

9 November 2005

By: Alex Muradin, Editor, Software Reviews

Can You Hear Me Now?

You'll never have to say that again with Skype



How is Skype Different? Another voice/chat messaging service that claims it offers great ways to communicate internationally. What's this one got to offer that we haven't already seen in about fifty other similar programs? Let's see if it's able to compete with powerhouses online chatting like AOL's AIM and MSN's Messenger or even Yahoo's Messenger. What is Skype all about and what are its primary functions?**Intro**After installing Skype, I was asked if I wanted to synch some of my other contacts from MSN Messenger who already had Skype installed and to add them as contacts. This was a great feature since I had no clue which of them actually used Skype. My first impression of Skype was that it's not your typical online chat application, nor is it meant to be. I approached Skype in the wrong way thinking it was mainly to chat online with friends. I got this idea from the people who only use it for online chatting, but I was amazed to see that Skype's intended use is something completely different. **How to use it!** I should have been smarter and gone straight to Skype's website to see that its main purpose is for calling people. You can make free, easy to use and high quality audio calls to anywhere in the world. As long as the person you're calling has Skype installed, talking over the net has really never been easier. Skype uses its software to give its users a chance to communicate through telephony rather than typing. **What's better about it?** Skype's users are pleased with the service that it provides. Compared to other voice services, Skype is hands down leading in every category. No other application that allows you to make calls over the Internet has a completion rate as high as that of Skype. Current voice and chat applications just don't measure up. Skype uses proprietary technology to deliver surprisingly good sound quality. Your calls are encrypted "end-to-end", which makes you relax a little more when it comes to security. I think the best thing about Skype is that it is in fact compatible with a lot of OSs out there. I know for sure that it's compatible with Mac and Linux users. As long as both clients have the software, they will be able to easily communicate. If you're worried about who has and who hasn't Skype, you can check out how many users are logged into Skype at any given time just by looking down at the bottom right-hand-side of the window (around 3 million for me). Aside from peer to peer, there's also conference calling which enables numerous users on one line. The interface does look a lot like a chat application, but it lacks all of its main functionalities. I noticed there wasn't an 'Away' option which lets others know you aren't at your computer... But that's a minor issue. If you want to make calls from Skype to a landline, that's also possible, but for a price. Use SkypeOut to call from Skype to traditional landlines or mobiles. Skypeln is a phone number your friends can call. You answer in Skype and Skype Voicemail takes your calls when you're busy or offline. **The Good** A quality product with an easy-to-use interface that lets you make calls to other Skype users. This should be a good enough reason to save money on international and long-distance calls. Great usability and offers more features if you pay for the extra services. **The Bad** I wish it could all be free. Some minor things on the interface that could make it so that users see your 'status.' **The Truth** The bottom line is that this is a great product. As long as both client machines have Skype installed, you can talk to people any time, anywhere. It works for multiple OS platforms and keeps the same great quality. Definitely worth the download! Check out the pics below.