

FaceTime gets 32-person group chats, Animoji support

Apple's video chat app takes on Microsoft Skype and Google Hangouts.

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With a new feature called Group FaceTime, up to 32 people will be able to chat online together, Apple [said Monday](#) at its developer conference.

The change is significant for a video chat service that right now only connects pairs of people. Group chats are useful for friends jumping online together, family member chatting and business meetings with distant coworkers. The changes come with [iOS 12, the next version of Apple's software for iPhones and iPads](#).

"This year FaceTime is going to take a big leap forward," said Craig Federighi, Apple's senior vice president of software engineering, at Apple's [Worldwide Developers Conference](#) in San Jose. "It helps us deepen our connection with people wherever they are."

In addition, FaceTime also lets you use Animoji, Apple's 3D augmented reality cartoon faces that track your own with an iPhone X front-facing camera, Federighi said. And Group FaceTime is integrated with group Messages chats so you can take a text chat into the video chat.



Apple CEO Tim Cook (center) appears as a memoji -- an animoji AR self-portrait -- in a Group FaceTime chat at WWDC 2018.

Screenshot by Claudia Cruz/CNET

FaceTime competes with other chat tools like Microsoft's Skype and Google's Hangouts, which already offer group-chat abilities. Unlike those rivals, though, it only works on Apple hardware -- Macs, iPads and iPhones.

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