

The ConFusion 2021 Guide to GatherTown

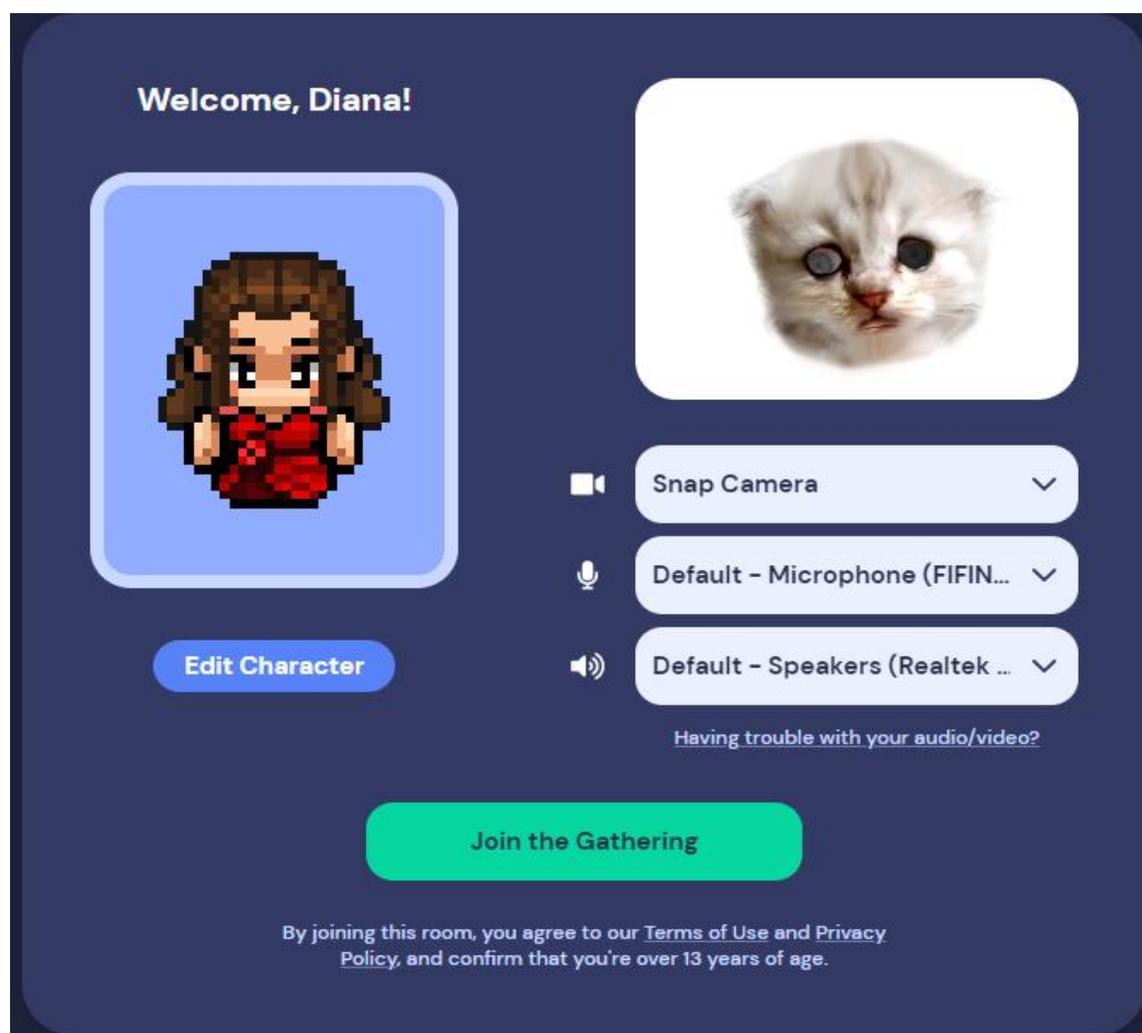
social space • events • art show • dealers

Getting into GatherTown

Click on the link which you received in your e-mail.

