A guide to our Discord Server, Friday Night Gaming, and LAN

This guide is aimed at anyone feeling too nervous to get involved with the UWCS Discord server or participate in our events.

Do you ever feel a little anxious to join an event because you don't know how it works yet? Don't worry, you're not alone! UWCS understands that sometimes all you need is an instruction manual for how an event works, for you to feel comfortable enough to participate in it. This guide will run through how the different Discord channels work and what you can expect when you join our online events.

UWCS Discord Server http://discord.uwcs.co.uk/

Contents

Discord

Discord Layout

This is the general layout of the Discord client:

1. **Server list - A list of all Discord servers you are in**
   Discord servers are individual groups hosted on Discord. Each one has its own server owner, moderators (the server owner + anyone else with admin permissions), and users. You can see which servers you share with any other Discord user, but you cannot see which servers they are in that you are not in.

2. **Channel list - The list of channels in the server you are currently in**
   Discord servers are composed of one or more channels. Channels are like independent group chats. Discord servers allow you to allocate members of a Discord server different "roles". These roles define your colour in the server, and your permissions (including your permission to see a channel, to send messages to a channel, and to moderate the channel).

   Roles mean that in some servers not everyone has access to the same channels. We use this in the Computing Society server to hide certain channels from members unless they opt in to seeing them. See the *roles and optional channels* section for more information.

3. **Your name and settings: mute, deafen, and user settings**
   The mute and deafen options affect whether you can be heard, or hear others, in voice channels. See the *voice channels* section for more information.

Your user settings allow you to customise your Discord layout and settings. These settings are kept the same across all servers you are in.

4. **The current name and topic of the channel you are currently in**

   This is just the title of the channel you are in. If you click the channel topic you can see it in full.

   On the right side of this bar are buttons for muting the channel (preventing you from being notified when new messages appear in it), seeing pinned posts (these are posts that moderators have "pinned", allowing them to be easily accessed later from this button), and toggle the member list (pressing this hides the list of server members on the right of the screen - see number 7 below).

5. **The chatroom**

   This is where messages from participants of the channel will appear.

6. **Text box**

   This is where you type messages to send to the channel

7. **Member list**

   This lists all members of the server who have access to the channel you are currently in. Members who do not have the required role to view the current channel will not appear in this list until you move to a channel they do have permission to see.

8. **Search bar**

   You can type search queries in here to find specific messages sent to the Discord.

   Next to it is a button to view your Discord inbox (containing notifications from servers you're in and direct messages from other Discord users), and a button for Discord's own help page.

Channels

Discord servers are comprised of channels, each with a name starting with a #. The point of having multiple channels is to allow multiple conversations to take place at the same time. In the Computing Society's server we have many different channels, each for different topics of discussion.

The list of channels in a server appear in a sidebar to the left of the Discord interface.

#general

The #general channel is the first channel you'll see when you join the server. When you do, a message will appear to everyone marking your arrival. Depending on how many people are online at the time some people might say hi; feel free to say hi back!

The #general channel is for general chit-chat, or any discussion that doesn't fit anywhere else. If you don't know where else to talk about something, or ask a question, feel free to do it in #general.

Categories

The channels in our Discord are separated into categories for easier organisation. These categories appear as titles above lists, in this case the category "Misc.".

These are some of the channels in our Misc. category. Note that in this screenshot #music has an unread message, so it appears highlighted.

You can close a category by clicking the arrow to the left of its name. This will hide all channels in it, except channels with unread messages.
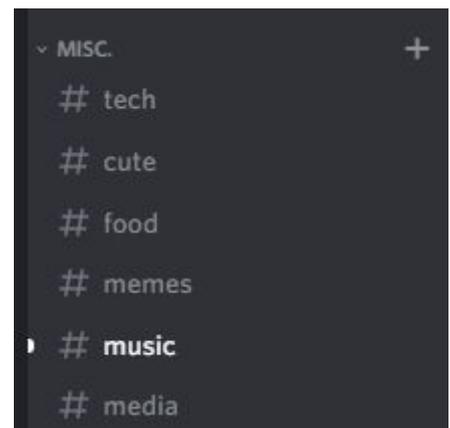
To stop #general being flooded with multiple conversations we ask you use the appropriate channel where possible. As shown above we have some general purpose channels, but we also have categories for gaming and academia.

