

Virtual Social Activities

There are many ways to interact with people without meeting in person. Try a few of these options next time you'd like to shake up your social activities.

Ways to Connect

Phone calls – Whether using a cell phone or a land line, giving someone a call is the easiest and most familiar way to connect and set up activities. If using a smart phone, you can even do video calls and have face-to-face interactions.

Communication apps – Apps like **House Party** and **Bunch** offer face-to-face interactions with loved ones all in one easy to use app. Using these, people can meet up with friends to hang out or play games.

Text based – Whether writing a letter, texting through your phone's messaging app, a downloaded app, or sending emails, text-based communication allows people to maintain a conversation at their convenience.

Video conferencing platforms - There are many video conferencing options available that allow for face-to-face connections, like: **Zoom**, **Teams**, **Google Meet**, **GoToMeeting**, **Skype** and **ezTalks**. What platform you use really depends on preference and familiarity.

Alexa enabled devices – These devices offer a call feature, but an even more versatile drop-in feature. This feature is wonderful for individuals who need extra assistance using communication technology, like people who have dementia, traumatic brain injuries, or an intellectual/developmental disability. With these devices people can video call using simple commands, like "Call Mom".



Pro tip! Alexa herself can help maintain connection and companionship through not only the call and drop in features, but she can also tell jokes, short stories, or play games like trivia.

Social Media/Online communities – Whether you prefer Tik Tok, Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, Discord, or Reddit, there is community to be had online. This is a good option for those without established relationships who are looking to make new friends. Just be sure to share safely.

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Book clubs are easily adapted to a distanced format. They work much like traditional book clubs, but participants instead discuss their book virtually. You can join with loved ones or make new friends through the online discussions. Some clubs available online include:

- **The Girlfriend Book Club**, is sponsored by AARP and focuses on literature for women 40 and over.
- **The Andrew Luck Book Club** was created by the former Indianapolis Colts' quarterback and offers two recommendations a month respectively for youth: "Rookies", and adults: "Veterans".
- **Now Read This Book Club** was created by the PBS NewsHour and the New York Times and focuses on both works of fiction and nonfiction that reflect today's issues.

Miss watching TV on the couch together? Collect on your respective couches and have a virtual viewing party. You can watch a movie or shows together using:

- **The Teleparty extension** through Chrome on your desktop or laptop allows subscribers to synch **Netflix**, **Disney+**, **Hulu**, and **HBOMax** together. There is even a chat feature so everyone can comment while watching.
- **Sling TV** is a service that provides sports, news, and channels you would typically find through cable. They also provide a service called **Sling Watch Party**, which allows up to four people to video chat while watching shows simultaneously.
- **Plex** is a digital media server, player, and organization tool that enables users to interact with media on their computer. Plex offers **Watch Together**, which works with your computer's media as well as streaming services, allowing users to watch simultaneously with other Plex users.
- **Scener** works similarly to Teleparty, in that it is a Chrome extension for laptops and browsers. Users can stream across platforms like Netflix, YouTube, Disney+ and **Prime Video**. It creates a virtual theater experience with unlimited guests in the "theater" and with hosts and cohosts choosing who is on camera. You can also have rooms with up to 10 guests on camera.
- Facebook's "Watch Together" option in Messenger allows people to have viewing parties, right in the Messenger app.



If your group enjoys a challenge, try out a virtual escape room! Companies like [The Escape Game – Remote Adventures](#), [Virtual Escape Experiences by Puzzle Break](#), and [Mystery Escape Room Online](#) provide all the fun and intrigue of an escape room while allowing people to participate virtually with their loved ones over video conferencing software. The fees range from per-person rates to single event rates.

If you prefer a bit more intrigue, host your own murder mystery dinner party and find the villain amongst you. Simply choose your game: free options include [The Business of Murder from John H. Kim at Darkshire.net](#), [Way Out West from Free Form Games](#) or [The Little Engine That Could Kill from Free Murder Mystery Games](#), and some paid kits include [Dinner and a Murder](#), [My Mystery Party](#), or [Murder at Mardi Gras from University Games](#). All you need to do is mail character materials to each of your participants and people can dress up in costumes to match their characters, have food and drink appropriate to the theme of the mystery, and you can all figure out who dunnit together over a videoconferencing call.



Play multi-player games with your friends on iMessage using [GamePigeon](#). This app has games like pool, word hunt, and sea battle and is a great easy to use method of interacting with friends one-on-one.

Online gaming can be a complex and high adrenaline social activity, with many options including [Fortnite](#), [PlayersUnknown Battle Grounds](#) and [Splatoon 2](#). This option is wonderful for meeting other gamers interested in this high-octane

type of gameplay. Online gaming can also provide social games with low-impact gameplay that oftentimes encourages positive online interactions. Check out games like: [Among Us](#), [Animal Crossing](#), [Don't Starve Together](#), [Minecraft](#) (on servers like the Mineplex Server) and [Starbound](#) via Steam.

Playing video games online is a great option to spend time with loved ones and friends, but if board games are more your speed and you are missing your weekly game night, [Tabletop Simulator](#) allows you to play online with friends or on the same computer, "hotseat" style. It comes loaded with classic games like chess, mahjong, backgammon, poker, and many others. You can also download more modern games, such as [Wingspan](#), [Scythe](#), and [Zombicide](#). Additionally, if you own a VR headset, you can play virtually-in-person with your friends!

Bust out your most beautiful stationery and pens to reinvigorate established relationships, or make new friends by fostering pen pal relationships, either with actual paper and pen or by virtual means. New pen pals can be obtained via: **Facebook groups**, **Discord groups**, **Reddit**, or **Google Meet**. This can even enable you to correspond with people around the world and share pictures and stories while learning about other cultures.

Look up your local community center’s website to see if they are offering online classes, as many are providing classes on a variety of topics, such as: art, meditation, and fitness.

If you are wanting to build on your education, whether it be for professional, personal interests, or artistic purposes, look to your local community college. Many offer learning extension or adult education classes including topics, such as: cooking, art, interior design, auto repair, and language building skills.

For those looking for companionship, but not keen on meeting new people, Elli Q is an adorable robot who functions much like Alexa or Google Home, but is designed for older adults. It offers mindfulness and entertainment activities and responds to questions and offers suggestions.

Joy for All Companion Pets are designed to bring comfort, companionship, and fun to older adults. They offer interactive dogs and cats who can provide comfort and companionship without the worry of feeding and hygiene needs that non-mechanical pets would require.

MyndVR is a company aiming to provide virtual reality services to older adults. Their service helps reduce anxiety, increase socialization, stimulate memory and cognition, and improve overall happiness.



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