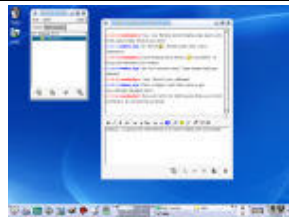


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INSTANT MESSAGING

Instant Messaging (IM) is commonly used for recreation, instant messaging is also becoming more widely used within corporations for communication between employees. IM regardless of the specific software you choose, provides an interface for individuals to communicate one-on-one.

To get started in the world of instant messaging, you need a connection to the Internet, an account with one of the 4 major IM services, and IM client software. The big 4 are AOL Instant Messenger, ICQ, Microsoft's MSN Messenger (Windows XP users have Windows Messenger) and Yahoo Messenger. Simply searching for any of these IM services on the internet will quickly link you to free downloads of IM software.

Each service's free client program is designed to give you maximum control over your online IM presence, including the ability to determine who can and who can't send you messages and whether you appear to be available for chatting. They also provide a list of your contacts, enable you to transfer files eg. pics and support voice, video and mobile messaging. But the programs are far from perfect. One drawback is that to reach friends on different services, you must run multiple IM programs, each service is incompatible with the others. You can't send an instant message to a Yahoo Messenger subscriber using ICQ for example or vice versa.

Even taking into consideration its shortcomings using an IM service whether for family and friends or work is an excellent communication device.

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