

LEARNING MADE EASY



Discord®

for
dummies®
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Build a Discord studio
and create a community

Set up a profile, establish a
channel, and join conversations

Maximize results from
the Discord platform

Tee Morris

Author of *Twitch For Dummies* and
co-author of *Podcasting For Dummies*

Discord[®]

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Discord[®]

by Tee Morris

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dummies[®]
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Discord® For Dummies®

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Introduction

I'm just going to come out and address the massive gorilla in the room: naming a communications platform Discord is just plain weird.

And naming a platform as powerful, as efficient, and as awesome as the one I'm about to introduce you to Discord makes no sense to me.

Yet here we are. *Discord For Dummies*.

Maybe you've already heard of this platform and are looking to broaden your skill set on it. Maybe you are, like me, on a streaming platform — Twitch (<https://twitch.tv>) being my preferred place for streaming shenanigans — and people on your chat are asking about your Discord. Maybe you are looking to find something to replace your Facebook seeing as Discord hasn't been called before Congress concerning privacy issues. Maybe you are just plain curious about this platform. (Or maybe you are one of those folks who has mastered Discord, is making a nice chunk of change from it, wanted to see who the heck I was in writing this book, and intend to poke fun at it next time you're online, to which, all I can say is "Yooooo, thanks for the shout-out!") Whatever the reason, you're here, and I appreciate it. I'm here to talk to you about Discord. It's a chat engine. It's an audio app. It's a video chat app. A lot is happening here, and I'm your guide in this beginner's approach to this communications platform.

Discord For Dummies offers you a deep dive and a step-by-step approach to an exciting platform that, while designed for gamers, offers so much more in the ways of communication. Beginning with the question at the forefront of your mind — what is Discord? — this book takes you through an up-and-coming platform that serves as primary game comms for fireteams worldwide and virtual meeting spaces for event organizers. By the time you reach the end of this book, you should know where to go in Discord to get things done, how to build a community, how to connect with people through audio and video, and even have some fun on this journey with me.

About This Book

Discord For Dummies should be these things to all who pick up and read it (whether straight through or by jumping around in the chapters):

- » A user-friendly guide in how to establish a server, work with audio, work with video, and build a community
- » A terrific reference for choosing the right hardware and software to improve on your Internet communications, whether it is for gaming or otherwise
- » The starting point for the person who knows nothing about audio, video, VoIP, chat, community building, community management, or how to turn a computer into a communications bank
- » A handy go-to think tank for any beginning server manager who's hungry for new ideas on what goes into a good stream and fresh points of view
- » A really fun read

There will be plenty of answers in these pages, and if you find the answers too elementary, I will provide you plenty of points of reference to research. I don't claim to have all the solutions, quick fixes, and resolutions to all possible Discord queries, but I will present to you the basic building blocks and first steps for building a community around your favorite game(s), charity, non-profit, podcast, or stream. As with any *For Dummies* book, my responsibility is to offer you a foundation on which to build your Channel and grow. You may not hear me talk about your favorite Discord server. In fact, you may think "Why didn't you talk to [insert favorite Discord server admin here]? They would have been a great feature." My mission is to teach you the basics, and in covering the basics, I might have missed some details. However, this book should provide you with a solid foundation.

This book was written as a linear path from setting up a profile for yourself to strategies in community engagement and management. However, not everyone will read this book from page one to the end. If you've already gotten your feet wet with the various aspects of Discord, feel free to jump around from section to section and read the parts that you need. I provide plenty of guides back to other relevant chapters for when the going gets murky.

Foolish Assumptions

It doesn't matter what platform you're on. If you have a browser, Discord can work for you. If you have a computer, a solid connection to the Internet, and a lot of curiosity, you are ready to go. Just remember, the operating system just makes the computer go. It's the browser that offers you a first look at the platform. I'm here to provide you tools not only for making Discord work, but also for making all aspects of it work — text, audio, and video.

What you have in your hands here is a detailed look at Discord, a mix of how-to exercises for a variety of the platform's features, and offered strategies on how to build, engage, and manage a community. I go into communication via text, via audio, and via video. There's a look in here at working on Discord through your browser, on your desktop, on your smartphone, and on your tablet. So if you know nothing about Discord, "You have chosen wisely," as we heard in *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*. If you know something about Discord, you might gain some insight into community management strategy, in working with bots, or upgrading your Discord rig. So, yes, *Discord For Dummies* offers something for everyone.

