

Setting Up Skype on a Computer

What Is Skype?

Skype is a computer program that allows you to make free voice and video calls between two computers, tablets, or smartphones that have Internet connections. Calls can also be made to land line and cell phone numbers from your computer and calls to international numbers cost about the same as a local call. This tutorial explains the basics of how-to setup Skype on a laptop/desktop, add contacts, and make a call.

What Do You Need to Use Skype?

1. A computer, tablet or smart phone
2. A microphone or webcam if you want to make video calls from your computer. These can be external, or you can use the integrated webcam that is practically standard on modern laptops/desktop computers. Smart phones of course have integrated cameras and microphones.
3. The Skype software application which is free

Step 1 - Download and Install the Skype App

First download and install Skype from www.skype.com. On an Android phone, install the Skype app from the Google Play Store.

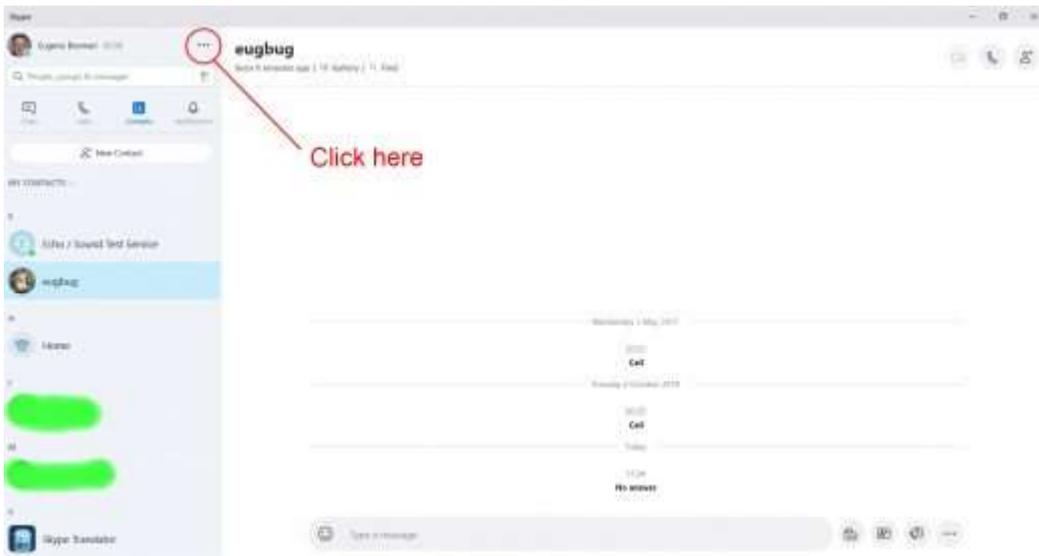
Next you need to setup an account and pick a username and password for yourself. Once you have done this and checked your microphone and speakers/headphones are functioning ok, you can start adding contacts.

Step 2 - Setup Your Microphone

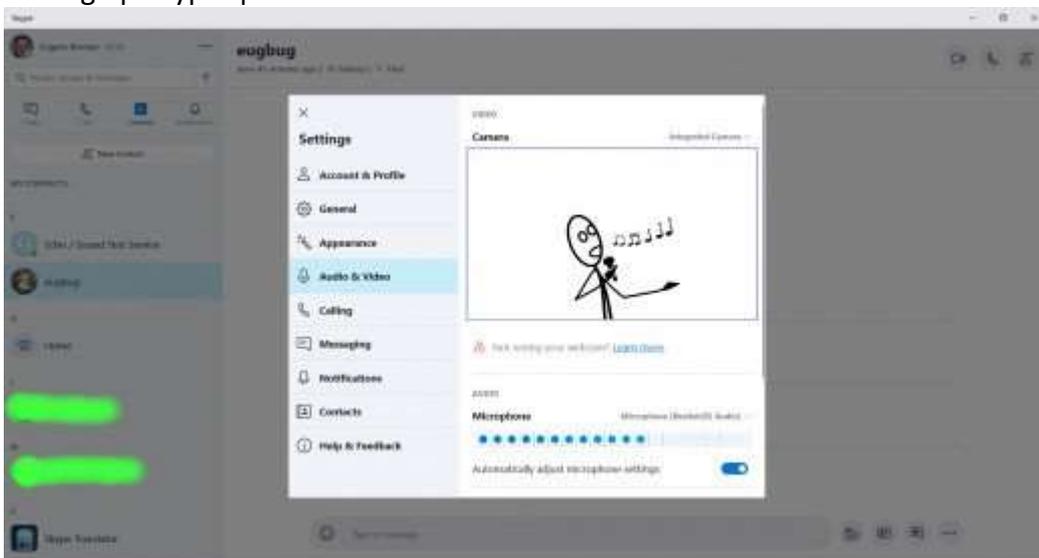
Before you use Skype, you need to setup your microphone and webcam if you have one.