Roles and optional channels

In Discord each user can be assigned any number of roles. These roles can define your permissions to view and interact with certain channels, as well as the colour your nickname appears in chat. For example, members of the executive committee (the exec) appear with orange names (except the president who appears with a yellow name):
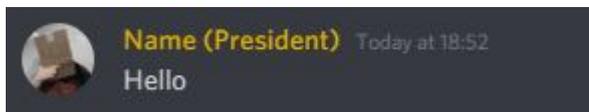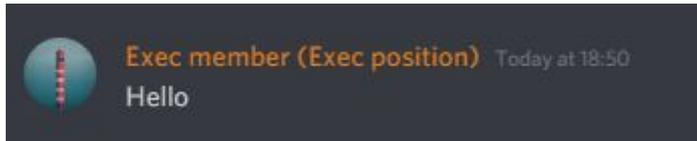
We use roles to filter out channels that not everyone will be interested in, such as channels for specific games, interests, or politics. In order to see these channels you have to assign yourself the relevant role in the #roles channel at the top of the channel list:
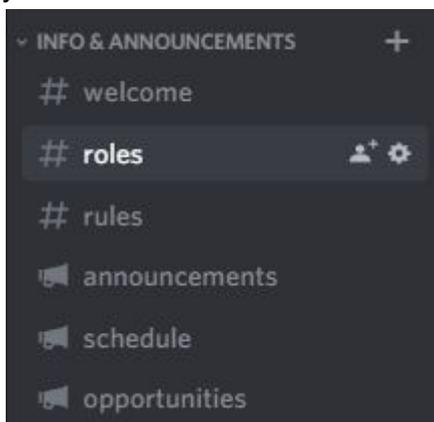
In this channel you can add "reactions" to various posts. This will automatically assign you the stated role.
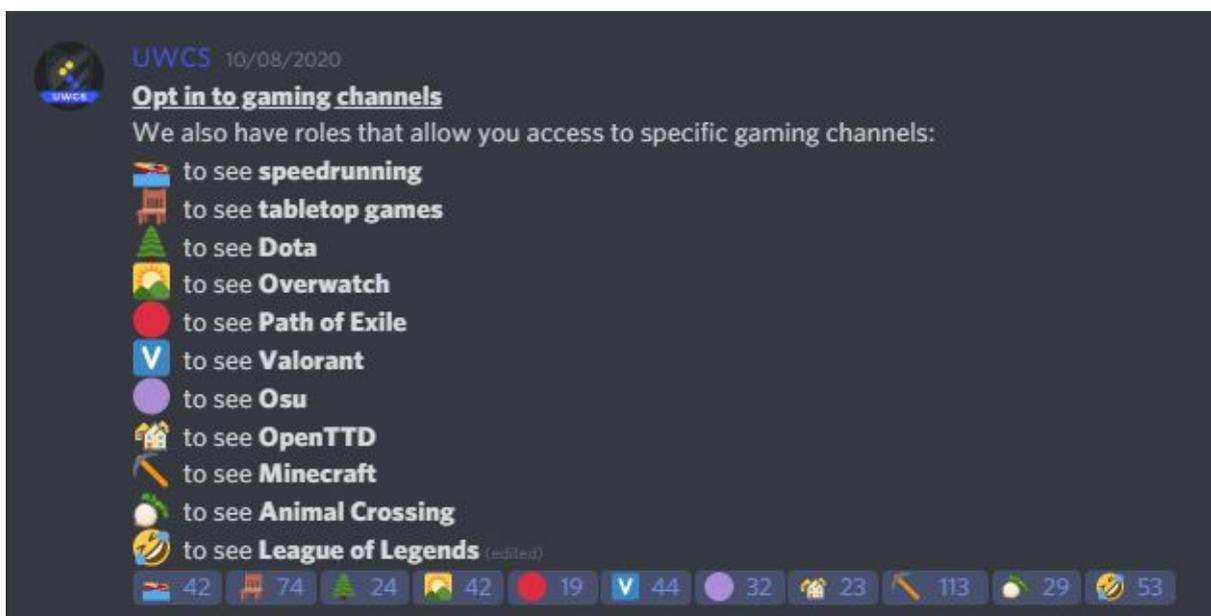
To add a reaction, click the icon underneath the message. This will give you the role. Click it again to remove the reaction, which will remove the role too. You can react multiple times to the same message.

There are also options to give yourselves roles for your year group and pronouns. Assigning yourself any year group role will give you access to the year-specific academic channels.
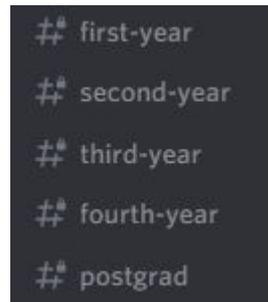
Pings
Specific users or roles can be "pinged" by sending a message with the name of a user or role after an @:
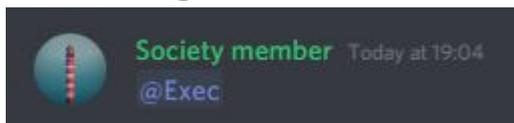
This pings the exec, highlighting the message to them, and sending them a notification to attract their attention.

