

Houseparty downloads have increased by 122% in the last month. Its popularity has surged during the COVID-19 pandemic as our offline interactions have been pushed online.

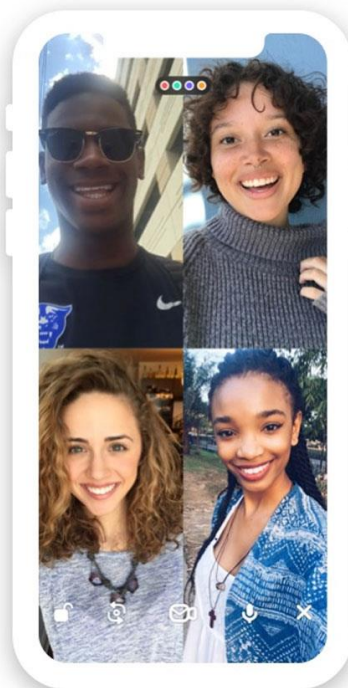
But what exactly is Houseparty and how can you keep young people safe on the platform? One of our in-house Digital Safeguarding Specialists answers your questions.

What is Houseparty?

The group video messaging app Houseparty launched in 2016. It allows users to live-chat with up to 8 people where they can play games and chat with friends and family in a 'room' (group video chat). It's currently available on Android and iOS phones, macOS and Chrome.

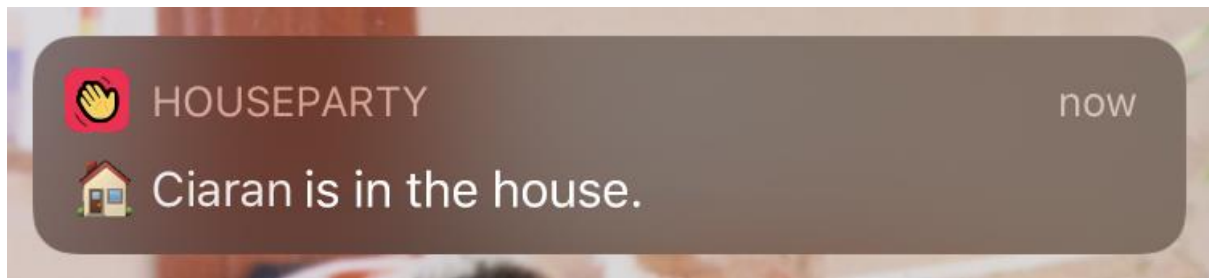
Apple rate Houseparty as 12+ and Google Play urge 'parental guidance', but Common Sense Media and others recommend users be at least 15 to use the platform. Houseparty's privacy policy requires users to be at least 13 years old.

What are the core functions?



source: houseparty.com

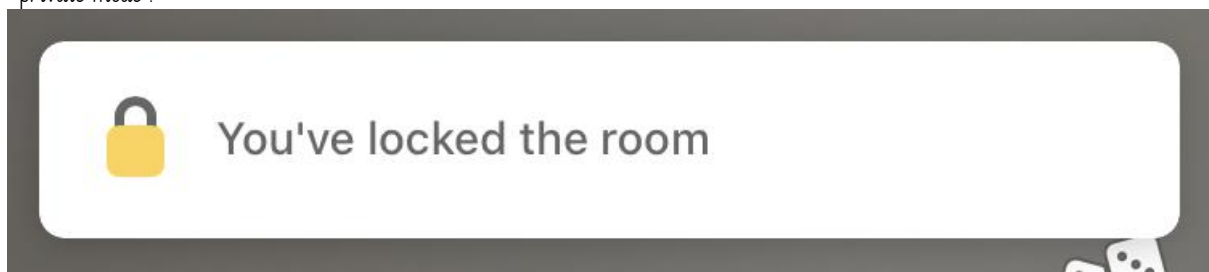
- Users can have group video calls with 2 to 8 people and play games together.
- Users can send group and private notes to friends or leave 'face-mail' (video-voicemail).
- Users receive a push notification when their friends have logged telling them they are "in the house".



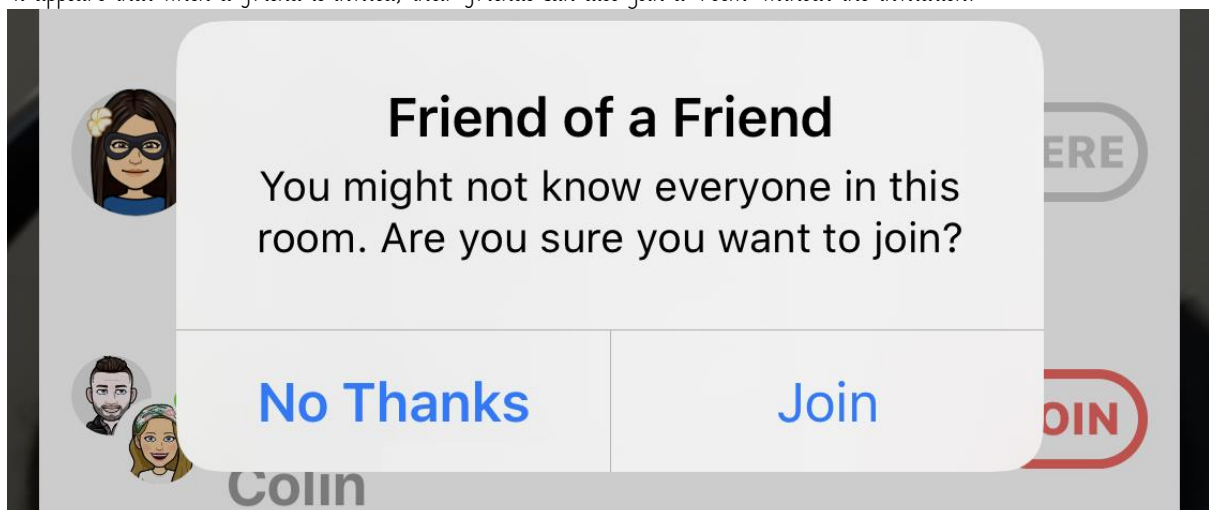
What are the risks?

As with all live-streaming platforms, screenshots, unsolicited messages and self-generated sexualised imagery can put young people at risk.

- Links to 'rooms' can also be shared publicly – to other platforms which could see uninvited users joining.
- 'Rooms' should be locked to prevent uninvited guests from joining – remember all rooms will lock by default if a user enables 'private mode'.



- If an uninvited guest joins a room they can easily 'friend' others taking part in the live stream.
- It appears that when a friend is invited, their friends can also join a 'room' without the invitation.



5 Top Tips for Parents and Carers

1. Encourage young people to only chat with people they know in real life and to use private mode (this locks all rooms they are in).
2. Make sure young people 'lock their room' to prevent uninvited guests from joining.
3. Try using Houseparty together to get an idea of how it works – you might even enjoy it.
4. Encourage kindness and respect online – to help create a safer internet for everyone.
5. Make sure young people understand the risks of image sharing and screenshots online.

Users should know and understand how to configure their privacy settings, as well as block and report users
– download our Houseparty safety card below for more info on how to do these things.