

Android: Frequently asked questions

Android is an **operating system** for smartphones and tablets. Depending on the age and manufacturer of your device, you may or may not have the most recent version. Below are some tips to help you understand the differences.

How can I tell which version I have?

The steps for checking your version vary depending on your device (sometimes depending on your version, believe it or not!). Below are general instructions that should work for most Android devices.

1. Open your device's **settings**.
2. Look for an option that says **About Device**, **About Phone**, or something similar.
3. Find your **Android version** on the list of specifications.

How do I get the most recent version?

The most recent compatible version will be sent to your device **automatically** whenever there's an update or new release. All you have to do is accept, and your device will take care of the rest. If you have an older phone or tablet, you may not be able to upgrade to the latest version.

What are the differences between versions?

Sometimes the differences are purely cosmetic; sometimes they can affect your device in more important ways. Below are just a few examples of things that might be different from version to version:

- Icons, screen layout, and other visual elements
- New apps or features
- Changes to existing features
- "Hidden" improvements that may boost your device's performance

Introduction to Android



You're probably here because you **already have an Android device** or are thinking about **buying one**. Congratulations—a new smartphone or tablet can be useful, empowering, and also lots of fun!

Unlike the iPhone or iPad (which are only available in a few different models), there are **hundreds** of Android devices to choose from. That's part of what makes them so appealing. You're bound to find something you like, whether you're shopping on a budget or looking for the latest high-end device.

If you're wondering why there are so many choices, it may help to understand what Android *is*. Technically, it's an **operating system** for smartphones and tablets. Many different companies make devices that are powered by Android, including Samsung, HTC, LG, and other lesser-known brands. That's why every Android device is different—each manufacturer likes to put its own spin on it.

What makes every device unique?

Android devices vary based on the **manufacturer** and sometimes even your **mobile carrier**. For instance, take a look at the two Android phones below. What do you see?



Samsung Galaxy S5



LG Nexus 5

Some differences are obvious, but others are less apparent. Here are some examples:

- The phone on the left is slightly larger
- The hardware is different (notice the buttons at the bottom)

- Each screen has its own unique layout
- Some of the icons look different; for example, compare the two **Phone** icons

This is a pretty good example of the type of variety you can expect from Android devices. There will always be differences in **hardware**, including things like outer appearance, storage capacity, and camera quality. There will also be differences in **software** (in other words, the on-screen features) that can affect your experience with Android in general.

There's one more thing to be aware of when it comes to Android devices. Not only are there different phones and tablets to choose from, but there are also different versions of the Android **operating system**. This can affect everything from the layout of your screen to the availability of certain features.

Purchasing an Android device

By now, you know that every Android device is unique. If you don't have one yet, it's time to choose the one you want (this is the fun part!). You'll also need to pick a **mobile carrier** and find out what types of **service options** it offers. Keep in mind that some of this information will apply more to phones than tablets.

Choosing a device



There are hundreds of Android devices to choose from, and each one is different. It's a good idea to do some **research** before making a decision, especially if there are certain features that are important to you.

If you're not sure where to begin, you might want to check out some **reviews** on sites like [CNET](#) and [PCMag](#). This can give you a better idea of which devices are available and how well they perform. In general, there are three factors to keep in mind: price, features, and carrier.

- **Price:** Android devices can vary widely in price. For example, many carriers offer certain phones for **free** (usually older or lower-end models) if you sign a two-year contract. If you have your heart set on a higher-end phone, you can expect to pay **\$100**

to **\$300** with a contract, which is still a discounted price. Tablets generally cost more, and so do no-contract phones.

- **Features:** Androids come in all shapes, sizes, and colors. While you're shopping around, start thinking about which features are important to you. Some **basic specifications** to keep in mind are screen size, battery life, camera quality, and general performance. Beyond that, there are a number of **cutting-edge features** to consider, including hands-free operation and fingerprint recognition.
- **Carrier:** If you haven't chosen a carrier yet, it's a good idea to think about which one you might want to use. Some carriers have **fewer devices** to choose from, so your options may be more limited than you think. Others offer **different prices** on the same phone or tablet. This can have a significant impact on the device you end up choosing.

Choosing a carrier and service

To place calls with your phone—or use mobile data with your tablet—you'll need to purchase service from a **mobile carrier**. Most carriers offer a variety of plans to fit your budget and lifestyle. There are generally two types of service to choose from: a two-year contract or no contract. Both have their pros and cons.

- **Two-year contract:** Signing a two-year contract means you'll receive your device at a **discount**; however, you'll be committed to paying for service on a monthly basis for the next two years. Every contract is different, so make sure you understand the terms, including when and if you can upgrade your device in the future.

- **No contract:** Some carriers, like [Verizon Wireless](#) and [T-Mobile](#), offer a no-contract option. This means you'll pay full price for your device (either up front or in monthly installments), but your service will cost less. You'll also have the freedom to cancel your service at any time with no penalties or fees.

When you're ready to buy

Have you decided which device and carrier you want? When you're ready, there are many different ways to make your purchase, including online or at a local store. Take some time to research your options before you decide.

- **In-store:** Most mobile carriers have **brick-and-mortar stores** where you can browse their stock and talk to an associate if you need help. If you want more flexibility, check out a retailer like [Best Buy](#), where you can shop several different carriers at once. When you buy a device in person, an associate will usually help you set it up.
- **Online:** There are a variety of ways to buy a phone or tablet online. For example, you can go directly through your **carrier**, or choose a retailer like [Target](#) or even [Amazon](#). This option is great if you feel confident navigating your choices and eventually setting up your device on your own.

Beware of any sales or promotions that sound too good to be true (especially online). Some Android devices are very expensive, so there will always be sellers and scammers looking to take advantage of unsuspecting buyers. When in doubt, purchase your device from a **well-known retailer** or **mobile carrier**.

First steps

Getting to know a new mobile device can be pretty exciting, especially if this is your first smartphone or tablet. The key is to start with the basics and take it one step at a time so you don't get overwhelmed.

First, make sure you're comfortable with the **interface**, including the screen, some of the built-in apps, and the various gestures you'll use to get around. Then you can move on to some other fundamental tasks, like connecting to the Internet using **Wi-Fi**.

Google account



The first time you turn on your device, you'll be asked to set up a few different things, including your preferred language, the date and time, and (most importantly) your **Google account**. If you don't have a Google account yet, you can create one during the setup process.

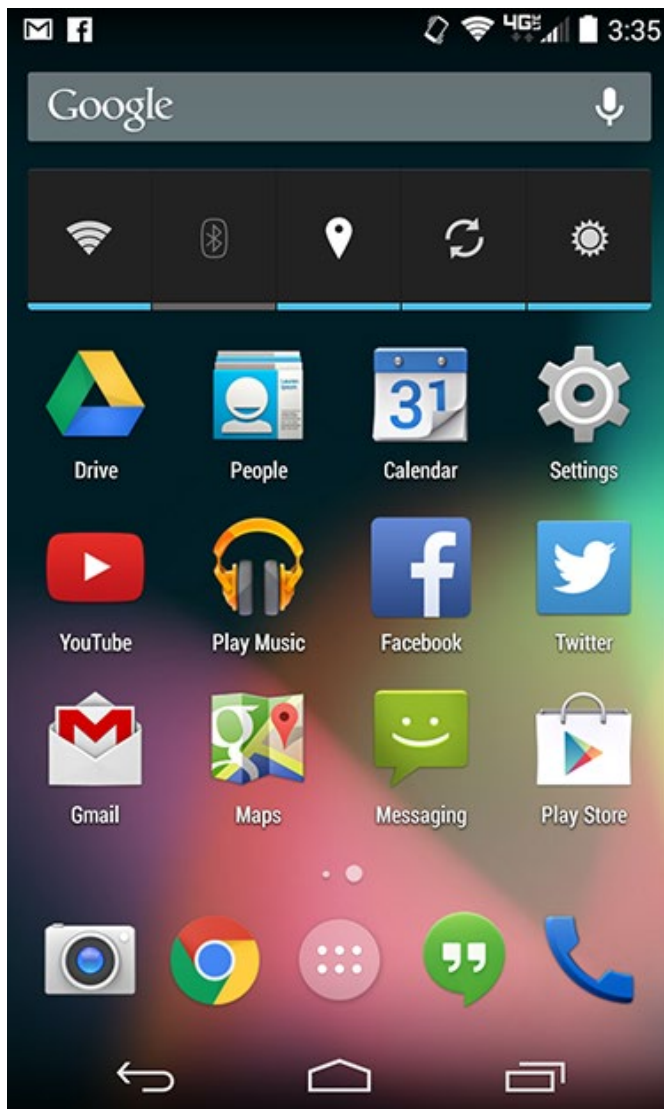
There are a few reasons this step is so important. In short, your Google account is your **identity** on your device. Not only does it connect you to the **cloud**—where things like photos and contacts are stored—but it also gives you access to the **Play Store**, where you can download and purchase apps. The more you use your device, the more you'll see how integrated your Google account really is.

You may have a Google account already if you use any other **Google services**, like Gmail, Chrome, Google Drive, or even YouTube.

Getting to know your device

Once your device is set up, you should be taken to a simple screen with some icons, buttons, and other miscellaneous features. This is actually one of the most important parts of your device—it's called the **Home screen**—and it's where you'll store all your favorite apps.

Remember, every Android device is unique. This means your experience may vary depending on your phone or tablet. Luckily, you can still learn a lot by comparing your device to ours.

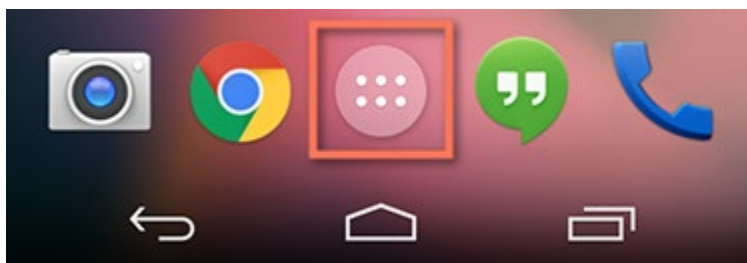


Basic apps

Ready to get started with some everyday tasks, like email and text messaging? We'll discuss these things in detail over the next few lessons, but in the meantime you can check your device for these **basic built-in apps**. They may go by slightly different names depending on your phone or tablet, but the icons will usually give you some clue.

- **Phone** for making phone calls
- **Messaging** for text messaging, or **Hangouts** for text messaging plus Google chat
- **Email** for managing your email, or **Gmail** if you have a Gmail account
- **People** for your contacts list (may also be called **Contacts**)
- **Chrome** for browsing the Web (may also be called **Internet** or **Browser**)
- **Camera** for taking photos and videos
- **Play Store** for downloading apps
- **Settings** for adjusting your settings

Some of these apps may be on your **Home** screen already. If they aren't, take a look in your **Apps** view. This special view gives you access to every app on your device. To open it, look for the icon near the bottom of the **Home** screen.



Basic gestures

Gestures are what you'll use to interact with your device's **touchscreen**. For instance, instead of clicking something with your mouse, you'll tap the screen with your finger.

- **Tap** to "click", select, or open something on your device, like a button or an app
- **Tap and hold** to occasionally access other options (think of this as "right-clicking")
- **Drag** to scroll up and down, left and right, or any other direction on the screen
- **Swipe left or right** to "flip through" things, like pages on the Home screen, photos, or pages in an e-book
- **Double-tap** to zoom in or out in certain apps, like Maps or Chrome
- **Pinch** (i.e., open or close your thumb and forefinger) to zoom in or out almost anywhere

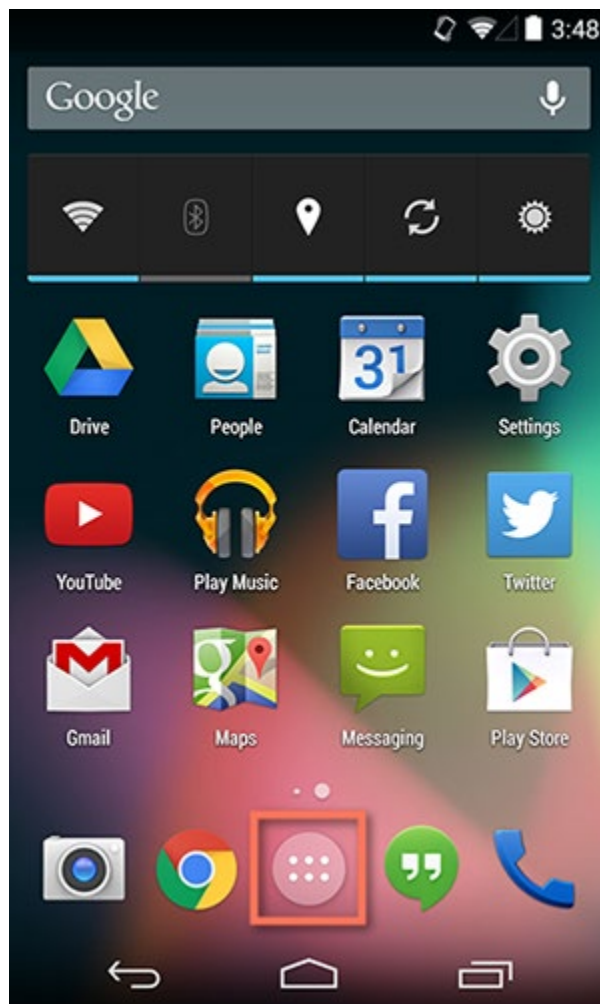
Accessing the Internet

Your device can connect to the Internet almost anywhere, either through **mobile data** (3G/4G or LTE) or nearby **Wi-Fi**. So what exactly is the difference? Most data plans only give you a certain amount of data per month, and there can be repercussions if you go over your limit. With Wi-Fi, you can use the Internet as much as you want, and it won't count against your data.

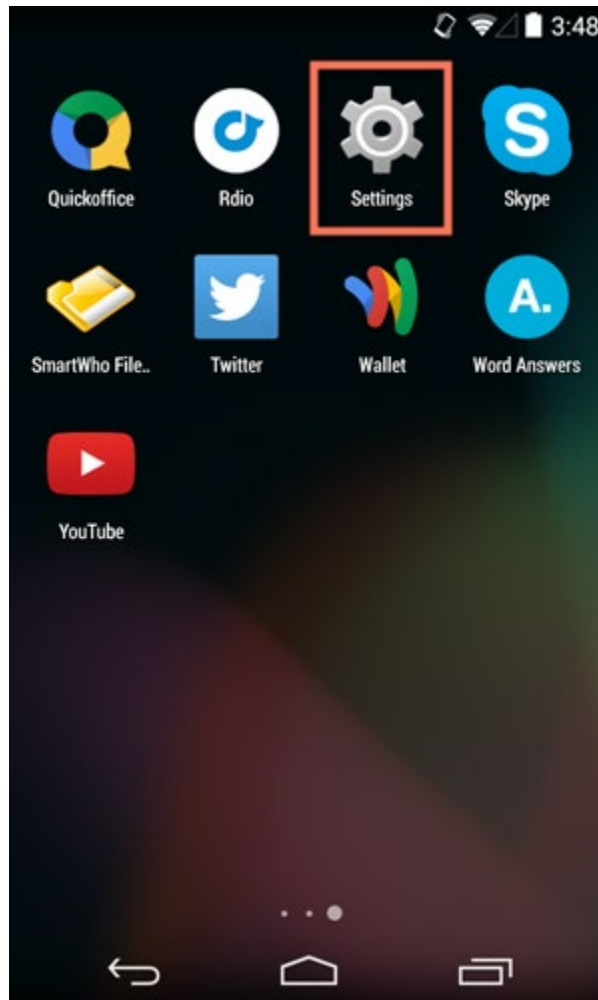
To connect to Wi-Fi (optional):

Do you have access to a nearby **Wi-Fi network** (for example, at home or at work)? You can easily connect to it using the steps below. For networks that you access repeatedly, you generally only have to do this once. The next time you're in range, you'll be connected to the network automatically, as long as you leave the Wi-Fi feature turned on.

1. Make sure you're on the **Home** screen, then open the **Apps** view. Your icon may look different from ours, but it's usually found in the Favorites tray near the bottom of the screen.

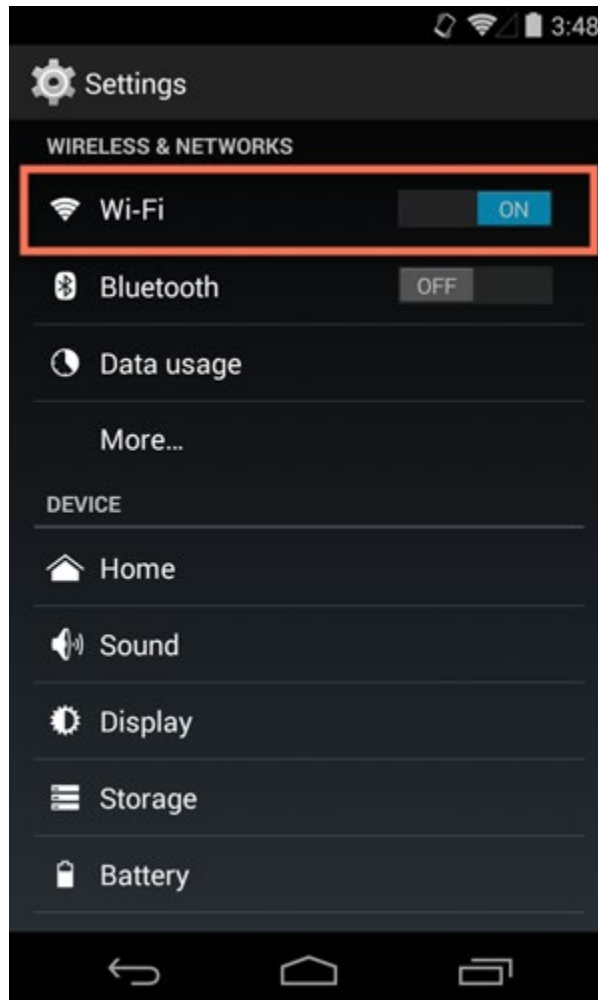


2. Tap the **Settings** icon. You may need to swipe through a few screens to find it.

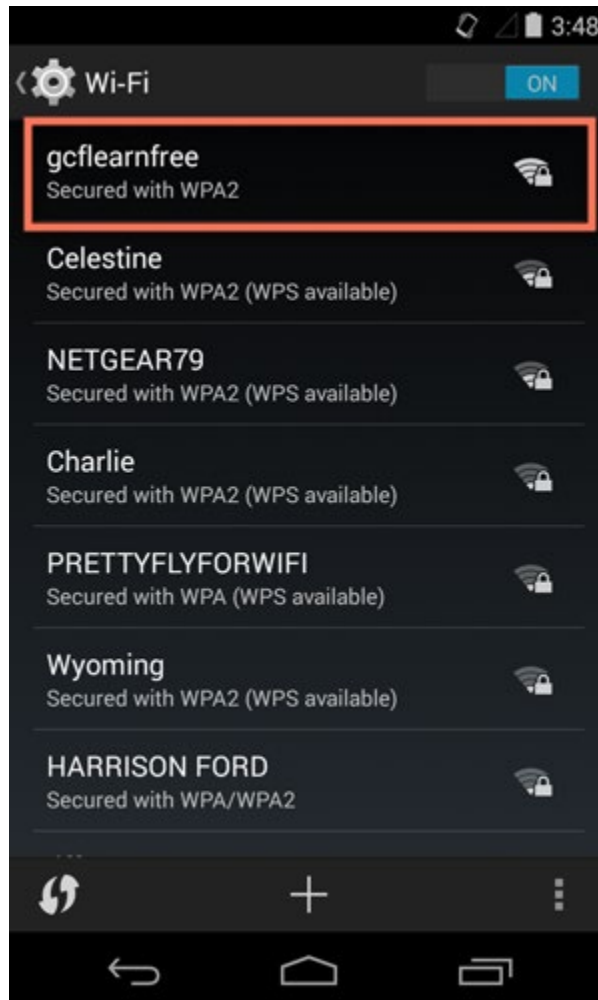


3. Scroll through the list of settings until you find the **Wi-Fi** feature. If it isn't already set to **ON**, tap the control on the right.

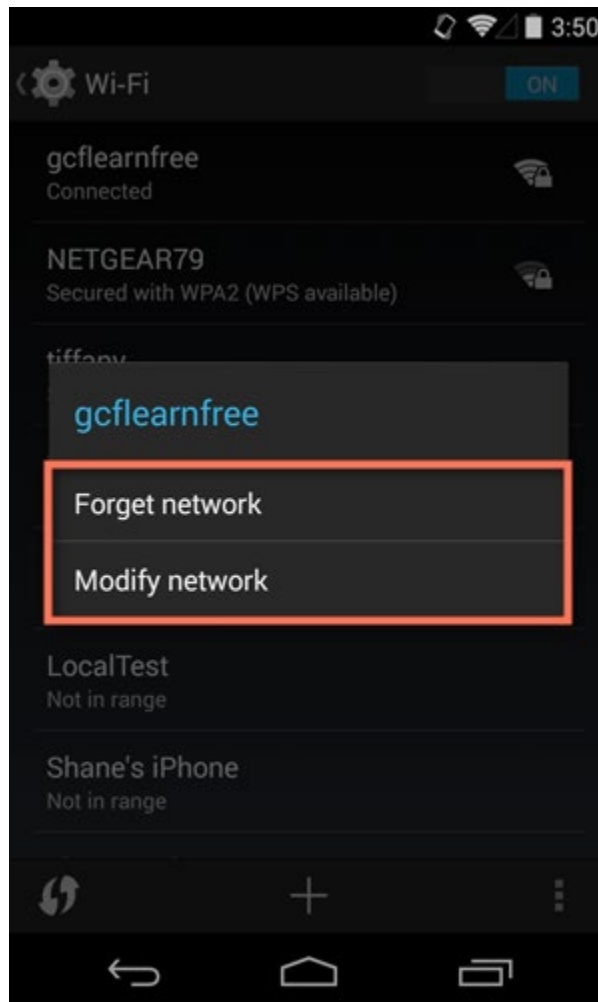
4. When you're done, tap the word **Wi-Fi**. This will open a list of nearby networks.



5. To join a network, just **tap** the one you want. If the network is secured, you'll need to enter a **password** to connect to it.



6. When you're done, your device will remember the details of the network (including the password if applicable), so you can connect to it automatically in the future. If you ever want to change these settings, **tap and hold** the network name, then choose **Forget** or **Modify**.