There is an option in #roles to give yourself roles to be pinged for announcements relating to specific topics like gaming, academia, socials, and LAN parties.

The exec channel
At the bottom of the Misc. category is the exec channel:

Use this channel if you have any issues or questions specifically for the exec, or regarding the running of the society or Discord.

If an exec is needed urgently online, you can ping the exec role as shown above. Please do not ping any person or role excessively or without reason, as it can be irritating.

Alternatively if you would rather contact us in private, our details can be found here: https://uwcs.co.uk/contact/

Bots

Not every member of the server is an actual person! Bots can be identified by the unique bot tag that appears next to their name:

Our server has several bots, some of them customised for our own use. The main ones to be aware of are Apollo and irc.

Apollo

Apollo is the society's custom bot, and provides a few custom helper functions. Type !help in the server to see a list of available commands, but please keep excessive bot use to the bot commands channel to avoid spamming over channels.
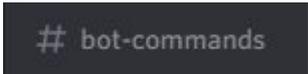
Apollo is open source and can be found on our Github: https://github.com/UWCS/apollo/

irc

The irc bot connects our Discord to an irc (internet relay chat) server, allowing people from our irc server to communicate with people on our Discord server.

It's just a way of letting people using our group chat from before we moved to Discord interact with our Discord server.

Voice channels

As well as channels for text discussion, Discord also provides voice channels for vocal discussion.
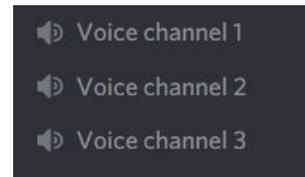
To join a voice channel, click on it in the channel list. While in a voice channel you can use your microphone to speak to other members of the voice channel.

By default your input mode will be "Voice Activity"; which means whenever your device detects sound it will broadcast it. You might prefer switching to Push To Talk (PTT), which requires you to press a combination of keys (on PC) or a button (on mobile devices) before Discord transmits what you say. Push To Talk is often favoured as it prevents excessive background noise in voice calls.

To turn on PTT, go to your user settings and find the "Voice & Video" menu.
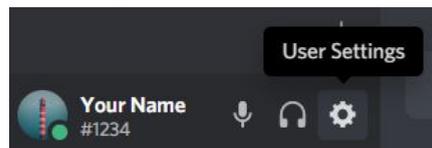
Once there, you can change your input mode, choose which keys you have to press to broadcast your voice, and set your microphone and speaker settings.
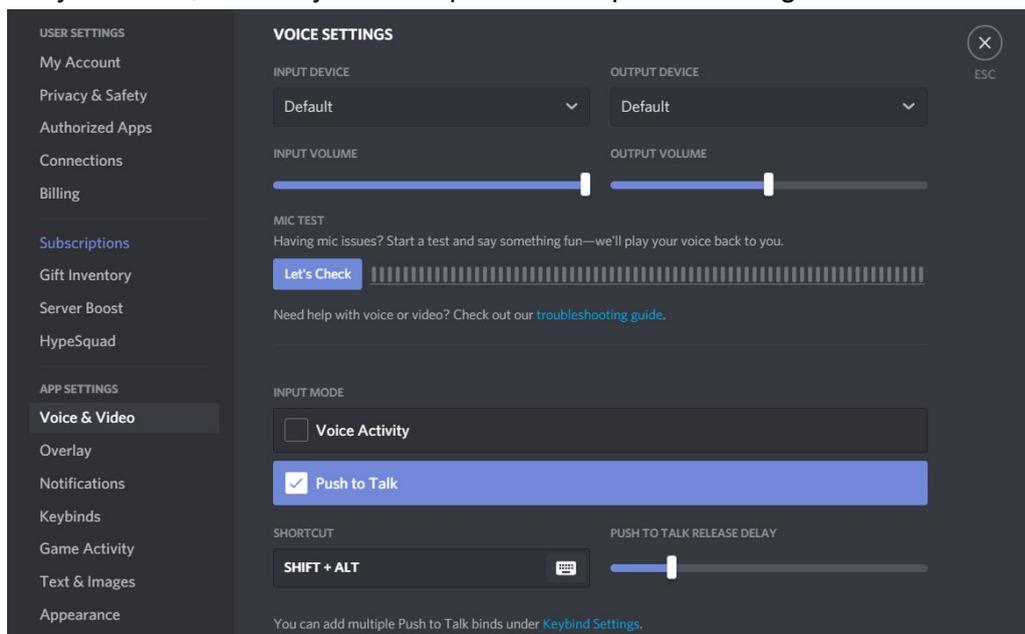
Note the two buttons left of the User Settings icon; these are your mute and deafen buttons. The mute button completely prevents your microphone broadcasting to the voice channel, and the deafen button prevents you from hearing the voice channel.

