Collaboration Tools with a Focus on Video Conferencing

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I am focusing on a small curated set of solutions that offer a free version and that are relatively easy to set up (whatever that means) for artists, charities or freelancers.

My current favourite approach (to be tested) is a combination of **Discord**, **OBS**, and **Jitsi** with alternative servers (see below) plus a fallback chat channel in WhatsApp/Signal/Telegram. In addition we use Google Drive for document sharing / editing. If there is a budget for collaboration tools I would use Basecamp (https://basecamp.com/).

Notes:
* The numbers of participants are theoretical limits, your experience will vary.
* It is a good idea to have a fallback (text chat with a different service)
* Lock down your channels, especially video, against unwanted guests
* Measure your upload and download speed with a tool such as https://www.speedtest.net/. Your upload speed is crucial if you broadcast and for video conferencing. Also it might be a good idea to ask other members of your household not to stream Netflix while you are hosting a video conference.
* To improve the audio quality, if you do not have a professional setup, put your phone or tablet on a stand in front of you and speak into the phone's microphone. This will result in better quality than with most headsets. To reduce reverberation (echo), find a room with a lot of stuff in it and draw the curtains.
* Participants who just listen in can mute their microphones.

Different Modalities / Needs:
1. One-to-many: Streaming / Broadcasting.
2. Many-to-Many: Audio/Video Conferencing, Chat
3. Collaboration: Live Editing Documents / Whiteboards / Code
4. Sharing: Documents, Links, Webapps

Tool	Features (Free Version)	Free / Pay Version	+/- (Free Version)
Discord **https://discordapp.com/** **OBS** **https://obsproject.com/** **Source: https://github.com/obsproject/obs-studio**	**Video/Voice/Chat/Screenshare/Game Streaming/Channels/Files/Links/Apps**	**https://discordapp.com/nitro**	**- Up to 10 video conferencing participants** **- Video requires software installation** **+ 50 screenshare participants (temporarily)** **+ Discord + OBS Studio: 50 broadcasting video participants (temporarily)**
Jitsi https://Meet.jit.si	**Video**	**n/a**	**+ Up to 75 video conferencing participants** **+ Runs in Browser (Chrome recommended), no Installation, no account**

Source: **https://github.com/jitsi** **Alternative Servers:** **https://github.com/jitsi/jitsi-meet/wiki/Jitsi-Meet-Instances**			**- Main Server possibly overloaded, use alternative ones**
Kast	Video/Voice/Chat/Screenshare/Movie and Game Streaming	https://kast.gg/subscriptions.html	+ Up to 20 members can stream video (audio and video) and an additional 100 members can spectate. - Video requires software installation - Web version Chrome only
Skype https://www.skype.com/en/	Video/Voice/Chat/Screen Sharing/Recording/Files, Links/Photos	Microsoft Teams	+ Up to 50 video participants - Video requires software installation - Chat and Audio in the browser require Chrome or Edge
Google Hangouts https://hangouts.google.com/	Video/Voice/Chat	https://gsuite.google.com/pricing.html	**- Up to 10 video participants**
Cisco WebEx https://www.webex.com	Video/Voice/Chat/Whiteboards	https://www.webex.com/de/pricing/index.html	+ Up to 100 video participants + Up to 24h meetings - Video requires software installation
Whereby https://whereby.com/	Video/Voice/Chat/Screen Sharing/	https://whereby.com/information/pricing/	**- Up to 4 video participants in the free version**
Zoom https://zoom.us/	Video/Voice/Chat/Screen Sharing/Files, Links/Photos	https://zoom.us/pricing	+ A participant does not require a Zoom account in order to join a meeting. + Up to 100 video participants - Requires software installation - 40 Minute group meeting limit - Default settings allow any meeting participant to share their screen without permission from an event's host. Anyone who has a link to a public meeting can join -> abuse. **- Horrific privacy and data security history**

Not considered for this list:

- GoToMeeting (no free version)

- HouseParty (unacceptable privacy policy aka **what do these guys smoke?**), e.g.:

  "Information Submitted Via Services. You agree that Life on Air is free to use the content of any communications ubmitted(sic!) by you via the Services, including any ideas, inventions, concepts, techniques, or know-how disclosed therein, for any purpose including developing, manufacturing, and/or marketing goods or Services."

  "Even if you opt-out, we may still collect and use non-Personal Information regarding your activities on our Services and/or information from the advertisements on Third-Party websites for non-interest based advertising purposes, such as to determine the effectiveness of the advertisements." (https://www.houseparty.com/privacy/#houseparty-privacy-policy)

- Slack (1:1 video, lock-in in the free version). Slack might be an option for collaboration and sharing but the free/paid conversion model to give you access to 10,000 of your team's most recent messages does not seem right to me. See https://slack.com/intl/en-de/pricing. If you have a budget, you might consider Basecamp instead: https://basecamp.com/how-it-works

- VR solutions, Second Life etc.

Links

A much larger list of tools by info@congressa.de in German and English (thanks Stefan)
https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1retD7xTjBeVuy7KI0kptX2JRg3Hht_Gcu0iweCia2TM/htmlview?fbclid=IwAR3DMjVL9OdPBZQkJcc4HjD2EkFXK9XLy5AafSuY7rGWYP19fW2_EbWsNFg

A comparison of professional live Streaming solutions:
https://livestream.com/blog/livestreaming-platform-comparison-pricing?category=marketing

Q: "How do I do a video conference with 20 people?" A: "Usually that is too many people."
A discussion and Q&A by the Basecamp founders on remote working in these times, recommended:
https://www.pscp.tv/w/1MYGNkzzNpXJw

Thanks to everyone who is contributing 😊.

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