Setting up the microphone

1. Click on the 3-bar menu at the top of the screen.
2. From the drop-down menu that appears, click "settings".
3. On the settings dialog, click "Audio & Video"
4. If your webcam is already enabled, you should see yourself in the webcam preview. Otherwise click the down arrow on the right of the dialog and pick your camera from the list.
5. If your microphone is working, you should see a dynamic display of sound level on the blue bar graph. If you don't, click on the arrow on the right of the dialog and pick your microphone from the list.



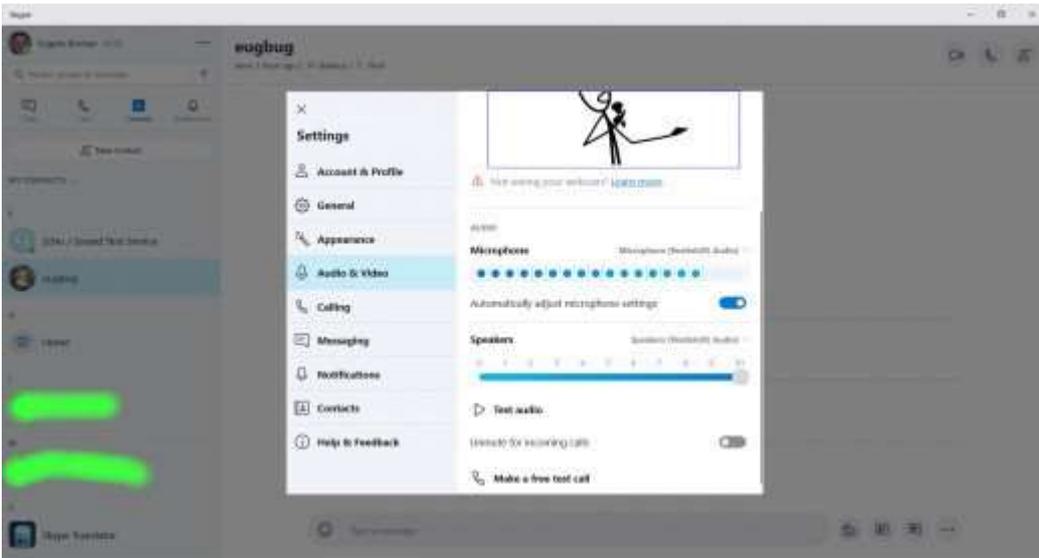
Setting up Skype. | Source



Setting up the microphone in Skype. If it's working ok, the bar graph will move up and down in response to detected sound. | Source

Step 3 - Test Your Speakers

Test your speakers are working ok by clicking on the small triangle beside "Test audio". If you don't hear anything, click the down arrow to pick your sound output device from the list.



