

Smart Uses of Smartphones

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Where do I get these apps?

- The apps we will talk about today are those that run on Apple (iOS) and Android devices.
- This includes both phones and tablets.
- To get Apple apps, open the App Store and search.
- To get Android apps, open the Google Play store and search.
- If, instead, you have a Windows, Blackberry, or other mobile device, they each have their own app stores.

Which app should I use?

- As of January 2017:
 - The Apple App Store contains about 2.2 million apps.
 - Google Play contains about 2.6 million apps.
- So, your best bet in choosing apps to meet your needs:
 - Do a search in the appropriate store.
 - See what kind of ratings the app has received (level of positive response as well as number of reviewers).
 - Take cost into consideration (free vs. \$0.99 vs \$9.99, etc).

Flashlight

- The current versions of both Apple and Android phones have flashlight functionality built in.
- The flashlight uses the camera flash LED to provide this functionality.

Visual notification

- You also can use the LED flash for visual notifications of calls, texts, etc. for occasions when audible or vibratory notifications are not an option.
- Like the flashlight functionality, this is built into the latest Apple and Android operating systems.

Magnifying glass

- If you are looking at tiny text, you can use the camera in your smartphone or tablet to act as a magnifier.
- Just open the camera, zoom in to the level you wish, and point the lens at the object to be magnified.
- If the thing you are magnifying is dimly lit, combine this technique with the flashlight.
- You also can use this technique to see something that is in a tight or difficult to reach spot.
 - Just put the phone into the tight, turn on the flashlight if needed, and take a photo.
- You should wait a few seconds before snapping the photo to let the autofocus do its thing.

Mirror

- In its native form, your front-facing camera acts as a mirror (i.e., the image is reversed).
 - This is useful for checking how you look.
- Interestingly, if you take a selfie with this camera, the picture saved is not reversed.

Hand-held memory device

- The camera in your mobile device has a wide variety of uses:
 - Product tags while shopping for large items.
 - Images of empty product packages instead of taking along the actual packages when shopping.
 - Record device wiring schemes before removing the device.
 - Take a picture of directions, maps, or shopping lists.
 - Keep a copy of the license plate of your rental car with you.
 - Grandkid pics when visiting an amusement park, county fair, etc. in case they get lost.
 - Collect info if you have an auto accident: damage, tag of other cars, etc.
- Also, there are built-in and other voice recorder apps.
 - Great if you are interviewing someone.
 - Also can be used to record short notes or reminders to yourself.
 - Some make it easy for you to send those audio notes to others.

Restaurant assistance

- If you enjoy eating out, there are a number of apps that will help you:
 - Calculate tips at various rates.
 - Split a check among the folks at the table.

Business card file

- Do you have a pile of business cards in the lap drawer of your desk?
- Do you throw new cards in with them?
- There are a number of apps that will scan business cards and store them on your device and in the Cloud.
 - Some even do OCR (Optical Character Recognition) so you search the cards for particular text.
 - And, of course, you always can just take a photo of the card.

Home improvement

- There are apps that will turn your mobile device into a spirit level.
 - This is a good example of skeuomorphism.
 - The level uses the orientation sensors of your device to provide you with angles.
 - You may want to look for an app that permits you to “zero out” the level at any given angle.
- Another useful family of apps are those that help you measure distances.
 - Many of these involve taking a photo that contains the object to be measured along with a reference object, such as a credit card or coin.
 - The app then can calculate distances using the known size of the reference object.

Settling disagreements

- If you have ever wanted to settle disputes over the song playing over the restaurant speakers, or the TV shows in which an actor has played ... there's an app for that!

- SoundHound and Shazam will listen to music around you and provide you with information about the song, including where to purchase it online.
- The IMDb (Internet Movie Database) will give you all types of information about movies, TV shows, and actors.

Television control

- You can turn your mobile device into a universal remote control for your TV, DVD player, etc.
- There also are any number of mirroring or screen casting apps that permit you to cast video content from you device to your TV.
 - This content may be stored on your device or streamed through it.

Musician's friend

- If you play musical instruments, your mobile device can be an invaluable part of your equipment.
 - Metronome
 - Tuner
 - Sound meter
 - Slow down music without changing its pitch for practice.

Comparison shopping

- With a bar code scanner app (such as Barcos or ShopSavvy), you can scan products in a store and then find out what their prices are online and in nearby stores.
- Using Google Goggles or similar image analysis apps, you can take a picture of that thing-a-ma-jig and (perhaps) find out what it is.
- More professional photos & video
- Purchase a tripod and Bluetooth shutter control to improve the quality of your photo and video efforts.

Old smartphone usage

- Do you have an old smartphone laying around?
 - There are apps (such as IP Webcam) that let you turn that device into a security camera that you can monitor over the Internet.
 - They make excellent dedicated universal remotes.
 - They are MP3 players, so use them when working in the yard on exercising.
- **Better sound**
- A no-cost trick that can give you better sound from your smartphone is to put it into an empty coffee mug.