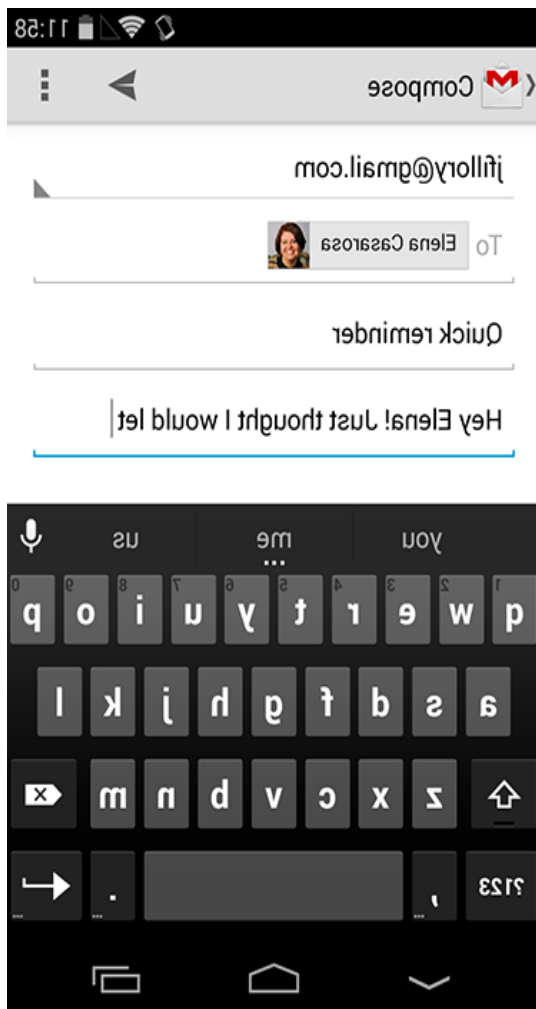


If the network you're connecting to is **unsecured**, you can access it without a password, but you should think carefully before you do (especially if it's a public hotspot, like Wi-Fi at your local coffee shop). Anything you view or share over an unsecured network is not necessarily safe from prying eyes.

Keyboard tips

By now, you've probably already encountered the **keyboard** on your device. It's designed to pop up automatically whenever you need to type something; for example, when you're composing an email, searching the Web, or filling out a form.

This keyboard may be smaller than a traditional keyboard, but it comes with several **convenient shortcuts** to make typing easier. Take the example below. Things like symbols, numbers, and capital letters are actually easy to access—you just have to know where to look.



Working with apps

At this point, you've turned on your device and gotten it all set up. You're probably eager to start **using it**—for things like taking pictures, sending text messages, and all that other fun stuff.

Fortunately, these tasks are fairly easy. You just have to know what **apps** to look for and how to **organize** them so they're easier to get to. Soon, things like making phone calls and customizing your Home screen will start to feel like second nature.

Finding a specific app

Apps can be found in two places on your device. The first is the **Home** screen, which should include shortcuts to several common apps by default (you can even add your own—we'll show you how in a minute). The second is the **Apps** view, where you can access every app on your device.



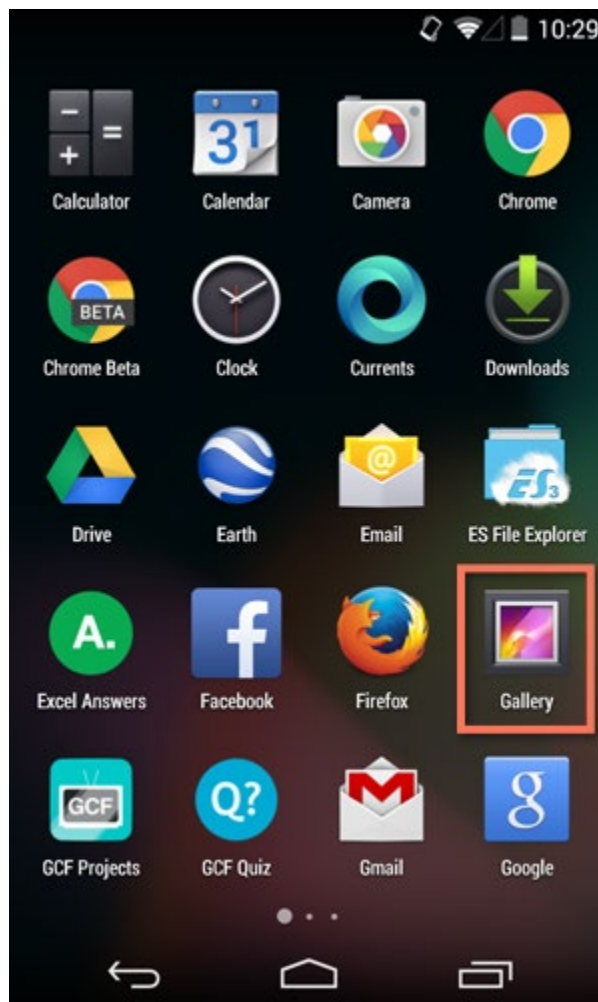
As you can see from the image above, you'll open the **Apps** view using the icon on the **Home** screen. The icon may look different on your device—sometimes

it's a circle, sometimes it's shaped like a grid or a square. It just depends on your make and model.

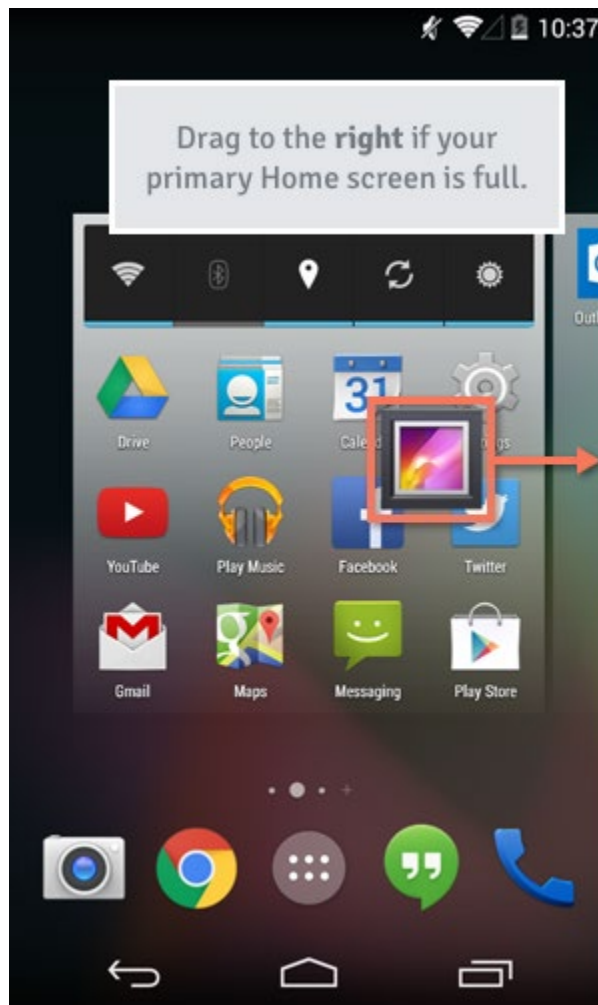
To add an app to the Home screen:

Adding an app to the Home screen is a lot like adding a shortcut on your computer desktop. You're not moving or altering the original app in any way—you're just creating a **link**. Ultimately, this is a great way to make your favorite apps easier to get to.

1. Open the **Apps** view, then find the app you want.



2. **Tap and hold** the app (be careful not to let go!), and you'll be taken to a special view of your **Home** screen.
3. **Continue to hold** the app while you decide where to put it. If your primary Home screen is full, you should be able to access/create another one by dragging the app all the way to the **right**.



4. **Release** the app once you've chosen a spot, and it will be added to your Home screen.



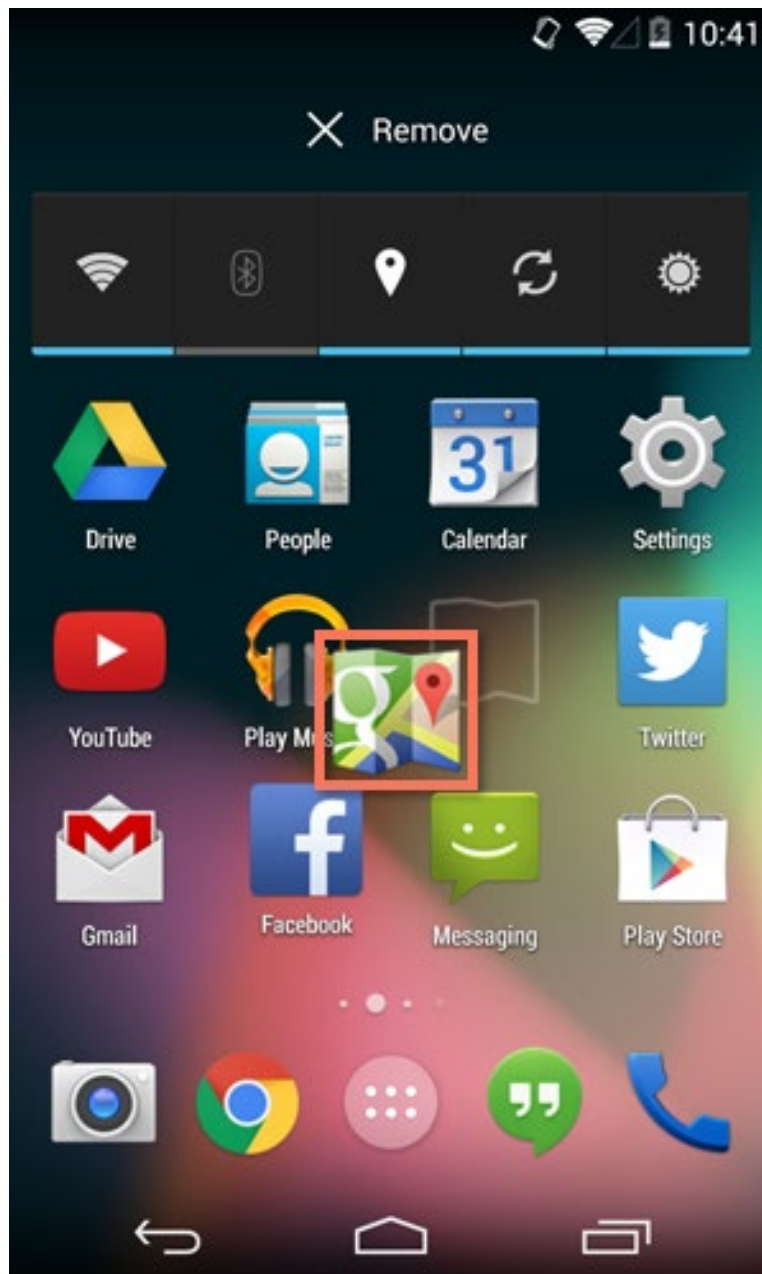
To navigate between Home screens, **swipe left or right**.

To move (or remove) Home screen apps:

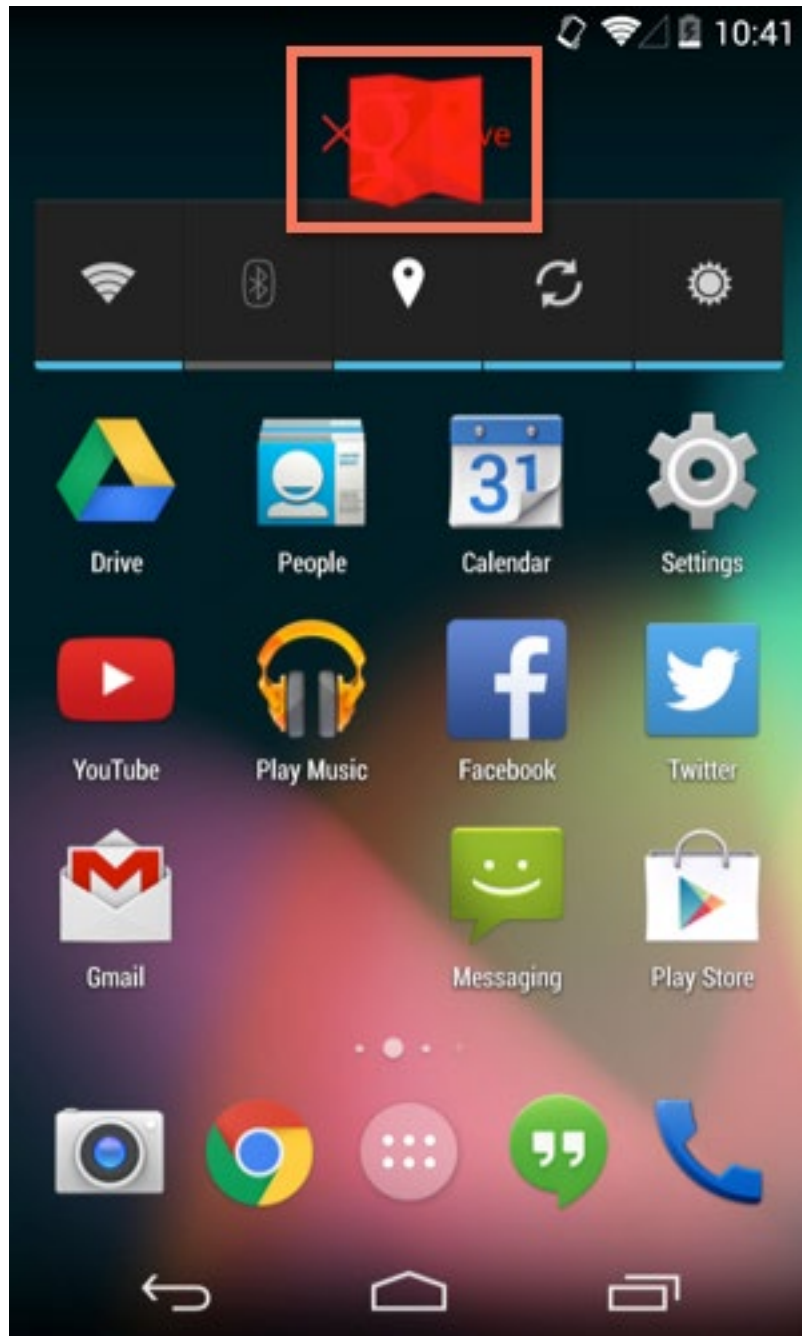
With a little know-how, you can easily **rearrange** your Home screen icons any way you want. You can also **remove** any shortcuts you don't need, like if your device came with a shortcut you don't really use.

1. Make sure you're on the **Home** screen, then **tap and hold** the shortcut you want to edit. This should give you control of the icon.

2. To **move** it, drag and drop the icon to a **new location**.



3. To **remove** it, drag the icon to the **Remove** option. (Keep in mind that this won't delete the app from your device. It will only remove the shortcut from the Home screen.)



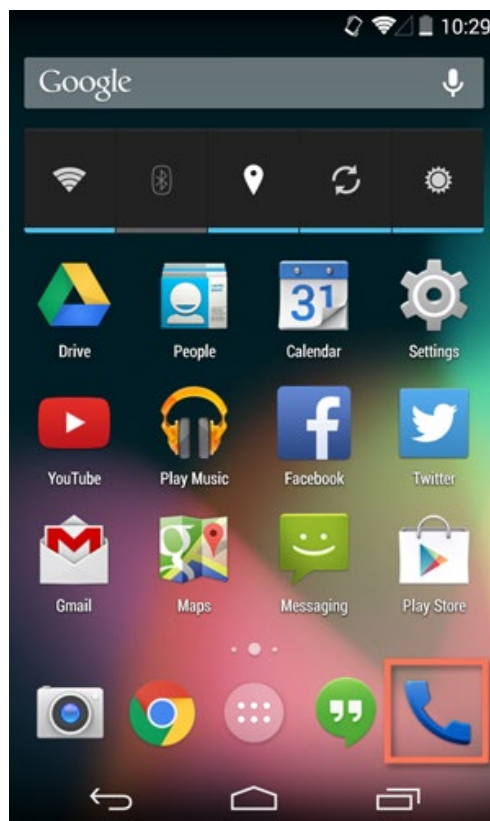
Phone calls and texting

Now that you know how to find and organize the apps you need, there's no limit to what you can do. Here are some **other tasks** you might be interested in while you're still getting used to your device.

To make a phone call:

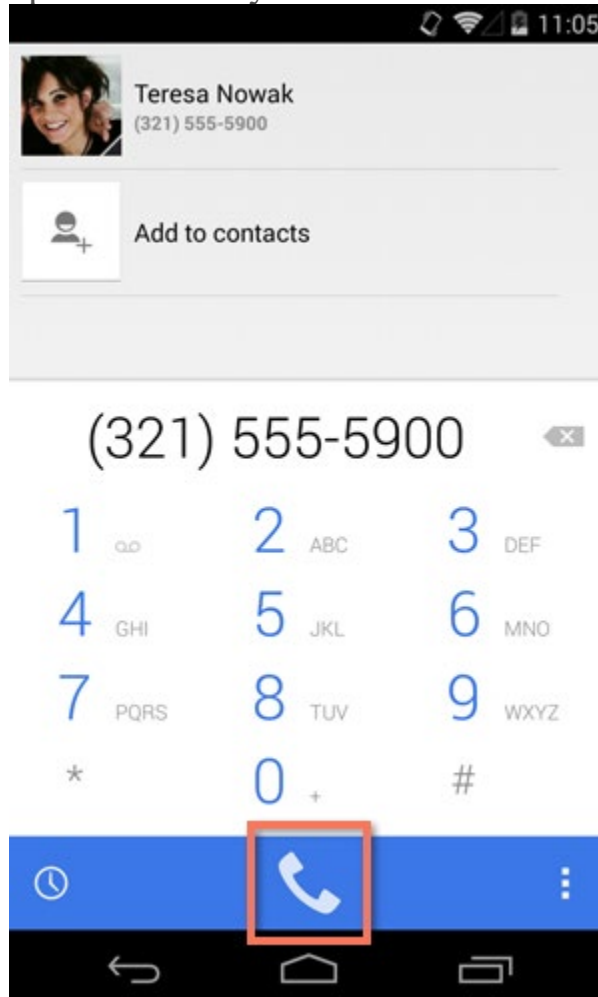
Every smartphone comes with an app for making **phone calls**. Yours may look different from the example below, but the overall experience—including opening the app and using the keypad—should be the same.

1. Open the **Phone** app on your device. It's usually located in the **tray** at the bottom of the screen.

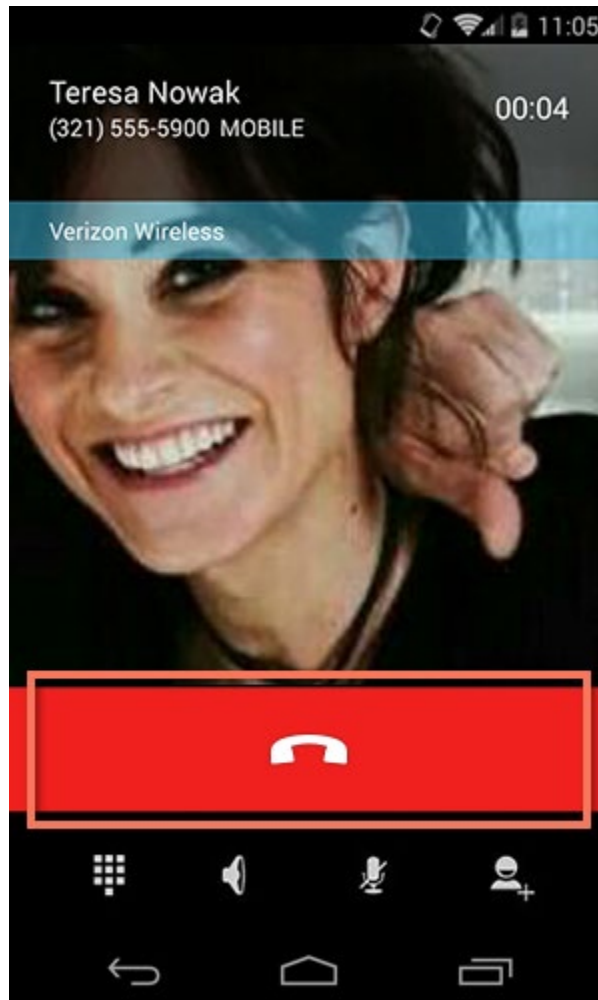


2. The keypad should appear.

3. Enter the **number** you want to call, then tap the **phone button** to continue. (If the person is in your **contacts list**, the information may pop up automatically.)