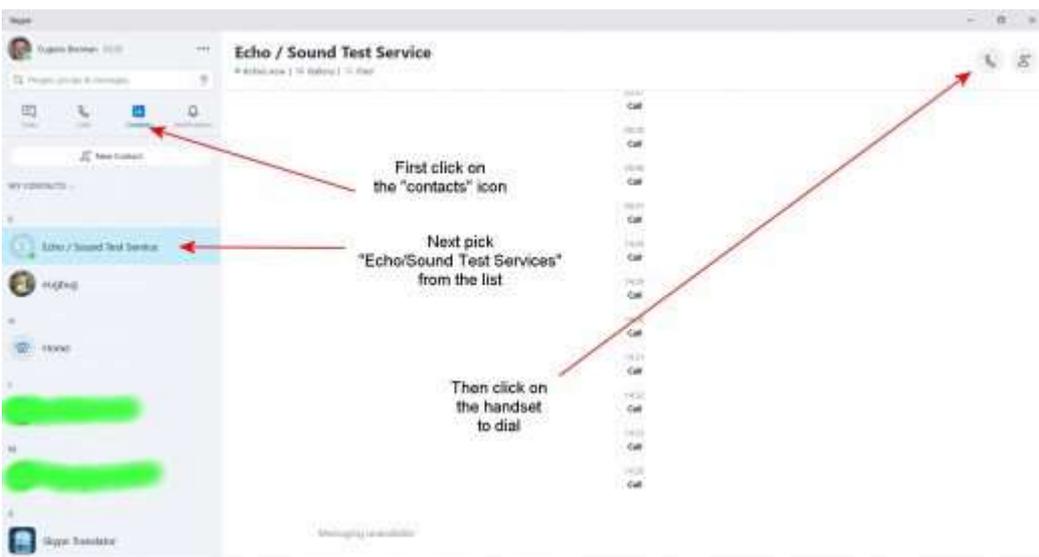
Testing the speakers in Skype. | Source

Step 4 - Make a call to the Echo/Sound Test Service

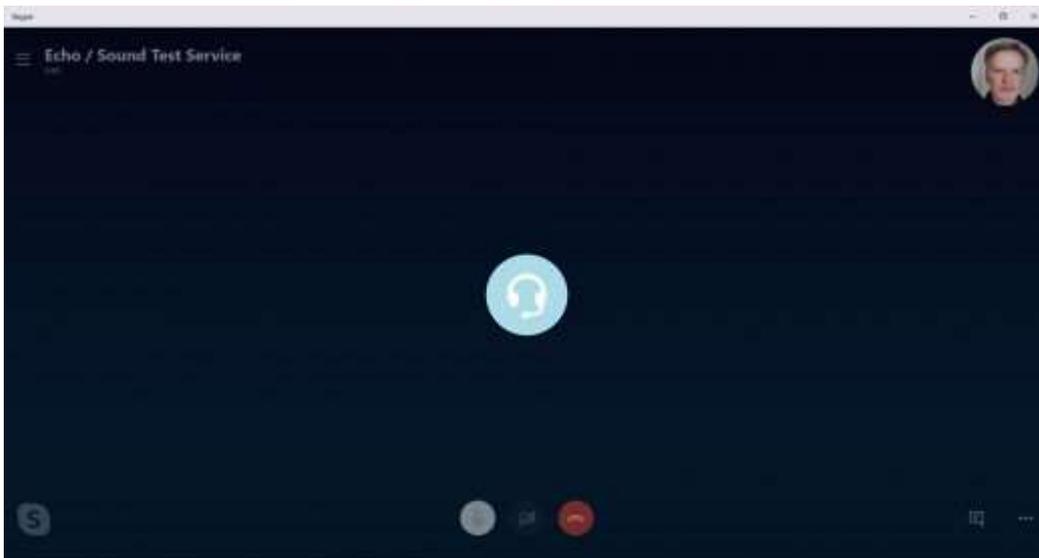
To finally make sure all your hardware is setup, make a call to the Echo/Sound Test Service. This is an automated contact that you can call and leave a test audio recording.

To test:

1. Click on the "contacts" icon at the top of the left side panel
2. Select Echo/Sound Test Service from the contacts list
3. Click the handset icon at the top right of the screen.
4. A window appears showing the attempt to contact the service.
5. Once the service answers, wait until prompted by the beep, then make your test recording.
6. After speaking, wait for several seconds for recording to end and if your microphone and speakers are setup and working correctly, you'll hear playback of your recording.



