



CyberAngels

A program of Guardian Angels
keeping it safe

Instant Messaging

What is Instant Messaging?

An instant message (IM) program allows two or more people to talk via typing back and forth in real time. IM programs usually appear on the screen as boxes of some kind, a split screen, or a small screen where the typed messages are passed back and forth. Some of these programs allow you to see what the person is writing as they are typing it.

IM programs are usually free, easy to download, and fairly simple to operate. Several of the programs allow you to leave a message so that when the recipient signs on, they see the message you left. Others will tell you that the recipient is not available, thus, no message can be left at that time. Many IM programs also allow you to transfer files such as photos or music files (eg, mp3 files).

Short Message Service

Short-message service (SMS), aka text messaging, is a means of sending messages to and from mobile phones. The term is also sometimes used to refer to the actual typed message.

Mobile Instant Messaging

Mobile Instant Messaging (MIM) is the ability to engage in IM from a mobile handset such as a mobile phone, Pocket PC, Blackberry or Palm. With the huge penetration of mobile phones and increasing dependence on IM technology by the general population, MIM is becoming more widespread every day. New technologies are being developed that allow instant video messages to be sent from phone to computer, phone to phone etc.

Risks and Liabilities

Instant messaging accounts are vulnerable to hacking, are not virus protected, and may change your computer's security settings. A very serious concern is the fact that the messages are not encrypted, and vulnerable to interception by third parties. Visit the [security](#) section of our site for more information about protecting your computer.

Additional Resources

CERT: [Using Instant Messaging and Chat Rooms Safely](#)