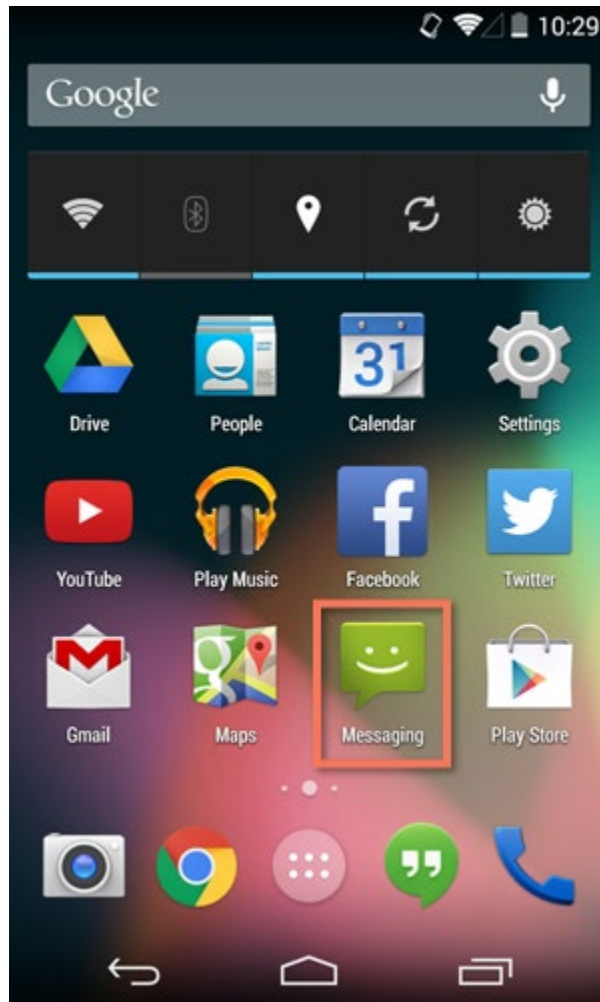


4. When you're done, tap the **red button** to hang up.

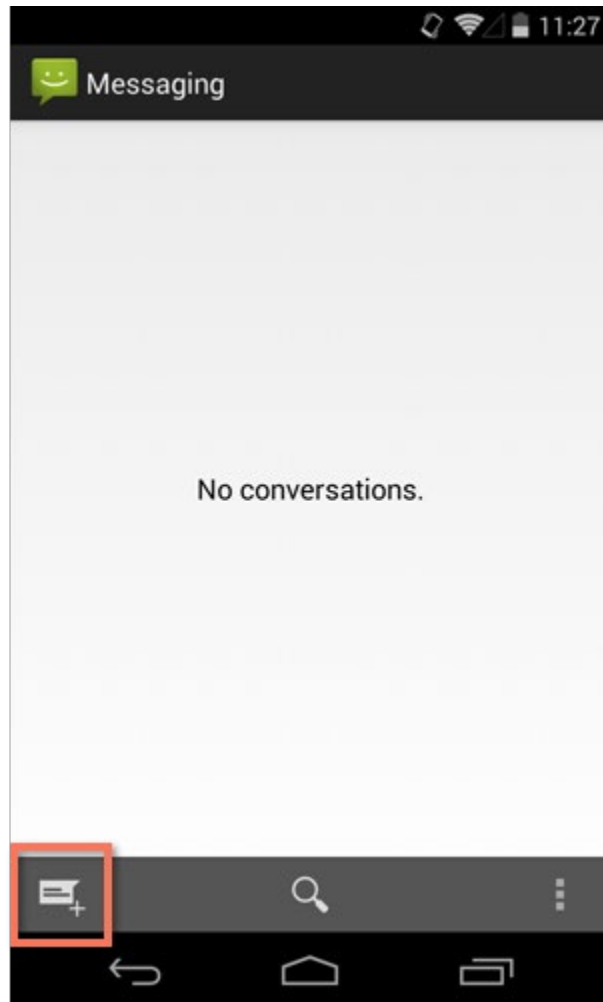


To send a text message:

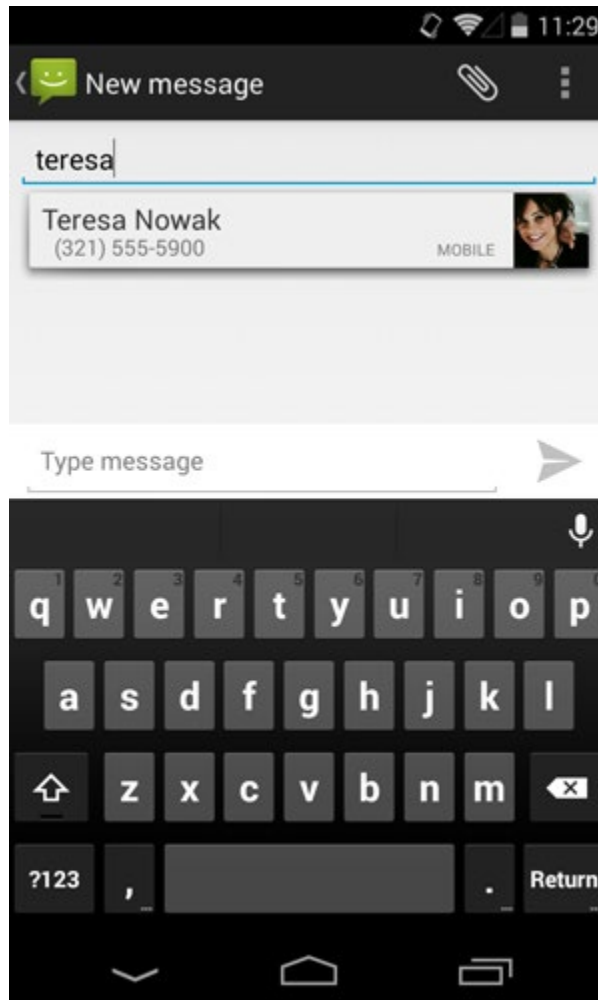
1. Open the **Messaging** app on your device.



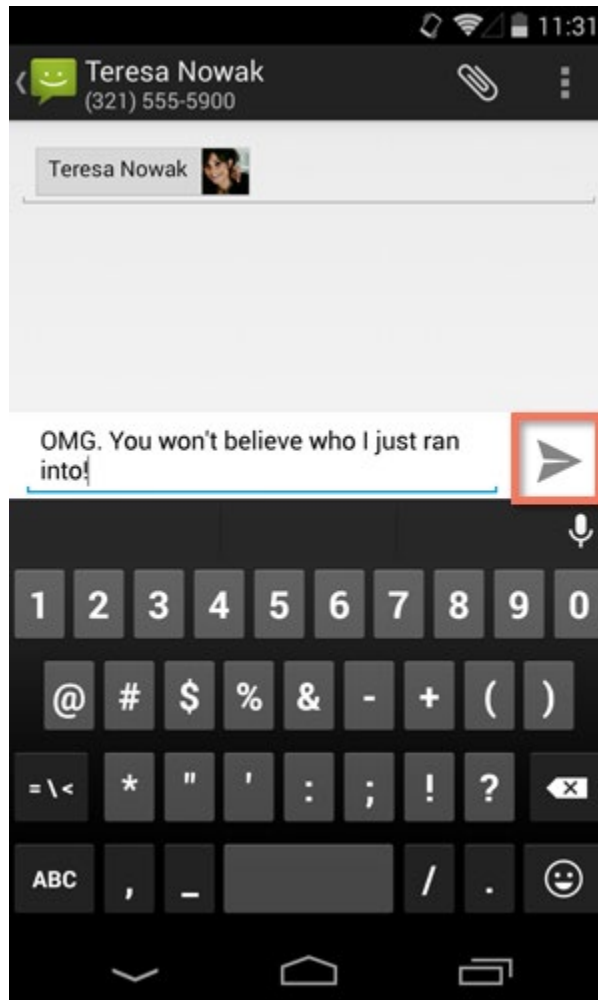
2. To start a **new conversation**, look for the **new message** button.



3. Enter the **phone number** of the person you want to text (or type the contact's **name** if he or she is already in your contacts list).



4. Enter your **message**, then press the **Send** button.

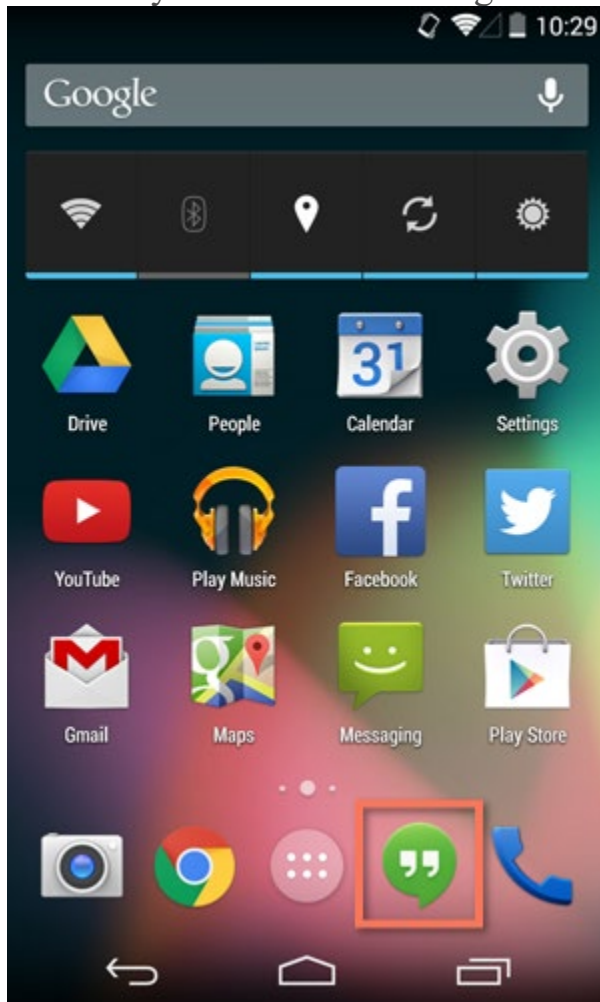


5. When the other person **replies**, his or her message should appear in the same conversation thread.

Traditional text messaging is done through your device's phone number—that's why tablets don't have this feature. As an alternative, you can use the **Hangouts** app for chatting, or you can check the **Play Store** for other messaging apps.

The Hangouts app

Many newer devices come with an app called **Hangouts**. You can use it to send and receive text messages just like you would with the Messaging app—the difference is that it can be used for **Google chat** as well. This makes it a great choice if you do a lot of texting *and* chatting.

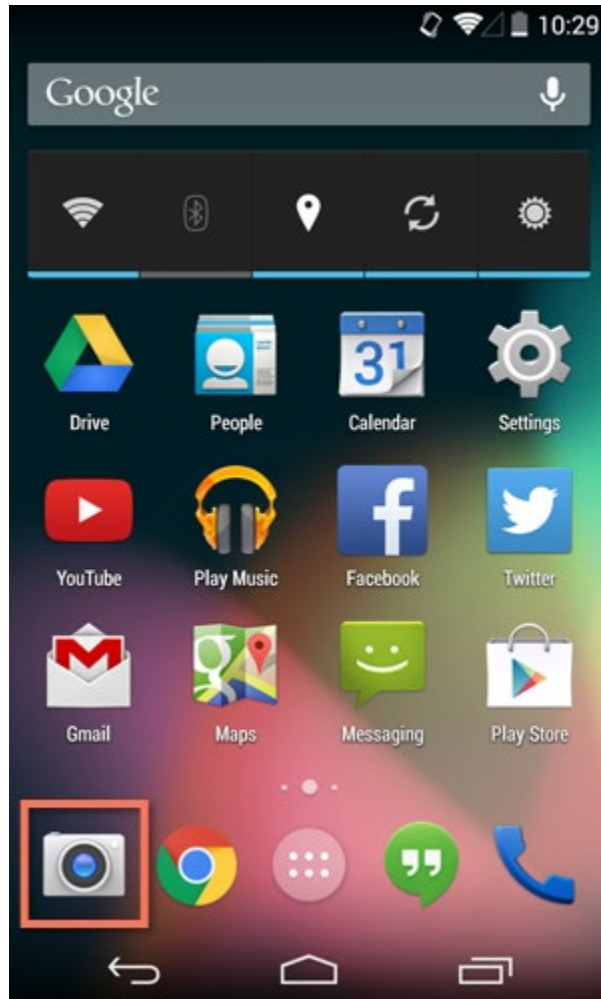


Taking photos

The camera app can vary quite a bit from device to device. Not to worry—the interface should still be fairly intuitive. If you have questions about how your particular camera works, try checking your **manual** or your manufacturer's **website**.

To take a photo:

1. Open your device's **Camera** app.



2. The camera view should appear.

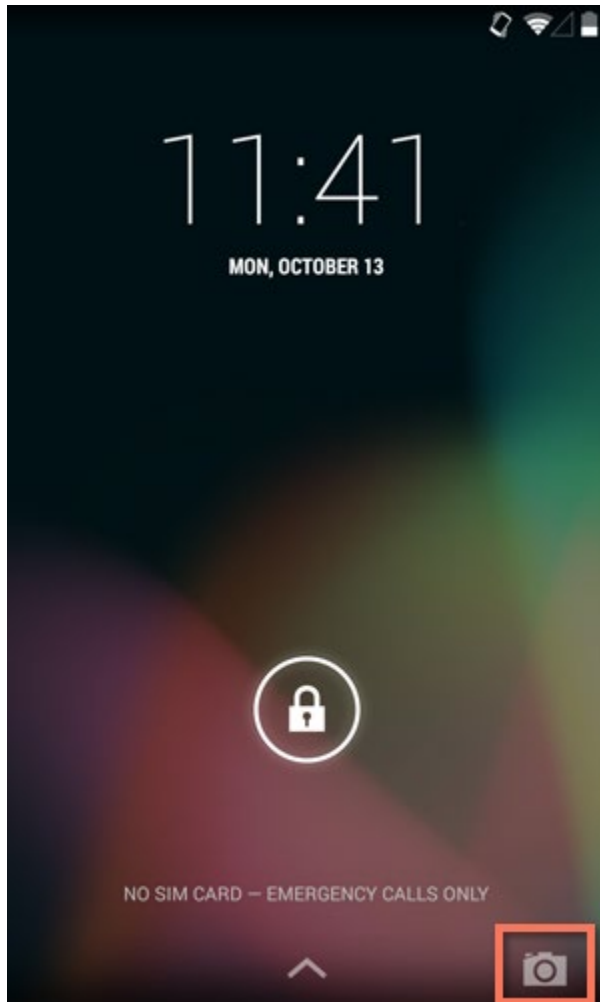
3. If the picture is blurry, try tapping your **subject** to refocus.



4. To take a picture, tap the **camera** button.



Many devices give you the option to launch the camera directly from your **lock screen**. To see if your device has this feature, look for an **icon** like the example below.



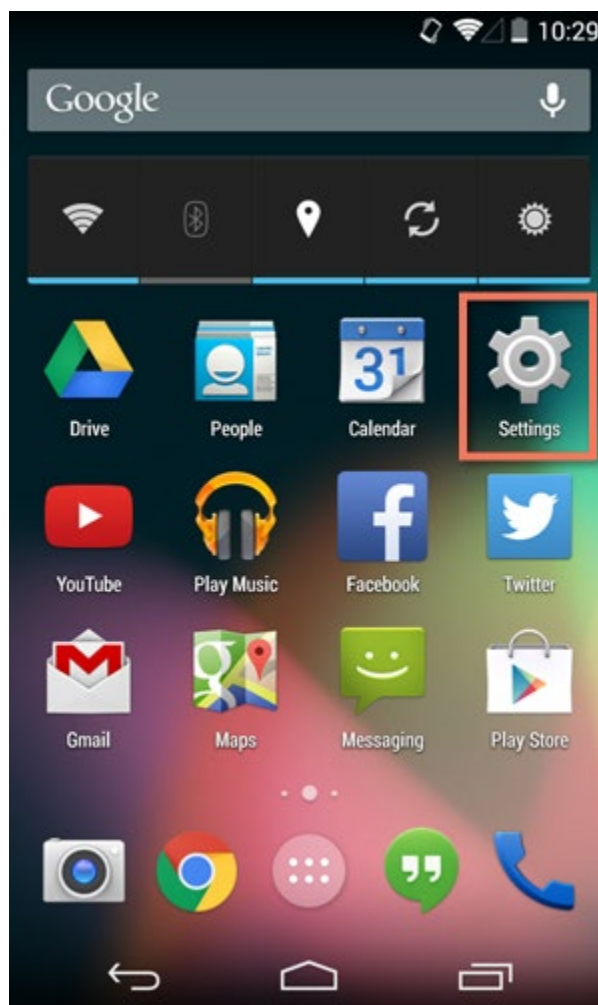
Accessing your device's settings

Once you're more familiar with your device, you might feel inclined to customize some of your **settings**. These settings let you control everything from the volume of your **notifications** to the way your **lock screen** works. They can even tell you how much storage space you're using.

We'll talk about various settings throughout this tutorial, so it's important to know how to **access them**. As for customizing them, we recommend taking the time to explore your options on your own. Because every device is different, your settings will be a reflection of whatever makes yours unique.

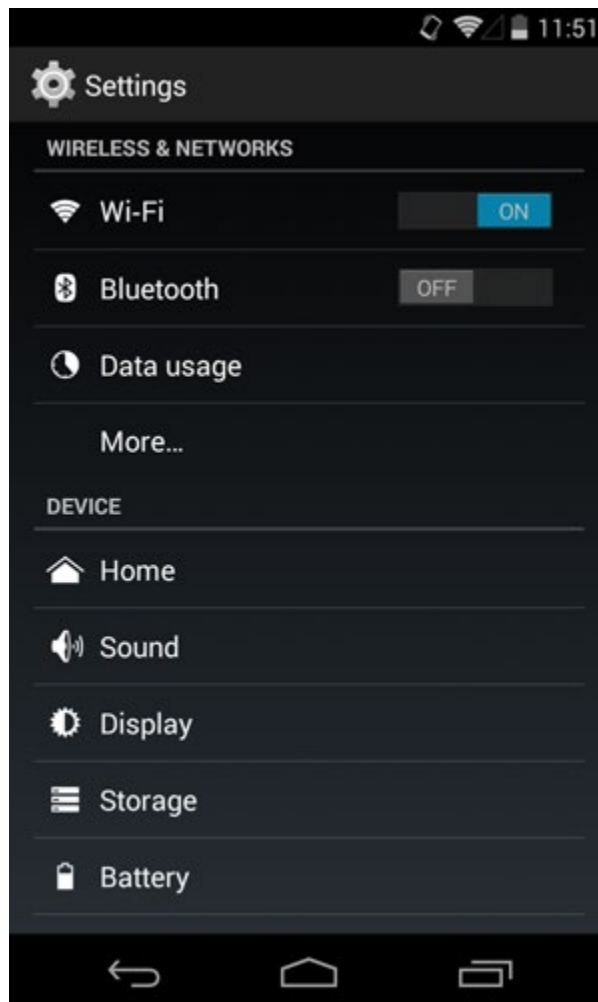
To open your settings:

1. Open the **Settings** app on your device. If it isn't already on your **Home** screen, you'll find it in the **Apps** view.

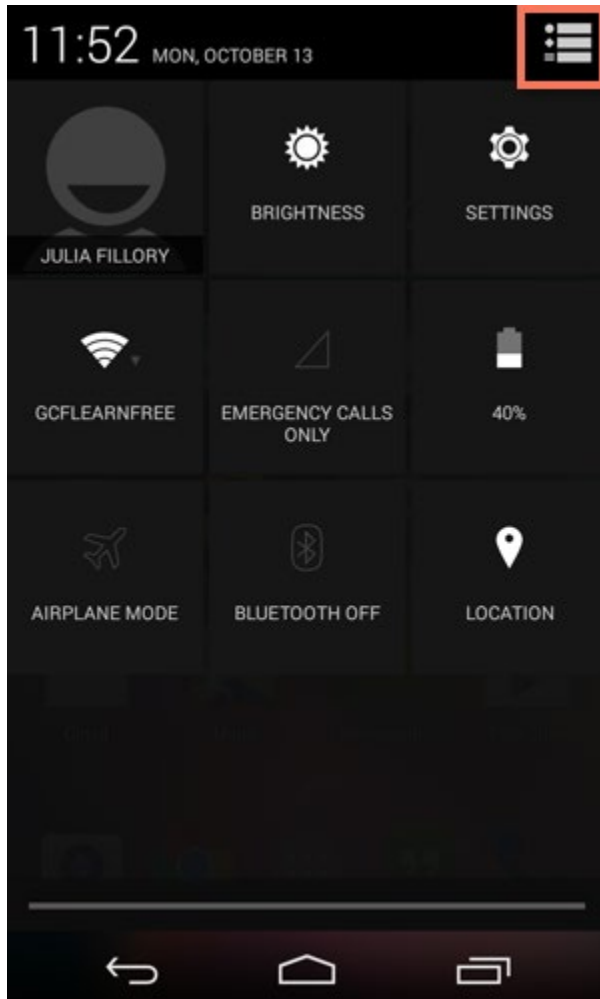


2. Your settings will appear.
3. Scroll through the list to find the section or setting you're looking for. Common sections

include **Wireless & Networks** (where you can manage your connections) and **Device** (for personalizing your device).



Some devices will include shortcuts to your settings in the **Notification Shade**. To get there, **swipe down** from the top of your screen, then tap the **icon** in the upper-right corner.



Getting started with email

Email is probably one of the first things you'll want to set up on your device. All you have to do is sign into your account using the appropriate app—then you can start sending and receiving messages just like you would on a regular computer.

The big question is, which email app should you use? There are quite a few options to choose from. Most people use the "official" app for their email

service, such as the **Outlook** app by Microsoft or the **Gmail** app by Google. Here are some tips to help you get started.

If you have a Gmail account

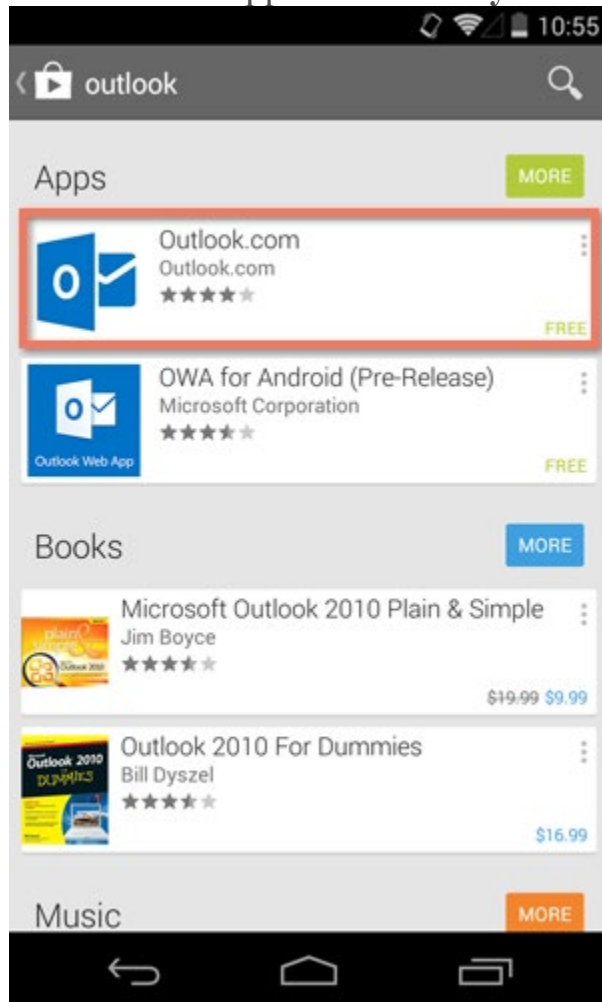
If you use Gmail, you're in luck. The Gmail app comes **pre-installed** on every Android device, so you don't have to download anything from the Play Store. In addition, there's a good chance your account is connected to the app already (as long as you used the same **Google account** to set up your device).



The Gmail app is designed to work a lot like your regular inbox. You can read and reply to messages and archive or delete the ones you don't want. You can even add **multiple accounts** to the app, so you can access them all in the same place (we'll show you how below).

