

Understanding the types of channels in Microsoft Teams

A team is built from channels.

Starting off, a team has a General channel which is the core of a team; it cannot be removed or renamed. A team can have up to 199 additional regular channels to use to categorise discussions. All team members have full access to whatever is stored in regular channels.

General channel

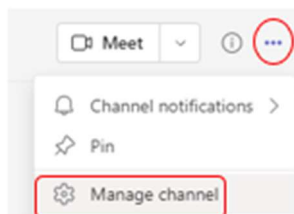
Ideally, the General channel should be kept for team-wide announcements rather than discussions, which should be in channels dedicated to themes.

There's nothing to stop you keeping everything in the General channel and this could work for very low-traffic teams, but once discussions become active, keeping everything in General often creates a collection of badly organised topics that's difficult to work with.

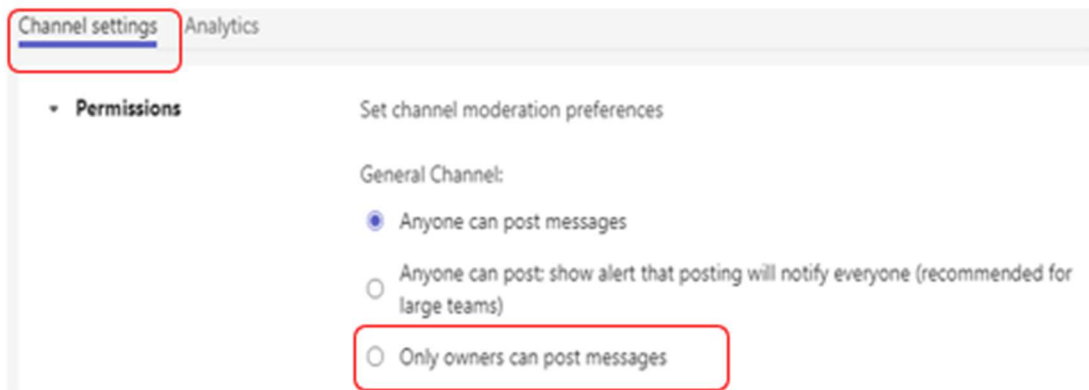
For this reason, it's best to block the ability to post on the General channel for anyone except team owners.

Restricting team members from posting to the General channel

Go into the ellipsis in top right of your General channel and choose 'Manage channel'.



Then click the button against 'only owners can post messages'.

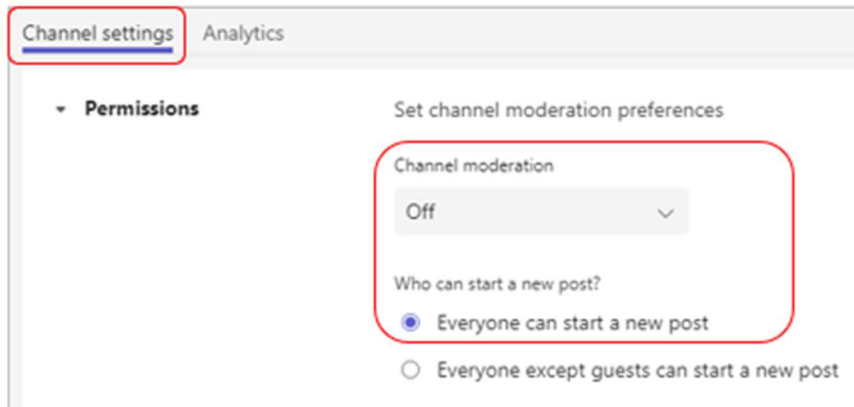


Other regular channels

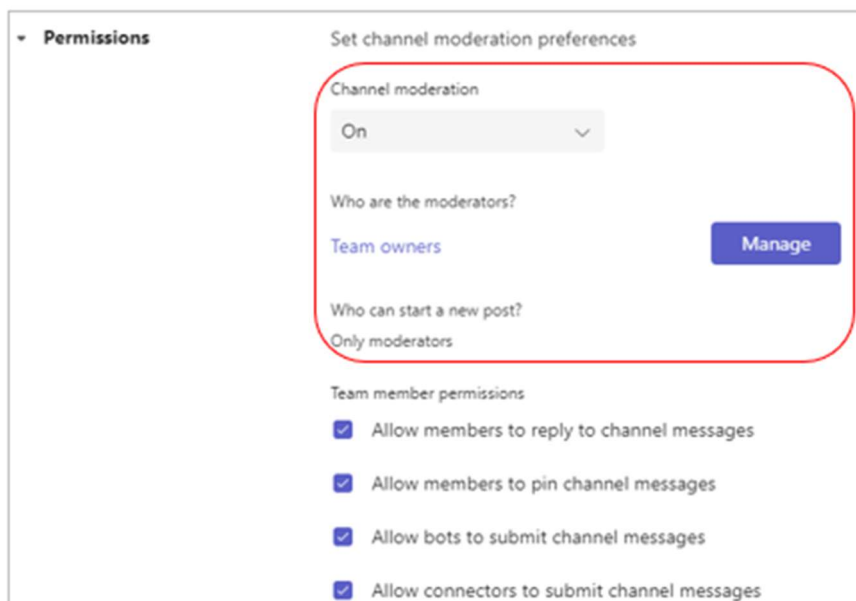
Posting privileges for other regular channels works differently. Instead of just owners, you can assign channel moderators and restrict the ability to add new posts to only those moderators.

