Cross-platform:** Web Based
- **Web-based access:** YES
- **Multi-network:** YES
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- **File sending:** NO
- **History (text chat recording):** NO
- **RSS Support:** NO
- **Open-source/Proprietary:** P
- **URL/download:** <http://www.koolim.com/>

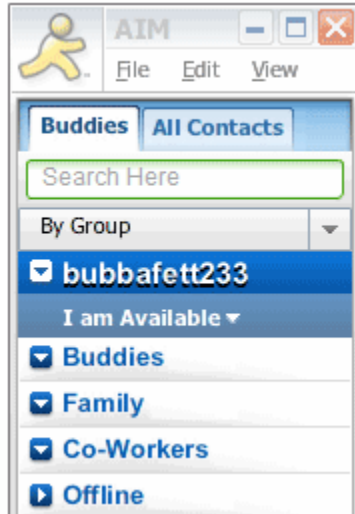
- **Cost:** Free

AIM Triton



AIM Triton is an instant messenger that allows you to text message your buddies and also receive messages on your phone when you are offline. With AIM you can also perform PC to PC calls and start video chats. You can also try AIM Triton, another version of this IM that also enables you to call landline and mobile phones and get your own free local phone number with unlimited incoming calls. Free download.

<http://www.aim.com>



- **Cross-platform:** Win, Mac, Linux
- **Web-based access:** YES
- **Multi-network:** NO
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- **Video:** YES
- **PSTN:** YES
- **SMS Enabled:** YES
- **File sending:** NO
- **History (text chat recording):** YES
- **RSS Support:** NO
- **Open-source/Proprietary:** P
- **URL/download:** <http://www.aim.com/>

- **Cost:** Free

Invite

Invite lets you chat with all your contacts from [Yahoo Messenger](#), [Windows Live Messenger](#), [AIM](#) and [ICQ](#). It allows you to make free video and worldwide PC to PC calls, read news via [RSS](#) and also to watch multiple TV channels at the same time. Free download. <http://www.invite.com/>



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- **Video:** YES
- **PSTN:** NO
- **SMS Enabled:** NO
- **File sending:** YES
- **History (text chat recording):** YES
- **RSS Support:** YES
- **Open-source/Proprietary:** P
- **URL/download:** <http://www.imvite.com/>

- **Cost:** Free

WebMessenger



WebMessenger Mobile Platform (WMP) is a software that provides mobile data communications and instant messaging. WMP's Real Time Messaging feature supports corporate instant messaging systems including a href=>IBM Lotus IM, [Jabber Inc.](#) XCP Enterprise Server, [Microsoft Live Communications Server](#) and [Exchange IM](#). WMP also supports public instant messaging networks including MSN, Yahoo!, AOL and ICQ. WMP is available in a Windows version for enterprises and a [Sun Solaris](#) version for wireless carriers and ISPs. Also available is WebMessenger Mobile for [Skype](#) a client that lets you take Skype on the road. WebMessenger Mobile for [Skype](#) client requires download and it is free. Mobile Instant Messenger comes at \$5.95 per month.
<http://www.webmessenger.com/>



- **Cross-platform:** Win, Palm OS, Pocket PC
- **Web-based access:** NO
- **Multi-network:** YES
- **VoIP:** YES
- **Video:** NO
- **PSTN:** YES
- **SMS Enabled:** NO
- **File sending:** NO
- **History (text chat recording):** YES
- **RSS Support:** NO
- **Open-source/Proprietary:** P
- **URL/download:** <http://www.webmessenger.com/>
- **Cost:** \$5.95 per month

Miranda IM



Miranda IM is a multi protocol instant messenger client for Windows. Miranda IM uses very little memory and is extremely fast. Only the most basic features are built in, but there are currently more than 350 free plugins available for download that allows users to extend the functionality of Miranda IM. Additionally, this IM doesn't require installation.

<http://www.miranda-im.org>



- **Cross-platform:** Win
- **Web-based access:** NO
- **Multi-network:** YES
- **VoIP:** NO
- **Video:** NO
- **PSTN:** NO
- **SMS Enabled:** NO
- **File sending:** NO
- **History (text chat recording):** YES
- **RSS Support:** NO
- **Open-source/Proprietary:** P
- **URL/download:** <http://www.miranda-im.org/download>
- **Cost:** Free

Usage of Instant Messengers

Here is the chart displaying which are the most popular instant messengers in the world and how many people use them (source: Wikipedia)

- **AIM:** 53 million active users (Nielsen//NetRatings, August 2005), 195 million total ([January 2003](#)).
- **Windows Live Messenger:** 29 million active (Nielsen//NetRatings, August 2005), 155 million total ([April 2005](#)).
- **Yahoo! Messenger:** 21 million active ([September 2005](#)).
- **ICQ:** 20 million active world wide ([source](#)), 400 million total.
- **QQ:** 20 million peak simultaneously on-line users, 221 million active users ([source](#)).
- **Skype:** 100 million total ([April 2006](#)).
- **Jabber:** 13.5 million enterprise users (Osterman Research August 2005), this does not count users via ISPs and other service providers (estimated to be more than 7.5 million, for a total of at least 21 million)([source](#)).
- **Sametime:** 15 million enterprise users.
- **Gadu-Gadu:** 5.6 million total ([June 2006](#)).

- **MXit**: 1.5 million (mostly in South Africa and about 150,000 international) ([source: IOL, 4 September 2006](#))
- **ZX2C4 Instant Messenger**: A start-up instant messaging product with a moderately small public user base, but has many users on private networks in small businesses. ([source](#))