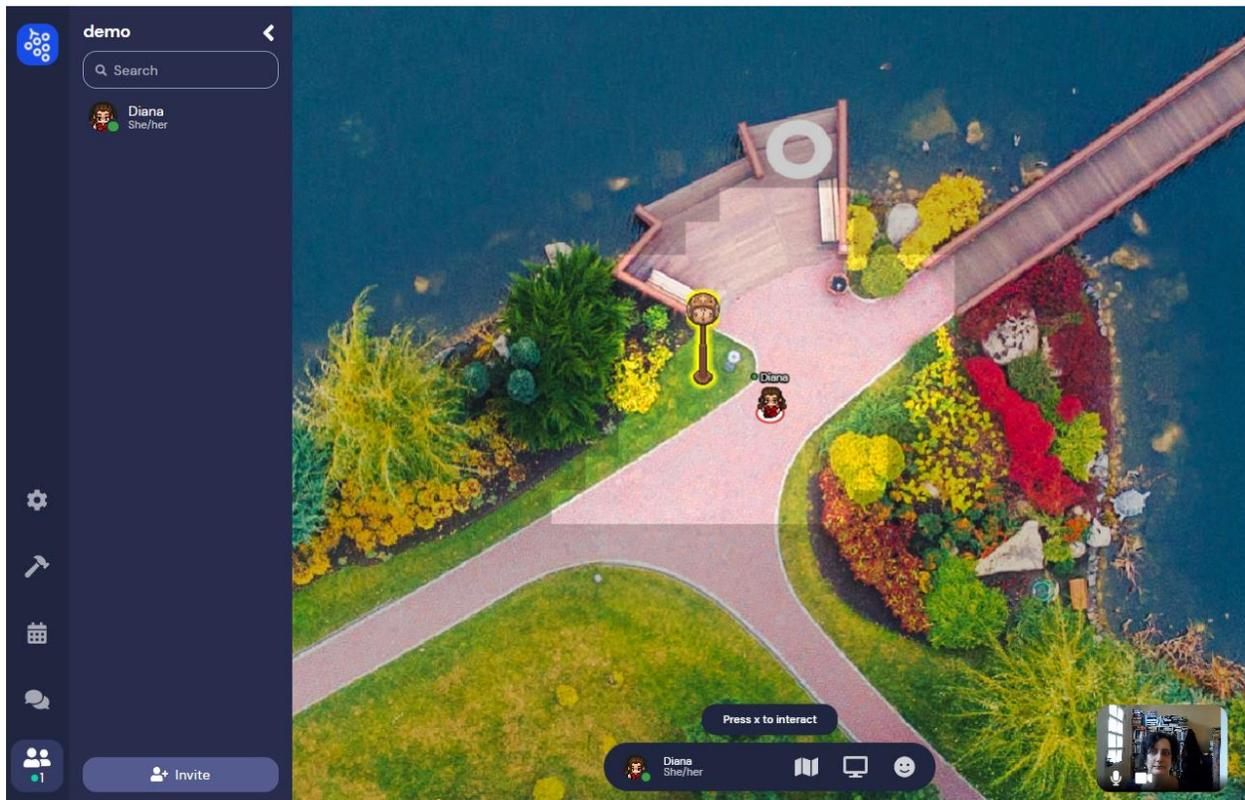
A panel will come up with your badge name, sample avatar, and audio and video settings. Adjust your settings and then click Join the Gathering.

TIP: You can leave GatherTown running as long as you like in your browser window. However, it will log you out after a period of inactivity. Just refresh the tab to get back in.



The screenshot shows the GatherTown join interface for a user named Diana. At the top left, it says "Welcome, Diana!". Below this is a large square placeholder for a pixelated avatar of a woman with brown hair wearing a red dress. Underneath the avatar is a blue button labeled "Edit Character". To the right of the avatar is a square placeholder for a video feed, currently showing a white kitten. Below the video placeholder are three settings menus: "Snap Camera" with a dropdown arrow, "Default - Microphone (FIFIN..." with a dropdown arrow, and "Default - Speakers (Realtek ..." with a dropdown arrow. Below these settings is a link that says "Having trouble with your audio/video?". At the bottom center is a large green button labeled "Join the Gathering". At the very bottom, there is a line of text: "By joining this room, you agree to our [Terms of Use](#) and [Privacy Policy](#), and confirm that you're over 13 years of age."

You will arrive at a main screen showing a space you can move about in:



Your avatar is positioned in the center. You can move using the arrow keys.

TIP: If you are caught in a crowd, you can pass through people by pressing and holding the G key. This activates Ghost mode and allows you to move freely.

TIP: You can zoom in and out of the convention space by holding down the control key and moving your scroll wheel back and forth. You can also use browser zoom keys such as Cmd + and Cmd - (Apple) or Ctrl + and Ctrl - (Windows).

Interacting with people

You can hear all the talk going on in the lighter-colored area around you, apart from private conversations. Other participants' video images will be positioned along the top of the screen in a carousel that you can rotate. You can click into any video to enlarge it.