However, as I've seen after *For Dummies* books hit the shelves, there are going to be assumptions made about this title. So let's cover the short list on what this book is not, and never will be:

- » This book offers suggestions and strategies on creating a community around your Discord. This platform is not a turnkey solution. Your community just won't "appear" nor does this book make the claim "If you build it, they will come." Building a community takes time and effort, and *Discord For Dummies* won't build a community for you.
- » There is a revenue-generating option in Discord, and although I cover it, I do not encourage you to quit your day job. This is not a "Make Money with Discord" book.
- » This book will have some answers for you, but when changes happen, this book will not instantly update. (Not until a 2nd Edition, at least.) I will, however, try to address any major changes on my stream. See "Beyond the Book" for details.

If you are looking for a solid start to Discord, this is the book for you. I'm thrilled you're here.

Icons Used in This Book

You might be working through an exercise or reading a chapter, making some real progress with understanding Discord, when suddenly these little icons leap out, grab you by the throat, and wrestle you to the ground. (Who would have thought Discord was so action-packed. Like an episode of *Altered Carbon*, huh?) What do all these icons mean? Let's take a look.



TIP

When I'm in the middle of a discussion and suddenly I have one of those "Say, that reminds me . . ." moments, I give you one of these tips. There are those handy little extras that are good to know and might even make your background in Discord a little better than average.



REMEMBER

So you're working hard on one of these exercises, and you come across this icon. Skip this at your own peril. This is one of those "Seriously, you can't forget this part! Otherwise the bus drops under 55 mph and explodes!" Okay, maybe you don't have to worry about the bus, but the Remember icon is one you want to pay close attention to.



WARNING

Sometimes I interrupt my train of thought with a "Taihoa, Bro." (That's Māori for "Pump the brakes, man.") moment — and this is where I ask for your completely undivided attention. The Warnings are exactly that: flashing lights, ah-ooga horns, dire portents. They're reminders not to try this at home because you'll definitely regret it.

Beyond the Book

You can find a little more helpful Discord-related information on <https://www.dummies.com>, where you can peruse this book's Cheat Sheet. To get this handy resource, go to the website and type *Discord For Dummies Cheat Sheet* in the Search box.

In addition to the website, this book comes with a companion stream on Twitch, airing on Sunday afternoons. From your browser of choice, visit <https://www.twitch.tv/theteemonster>, and follow (or subscribe) to receive notifications when I go live to take your questions on Discord, Twitch, podcasting, and content creation. And maybe, on occasion, I may be joined online or in-studio by special guests. Your questions are encouraged, as I'll try and cover concepts in this book explored in greater detail, and maybe touch base on topics too advanced for this title but more than suitable for the stream.

Where to Go from Here

At this point, many *For Dummies* authors say something snappy, clever, or even a bit snarky. Chuck and I did so often throughout editions of *Podcasting For Dummies* and *Twitch for Dummies*. My best tongue-in-cheek material is saved for the pages inside, so here's a more serious approach.

If you want to hop around the book, that's your decision, but I suggest planting yourself in front of a computer, pointing a browser to <https://discordapp.com>, and starting with Chapter 1. Together, we check out a few links, put together a profile (and eventually a server), and then we start working on that streaming persona. Along the way, I'm going to suggest ideas, concepts, and strategies that will educate, inspire, and enlighten you. And through it all, we are going to work together to create a community that will rally around you for whatever cause you believe in, be it a favorite game or worthwhile charity.

Limber up, folks. This is going to be a fun ride. Don't forget your towel.

1

Getting Started with Discord

IN THIS PART . . .

Set up your Discord profile.

Set up your server.

Communicate with people with text.

- » Finding out what Discord is
- » Creating a Discord account
- » Understanding the Discord landscape

Chapter 1

The Lowdown on Discord

When social media offers up a new platform, it fills me both with excitement and dread. I love learning something new. Any opportunity to teach myself something to add to my arsenal of life hacks, daily routines, and day-to-day productivity, I look at as a good thing, in social media especially. I've always been a believer that social media is a fantastic tool of communication. With so many ways to get your message out, its possibilities are endless. A new platform means new options other platforms may not offer or possible replacements for routines that once worked wonders for you but seem to be losing their efficiency. Additionally, if the platform becomes a sensation, you become something of a founder in its community, a trustworthy voice on how the new communications avenue works. Awesome!

