



Gooseberry Parent

House Party

What is House Party?

A free, group video chatting app. House Party enables users to hold group video chats with up to 8 other people. The app makes use of a split-screen, so that all members of the group chat can be seen at once. The app is popular with teenagers who want to connect with their friends, as well as families in long-distance relationships who want to video chat with each other.

Key Features of House Party to be aware of

- The House Party app can be downloaded from the Apple app store or Google Play and used on digital mobile devices.
- To set up a House Party account, an email address, full name, username and password are required.
- Using House Party does not require entry of a birthdate or age, though it is rated as 12+ on the iTunes store and 'parental guidance' is suggested by Google Play.
- The app makes use of your device's microphone and camera and cannot be used without them.
- Users choose who they want to chat with and all parties must consent before the chat begins.
- Chat requests are sent out through the app to other users or via text messages and can be accepted or ignored.
- 'Rooms' can be created in the app, which allow up to 8 users to chat at the same time, to provide a 'party' feel to the conversations. Multiple rooms can be created at the same time, allowing the user the opportunity to move between group chats.
- House Party is often used by children for group projects and study sessions, and can also be useful for work-related meetings and planning sessions.

Enjoying House Party safely and managing the risks

- **Signing Up** – Encourage your child to keep log in details and passwords secure and share them with you. Though there is no explicit age requirement, parental guidance is recommended when children use the app.
- **User Names** – Encourage your child to choose an original and creative username that avoids giving away their own.
- **Creating 'Rooms'** – Ensure your child knows all the members of a room in real life prior to joining a room. Encourage your child to use the app's 'lock' feature to secure the room and prevent any other users from listening to their chats.
- **Chat Requests** – Encourage your child to request chats with only those that they know and trust in real life. If they receive a request from an unknown person, encourage them to ignore it. If the person persists or becomes abusive, they can be blocked using the app's blocking feature.
- **House Party 'Stranger Danger'** - House Party gives a 'stranger danger' warning if an uninvited person, for instance a friend of someone in the room, attempts to enter the chat. Encourage your child to refuse entry to anyone that they do not know and trust in real life. Remind them to leave any chat if a stranger enters or if the conversation begins to make them feel uncomfortable.
- **Location Settings** – Encourage your child to disable location services in the settings section of the app so that others cannot trace their location.



- **Sharing Information** – Remind your child not to share any personal details with other users of the app who they don't know and trust in real life. Remind them that anything they say in a chat could potentially be recorded and saved by another user. Ensure that they do not provide their phone number, even if the app requests it.
- **Communicate your expectations** – As a parent, it is your responsibility to make clear what is and is not acceptable online behaviour. You need to accept that allowing your child access to online apps like these, require trust and clear boundaries, for their own wellbeing.
- **Model positive and safe online behaviour** – Safe behaviour online starts with us as adults. Following basic safety suggestions and demonstrating these will help your child to follow in your footsteps. You also have a better chance of staying safer online yourself.
- **Do your homework** – Take time to read Privacy Policies and Terms of Use to find out how app developers use personal information. You can also learn about acceptable use of the app and find advice on securing online accounts and set privacy settings on devices.
- **Download and use the app** – Having a go yourself can help you understand how the app works and how to secure an account.
- **Read the reviews** for the app, this will give you an idea what other people are saying about it and what potential risks there may be.
- **Become your child's friend** – this way you can check what they send, and make sure they are staying safe. **This is not prying, it is parenting.** Consider how you will monitor what is being shared online by your child and what is being shared with them.
- **Read the safety tips and resources** – preferably with your child. This communicates clearly what is and isn't acceptable and what people can do with your pictures and messages. If you can have a clear conversation with your child about this, they are sensible enough to use it.
- **Make the decision** – **You are a parent** and you will know your child enough to decide on allowing them to use House Party or any other social networking app. House Party is designed to be a fun and appealing app and it is not difficult to see why it is so popular. By following the steps outlined above you have a better opportunity to ensure that your child is protected online.

Enjoy the House Party...but enjoy it safely!