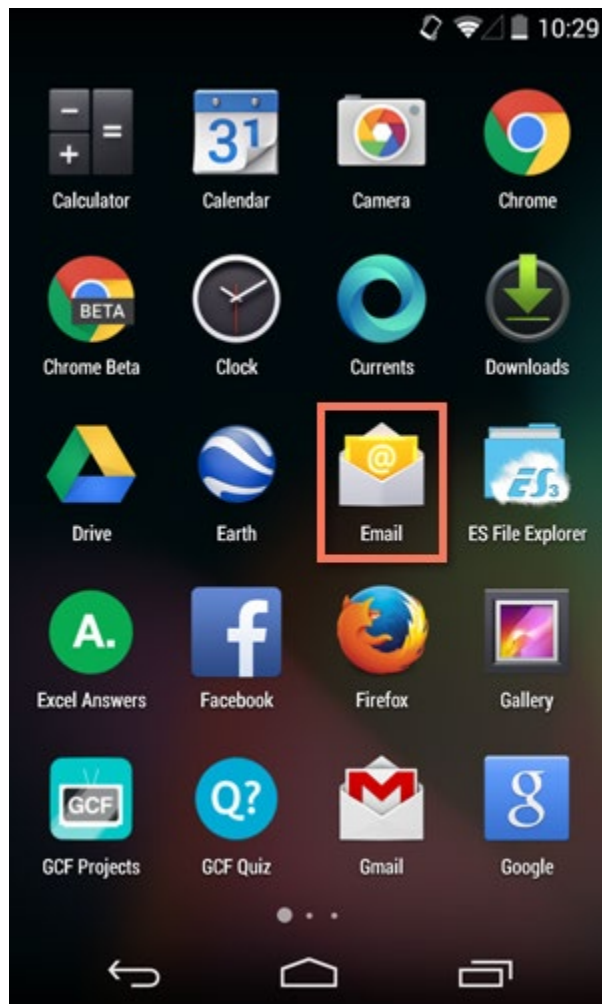
If you use a different email service

Gmail isn't the only service with its own app. All of the primary services have one, including **Outlook**, **Yahoo!**, **Mail.com**, and **AOL**. All you have to do is download the app from the **Play Store**, then install it on your device.



Alternatively, you can use the all-purpose **Email** app, which comes pre-installed on most devices. Each version of this app is different, but it's generally designed to be more universal. In other words, you can use it to set up **any type of account**, including Outlook, Yahoo!, and everything in between.

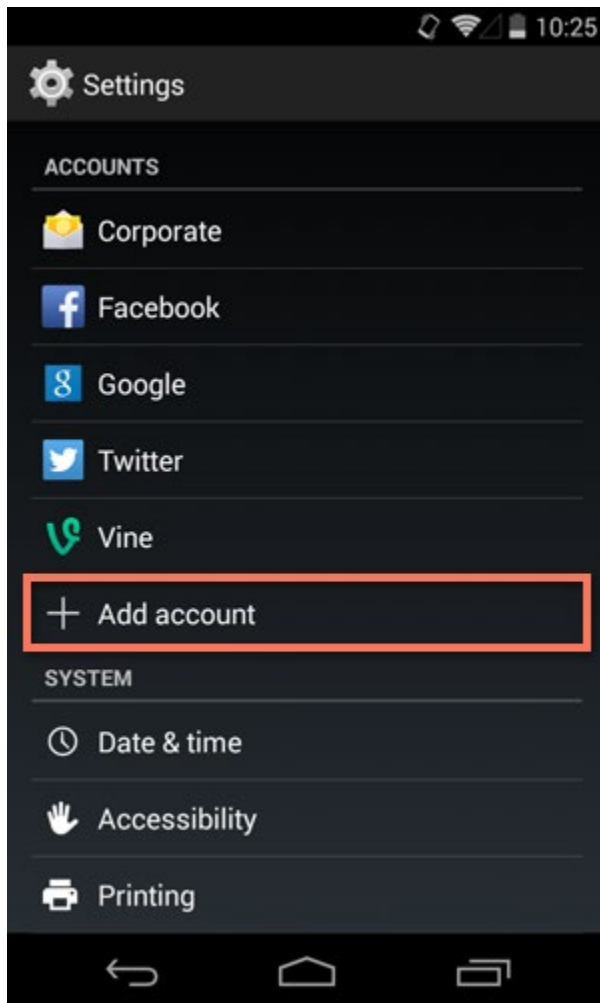
You can even use it to set up your **work email** (if your job or business uses some type of corporate account).



Adding multiple accounts

Almost every email app lets you add **more than one account** to your device. This option is great if you have multiple addresses—like separate ones for work and school—and you want to be able to access them in the same place.

The process for this can vary, but the general idea is the same. Start by going to your device's **settings**, then look for the option that says **Add Account**. Next, select the **account type**—for example, Google or Yahoo!—and follow the instructions.



What are contacts?

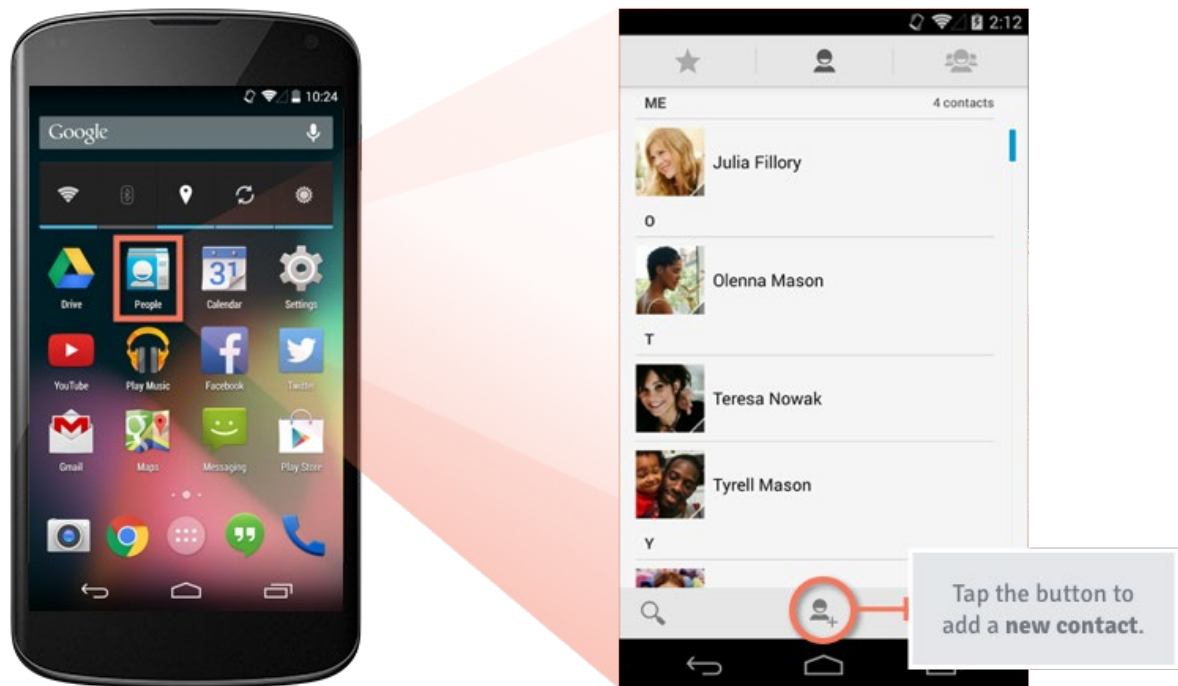
Your **contacts list** is one of the most important things on your device. It's where you'll save **contact information** for the people you know, including their names, phone numbers, and email addresses.

This information isn't just for your records—it's also used by **other apps**. For instance, if you need to call or text one of your contacts, thankfully you don't

have to remember his or her phone number. All you have to do is start entering information and the app will pull up the rest.

Adding contacts

If you have any existing **Google contacts**, they were most likely added when you set up your phone or tablet. Beyond that, you can easily add contacts manually. To get started, open the contacts app that came with your device. It's usually called **People** but may be called something else (for example, **Contacts**).



As you can see from the image above, you can add a new contact using the **add contact** button (which is usually identified by a + sign or something similar). A list of **fields** will appear where you can enter any kind of information you need, including a person's name, email address, and multiple phone numbers.

10:37

✓ DONE

Google contact
gcflearnfree.nexus.phone@gmail.com

Name

Add organization

PHONE

Phone MOBILE

EMAIL

Email HOME

ADDRESS

Address HOME

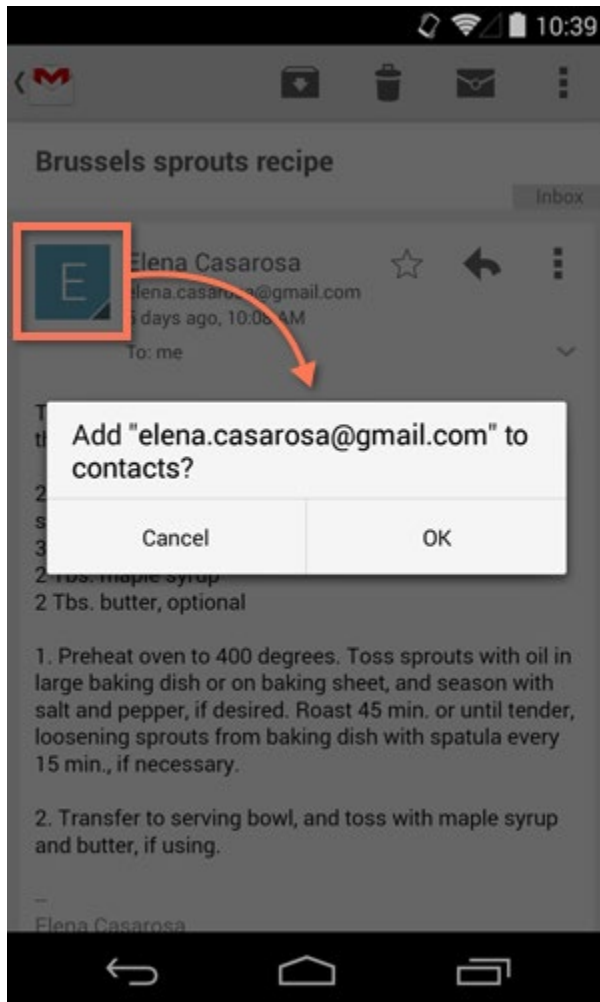
SPECIAL DATES

Date BIRTHDAY

GROUPS

Sometimes you can add contacts directly from other apps, like if someone emails you for the first time and you'd like to save that person's address. To try this out, **tap** the person's information (or **tap and hold** if that doesn't work).

You should be taken to a screen or dialog box where you can quickly add the person to your contacts.

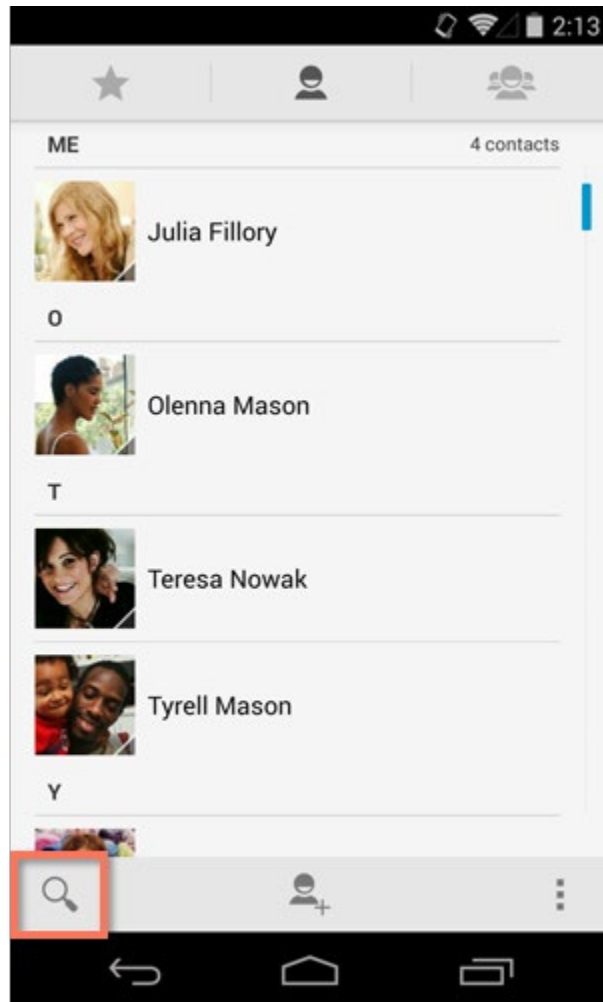


Viewing and editing contacts

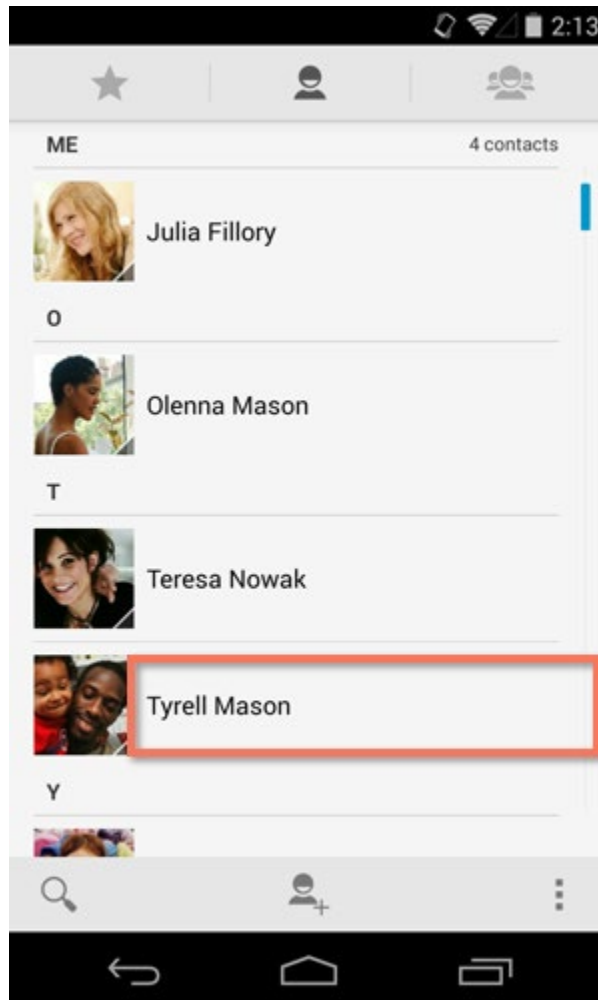
You'll return to the **People** app whenever you need to view or edit one of your contacts. Each version of this app is different (for example, yours might have different icons), but some tasks are still fairly universal. Here are some tips to help you learn your way around.

- To **browse** your contacts, scroll up and down the list. They're usually sorted alphabetically by first name.

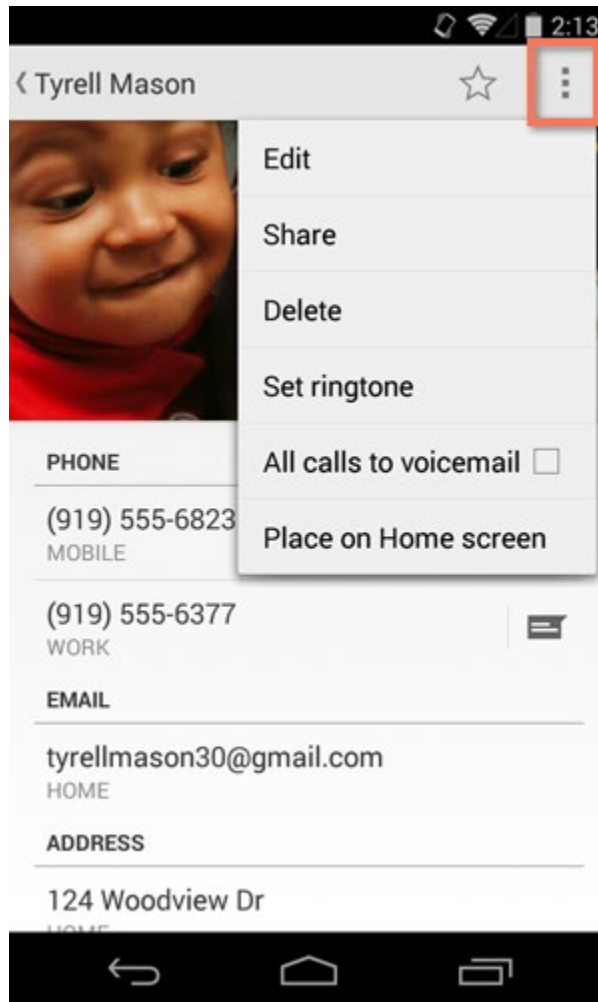
- To **search** for a contact, tap the **search button**. You can find the person you're looking for by entering any **contact information**, including the contact's name, organization, or email address.



- To **view** a contact, tap his or her name on the list. Their information will appear.



- To **edit** or **delete** a contact, tap the **menu button** while viewing the contact's information. You'll find several options to choose from—you can even set an individual ring tone.

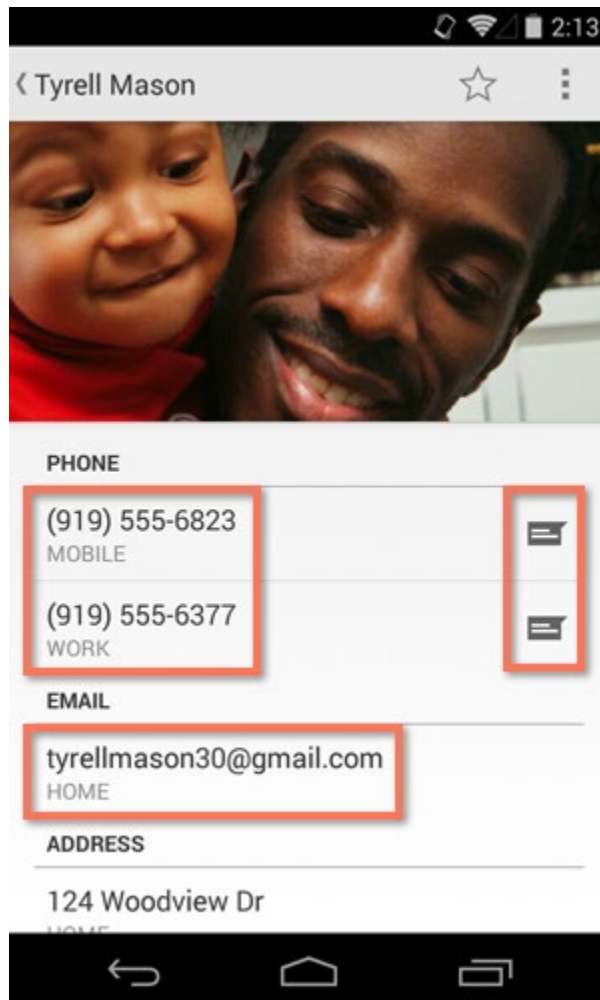


Using contacts

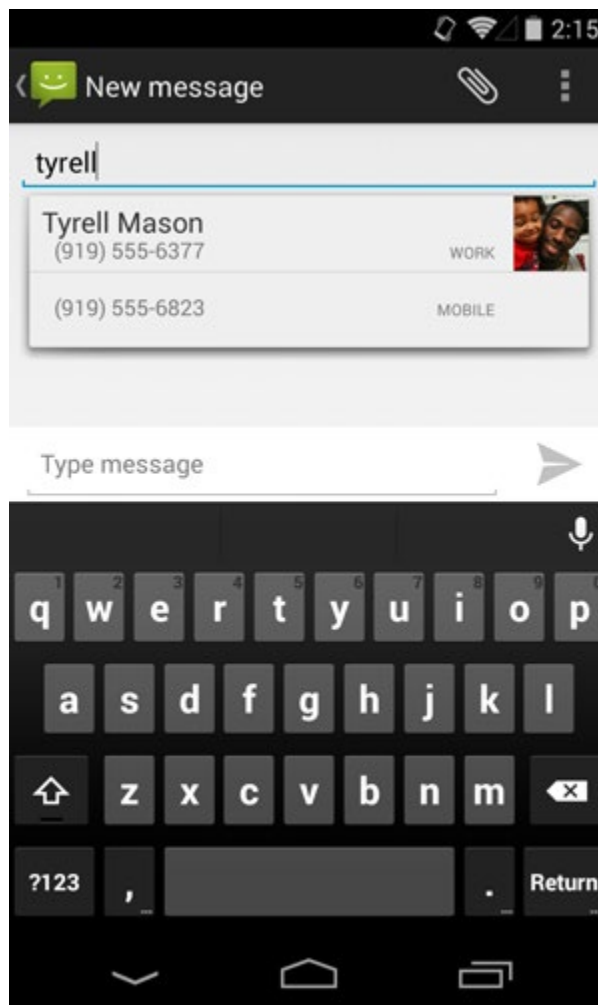
Whether you're making a phone call or sending a text, using your contacts list to pull up the information you need can be a huge time saver. There are two ways to put your contacts to use: You can start with the **People** app or go directly to the app you want to use.

- To contact someone using the **People** app, navigate to the contact's information, then tap

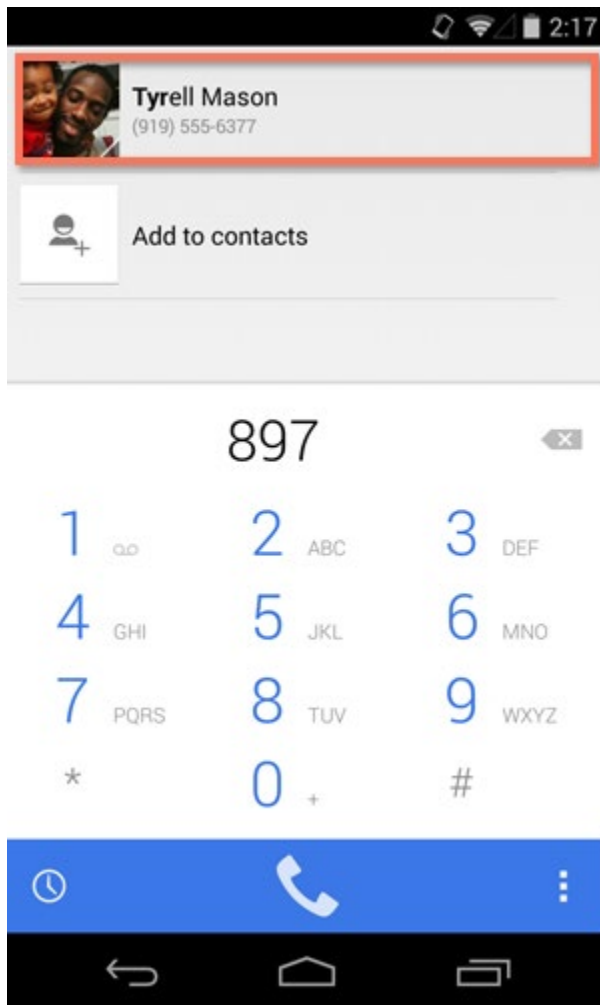
the item you want, like a **phone number** or **email address**. You can even tap the **message icon** next to the contact's phone number to send a text message instead. Once you tap one of these items, you'll be taken to the appropriate app.