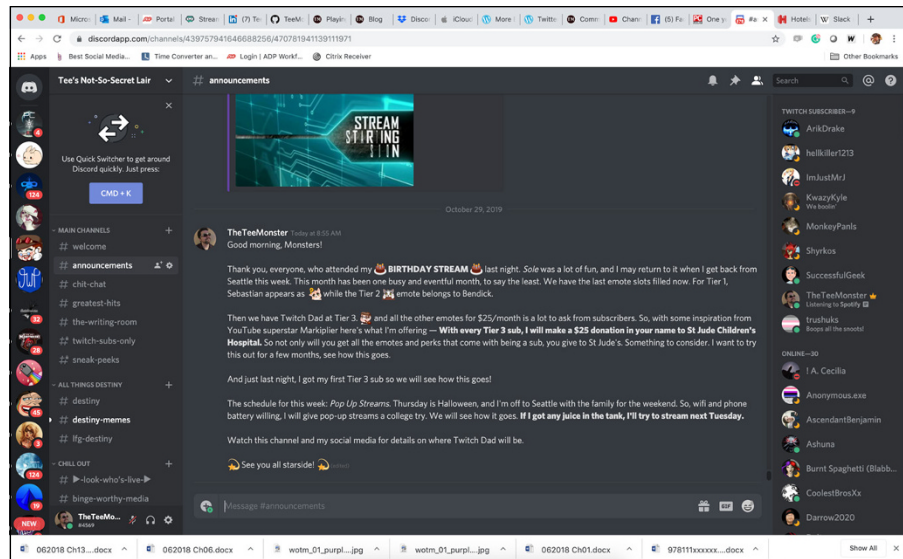
But here is where the dread settles in with me. When I hear about something new, whether new to social media or new to me, my first thought is always the same: *Great. One more platform to add to the stockpile.* See, the downside of learning something new is that you won't necessarily become an expert within the first day or two of picking it up unless you spend uninterrupted hours diving into every aspect of it. Then, once you have a grasp of it, you have to fit it into the rotation of all the other social media platforms you have tied to your name. This also means setting aside time, or pockets of time, to manage this new platform with all the other platforms you have active. There is only so much time in the day, and if your full-time job is social media, you know how tough it can be creating content for audiences across platforms. If your full-time job isn't social media, then content creation across platforms just got a *lot* tougher. And now you have a new platform to contend with. And that's if the platform takes off, lest it become like other

social media hot flashes in the pan that everyone joins only to abandon a week or two later. Awesome.

Welcome to a look inside my brain when I first started *streaming* — creating content live online through a service like Twitch (<https://www.twitch.tv>), Mixer (<http://www.mixer.com>), or YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com>) — and I was asked, “So what’s your Discord server?”

Are you kidding? I have to know this thing called Discord (see Figure 1-1) if I want to know Twitch?

FIGURE 1-1:
Welcome to
Discord, a Swiss
Army knife of
communications
for you and your
team.



No, Discord is not necessarily a necessity for streaming, but if you want to build a community, if you want to extend your reach as a content creator, and if you want to level up your online communications game, yes, you will need Discord.

Awesome.

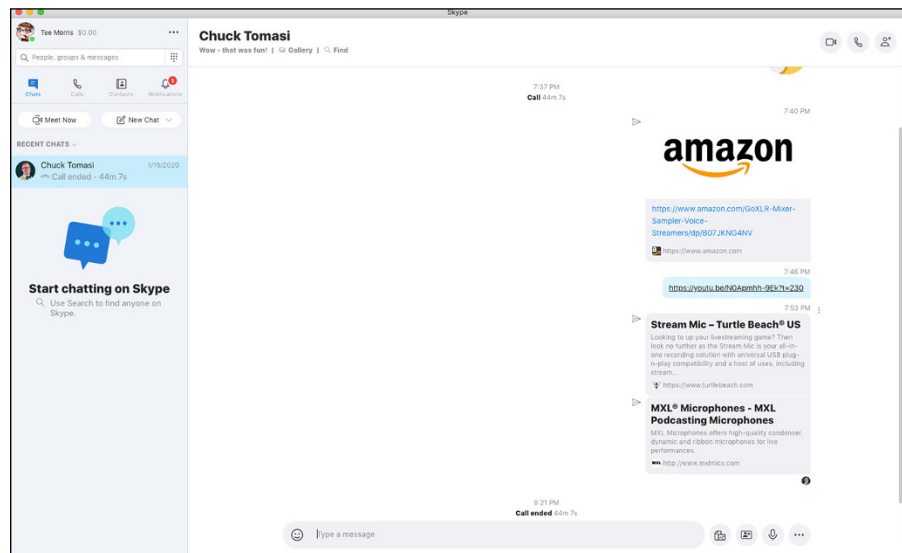
So What Exactly Is VoIP?

