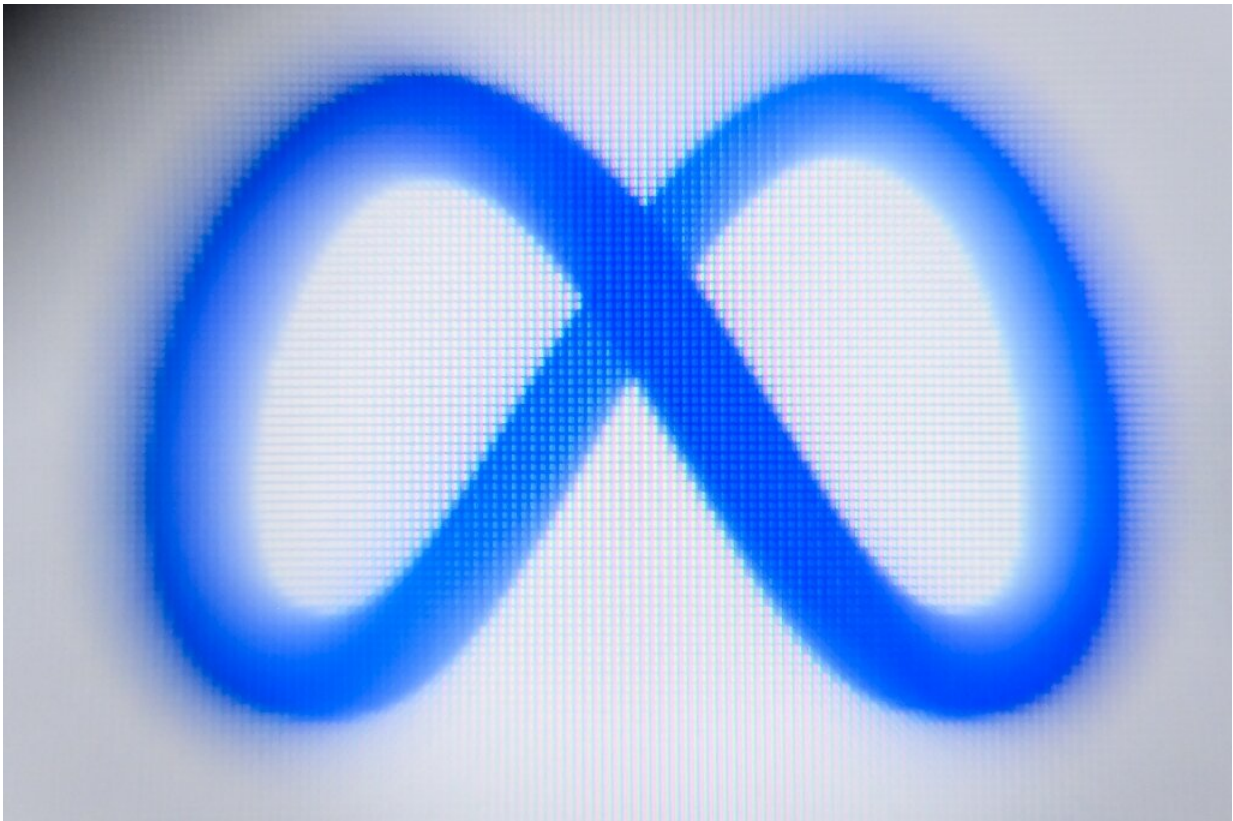


Facebook opens virtual world app to public, inching toward metaverse

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Facebook's parent company Meta is opening its virtual reality platform to the public in North America.

Facebook's parent firm opened its Horizon Worlds virtual reality platform on Thursday to the public in North America, in a step toward

building its metaverse vision for the future.

Horizon Worlds is far from a fully realized metaverse, a future internet where online experiences like chatting to a friend would eventually feel face-to-face thanks to [virtual reality](#) (VR) headsets.

But headset-wearing users in the United States and Canada can now gather with friends or others, play games and build their own virtual worlds on Horizon as long as they are 18 years old and have the proper equipment.

Since last year a testing version of the platform has been available to a limited number of users.

Facebook renamed its [parent company](#) to Meta in October to emphasize its aim to shift from scandal-prone social media platform to its virtual reality vision for its future.

"We want Horizon Worlds to be a safe and respectful environment, so everyone must follow our Conduct in VR Policy," Meta said in announcing the opening.

"You have several safety options... which lets you take a break and then block, mute or report people," it added.

Meta-owned platforms Facebook and Instagram have been fighting to put behind them a crisis unleashed in September by reams of internal studies leaked to journalists and US authorities by whistleblower Frances Haugen.

The documents underpinned damaging articles that generally argued the firm knew its products could harm users, but chose growth over safety.

The firm's metaverse push also includes tools for remote working, which has boomed during the pandemic.

Facebook in August unveiled technology for "workrooms," allowing [remote collaboration](#) for people using its Oculus virtual reality gear.

The "Horizon Workrooms" project makes it possible to switch back and forth from virtual reality to web conferencing to adapt to different situations.

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