Making a test call to the Sound Test Service in Skype. | Source



Making a call to the Sound Test Service in Skype. | Source

Step 5 - Add Contacts

There are two types of contacts you can add, Skype contacts and landline/cell phone contacts

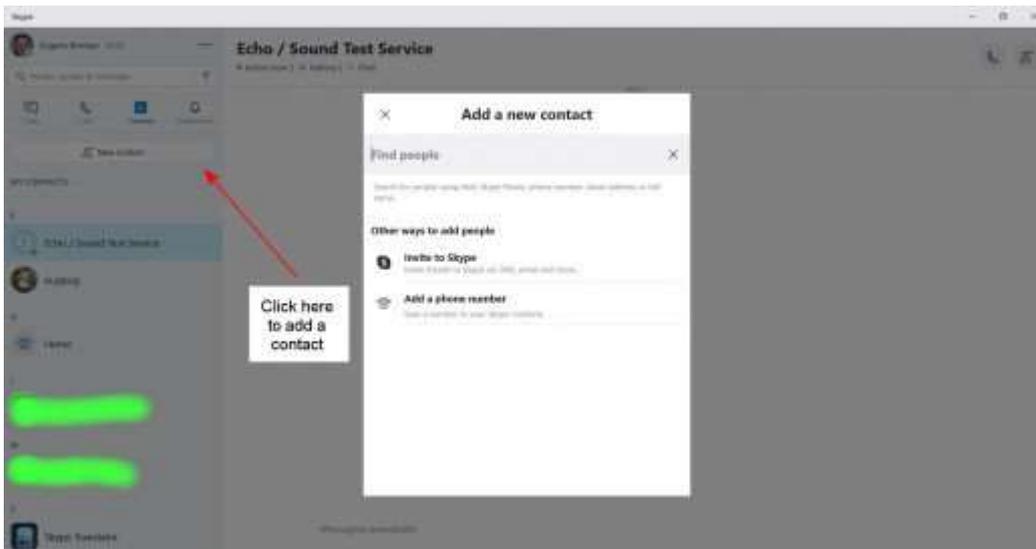
Adding a Skype contact

1. Click on "New contact" in the left side panel
2. In the dialog that appears, Click in the "Find People" box and start typing the person's username if you know it. If the contact is not "ex-directory" with privacy settings turned on, suggestions will appear. Either pick the contact from the suggestions or continue typing their username.

Adding a landline/cell phone (mobile) contact

1. Click on "Add a phone number"
2. In the dialog that appears, enter the person's first and last names as you would like them to appear in your contact list.
3. Under the "Phone" setting, click the down arrow, and select the country code from the list.
4. Use the down arrow on the right to choose whether the phone number is "home", "mobile" or "office".
5. Click to the right of the down arrow beside "Phone" and enter the area code followed by the phone number.
6. Click "Save" in the top right corner of the dialog.

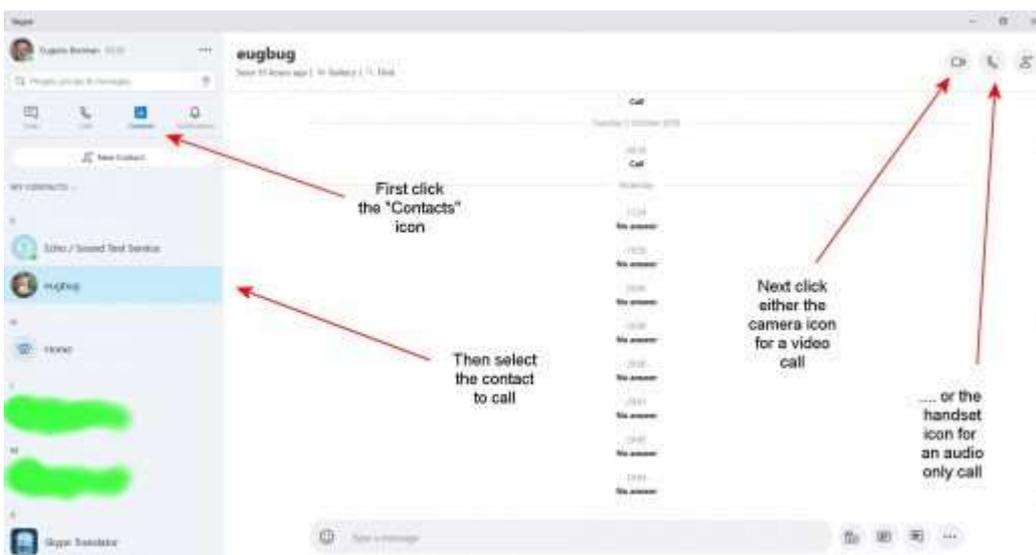
You can also request a person to join Skype and setup an account if they haven't got one already. To do this, click on "Invite to Skype" and send them a request via email or SMS.