All right, maybe learning something new won’t be so bad if you have a good reason for picking up yet another platform. That is a sound reason to get behind taking time to traverse the learning curve, so where do you begin with Discord? Or where do you begin your serious look at why you need yet one more platform added to your growing palette of applications?

So let's step back a bit and talk about what is at the heart of Discord: audio chat. Discord is one of many apps taking advantage of *Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP)*, a method commonly used for the delivery of media communications (audio, video, and data files) through online connections using audio and video *codecs* (formats used for compressing a lot of data into order to make it manageable for exchange). Think of how the JPEG format takes a huge image file and makes it only a few megabytes. Codecs are similar to that. Instead of data being transmitted over a circuit-switched network, digital data is transmitted over a packet-switched network: the Internet.

Perhaps the biggest name of early VoIP that changed the way the world communicated was *Skype* (see Figure 1-2; <https://www.skype.com>), offering free calls anywhere internationally by using closed networks for private user bases. The Danish software first reached the public in the summer of 2003. Provided you have broadband Internet, Skype offers up audio and video calls of better quality than standard telephone connections. Along with VoIP, a handy chat function is included for the exchange of data files.

FIGURE 1-2:
Skype brought
free international
communications
to everyone
around the world
with a broadband
Internet
connection.



Here's where things start to get a little dicey with VoIP. While the audio and video quality of these calls was unparalleled, a lot of factors would come into play, beginning with the quality of the broadband Internet. Not all broadband is created equal, and in rural areas and developing nations, dial-up was still the way to connect in 2003 and later. Even if broadband is up and running on both the sending and receiving ends of a VoIP call, sending files during a call could disrupt or outright end a call on account of the size of the files being exchanged, the upload/download limitations of the broadband connection, and the amount of traffic on both parties' end.

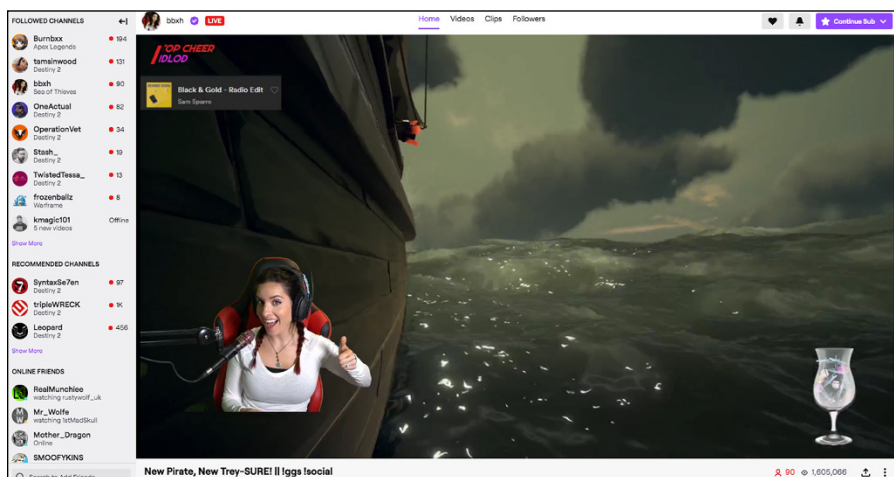
Then there's security. Each point of a VoIP connection creates a potential vulnerability, as firewalls, if not configured properly, can block incoming and outgoing calls. Additionally, distributed denial-of-service attacks can easily take down VoIP systems, rendering them busy. And these are just two of many vulnerabilities that VoIP can bring to a professional or home network. Free global communication is a very cool thing, but it also comes with a lot of compromising possibilities. So while an improvement over your usual hard-wired telephone calls, VoIP is hardly perfect.

So What Exactly Is In-Game Chat?

