

How to Choose a Platform for Your Watch Party

As we mentioned in our Toolkit for organizing a Watch Party, there are two main types of engagement that you can use to get the conversation going online – during the screening, or after – and there are many online platforms to help you with each.

And please, don't worry if the options on these two pages feel highly technical or even overwhelming. We're here to help – email ncfd@reelcanada.ca and someone from our team will talk you through choosing the platform that will work best for you.

Chat while you watch:

If you'd like everyone to watch a movie simultaneously, you might also include a way for viewers to chat in real time while the movie plays. This option is the best way to approximate the feeling of sitting in the same living room, watching a movie together. Here are a few great online platforms for this model:

1. **Twitter Party:** A party experience can be as simple as telling your audience to live-tweet along with the the film using #canfilmday and your custom event hashtag. Participants need a Twitter account to join the chat, but anyone can follow the conversation even without an account.
2. **Netflix Party:** This free extension for your Chrome browser allows you to watch movies with your friends and text chat live within Netflix! Please note that all participants must have a paid Netflix account, and they must be watching on a computer, using the Google Chrome internet browser.
3. **Kosmi:** This website lets you create a room (you don't even need an account) in which to watch films from any online streaming channel service together. Kosmi allows you to share your screen with friends so only the host needs to have access to the film. Rooms can be public or private, and allow for text and video chat. Chrome is the recommended browser to use for this website.
4. **Scener:** This Chrome extension is similar to Netflix Party, except it also allows video chat. All users must have a paid Netflix account and create a free Scener account.
5. **Discord:** If your audience wants to do voice chat while the film plays, Discord can accommodate up to 50 people (a pandemic-responsive increase from the usual 10) with the host using the Go Live feature to share the movie from their screen. All participants require a free Discord account.

6. Zoom: It seems everyone is on Zoom these days! This platform allows you to share your screen to watch the film while up to 100 viewers can interact using text or video chat. Viewers will have to download the free Zoom app, but creating an account is optional for everyone but the host. Meetings are capped at 40 minutes with a free account, so you'll have to build in short 'breaks' to allow people to reconnect and continue from where you last left off.

Chat After You Watch:

If interacting during the film seems distracting or complicated, you can always arrange for a discussion to take place after the film. With this model, each person can watch the film independently and then log on to your chosen platform at a specified time to chat about it.

Remember, it's like a book club, except with a movie ... and online! Now, you'll need to figure out a few things before deciding what platform to use. On page two you'll find the best video-chat and text-chat options that we recommend.

Want participants to see and/or hear each other? Here are some great platforms that include video chat:

1. Zoom: As mentioned on the first page, Zoom is the video conferencing service du jour, and lets you hold "virtual meetings" or video calls with friends, family, or the whole community! Up to 100 users can meet at once.
2. Google Hangouts Chat and Google Meet: Google's Hangouts Chat platform allows 25 users to video chat for free, or up to 250 through their Google Meet platform for G-Suite clients.
3. Skype: Skype allows group video chatting for up to 50 people over the desktop app.
4. Facetime: Up to 32 iOS users can join a group video chat.
5. Google Duo: For smaller groups like, say, family or friends wanting a more low-key, private experience, Duo (Google's equivalent to Facetime) offers video chat for up to 12 people.
6. Houseparty: This popular video chat app from Epic Games (the creator of Fortnite) offers not just video chat capability, but also has built in quizzes and games for up to 8 users.

If you'd rather use only the written word, all of the platforms mentioned above also offer text chat. Some other options that work for text interaction include:

1. Slack: The Slack interface is particularly well-suited for this kind of event because the host can create distinct 'channels' for various purposes & discussion topics. All you need is a free account!
2. Facebook: Create an event page and the host can start a chat with guests via FB Messenger
3. WhatsApp: This chat app can be used on mobile or desktop.

4. Twitter: This is a public platform, so anyone will be able to see your conversation, but if you use #CanFilmDay and a second hashtag dedicated specifically to your event, it will help participants track and follow the conversation easily.

If you're hosting a Q&A with a special guest, some easy options include:

1. Twitter Live video: Twitter's Go Live feature lets your guest create a live video from their Twitter account that users can join and interact with.
2. Instagram Live: One nice feature here is a "split screen" option so that you can conduct a live conversation between moderator and guest, even while they're in different locations.
3. Facebook Live: Like the two above, Facebook Live allows audience members to use emojis in real time as reactions to the Q&A.
4. YouTube Live Stream: While your guest is streaming live, audience members can type questions in the comments section below. Your guest can choose the ones they wish to address as they appear. While anyone can watch the live stream, audience members must be registered and signed in to their free YouTube account through Google to comment.
5. Reddit Ask Me Anything (AMA): This option allows for text only (no video), but it's interactive. Audience members can up vote and down vote the various questions as the event takes place, so you can see what the most popular questions are.

When choosing a platform, consider your audience and which platform most of them are already using.