Adding a contact in Skype. | Source

Step 6 - How to Call a Contact

1. Click on "Contacts" at the top of the side panel on the left of the screen.
2. Select a contact from the list.
3. The symbol to the left of the person's name in the list indicates their online status. They can be online, offline when not signed into Skype, invisible when online but don't want anyone to know, away when they are not active on their computer for a set period of time. You can set your own online status by right clicking the Skype icon on the task bar.
4. You can make a video call if you have a webcam by clicking on the video call icon which looks like a camera, alternatively click on the handset icon to make a voice only call.
5. On the call window, you can mute your microphone or turn off your camera by clicking on the icons at the bottom of the screen.



Select a contact and click the camera or handset icons to initiate a video or audio only call respectively.

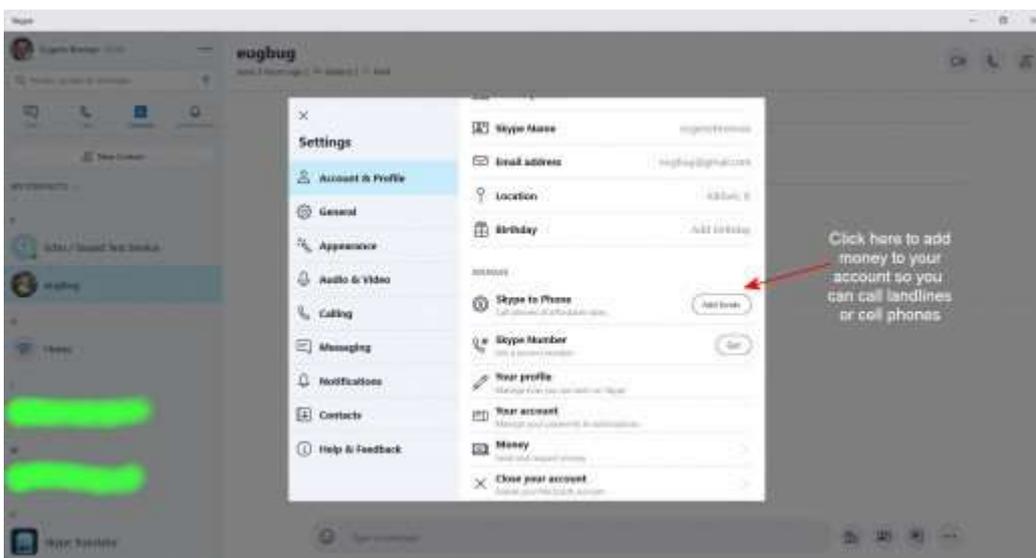


The Skype call screen appears once you dial a contact. You can turn on your camera during an audio call.

Adding Skype Credit for Calling Landlines and Cell Phones

Calls to other Skype users are free, however you can also make low cost calls to cell phones and landlines. First you need to put some credit into your Skype account.