When you're in a voice channel, you can change the volume of other participants by clicking on their names to reveal a volume slider. All this does is change how loud they sound to you; it doesn't affect anyone else. You can also mute other users so you personally cannot hear them. Neither of these effects notifies anyone else.

Streaming
While in a voice channel, you can choose to stream your webcam or screen, allowing other members of the voice channel to see you, or what you're currently doing on your computer. Members of our Discord often use this feature to let people watch them play a game.

Our voice channels
At the top of our server are a set of Lobby voice channels. These are for general use either during official events, or whenever anyone in the society wants to use them. If people are using the Welcome Lobby channel feel free to drop in.
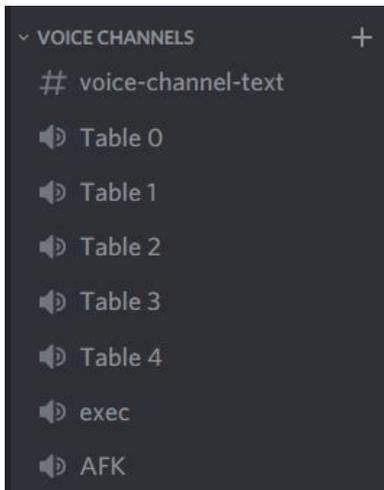
At the bottom of our channel list are extra voice channels for use if the lobby voice channels are all in use.

Both the lobby voice channels and the tables have text channels for any text discussion that needs to take place during a voice chat (#lobby-text and #voice-channel-text respectively). If you want to listen into a call but not use your microphone, feel free to use these text channels to speak.
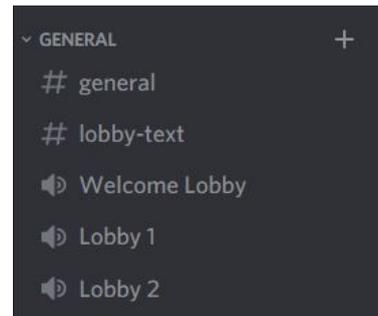
If you are inactive in a voice channel for long enough, you will get moved to the AFK voice channel. To return to the voice channel you were previously in just click it again.

Friday Night Gaming

Every Friday evening during term, we would normally run a gaming session in the Department of Computer Science building (the DCS). During these we set up one of the lab rooms with Steam and a collection of DRM-free games for anyone to use. We also provide consoles from the current generation releases to classics like the Xbox 360 and the Nintendo Wii, and when possible we set up our virtual reality headset: the Valve Index.

Gaming runs from 7pm until late, officially ending at 8am Saturday morning, but practically it ends whenever the last person leaves. It's a drop-in session with no requirement to arrive when it starts and stay until the end. People often turn up to meet new people, play games with each other, order food, or try out consoles they don't otherwise have access to.

Virtual Gaming
Since we can't currently run Friday Night Gaming in person, we are instead running it online, on our Discord server. This obviously comes with a few restrictions.

We are unable to run consoles or VR over Discord, but we are able to somewhat recreate the atmosphere of gaming.

How we run it

Every week we pick two multiplayer games for gaming. We announce these in advance so that people know what will be running and whether they need to download anything in advance. When gaming starts, we set up a group for one of the games; when enough people join, we start a session for the other game.

Don't feel like you have to play either game to take part, though. The Welcome Lobby is used as a general hub for Gaming activity. If you aren't currently in a game, or just want to chat to people or watch them play single player games, feel free to use it.

Like in-person Friday Night Gaming, it starts at 7pm and ends late. Similarly, there is no obligation to arrive on time, or stay until the end. Drop in and out as you wish.