The narrow left hand column has several controls.

Click on the People icon at the bottom and a list of all participants who are present in GT will appear in the wide left-hand column. You can click on any name to message them or to follow them. If you follow them your avatar will go where their avatar goes until you toggle off following. Please remember to stop following someone if they ask you to stop following them.

Click on the Chat icon above it and the convention chat will appear. You can chat to people nearby or to an individual by adjusting the settings in the typing box. Note that if you have Chat open you cannot move unless you are following someone.

You can block people from seeing and hearing your audio-visual pane by going to their video and clicking the No Entry sign (circle with a diagonal bar). You will not see theirs either; their pane will appear to you only in outline. You can unblock them by toggling the No Entry sign back on. Alternatively, you can block/unblock from the Participants list by clicking their name, and then the three dots that appear in the top right corner of their information card. A person you have blocked will not be able to see that you have blocked them.

Interacting with objects

When you approach an object that can be interacted with, 'Press x to interact' or a more specific message, such as 'Press x to view catalogue,' will appear above your control bar at the bottom of the screen. Pressing x will cause a large window to open displaying the content or functions of that object.

For example, at the Information lamppost, the ConFusion website will open, enabling you to check anything there. At a newsletter kiosk, the newsletter will open. At a message whiteboard, you will be able to write and draw. As before, you can use control-scrollwheel to zoom in and out in the object window so that you can read the content better.

Press x again to close the object window and return to the convention space. Alternatively, you can click the x button which appears in the top right of the screen.

Watching programme items

To watch a programme item, you will need to go to the space where it is being displayed. You will see a video thumbnail at lower left, between the left-hand columns and your control bar. Press x to enlarge it and watch the programme item. You can chat with the people around you by video and chatbox while it is going on. Press x to minimise the item window again.

Your control bar

At the bottom of the screen is a rounded bar with some extra functions. You can further adjust your avatar by clicking on it.

Click on your name and you can update your status (for example, choose your pronouns) and adjust your audio/video settings (gearwheel icon). If you are having bandwidth problems, try turning off smooth movement and HD video. You can turn on quiet mode in order to only be able to hear people directly next to you.

The folded map icon opens the minimap, a bird's eye view of the entire convention space with your position marked. If you are lost, you can click on your name and Reset Position to return to the entry point.

The screen icon opens screen sharing controls, which work the same way as video conferencing applications like Zoom and Microsoft Teams. The shared screen can be seen by people whose video screens you can see. Audio is not shared in screen share mode.

The emoji icon allows you to display an audience reaction emoji - applause, heart, flowers, thumbs-up, question mark, hand raised - and to turn it off by pressing again. Alternatively, you can hit the numeric key corresponding to each emoji to make it appear, without opening the menu. The emoji will appear above your avatar.

Getting out of GatherTown

Click the bunch of grapes in the upper left hand corner and click 'Go home.' Just closing the tab works too.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

EQUIPMENT

Q / What do I need to be on GatherTown?

A / You need a modern browser (Chrome, Edge, Firefox, Safari or equivalent) on a desktop or laptop computer. GatherTown is not in full release yet for tablets or phones. You do not need a camera or microphone unless you would like to use the videoconferencing capabilities to communicate with other members. If you are using the videoconferencing capabilities, it is strongly recommended to wear headphones or a headset to minimise echoing. Alternatively, you can mute your mic until you wish to join a conversation.

If you will be joining on a tablet or phone, you will need to follow the separate instructions above for accessing programme items outside GatherTown.

CUSTOMISING YOUR SELF-PRESENTATION

Q / How can I style my avatar?

A / Either on entering GatherTown, or in your control bar (center-bottom of screen), you can click the avatar and cycle through different looks. GatherTown does not currently offer the possibility to customise avatars further, but you are welcome to customise your video look, for example by using a camera filter program like Snap Camera, which also permits custom backgrounds.

Q / Why is my username what it is?

A / Your username on GatherTown is your badge number and badge name when you registered. You can change your badge name at the registration desk; ask for Fionna or James.

Q / Where can I put my pronouns or other additional information?

A / You can put your pronouns in your status. You can edit your status by clicking your name in the bar on the bottom of the screen and typing into the text box. Your status can be a maximum of 50 characters long, and you can write anything you like there as long as it does not violate the CoC. Your status is only visible in the participants list.

Q / Can I keep my camera and/or microphone off?

A / That is perfectly fine.

Q / Can I be hidden to all other members?

A / You could stay in Ghost mode, but then you would not be able to see or hear any other members.