Now as VoIP has its checkered reputation, it did introduce the idea of open communications within online games. The concept of built-in chat options, a feature that is usually expected in team-oriented games, be they MMOs (massively multiplayer online games), FPS (first person shooters), RPGs (role playing games), or some other flavor of video game with communications between team members, completely changed how we play on our chosen platforms. *In-game chat* was introduced in 2006 with Nintendo's *Metroid Prime Hunters*, offering gamers real-time audio through the Nintendo DS's built-in microphone. In-game chat was also offered that year with Nintendo's *Pokémon: Diamond and Pearl*.

Today, in-game chat is everywhere. Bungie's *Destiny* offers Fireteam Chat to keep Guardians connected when you lead a raid team into the Garden of Salvation. Epic Games' juggernaut *Fortnite* also comes with native chat, allowing you to tell that 10-year-old who just fragged you the best place to store his or her Legendary pump shotgun. Even cutthroat pirates can make new friends through in-game chat in Rare Studios' *Sea of Thieves*, pictured in Figure 1-3.

FIGURE 1-3:
Thanks to in-game chat, streamer BBXH (<https://twitch.tv/bbxh>) can give the order to raise the main sail, drop anchor, and give a sloop to starboard a broadside in *Sea of Thieves*.



Then you have Xbox Live and PlayStation Network. Consoles are offering their own audio channels to give their gamers a more social experience. Can't game with your friends in *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare*, as you are enjoying an adrenaline rush from *Dead by Daylight*? No worries. Sign on to Xbox LIVE or PSN and enjoy some casual hangout time with your crew. So long as you are logged into your console's respective network, you can chat with your friends, build your network to include others, and swap media ranging from screen captures to game play. And don't worry about not having the right gear straightaway. Consoles will offer you the basics (such as an earbud with a mic and an audio jack in your controller) so you can start chatting straight out of the box.

In-game chat has become so prevalent, it is now a feature expected by gamers. It's the ability to connect that appeals to players, as the gaming experience becomes something more social and more inclusive. From my own experience with in-game chat, it's always fun to be able to work with fellow gamers in a tight scenario (be it PvP or PvE) and execute audibles. Feels good, man. However, the quality of the chat varies from game to game. *Destiny*'s native Fireteam Chat, for example, is barely better than the audio quality of a hard-wired telephone call. Another limitation of native in-game chat is that it is native to that game, so if you want to just hang out with your mates while gaming, you have to be in that particular game.

Console chat tends to have better audio quality as opposed to native in-game chat, provided that the network you're on is having a good hair day. If someone in your party is suffering from connection issues, their audio will be spotty at best, popping and locking harder than a Cirque du Soleil performer. Sometimes, incompatibility in gaming gear (microphones, headsets, and so on) may also complicate things. A common audio issue on PSN, for example, is a Network Address Translation (NAT) error, which can occur when network settings on an individual's console are not set properly or a firewall is active. Troubleshooting can be something of a challenge and may not always be a one-solution-fits-all kind of thing. And if Xbox LIVE or PSN is offline? No soup for you.

VoIP is free and able to connect you with friends everywhere in the world, but not without a fair share of problems ranging from spotty reception to security vulnerabilities. Meanwhile, game and console developers offer their own brands of in-game communications, but if the audio quality doesn't make you suffer, connection issues will.

And that is what brings us to the subject of this book.

So What Exactly Is Discord?

Perhaps the trickiest thing to do right off the bat is define *Discord* (<https://discordapp.com>). On the surface, it looks and sounds like Skype on steroids, but it's a robust, stable communications platform available as a browser application, a stand-alone desktop application, and a mobile app for both smartphones and tablets. Discord offers the following features:

- » Text chat
- » Audio and video chat (group and private)
- » Private text messaging
- » News feeds
- » Link and media sharing
- » Streaming and screen sharing