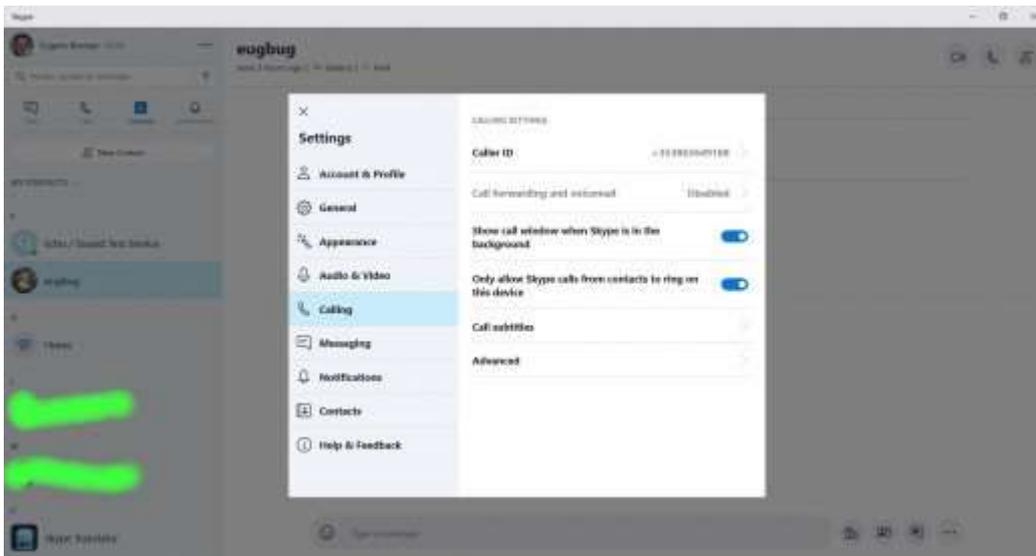
1. Click on the three-bar menu icon at the top of the screen and select "settings"
2. Select "Account and Settings" from the dialog that appears
3. Click on "Add funds" to the right of "Skype to Phone"
4. You can use PayPal or a debit/credit card to buy credit. There are several different packages for calling different continents/countries.



Click "add funds" to add credit to your account. | Source

Staying Private on Skype

Avoid unwanted calls from people who look up your username by turning on "Only allow Skype calls from contacts to ring on this device".



Avoid unwanted calls from people who look up your username by turning on "Only allow Skype calls from contacts to ring on this device".

Skype - The Facts

- Skype is a VOIP software program that stands for Voice Over Internet Protocol. Basically, a VOIP program converts audio and video during a call into data and sends it over the Internet. Since it is free to send data, (once you pay your broadband bill) Skype cashes in on this and allows calls between computers to be free. This is in contrast to calls over the PSTN (Public Switched Telephone Network) that are timed and for which there is a charge. There are other VOIP programs such as Gizmo and Google Talk, WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger but the most well-known is Skype.
- There is no charge for voice or video calls between two computers - They are entirely free!
- You can call regular land line or cell phone numbers using Skype. The call charge is made up of a fixed setup cost and a per minute cost. For example, a call from the U.S. to the U.K. costs 4.9c to setup and 2.3c per minute. This makes Skype great for making international calls.
- Skype can be configured so that when you ring someone on their cell phone or landline, a chosen number appears on the callee's caller ID unit or phone. You could for instance pick your cell phone number. This lets the callee know who is calling.
- Another feature of Skype is "Skype to Go". This allows you to call a number from your landline or cell phone. This is useful if you want to call someone in another country, or even make nonlocal calls in the same country that might normally incur high call charges because of the distance. To set this up, you submit the land line or cell phone number/numbers of the person you are calling to Skype on your account page. A local number is then generated that you call from your phone. A self-service menu allows you to pick the number you wish to contact. Since the number is local, it is charged at local rates. This is useful if you wish to call someone abroad or if you are abroad yourself and want to call home. (You don't need to call from a device running Skype such as a computer or smartphone to use this feature, but you must have a Skype account)

- An "Online Number" makes it possible for people to call you on your computer or smartphone running Skype, from their landline or cell phone.
- To pay for calls to land lines and cell phones, you can choose a "pay as you go" prepaid option or pay a monthly subscription charge. The latter works out cheaper per call if you are a heavy user.
- You can make a video call if you have a web camera or webcam for short. You don't have to do this and can just make a voice call, if you don't want to be seen! Most new computers have an inbuilt webcam. Alternatively, you can buy one and plug it into a USB socket.
- A feature which can be useful is share screen. If someone is helping you sort out a problem on your computer, this facility allows them to watch everything that is happening on the screen of your computer.
- It is possible to send files to the other computer and also SMS messages to cell phones.
- A disadvantage of Skype is that it often suffers from anomalies. For instance, the connection can drop or there can be short periods during a call when either party cannot hear each other. It sometimes happens that you get a "stuttering" effect where the last word that a person says is rapidly repeated. Often though the sound quality can be excellent and much better than that achieved on a standard telephone handset, set to speaker/hands free mode. This is because of the higher quality of microphones and loudspeakers in a computer.