

## Background

Houseparty was launched in February 2016 by Life on Air as a free, easy-to-use video conferencing platform. It was built from the remnants of previous failed attempts at creating a livestreaming application, and was initially launched under a pseudonym, Alexander Herzick.<sup>1</sup> It experienced relatively slow growth before going viral in late 2016. Houseparty can support videoconferences (“houseparties”) with up to 8 simultaneous participants, in which every participant can see and talk to every other participant. The application is currently available via the Google Play Store and Apple iOS Store.

## What is Houseparty?

Houseparty’s basic interface allows users to initiate or join a “party”—an ongoing videoconference call that can be joined or left freely by any user who is invited. The screen is split equally among all participants. Users can be in several parties at once, and each party can support up to 8 users at a time. While in a party, users have the option to mute their device’s microphone and to change or temporarily disable the video source—and can invite other users to the same party.

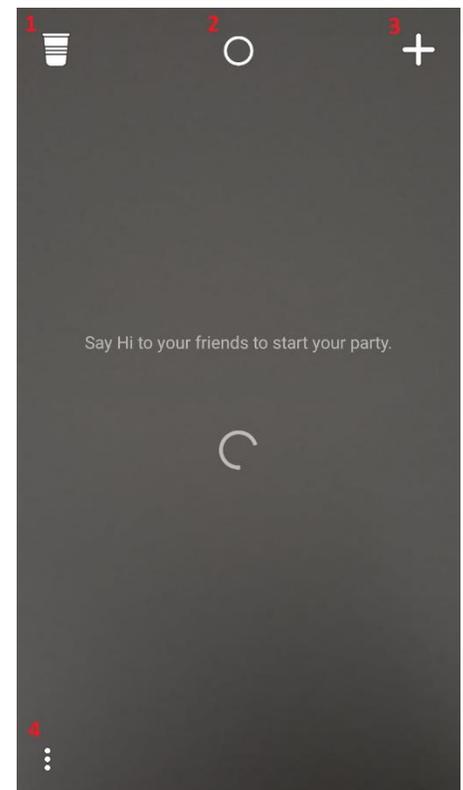
Unlike other similar videoconferencing applications, Houseparty does not offer other common messaging capabilities like persistent text chat.

New users register for Houseparty by providing a full name and email address, and creating a username and password. After allowing the required permissions for the app to run, like access to the device’s microphone and camera, a new user is also prompted to import contacts from their device to network with their friends.

## Graphical User Interface

Opening Houseparty creates a new party. From the home screen (pictured at right), the user has a number of options:

1. **Houseparty icon.** Users can search for and add friends who are already Houseparty users (and who have opted in to share their personal details and allow themselves to be found).
2. **Circle icon.** Users can tap this icon or swipe down to open a list of current friends, sorted by recent activity. This menu can also be



used to invite friends to the current party or to join their parties, or to “poke” a friend (send a push notification to their device).

3. **Cross icon.** This icon is used to invite anyone from the user’s contact list (via a text message with download link) to download Houseparty.
4. **Breadcrumb icon.** This icon opens a menu of user options: muting the microphone, changing the camera source, or locking the room (preventing others from joining the current party).

## Importance to Law Enforcement

The nature of the application (video calls), paired with the primarily teenage user demographic, creates a massive target for criminals. The greatest threat is likely the solicitation and potential abuse of minors due to the application’s user base and viral growth. In April 2017, two children in Manchester, UK had their locked, private Houseparty call crashed by two naked, adult men while working on a school project.

## Investigative Information

Information obtained via [joinhouse.party](https://joinhouse.party)

Houseparty lists their address at 683 Brannan Street, San Francisco, CA 94107. Legal process can be served through email at [hello@joinhouse.party](mailto:hello@joinhouse.party).

Houseparty cooperates with government and law enforcement officials and private parties to enforce and comply with the law. They may disclose any information about a user to government or law enforcement officials or private parties to respond to claims or legal process.

In order to use the service, users must register an account with Houseparty. This account registration contains a full name, chosen username, email address, password, and may include a phone number if the user chose to share theirs to network with their friends. According to the Houseparty Privacy Policy, Houseparty also uses cookies and web beacons to store users’ preferences, app usage trends, and gather demographic information. Houseparty collects location data by geolocating IP addresses and accessing the device’s GPS. Log data may include IP address, browser type, operating system, location, mobile carrier, device and application IDs, other users with whom the subject interacted via the service, and access date and time spent on features of the service.<sup>3</sup>

## Sources

- 1 <https://www.theverge.com/2016/9/28/13081014/meerkat-houseparty-video-app>
- 2 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-4385918/Warning-House-Party-app-men-perform-lewd-acts.html>
- 3 <https://joinhouse.party/privacy.html#houseparty-privacy-policy>



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