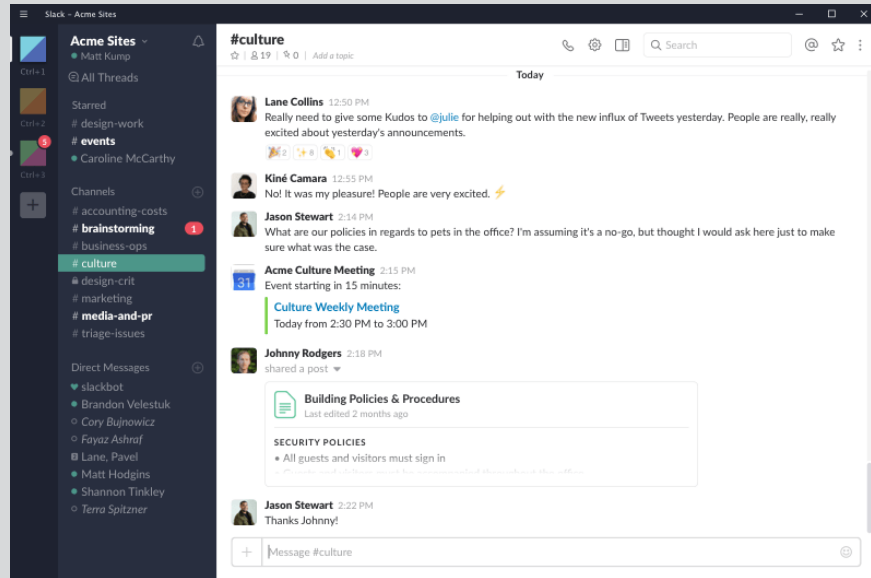
Discord provides gamers, streamers, and many other creative individuals and organizations an all-encompassing platform for topic-specific chat streams, private audio channels and open public chats, interviews for podcasts and streams, and much more.

One of many reasons this platform is so closely associated with gaming is due in part to its founder, Jason Citron. Citron was the founder of OpenFeint, a social gaming platform for mobile games, and Hammer & Chisel, a game development studio. Being a gamer himself, Citron noted problems with available options providing real-time game comms. His development team introduced Discord in May 2015 to Reddit communities, where it gained popularity with eSports gamers and Twitch.tv hosts and took off from there. Within its first year, Discord was hailed by *PC Gamer* as the best VoIP service available, praising its ease of use and its stability.

Oh, and Discord costs now what it did when it was introduced: *free*.

Discord stands apart from other game comms solutions — and for many professionals reliant on using the Internet for communications — for its stability, audio quality, video quality, and ease of use. It may seem a little intimidating when you first launch it, but setup and use are incredibly easy.

CUT ME SOME SLACK, WHY DON'TCHA?



If Discord is sounding familiar to you, you might be using Slack. For myself, that confirmation came when I was introduced to it.

Program manager: So this is Slack. It's a platform for topic-specific chat streams, private audio channels and open public chats, and videoconferencing.

Me: Like Discord?

PM: **blinks** Well, I wouldn't know. I'm not a gamer.

Trust me, dude. You know.

Slack (<https://slack.com>), which stands for Searchable Log of All Conversation and Knowledge, found its roots in gaming, used as an internal communication tool for development of the online game Glitch. Slack, the cornerstone of Slack Technologies and launched in 2013, is a freemium product (the basic app is free, but additional services expanding its capabilities are unlocked at a fee) based on Internet Relay Chat (IRC) technology. While predating Discord, Slack experienced some growing pains on account of the same problems that inspired Discord. Today, Slack is considered to be one of the tech-industry standards for communications. There are a lot of similarities between Slack and Discord, and if you know Slack, you have something of a head start with Discord. If you know Discord, Slack shouldn't be too much of a challenge.

Setting Up Your Discord Account

There are a lot of flavors of Discord. You can use the communications app:

- » Through a browser
- » As a stand-alone desktop application
- » On your smartphone or tablet

You have an entire book to explore what you can do with Discord, so you're going to spend some quality time using Discord through your browser. You'll get comfortable with things and then gradually stretch your reach to other ways to enjoy connecting with old and new friends.

Setting up your server

Your first to-do item with this new platform is to set yourself up on Discord first. Again, it does not cost a thing for you to do this, apart from time. And remember that part I was telling you about how easy it is to set yourself up on Discord?

This investment of time you're about to make will amount to pocket change, believe me.

1. **Launch your browser of choice, and go to** [https:// discordapp.com](https://discordapp.com).

Discord offers you two options: Download for Your OS or Open Discord in Your Browser.

2. **Select the Open Discord in Your Browser option.**

As I mention earlier, we will jump into the stand-alone Discord app later on. For now, we will focus on the browser application.