- To pull up someone's contact info in **Gmail** or **Messaging**—or another similar app—start typing anything that's saved to the contact's record, including his or her name, organization, or email address. It's a lot like performing a search of your contacts list. Once you've found the person you're looking for, tap the contact's **information** and the app will take care of the rest.



Wondering how to pull up someone's contact info in the **Phone** app? Try dialing part of the person's **phone number** or spelling his or her **name** with the keypad. (In the example below, **897** = **TYR**, the first three letters of the contact's name.) This should bring up the rest of the information automatically.



Introduction to the Play Store

By now, you're probably familiar with the apps that came with your device. What if you're interested in downloading some more? That's where the **Play Store** comes in (also known as **Google Play**). The Play Store gives you access to thousands of apps, services, and other media—everything from games like Angry Birds to tools that can help you with everyday tasks.

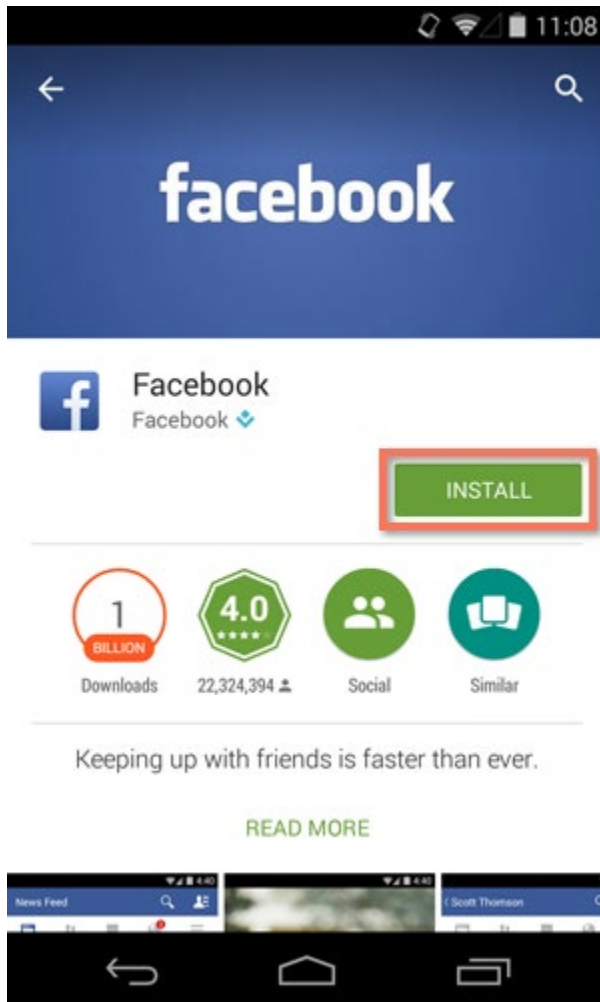
Many of the apps in the Play Store can be downloaded **for free**. Others cost as little as \$0.99, although some may be more expensive. To purchase apps from the Play Store, you'll need to have some form of **payment** on file with your Google account, such as PayPal or a credit card. If you don't have this set up yet, that's OK—the app will walk you through it.

Finding and installing apps

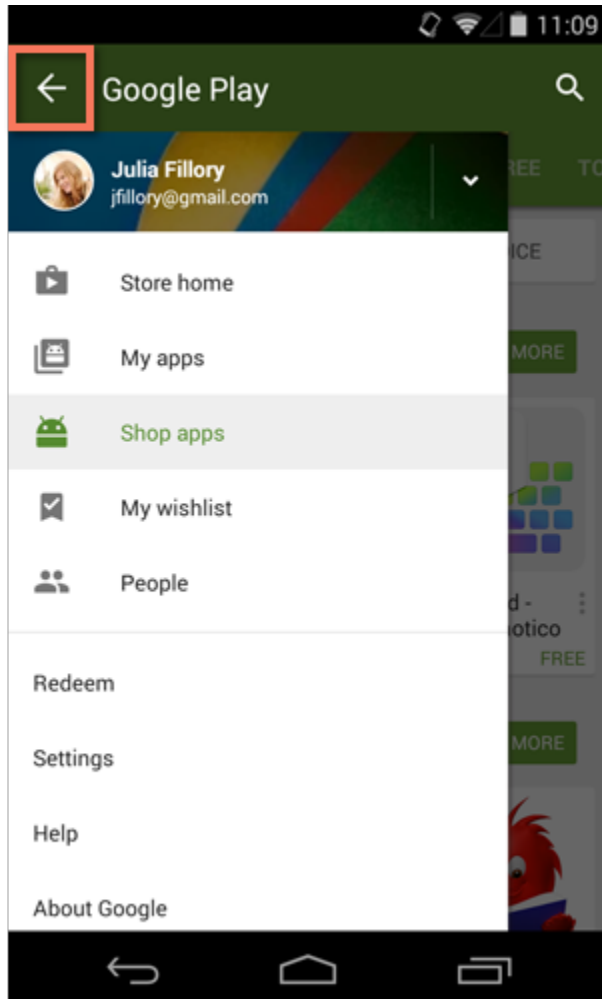
The **Play Store** comes pre-installed on every Android device. To get started, open the app. You can use the **search feature** to search for something specific, such as the name of an app, the company that makes it, or something descriptive (like "photo editor"). You also can tap **Apps** to browse the apps section of the store.



To **download** or **learn more** about an app, tap the one you're interested in. You'll be taken to the product page, where you can check out reviews, screenshots, and a description of the app. To download the app, tap the **install button** (it will say "install" if the app is free or will tell you the purchase price), then follow the rest of the instructions.



To return to the Play Store **homepage**, open the **menu** in the upper-left corner, then choose **Store home**. You can also use this menu to view your current apps, account settings, and more.



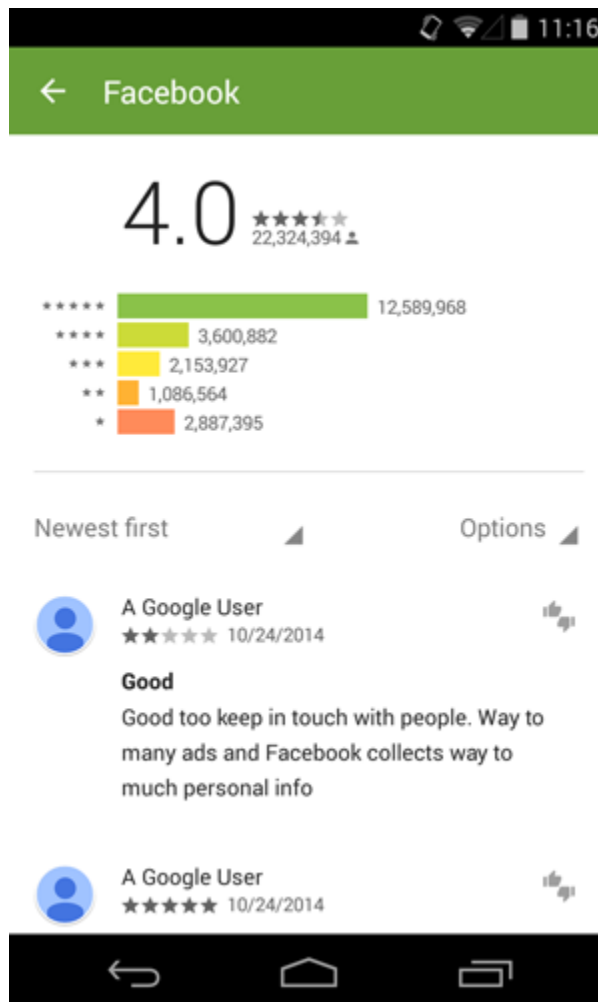
App safety

Many apps in the Play Store are perfectly legitimate; however, there will always be a few exceptions. For example, some apps may compromise your privacy by sharing your **personal information** with advertisers. Others may even contain **malware**, which can affect the operation of your device.

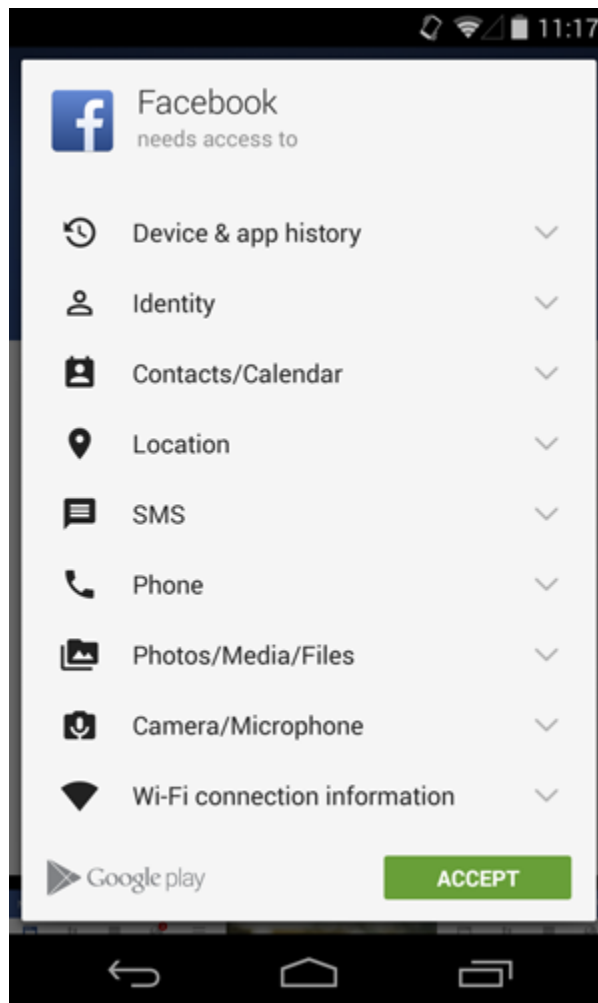
The best way to protect yourself is to stick to apps and brands you **trust**. You should also think critically about the app's **reputation** before downloading it,

and review the app's **permissions**—especially if you're unfamiliar with the developer.

- **Reputation:** Every app has a reputation of some kind. You can get a better idea of what it is by checking the **user reviews** and other details on the product page. For example, do you see a lot of negative comments? Does the app have fewer than 100 downloads? This is a pretty good indication that the app may be unreliable (or may even be unsafe or a scam). Use your judgement, and don't download anything that makes you feel uncomfortable.

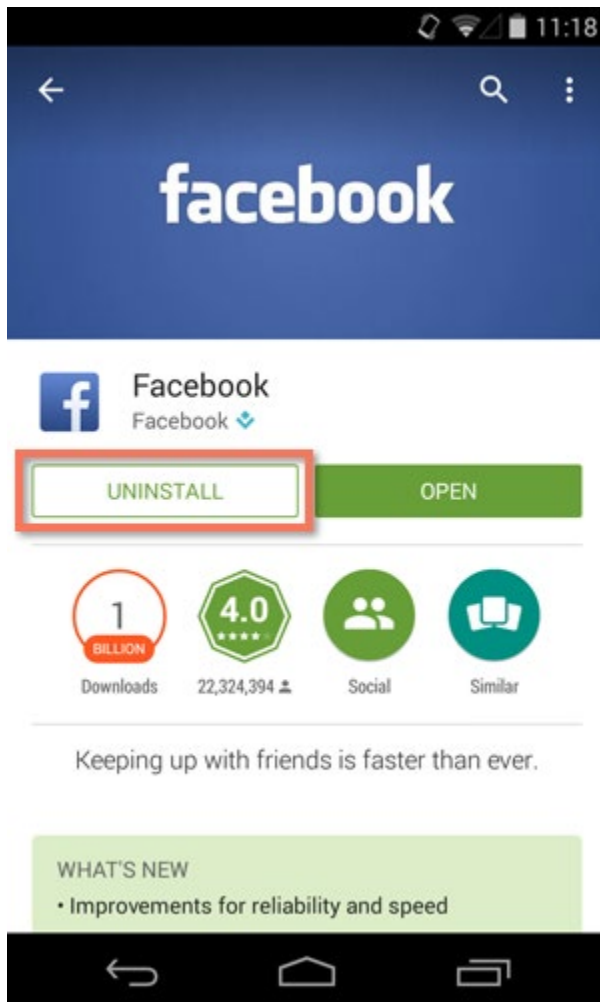


- **Permissions:** Apps need permission to access certain **information** on your device in order to work properly. Sometimes this information is completely necessary, and sometimes it isn't—it just depends on the context. For example, if you're downloading a simple flashlight app and it requests access to your phone, contacts, and location, you might want to reconsider. The app's **reputation** can also help you make smart decisions about permissions.

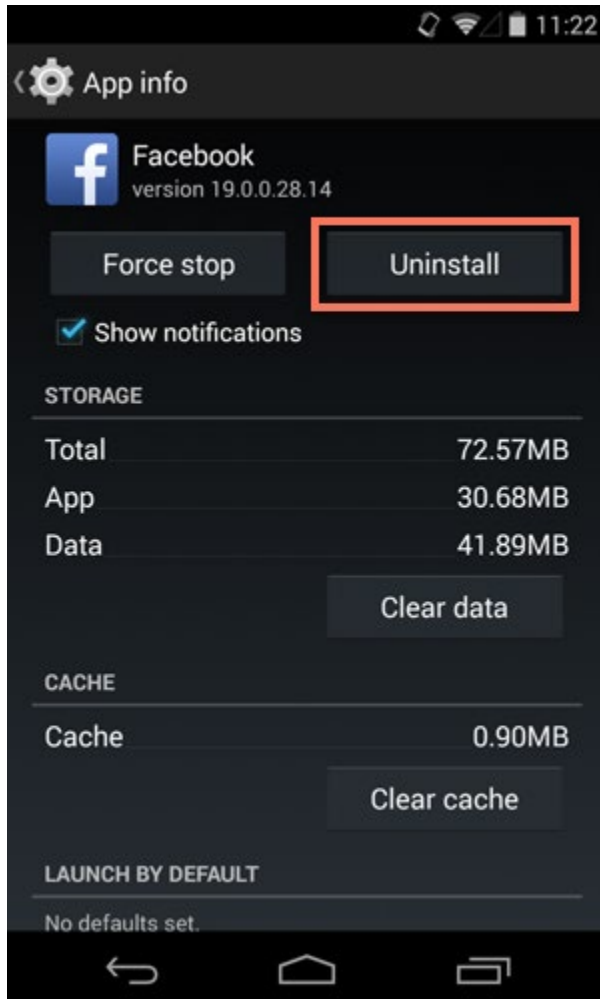


Uninstalling apps

Uninstalling an app only takes a few minutes. There are two ways to do it. First, if you're viewing the app in the **Play Store**, all you have to do is tap **Uninstall**—the app will be removed from your device immediately.



If you're outside the Play Store, open your device's **settings**, then go to **Apps** or **Application Manager** (this may vary depending on your device). From there, select the **app** you want, and tap **Uninstall**.



If you change your mind later, you can always **reinstall** any apps you've uninstalled. Just go back to the **Play Store** and follow the usual steps. If you paid for the app, you won't have to pay for it again.

Doing more with the Play Store

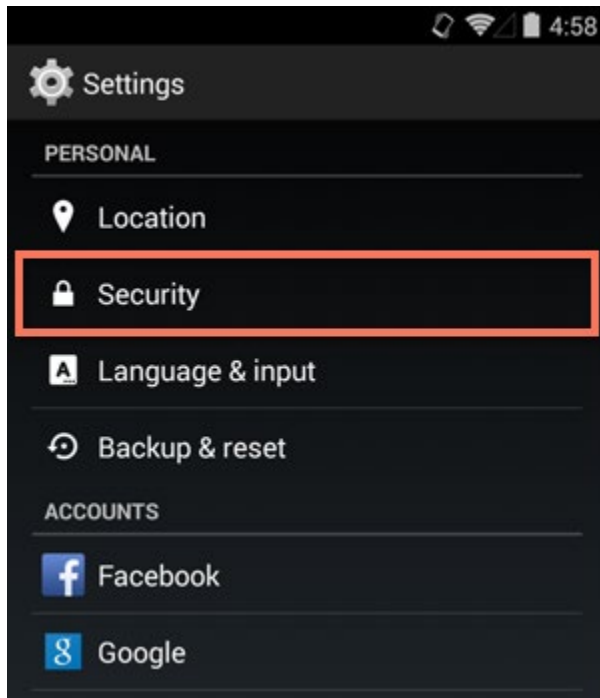
The truth is, apps are **just the beginning** when it comes to the Play Store—there are many other things you can download, including movies, TV shows, books, and music. Unlike apps, these purchases aren't just for your mobile device; they can also be viewed on your computer.

Protecting your device

People lose their devices or experience some breach of privacy more often than you might think. Luckily, there are several things you can do to protect your phone or tablet—and, by extension, your personal information.

Some of these precautions involve enabling something on your device (for example, a **screen lock** that provides extra security). Others depend on your knowledge of safe browsing habits, like knowing when to avoid **public Wi-Fi**. It only takes a minute to review your options and prepare for any mishaps down the road.

Basic security tips



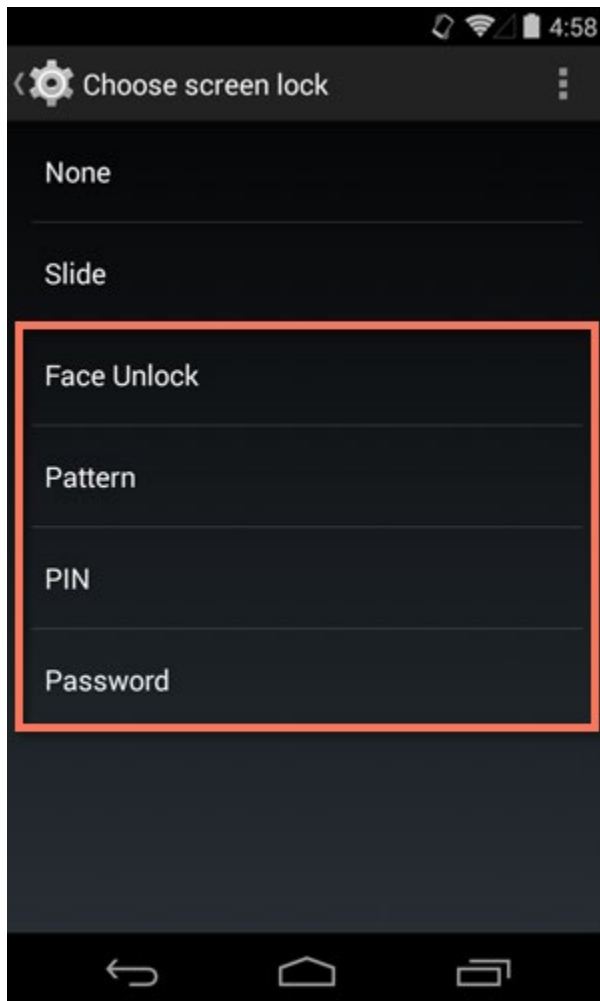
A few basic strategies can go a long way toward protecting your device. Here are some **everyday tips** to help safeguard your information and keep your device safe, secure, and healthy.

- Update your version of **Android** whenever prompted. System updates often contain bug fixes and other improvements that can protect your device from the latest security threats.
- Know how to access your **security settings**. Take some time to review them, and make sure you understand how they work. Everyone's security settings are different—you can usually get to them in your device's **settings**.
- Be careful when **downloading apps**. Many apps in the Play Store are safe, but some may pose a risk to your privacy. Stick to apps you trust, and think carefully about any permissions they require.

Secure screen lock

By default, most devices don't require a **PIN** or **password** to unlock the screen. This means anyone can access your information if you aren't careful—including your email, photos, and text messages.

To help combat this, you can set up a **secure screen lock** using a feature that's already built in to your device. All you have to do is open your **settings**, then look for the option that says **Security** or **Screen Lock**. Your choices may vary depending on your make and model.



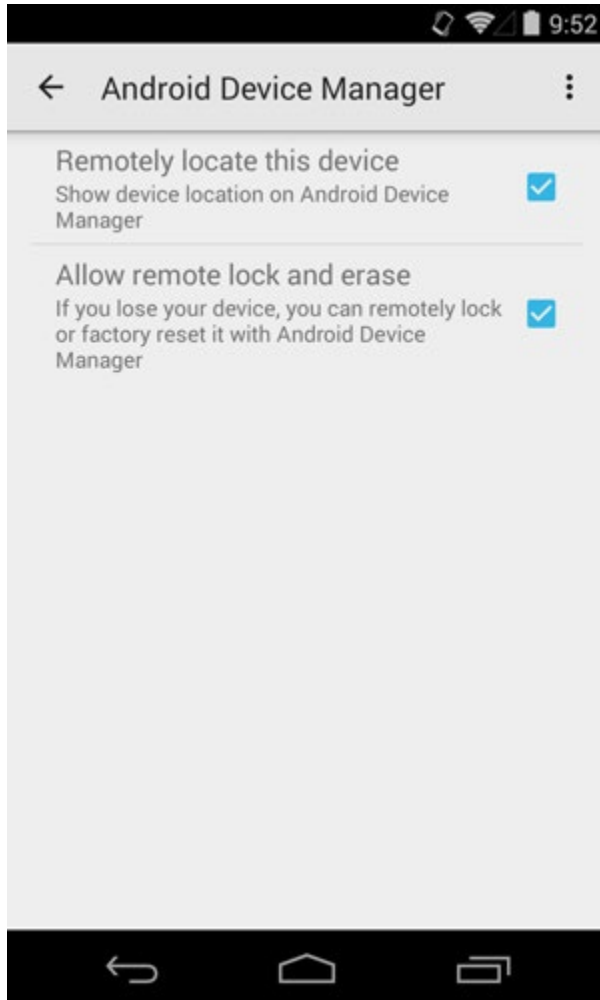
The next time you turn on your device, you'll have to enter the **code** (or pass whatever **security check** you chose) in order to unlock it.