NAVIGATION

Q / I don't know where I am.

A / Go to your control bar (center-bottom of screen) and open the folding map icon. It will show an overall plan of the convention space with your location. You can jump to the place you entered by clicking your name on the control bar, and Reset Position.

Q / I can't see my avatar anymore.

A / Look for the avatar which is standing on a white circle surrounded by a colored ring.

Q / How can I get out if I am blocked in by other users and objects?

A / If you are blocked in by other people and can't move, Ghost mode allows you to pass through other people's avatars. Press and hold G to enter Ghost mode and move out of the block. People cannot follow your path through ghosting.

Q / I have found I'm getting stuck in doorways when a lot of people want to go through.

A / Press and hold G to enter Ghost mode. Then you can pass through people and objects. You will not be able to see other people's video while you are ghosting.

ACCESSIBILITY AND COMFORT

Q / How can I make videos of other members bigger?

A / You can click on any video and it will expand to fill the central portion of the screen. Click again to reduce it. Any other nearby users remain in the carousel at the top of the screen as small videos.

Q / How can I improve the video quality?

A / Go to your control bar (center-bottom of screen) and click your name and then settings (gearwheel icon). Turn off smooth movement and see if that helps. Try turning HD video on and off as well.

Q / What can I do to reduce the number of inputs coming at me?

A / Try Quiet Mode. Quiet Mode means you can only hear people who are directly next to you in any direction (including diagonals). You can toggle it on and off from your control bar (click your name).

Q / Can I turn off one particular person?

A / You can turn off individual users' picture and sounds (for you) by clicking the camera and microphone on their video image. Remember, the video and sound are only turned off for you - other users can still see and hear that user. If you wish to re-engage with the user, you need to turn their sound and picture back on.

SOCIALISING AND BLOCKING

Q / How can I see who is around me in a crowd or a room full of people?

A / You can activate grid mode by pressing the expanding arrows at the top right of the video carousel. This displays videos of nearby people in a grid which takes up the whole screen, although how large the videos are depends on how many people are nearby - you get bigger videos with fewer people, smaller videos with more.

Q / What are the exact dimensions of 'nearby'?

A / 'Nearby' is defined as all the users in a private space, or those in communicable distance in public spaces - the users whose videos you can see and communicate with.

Q / Where is chat?

A / Left edge, click the speech bubble. You can chat to everyone, people nearby, or one specific person. Previous chat remains visible even if you log out and log in again.

Q / How do I 'friend' an individual member?

A / Go to their profile in the participants panel (left edge, 'people' icon) and send them a friend request. It's not automatically reciprocal so for a two-way friendship they have to friend you back.

Q / What are the advantages of adding an individual member as a friend?

A / The advantages are limited. You may be able to see them in some more views than usual, for instance on the Gather homepage.

Q / How do I block another individual member from seeing or following me?

A / Go to their video and find the No Entry sign (circle with a diagonal line through it). Clicking it turns on blocking for that person and they will not be able to see your video or follow you. You will still see an outline for their video and you can toggle the No Entry sign back on to turn off blocking if you wish.

Q / My conversation partner's microphone is turned off. How do I tell them to unmute?

A / You can use the Ring function, which will be visible if you hover on their video. It only appears if the person has muted themselves. The ringer emits a noise to the person you've rung, but if the person is away from the screen or does not hear, there is no notification or record that

you have rung. So if you don't get a response, you may want to send a text chat, which gives a notification that doesn't disappear.

Q / How do I find a specific person at the con?

A / You can search for them in the participants panel (left edge, 'people' icon) and click Locate. That will show you a path from you to them. You can also follow them, which moves your avatar to where theirs is and keeps it near them until you turn off following.

Q / Can I leave a message for someone?

A / A whiteboard in GatherTown works like the message board at a real con. You can write, post links, pin up flyers (images). However other people can see and interact with messages left on whiteboards. Therefore if you need to get in touch with someone you are best off sending a text chat, which will not disappear and is private.

OBJECTS AND TEXTS

Q / How do I interact with a whiteboard?

A / Click x to open it in your main screen area. You can read it, write on it, paste links and images. On the right are zoom in / out controls, and a presenter mode that allows you to single out areas with a red circle while presenting.

Q / ...

A / Nobody asked this, but objects can have multiple links.w

Q / Can I show someone something that isn't in GT?

A / Sure! You can send them a link in chat/messaging. This is especially useful for artists and dealers. The link must start with <http://> or <https://> ... Links in chat/messaging open in separate tabs, so they don't close down your GT session.