How to participate

Once gaming starts, we'll have at least one exec member in the Welcome Lobby at all times. We'll also rename the lobby chats so it's clear what game is/will be taking place in each voice channel.
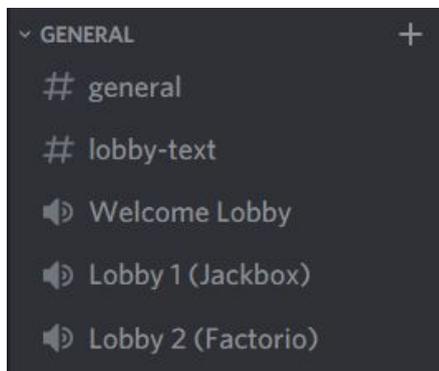
If one of the voice channels already has people in, feel free to drop in immediately and ask to join. Otherwise, join the welcome lobby and we'll move to the other voice channel when enough people are online to start a game.

If none of the games on offer take your fancy, feel free to suggest others in the #gaming and #lobby-text channels before or during gaming. If there's interest for other games we are happy to create additional voice channels to support them.

Virtual LAN

What is a LAN?
LAN stands for "Local Area Network" and generally refers to a network of computers connected in short range, traditionally via ethernet cables.

What is a LAN party?
A LAN party is when a group of people all bring their computers into a single room and connect them via ethernet cables, forming a *local area network*. The close physical proximity, and high-speed connection, makes this a great environment for gaming.

CompSoc LANs
It has been a long-standing tradition for two decades to run LAN parties as a society. Twice a term in both terms 1 and 2 we book out a large room for the weekend and invite our members to bring their desktop computers along to form our own 48-hour LAN parties. In term 3 we instead run a single 5-day LAN party from the Monday of week 10 term 3 until the Friday.

LANs are drop-in sessions, so there's no obligation to stay for the entire 48 hours (in fact we ask people to go home to sleep, and that they shower before attending). People often run tournaments, bring board games, and order lots of food to them.

The Music Server
Another traditional aspect of our LAN parties is the fabled Music Server™. We run a service on a local device that allows participants of LAN to queue YouTube videos to a playlist that is then displayed to the room, allowing members to choose their own music.

The definition of "music" is entirely subjective. All we ask is that content queued is not upsetting, disturbing, lewd, otherwise NSFW, or politically charged.

LAN parties in 2020

Due to *recent events*, we are unable to run LANs like this for the time being. Instead we are hosting similar events on our Discord server, just like our Friday Night Gaming sessions. The rest of this section is a guide on how we run LANs online, and how you can participate in them.

(If this guide is still being used by future generations of CompSoc members in a post-COVID world, *please send help*)

LAN vs Gaming

Virtual LAN is quite similar to virtual Gaming. The main differences are that we rearrange the channels to prioritise LAN discussion, run an online version of the music server, host a number of special events during it, and the event lasts all weekend. We also encourage greater use of the welcome lobby voice channel (renamed to LAN Lobby), to simulate attendees being in the same room. If you're not sure where to go, or what to do, just pop into the LAN Lobby and say hi. We're friendly!
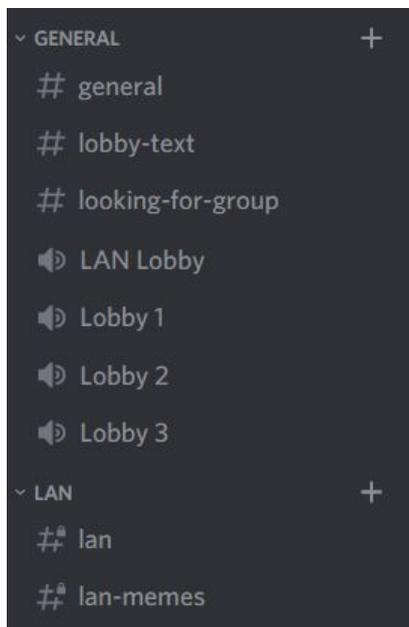
Finding a Game

You'll likely find people planning multiplayer games soon after a LAN is announced in #gaming or #looking-for-group. If you are interested in taking part in a game that nobody else has asked about yet, feel free to do so in these channels.

Since LAN is much longer than Gaming, you're more likely to find people interested in longer-form multiplayer games, such as *Factorio, Civilization,* or *Divinity: Original Sin*.

There will also be plenty of drop-in games happening. The best place to look during the event will be #looking-for-group, or you can pop into an active voice channel to see what people are up to.

Music server

We currently run an online music server called Amphi. Here you can queue videos to the playlist, which will automatically be played to everyone who has Amphi open. Please note you must be a member of the society to queue videos.

Events

During LANs we often run special events like tournaments, quizzes, and movie nights. The events being run each LAN will be announced before LAN, so make sure you give yourself the LAN role in the #roles channel so you get notified of them. This announcement will include details on how to enter, and how to form teams. If you're unsure of anything, feel free to ask in the #general or #lan text channels.