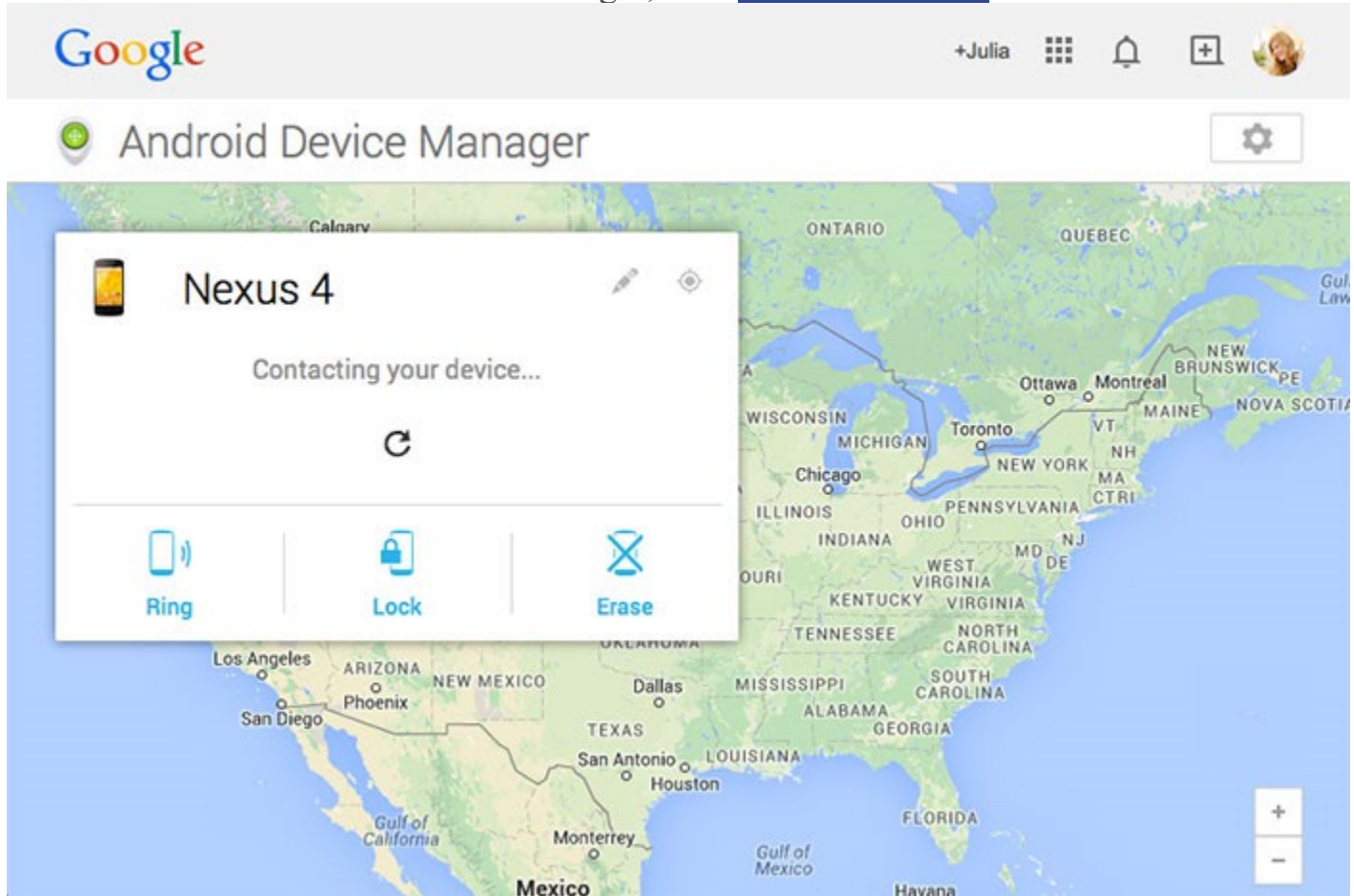
Tracking and remote erase

Hopefully your device is never lost or stolen. If it is, there's a feature called **Android Device Manager** that can help you track it down. You can even use it to erase all of your data remotely, so there's no chance of anyone accessing it.

Android Device Manager must be set up in advance, so we highly recommend doing this now just as a precaution. To get started, open the **Apps** view on your device, then look for **Google Settings**. Next, choose **Android Device Manager**. You can enable or disable two options—one lets you locate your device, and the other lets you lock or erase it remotely.

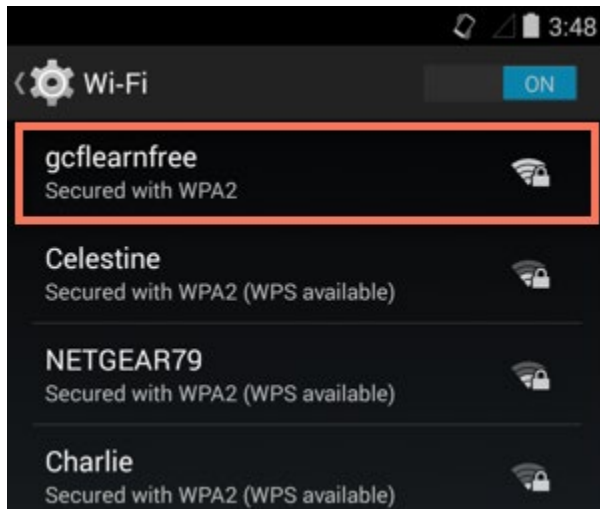


Now you can track or manage your device at google.com/android/devicemanager, the Android Device Manager website. Go ahead and test it out—you'll need to sign into your Google account first. To learn more about Android Device Manager, visit [Google Support](#).



Wi-Fi security

Using Wi-Fi instead of mobile data is one of the best ways to stay connected on your device. However, your privacy and security could be at risk if you aren't careful about the **networks** you use. When connecting to Wi-Fi, consider these tips:



- If you have a **home Wi-Fi** network, make sure it's secure (i.e., you have to enter a password to connect to it). If you don't know how to set this up, try asking a friend, relative, or even your Internet service provider for help.
- Avoid using **public Wi-Fi** for sensitive tasks like online banking or shopping. Even if the network is secure, someone else on the network (for example, a patron at the same coffee shop) could gain access to your activity.
- Never connect to an **unsecured network** (in other words, one that doesn't require a password)—especially an unidentified hotspot in a public place. Criminals sometimes set up rogue networks with common names like "Free Wi-Fi", making it easy for them to access your information.

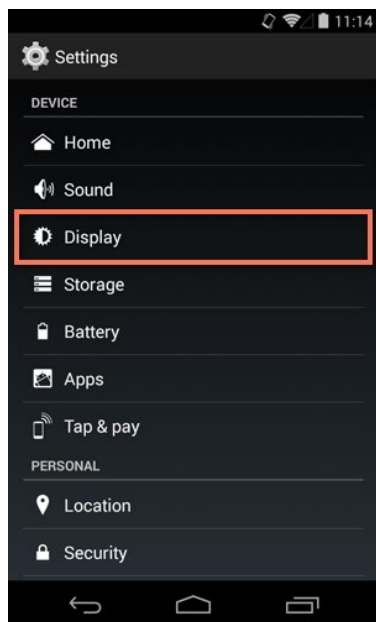
Maintaining your device

Android devices are usually pretty reliable, but there are certain things that can affect your phone or tablet's **performance**. Poor battery life, apps that misbehave—these are just a couple of the most common complaints. With a little know-how, you can easily troubleshoot these issues to keep your device running smoothly.

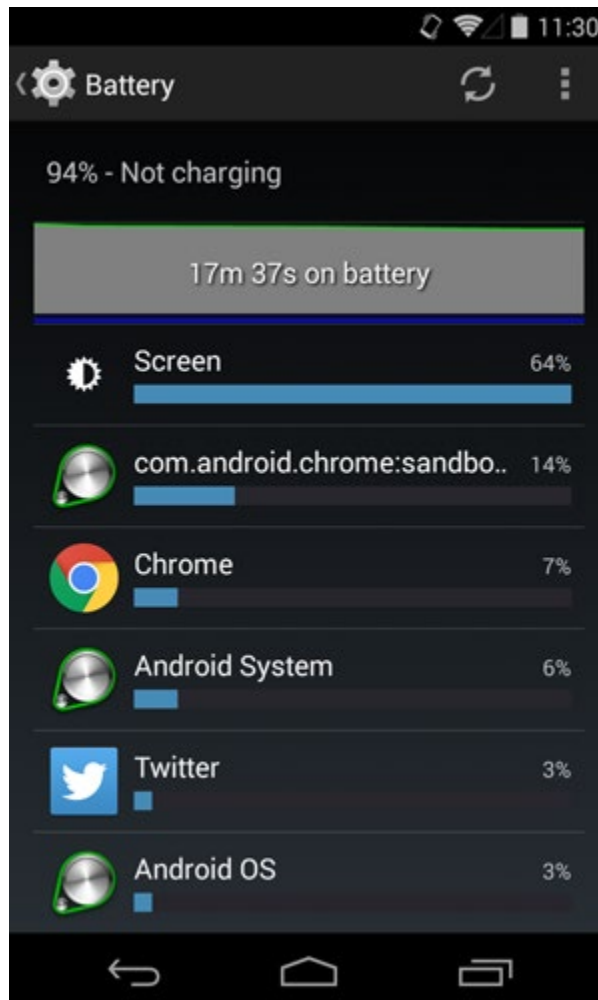
Boosting your battery life

Each device is different, but most of them have a strong enough battery to get you through the day (so you only have to charge at night). If you feel like your battery is getting drained **too quickly**, there are a few simple things you can try.

- Many devices have big, bright screens—which is great for you, but not so great for your battery! Fortunately, reducing your **screen brightness** can help. To access this feature, go to your device's **settings**, then look for **Display**.



- Certain **apps** and **background processes** use more battery than you might think (we'll talk about this more below). To find out what's drawing the most power on your device, go to your **settings**, then tap **Battery**. If you see an app that you hardly use near the top of the list, you might want to uninstall it or attempt to adjust its settings.



There are other more technical things that can put a strain on your battery, including **location reporting** and scanning for nearby **Wi-Fi networks**.

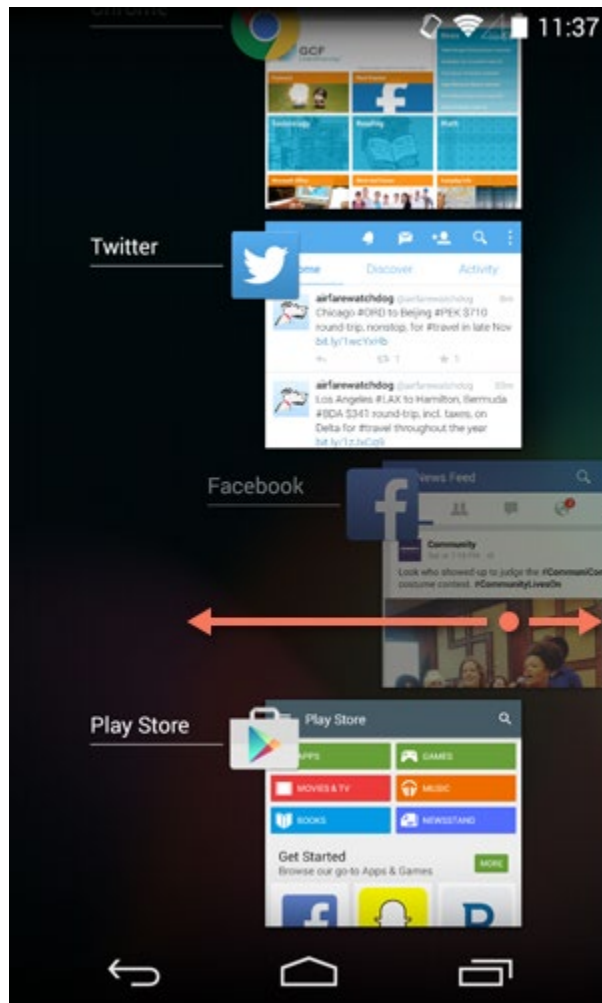
Closing, quitting, and managing apps

There are a couple of reasons you might want to close an app (or quit it as a last resort). For example:

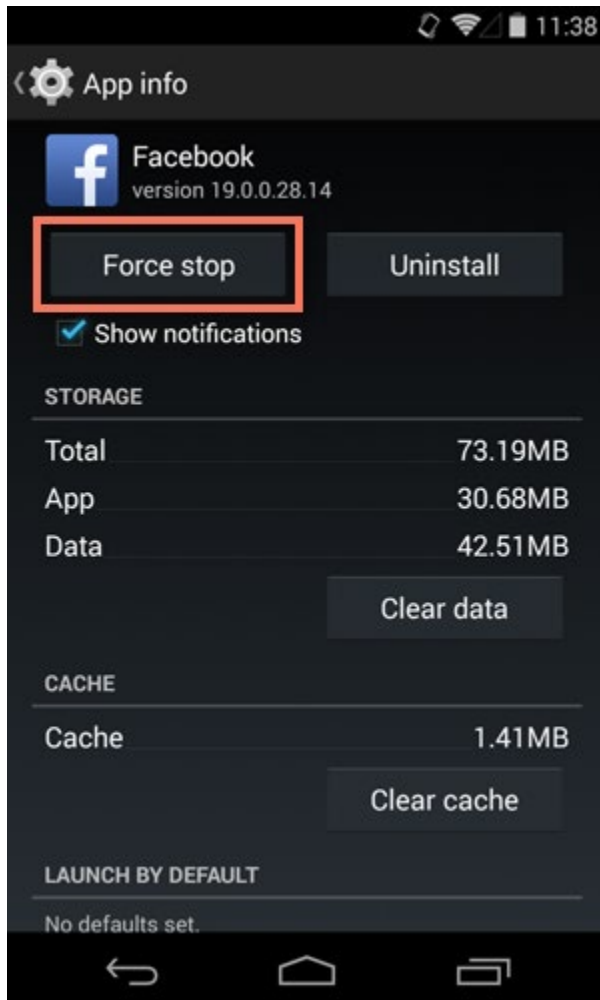
- The app might be **malfunctioning**—maybe it's frozen, or it isn't displaying properly.
- The app is running in the **background** even though you aren't using it, which can put undue strain on your battery.

Many apps are designed to run in the background, so you should be careful about quitting anything important. (For example, email runs continuously so it can check for new messages.) This generally doesn't use much power either. If you're dealing with a true "energy hog", it's better to go into the app and adjust its **settings** or **uninstall** it all together.

To **close** one of your current apps (also known as **swiping**), tap the **Recent Apps** button, then **swipe** the app off the screen. Technically, this doesn't "close" the app—instead, it just stops any current activity that the app is trying to process. This is the first thing you should try if an app is giving you trouble.



To **quit** an app, go to your device's **settings**, then look for **Apps** or **Application Manager**. Next, open the app you're looking for and tap the **Force Stop** button. This will close the app and stop any and all activity (including new messages, notifications, and other activity in the future). In most cases, the app won't start again until you **open** it yourself, but some may restart on their own.



Be careful what you download

Finally, one of the easiest things you can do to keep your device running smoothly is to avoid **suspicious software**. In other words, don't download anything questionable from the **Play Store**. Some apps may contain malware or other power-draining features that can affect your device's performance.

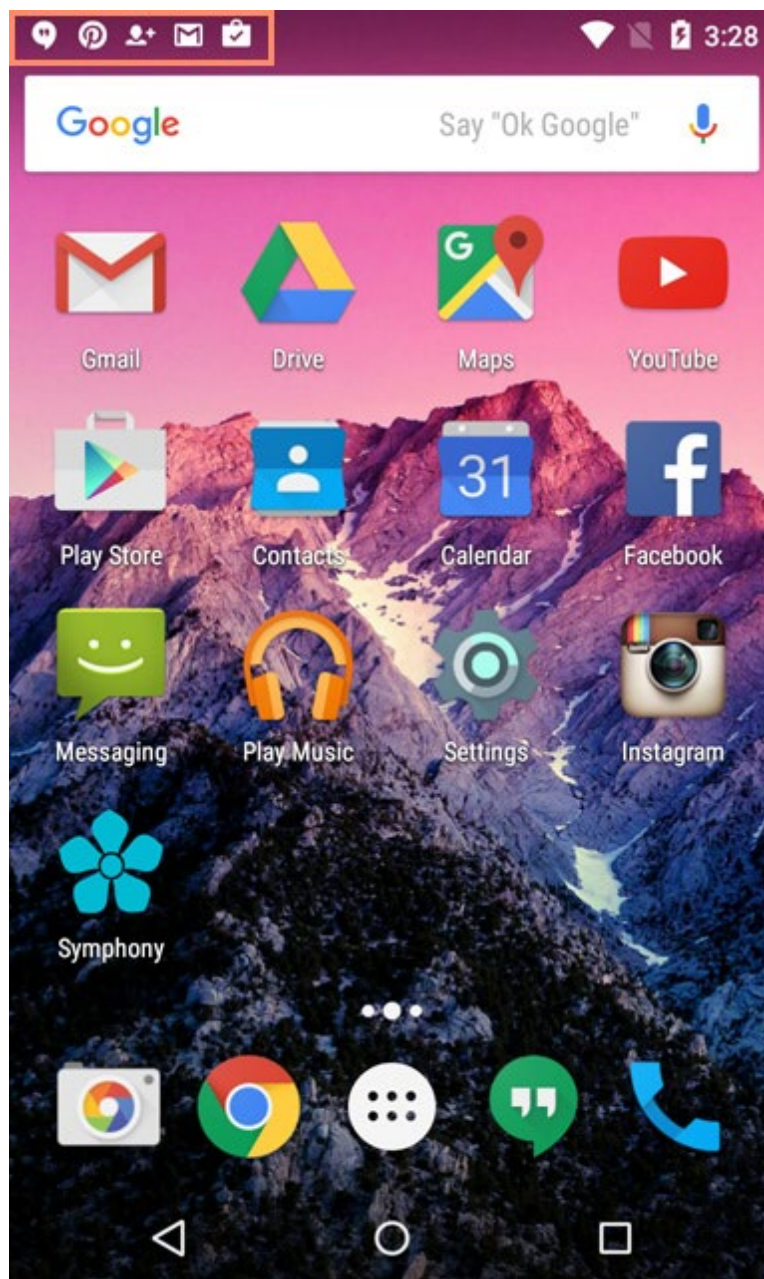
Managing notifications on Android

Notifications alert you to many things on your Android device, including incoming messages, new emails, and calendar events. Notifications work slightly differently for each app, but they're easy to customize. In this lesson, we'll show you how to view and manage notifications and customize your notification settings.

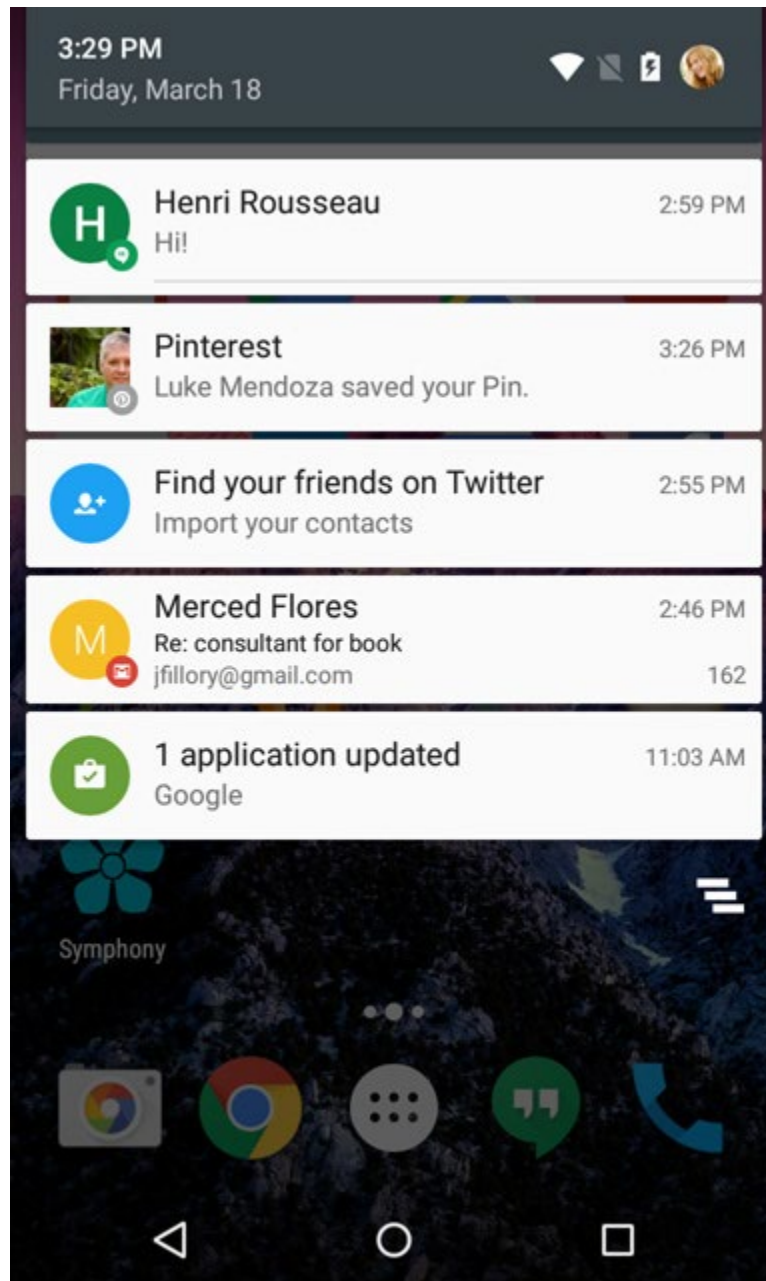
The process for managing notifications may vary depending on which version of Android's operating system your mobile device is running.