3. **Enter a username for yourself (see Figure 1-4).**

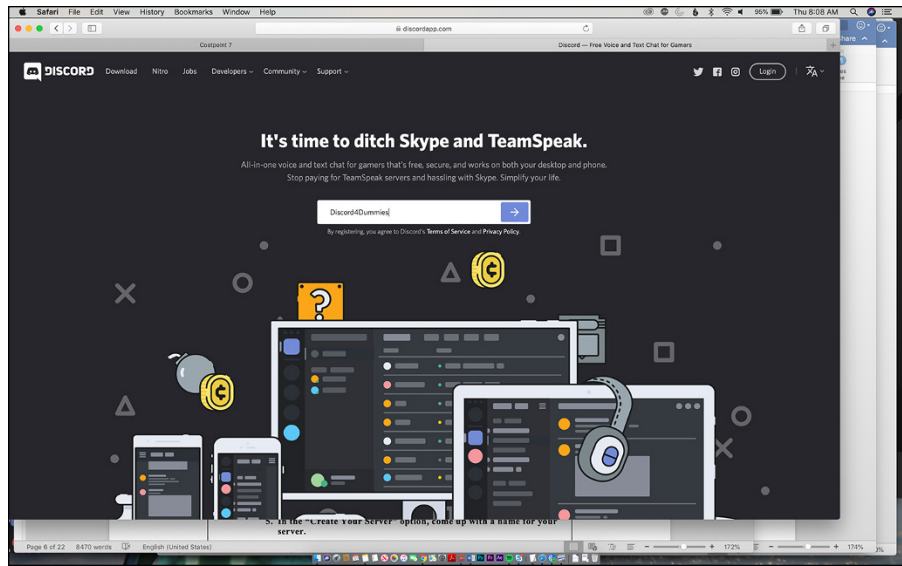
Create a name for yourself that people in Discord will know you by.



TIP

If you are a content creator or a gamer, or if you're developing an online persona, it is best to think ahead of how you want to be known. For example, on PSN, Instagram, and Twitch, I use the moniker TheTeeMonster. So when I set up my Discord, I entered TheTeeMonster as my username. Consistency is key, so aim for the same username from platform to platform.

FIGURE 1-4:
What do people
call you on
Discord? Create a
username for
yourself here,
and begin
building a brand
for yourself
or your
organization.



4. **Click the arrow button to the right, and verify that you're not an automated program or bot.**

5. **Verify your account by email or by phone.**

Choose your preferred method of verification and follow the steps to assure Discord that yes, you are in fact a real person.

6. **When you're asked to set up your server or jump into Discord, click the Get Started option.**

When you join Discord, you create what is called a *server*. This is your own private corner of Discord, and you decide how public your chat will be.

7. **In the Create Your Server dialog box, come up with a name for your server and a server name, and select the server region closest to your location (see Figure 1-5).**

This is where you give your server a name people can remember it by. The content creator IAmTeeBot called his server The System. Aura's Discord server is called The Pit, named after his love for his pitbull Layla. Then you have James Werk's Discord, named aptly enough The Workshop. If you don't like what you initially name your server, don't worry. You can always change it later in the Settings section of your server.

FIGURE 1-5:
When you create a server on Discord, you christen it with a name and establish a region where your server operates.

8. Claim the server as your own with a valid email and password.

You will be sent an email asking you to claim the server, making you its *moderator* — the one in charge of the whole operation.



WARNING

You are given the option of downloading the desktop app. As I mentioned before, I will go into more depth with the desktop app later on, but if you want to download it now and walk through the steps of setting things up there, feel free to jump ahead to Chapter 4. You will always have the option of downloading the app later, but let's stick together through the browser app, shall we?

When you claim your server via email confirmation, you are live on Discord!

9. Return to the Discord browser window, go to the top left of the app, where you see your server name, click the arrow to get the drop-down menu, and select the Server Settings option.

A few options are listed here, and I will cover them all eventually. Right now, I'm focusing on just the Server Settings option.

10. In the Server Overview section, you can upload an icon for your server. (See Figure 1-6.) To do so, click the default icon (the initials of your server name in a blue circle) or click the Upload Image button, and find on your computer an image or logo representative of you or your organization. Select it and then click the Open button to upload it.

The server's unique icon or *avatar* allows users to recognize your server at a glance. You will want to have an avatar for your server as well as one for yourself. Discord recommends an image at least 512 x 512 pixels for an avatar.