Restricting posting to a regular channel (not General)

With moderation switched off:



With moderation switched on:



How many channels do you need?

Apart from restricting who can post into channels, the major issue is to decide on how many channels to have within your team.

You can have a team with 200 channels (General limited, 199 available for conversations). Without discipline on the part of members and owners, the team will be a mess. In all likelihood, relatively few channels will be used on a daily basis and the rest will become obsolete, with a few initial conversations and then nothing.

Because of this, it's better to start with a few channels and grow the number of channels when justified by an obvious demand. It's also useful to have someone act as the 'responsible individual' to keep an eye on what happens in a channel.

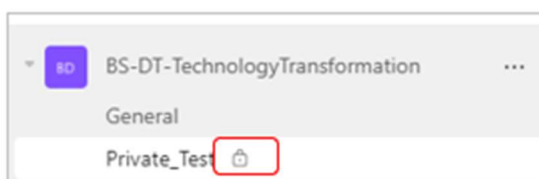
Tip: it's good to have a Social channel if you are a team that likes some down-time and to share silly videos, GIFs etc. That way your 'work' channels stay on-track.

Private Channels

A private channel is a restricted part of a team that's only available to a subset of team members. There can be up to 30 private channels in a team, each supporting a membership of up to 250 Barnardo's and guest accounts.

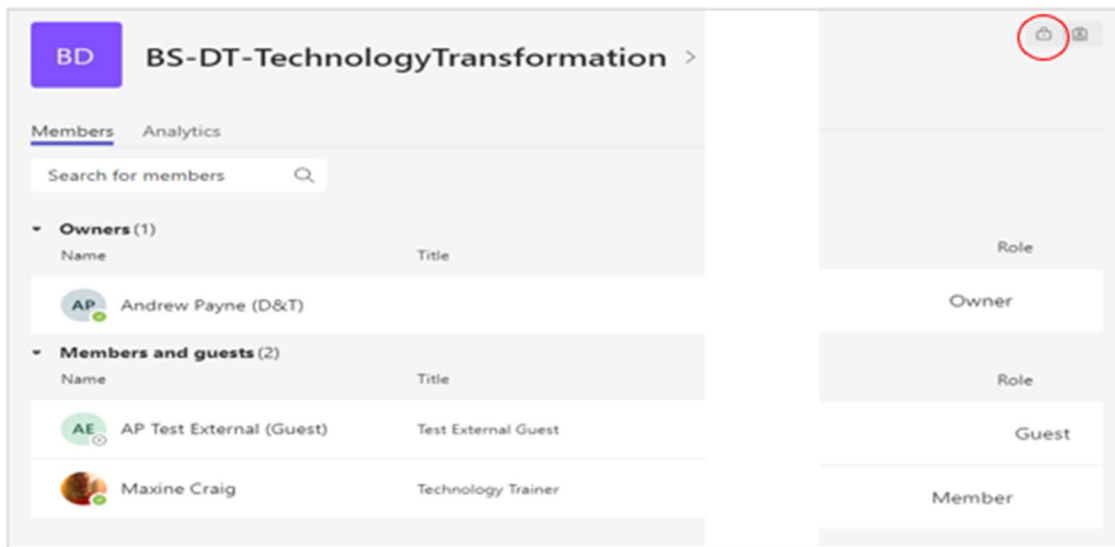
Managing private channel membership looks and feels like managing the membership of a regular channel, but with the proviso that someone must join the 'main' team first before they can join a private channel within that team. To maintain privacy, team owners must become a member of a private channel to be able to access content belonging to the channel.

A private channel will appear in the team's channel list with a padlock icon next to its name and in top right of its Teams screen.



Managing the membership of a private channel

Notice there is a padlock in top right of the channel screen again.



The owner(s) can add members as with a regular channel.

If someone leaves a team, they lose access to the private channels they had membership of. Teams also removes people from private channel membership if their Azure AD account is disabled (your log-on account).

Private channels are useful in scenarios when some confidential discussions need to happen away from the view of all team members. For example, you might need to discuss the financial structure of a project without exposing all the details to every team member.

A private channel does this by providing a space for conversations and a dedicated SharePoint site for sharing documents. As well as having its own membership, the separate SharePoint site is the most distinctive feature of a private channel. It guarantees the privacy of documents shared within the private channel. The sites used for private channels are created in the same geographic region as the parent team and inherit settings from the parent site.

To confirm, files in a private channel's SharePoint site cannot be seen by anyone other than members of the specific private channel.