Viewing notifications

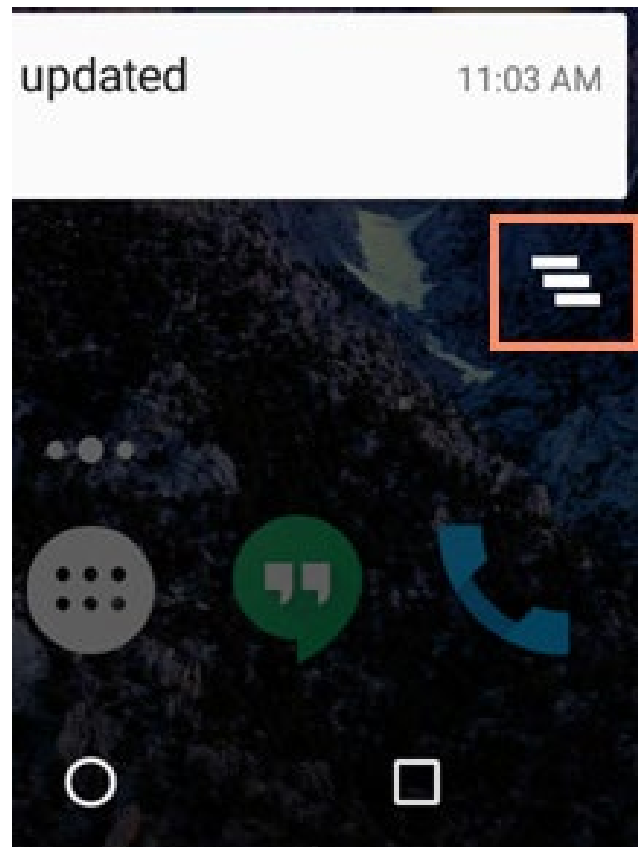
Android displays all of your current notifications in one place. You can see icons for your current notifications in the **notification area** at the top-left of your screen. This can tell you at a glance what types of notifications are awaiting your attention. These icons can show you what type of event they're for or which app they're from.



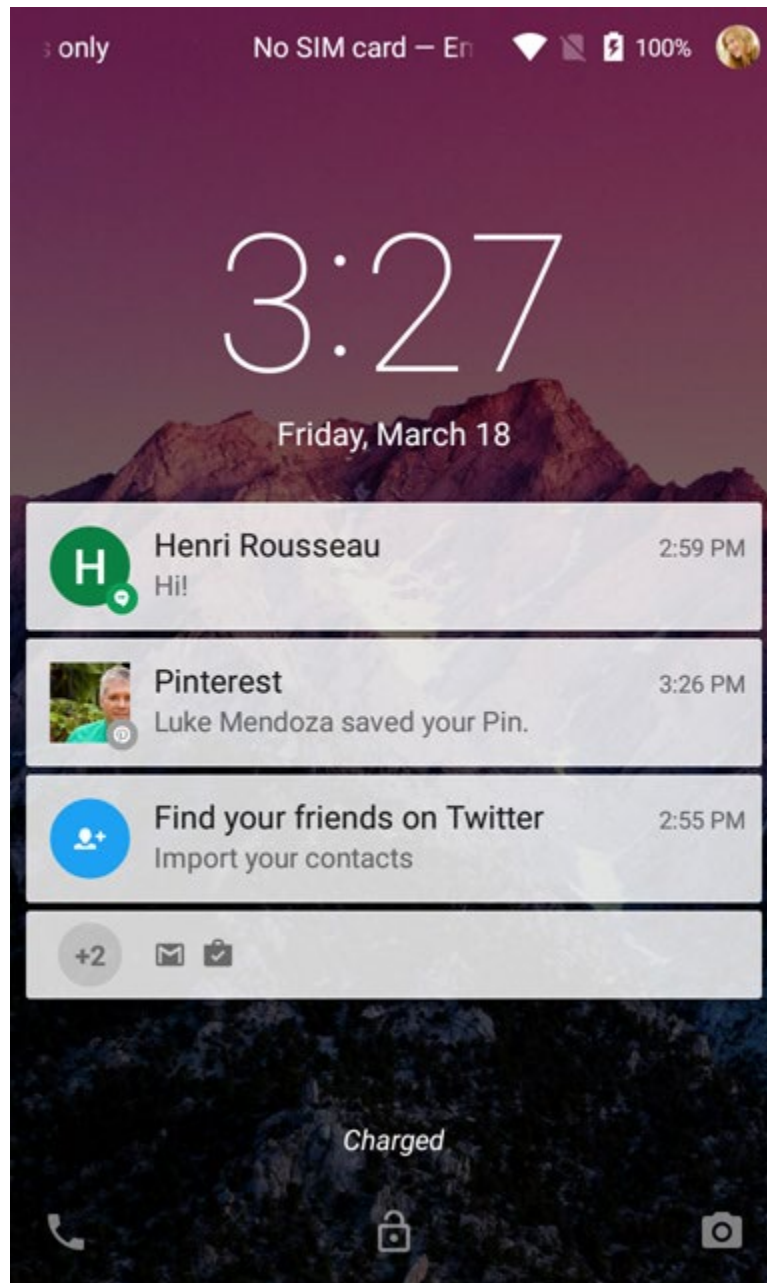
To see more detail about your notifications, swipe down from the top of the screen to open the **notification drawer**. This will show you a list of your current notifications and a little information about each.



You can manage your notifications from the notification drawer. If you tap a notification, the app that sent it will open. To dismiss a notification, touch it and swipe left or right. Tap the **dismiss** icon to dismiss all notifications.



On newer versions of Android, you can manage some notifications from the lock screen. Double-tap a notification to open the app or swipe left or right to dismiss the notification.



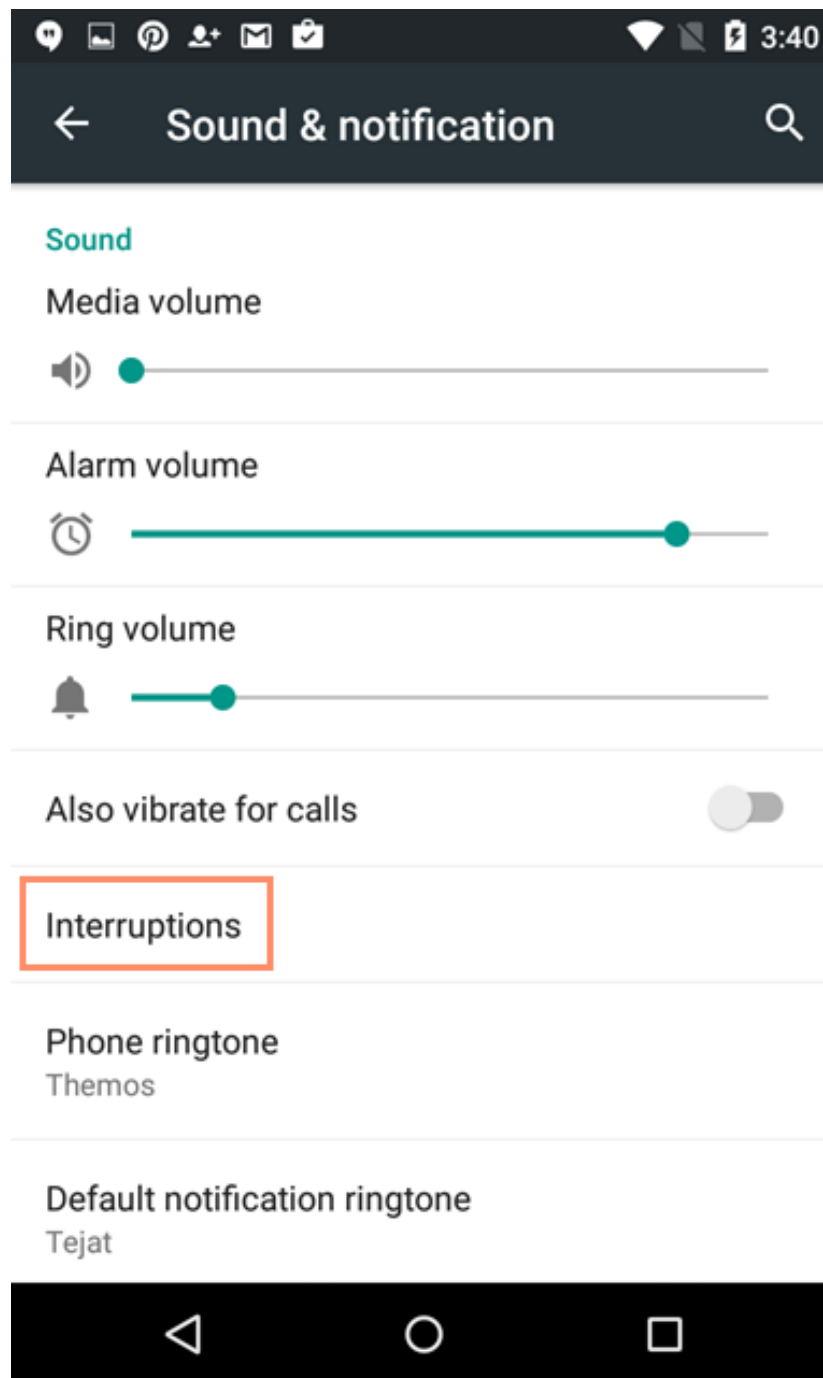
You can disable notifications on the lock screen in the **sounds and notifications** menus in the Settings app.

Notification settings

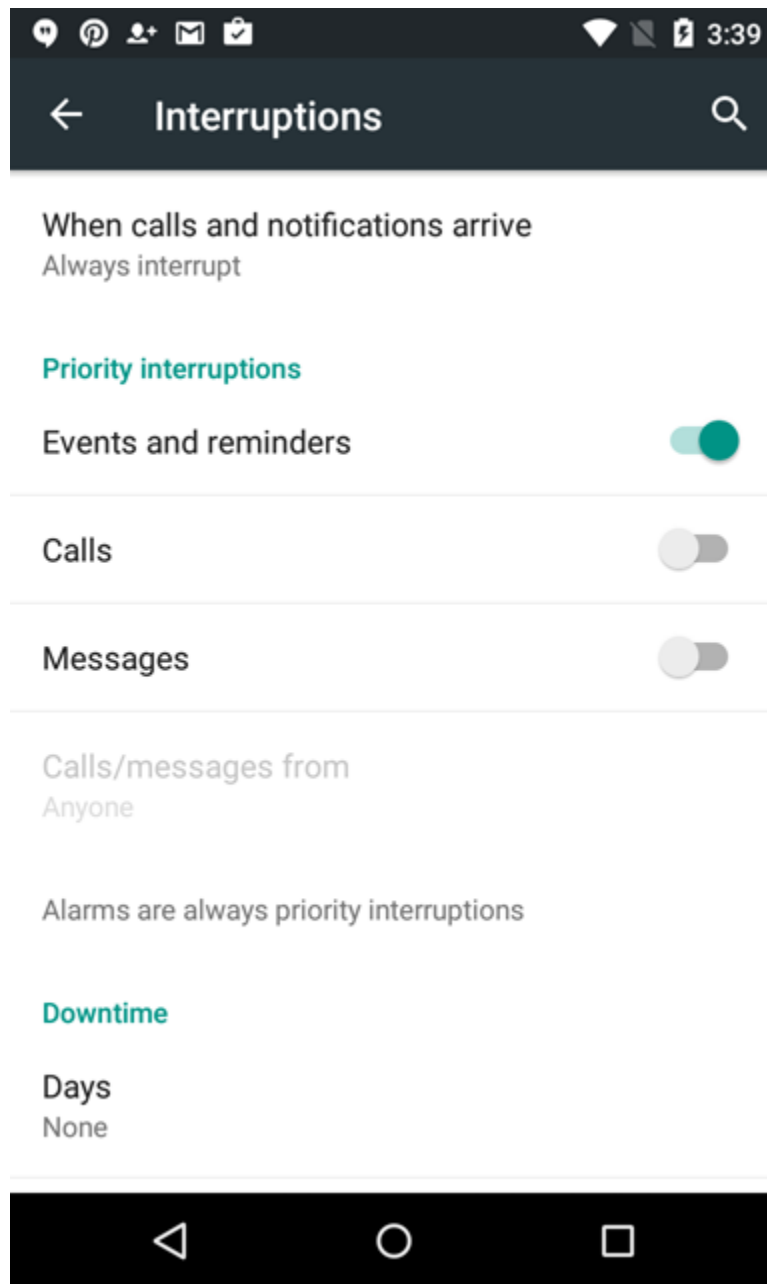
On Android, you can customize your notifications in several ways, including choosing which notifications you receive, when you receive them, and more. Most of these settings can be found in the **sounds and notifications** menus in **Settings**.

Interruptions

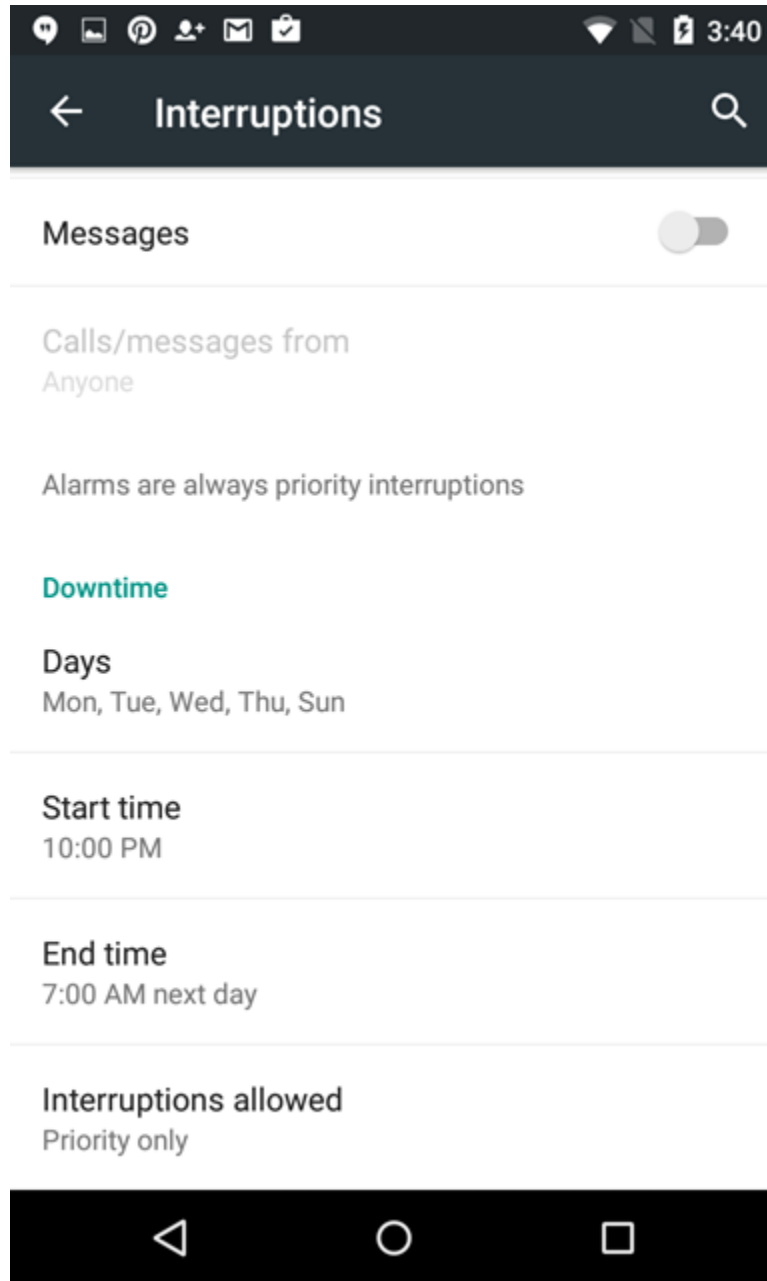
The **Interruptions** menu contains settings for managing when and how you receive notifications. You can find the Interruptions menu in the **Sound** section of the **Sound & Notification** menu.



The **Interruptions** menu lets you choose which notifications will alert you of their arrival with a sound or vibration, rather than being alerted of every notification. To enable this, tap **When calls and notifications arrive**, and select **Allow only priority interruptions**. Then select which kinds of interruptions you would like to alert you. You can also choose to only receive alerts with calls and messages from certain people.

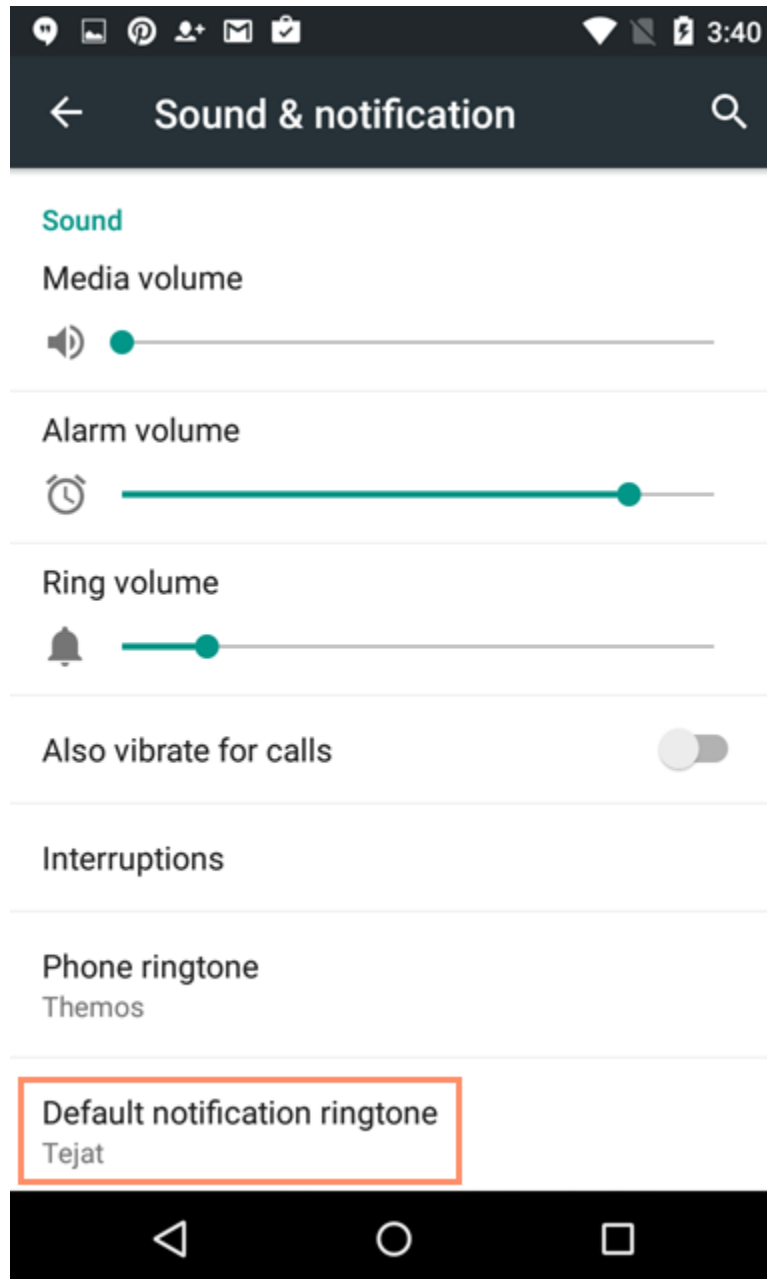


The **Downtime** section allows you to set certain times when you will receive fewer or no notifications. You can select a time range for your downtime and which days of the week will have downtime.



Sounds for notifications

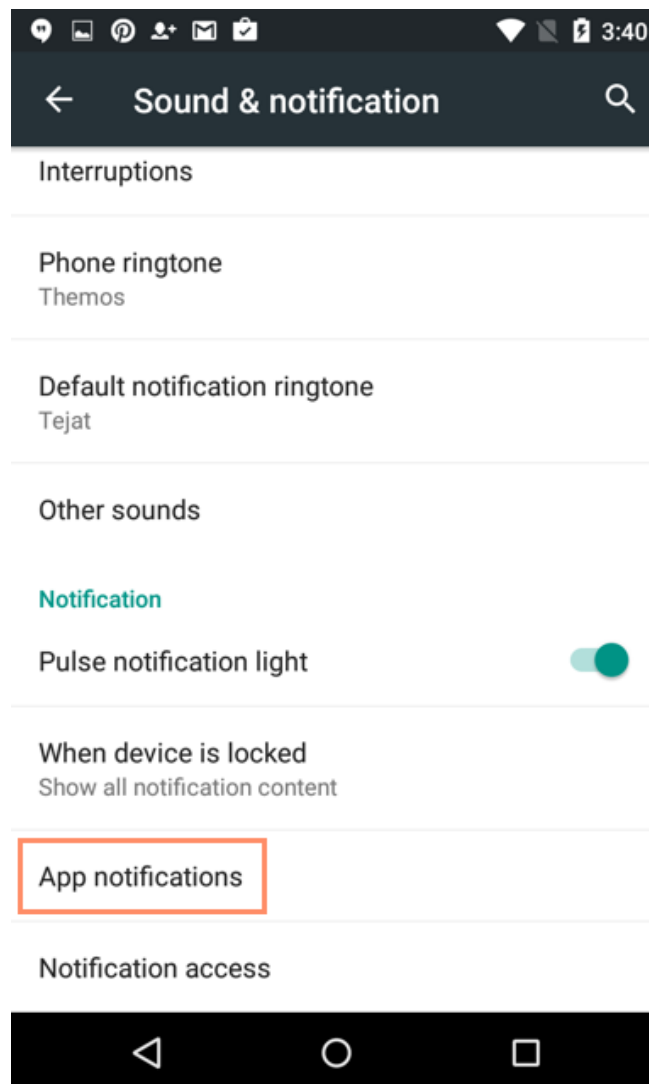
You can select the default sound for notifications in the **Sound & notification** menu by tapping **Default notification ringtone**.



