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iChat icon
Apple

[iChat Gets Your 'Far-Flung Family' Together for the Holiday](#)

Pro Tip explains how you can spend quality time with the loved ones at a distance

One of Apple's latest Pro tips features great tips on how to use the audio chat feature in [Leopard](#)'s built-in IM client, iChat. In a Pro Tip document under [Apple](#)'s Mac section of the official website, the company details methods of getting together with up to 9 buddies for an audio chat unmatched by other solutions.

"Sure, you can text someone with iChat. But did you know that iChat also lets you conduct audio chats — with up to nine buddies at the same time," says Apple. "You can use the built-in microphone on your Mac or connect an external mic. It's a great way to get a far-flung family together for the holiday. And it's really easy," Apple assures visitors of its [website](#). The company thus encourages Mac users to find out how, by reading the latest Creative Pro tip.

With the audio chat feature built inside iChat, you can invite as many as nine buddies to talk, Apple says. You can even record audio chats with their permission, just like with video chats. Most Macs boast a built-in mic, so there's really no requirement at all, as long as you have a Macintosh and an Internet connection.

Want to use an external mic? No problem just connect one to the audio input port of your computer and, if a telephone or camera icon appears beside a name in your buddy list, it means everyone has what they need to conduct the audio chat. If some of your buddies are using low specced Macs, Apple says to look for the "stacked" telephone or camera icon - it indicates that your buddy's computer has enough power to participate in a multiple-person chat.

Having said all this, start an audio chat by opening iChat and selecting the buddy or buddies you want to chat with. Hold down the Command key as you click on their names to choose more buddies to talk to simultaneously, then click on the telephone icon at the bottom of your buddy list. Alternately, you can select to Invite them to Audio Chat, by using the Buddies menu. Upon receiving your invitation, your friends simply hit Accept to join the chat. Best of all, everyone has their very own sound level gage, which enables you to see who's talking.

For the full scoop on Apple's Audio Chats, or more Pro tips for Mac users, visit Apple's website [here](#).