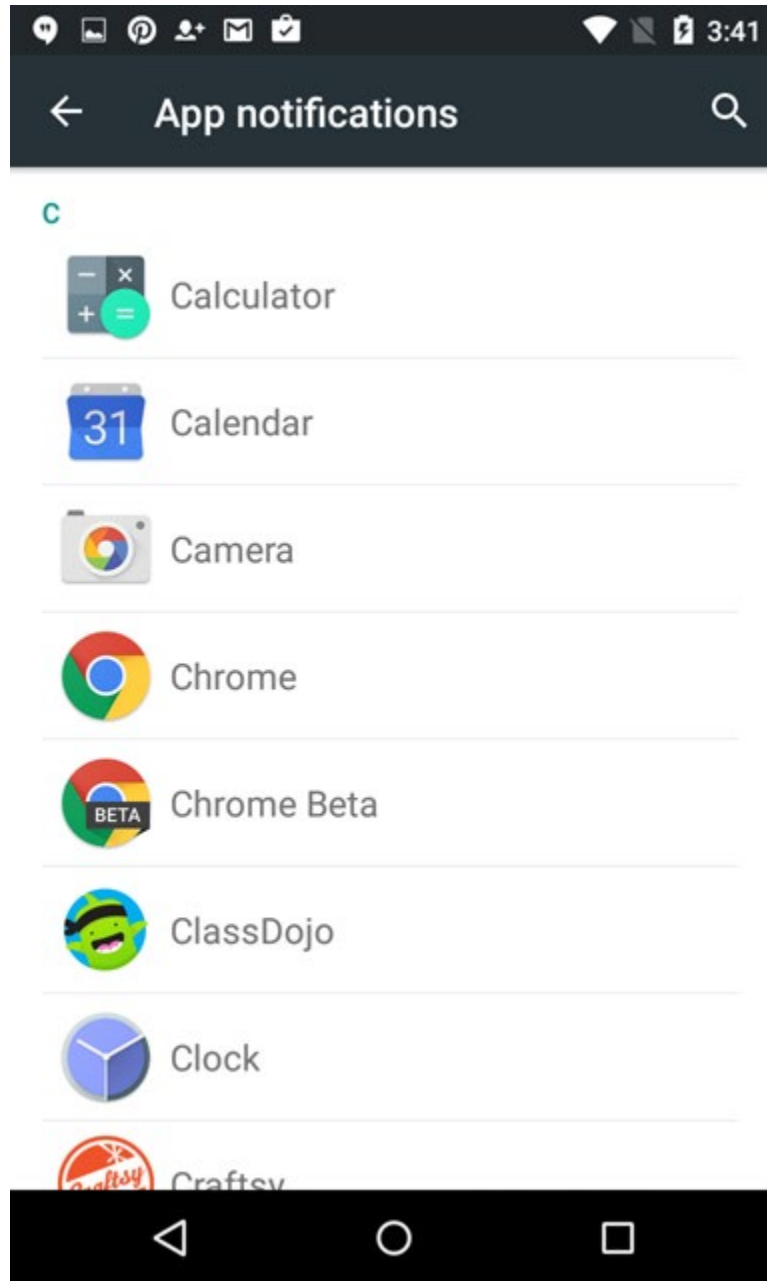
Some apps allow you to customize the sound for notifications from that app. This option can be found in the settings menu within those apps.

App notifications

The **App notifications** menu allows you to customize the notifications you receive from apps. You can find the **Apps notifications** menu in the **Notifications** section of the **Sound & notification** menu.



The Apps notifications menu will list your installed apps. Tap on any app to change its notification settings. You can set it to block notifications from being generated by that app, or to flag this app's notifications as priority notifications.



Some apps have additional notification settings accessible from within the app. This will vary significantly for each app. Some apps don't have any additional notification settings.

More resources

Learning your way around your device can feel overwhelming at times, especially because every Android device is different. Fortunately, there are many **online resources** that can help you learn more. We've compiled some of them below.

Help for your specific device

Looking for help with your specific phone or tablet—and didn't find what you were looking for in our tutorial? There are several strategies that you can try, starting with your manual and manufacturer.

- **Manual:** Your owner's manual can be a great resource if your device came with one. If it didn't, you should find a copy on the **manufacturer's website**. To get there quickly, use one of the **links** below, or try searching the Web (for example, "Samsung Galaxy S5 manual").
- **Manufacturer support:** On the subject of manufacturers, many of them provide their own guides, tutorials, and other types of support. For example, Samsung has several useful tools for the Galaxy S5, including this [setup guide](#). To find out what types of resources your manufacturer offers, go directly to its **support site**.
- **Searching online:** Beyond your manufacturer, there are several places to find help on the **Web**, including message boards, blog articles, and other community-driven sites. If you need help with something specific, try **searching** for it (for example, "Samsung Galaxy S5 won't turn on") to see what you can find.

5 things you didn't know you could do with your smartphone

With each new generation of smartphone capable of doing more than the one before it—and the technology behind them advancing at practically lightning speed—it's difficult to imagine there was ever a time when we just used them to make phone calls. **New features and apps** are hitting the market on a daily basis, making our phones capable of performing tasks for us that we couldn't have imagined 10 years ago. If it's been a while since you browsed for new apps, it might be time to ask yourself **whether you're getting the most out of your smartphone**. Take a look at these **five free apps** and see if there's something new your phone can start doing for you today.

1. Scan documents

Forget the bulky scanner/fax machine combos of the late 1990s. These days, most smartphones sport powerful cameras that let you do much more than snap a few photographs. Apps like Cam Scanner for [iOS](#) and [Android](#) allow you to **turn almost anything you can take a picture of into a PDF**. With this feature, you can keep digital copies of business cards, receipts, and other important documents. You can even share documents via email straight from your phone, or you can send documents to a landline fax machine.

2. Monitor your heart rate

Measure your heart rate, watch every heartbeat with a real-time PPG graph, and monitor your cardio workouts with apps like Instant Heart Rate for [iOS](#) and [Android](#), which uses your phone's camera in a way that's about as far from a document scanner as you can get. It uses the camera to detect color changes in your index finger that are linked directly to your pulse. Apps like these are fun to try even if you're just curious to see how they work, but they can also help you **track your heart health** and stay on top of your **fitness goals**.

3. Track your kids

Giving parents everywhere a little extra peace of mind are **GPS-tracking apps** like Life360's app for [iOS](#) and [Android](#). This app allows family members to stay in touch and let each other know when they've safely arrived at a destination. Users can view the locations of friends and family on a private map, chat one on one, and even track a lost or stolen phone.

4. Use a surface level/tape measure

These practical apps **turn your smartphone into a convenient multi-use tool**. Bubble Level for [iOS](#) and [Android](#) uses your phone's accelerometer (the same thing that rotates the view of your screen when you change the position of your phone) to detect how level a surface is. Using this app is as easy as setting your phone on or against the surface of a given object. And never guess height or distance again with Smart Measure for [Android](#). It uses trigonometry to measure the distance, height, width, and area of a given object. When using the app, all you have to do is point your phone's camera at what you want to measure, then press the shutter as if you were taking a picture.

5. Identify things

Have you ever looked at something and been totally baffled as to what it is or what it does? Has the name for it been on the tip of your tongue, driving you crazy because you can't remember what it's called? Kiss that frustrating struggle goodbye with Google Lens for [Android](#) and [iOS](#) (iOS users can access the feature through the Google Photos app). Just snap a picture of a product, painting, barcode, famous landmark, or popular image. If Google can match your picture to something in its database, it will provide you with useful information. You can even use it to translate by taking a picture of text in a foreign language.

These are just a few of the seemingly countless apps available for smartphones today, and more are being developed all the time. With so many apps available for free, trying out a few new ways to use your smartphone is both easy and fun.

10 everyday uses for your phone's camera

Most mobile phones have built-in cameras, and their image quality is getting better and better. They're also convenient because people keep their phones with them wherever they go. Because of this, the built-in camera is actually a really useful tool—not just for snapshots, but also for **scanning documents** and **recording almost any type of information** you want to remember.

Here are 10 situations in which a camera phone is useful.

1. Nutrition Facts labels

If you're keeping track of calories or other nutritional information, it may be easier to take a picture of the labels and then write everything down at the end of the day. You can find this information on boxes, restaurant menus, or online.



2. Comparing prices

When you're out shopping, you may want to compare prices at different stores. Just take a picture of the item's price, and try to include the item itself in the photo. The price isn't the only thing that matters; if one store sells a pack of 48 plastic cups and another store sells a pack of 96, you'll need to include this information in the photo so you can make an accurate comparison.

3. Product dimensions

If you're shopping for furniture, shelves, or appliances, it's best to measure the space before going to the store. But if you forget to do this, you can take a picture of the item's dimensions (on the front or back of the box), then measure the space when you get home. This is usually easier than buying it and having to return it if it isn't right, especially if it is large or heavy.

4. Parking lots

If you've parked at an airport or the mall, you might forget where your car is. Right after you park, take a picture of your car, and be sure to include an identifying feature like a sign or a building. When you're looking for your car, the photo can help jog your memory. Similarly, if you're visiting another city, you can take a picture of the street signs near your hotel so it's easier to find after a long day of sightseeing.



5. Car accidents

If you're involved in a car accident, it's a good idea to take pictures of your car and all other cars that were involved. If there is a dispute about who's at fault, the photos may help support your side of the story.

6. Scanning documents

You don't need a scanner to keep a record of documents. If your phone has a good camera, you can just take pictures of tax forms, bills, letters, and other documents. Even if the quality isn't perfect, it still may be good enough to read small text. For higher quality, keep the papers as flat as possible by putting them on a table or floor.

7. Rental cars

Most rental car companies require you to return the car with the same amount of gas in the tank (or more) to avoid extra fees. They'll give you a document that shows the current fuel level, but it's easy to misplace it. The first time you start the car, take a picture of the gas gauge. You can then check the photo before refueling the car.

8. Confirmation numbers

If you're buying tickets online for a movie, concert, or baseball game, you may need to bring your confirmation number to the ticket window. If you take a picture of the confirmation number on your computer screen, you won't have to worry about bringing it with you.

9. Making repairs

If you've ever taken something apart to repair it, you know that the hardest part is putting it back together. Before you start disassembling something, take a photo of it, and if necessary take more photos as you take it apart. Later, when you forget which part goes where, you'll be glad you have the photos to remind you.

Note: Do not take apart any electrical appliance or device unless you know how to do it safely. Electric shocks can cause injury or death.

10. Saving evidence

Remember that Twilight Zone episode where William Shatner (or John Lithgow in the movie version) sees a gremlin on the wing of the airplane and no one believes him? A camera phone would have been helpful in that situation. If you're telling your friends about something unbelievable that happened (for example, catching a really big fish), it's nice to have proof. Take several photos, just in case your friends are still skeptical.

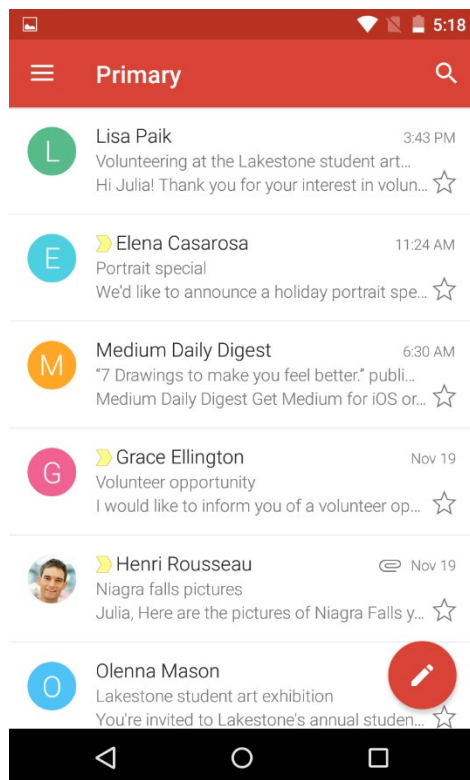
With all of these tips, you'll have better luck if you know the basics of taking photos.

Getting started with the Gmail app

The Gmail app is the default mail app for many Android smartphones. While it appears different from the Gmail web interface, it still has most of the same features. The Gmail app automatically connects to the Google account you associate with your Android device, so it's ready to use as soon as you open it.

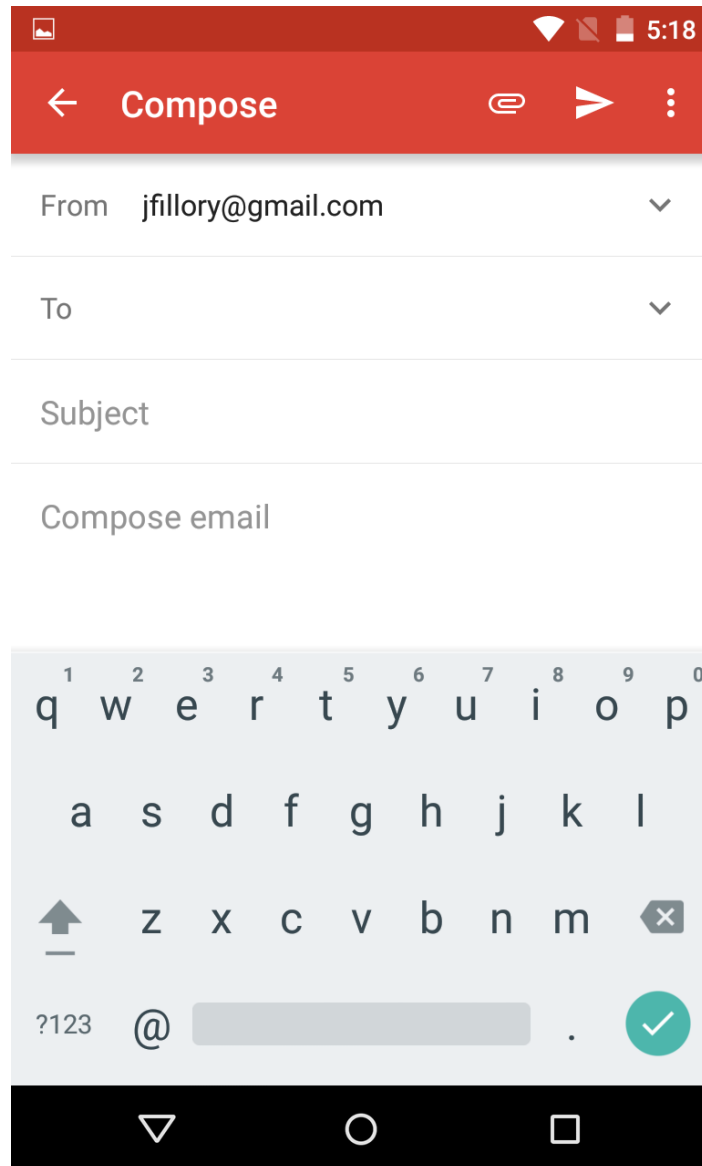
The inbox

The inbox serves as the main page from which you can navigate to other features in the Gmail app. Inbox view has three buttons to access these features: the **menu** button, **search** button, and **compose** button. You can also tap any email to view it.



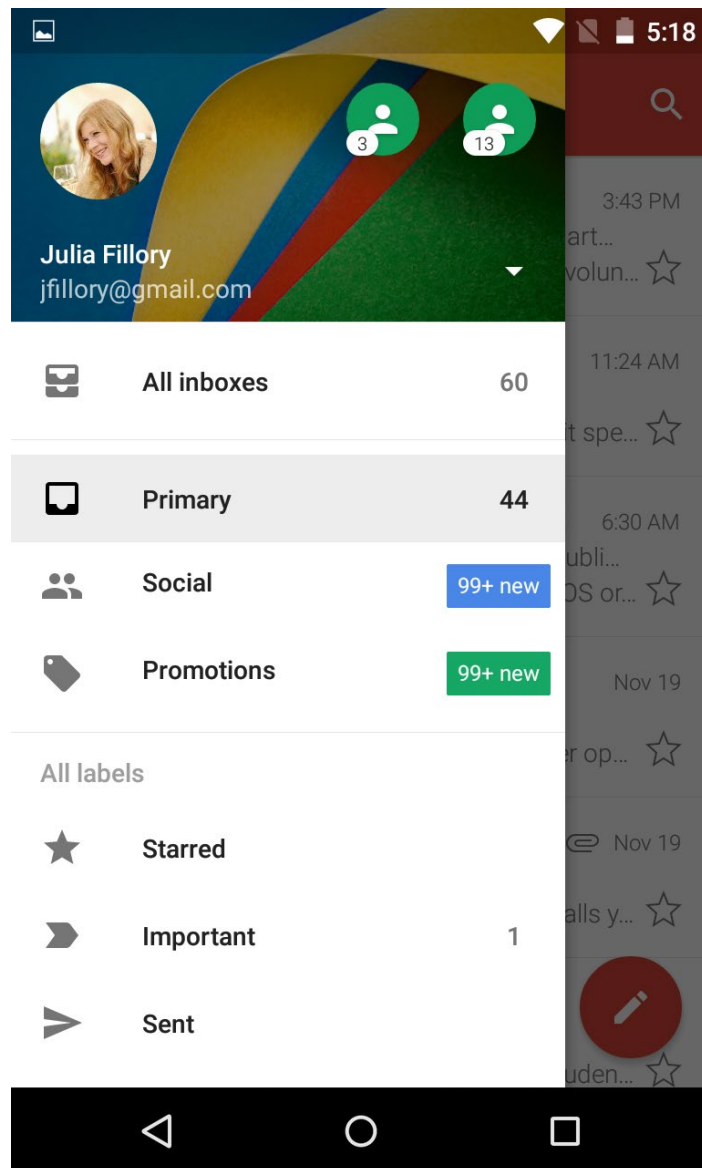
Compose

The **compose** button will open a new email draft. The app will save your draft as you write it. You can tap the paperclip icon to attach a file and the chevron icon to send an email. Note that there are no font formatting options in the app, but it will display formatting in saved emails.



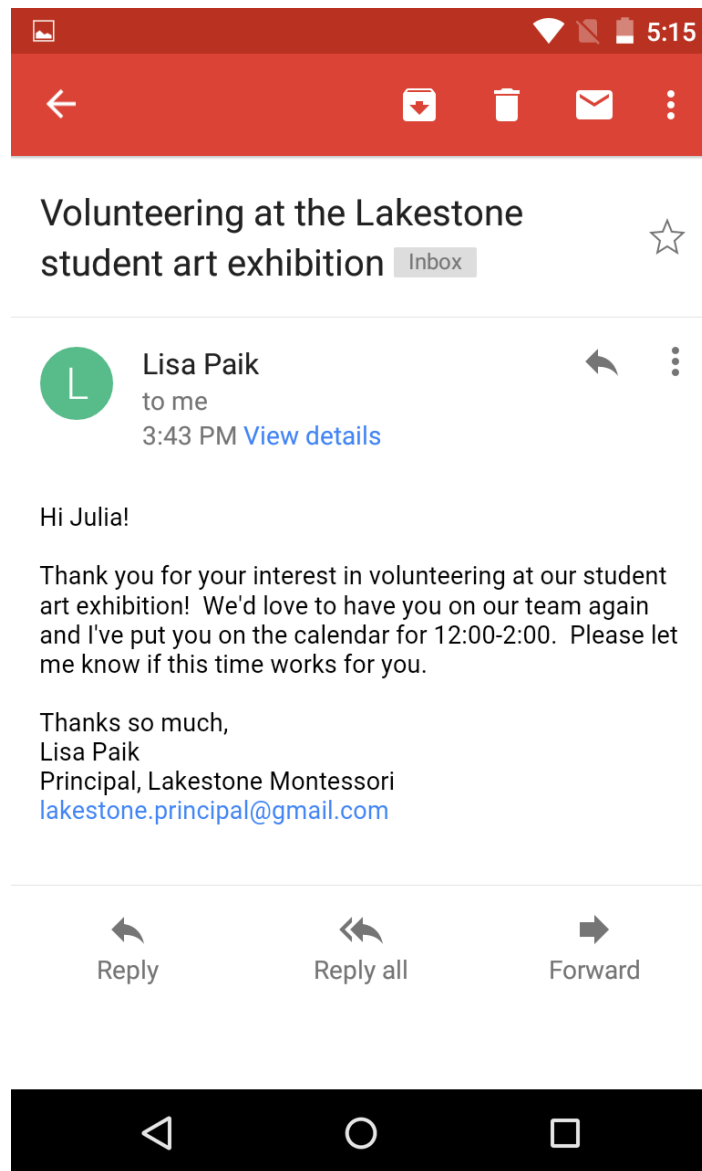
The menu

The **menu** pane allows you to select a different **category** or **label** to view, switch accounts, and access app settings. By default, the inbox shows the **Primary category**, which excludes promotional emails and notifications from social media. Tapping a different category or label on the menu will switch to that view.

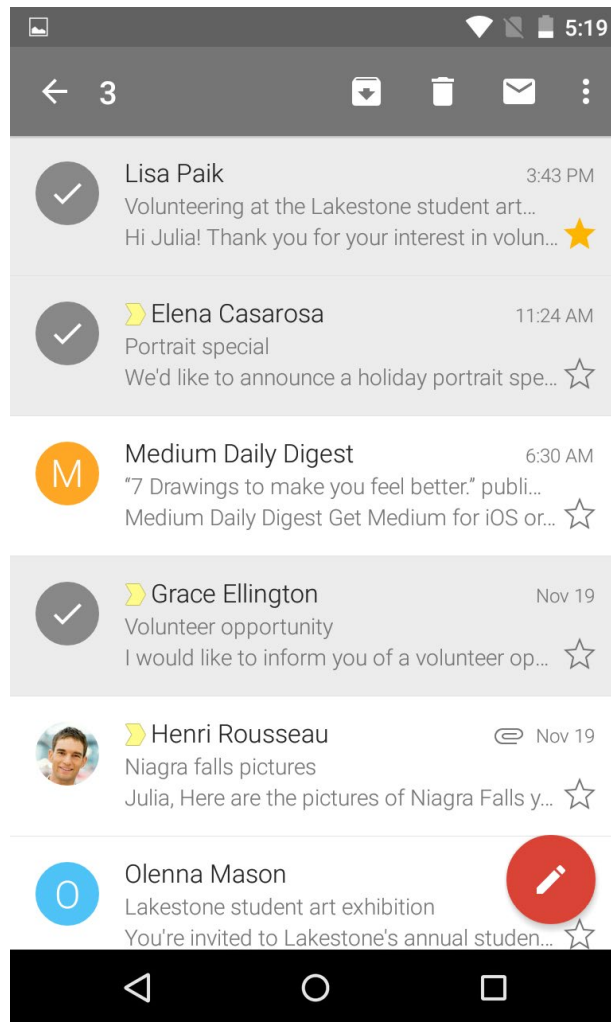


Viewing and managing email

From the **inbox**, tap an email to open it. Below the email are commands to **reply** or **forward**. Above the email are commands to **archive**, **delete**, or **mark as unread**. Tap either of the three vertical dot icons—called the **overflow menus**—to open menus with more commands. The arrow in the top-left of the screen will return you to the inbox.



From the **inbox** view, you can select emails by tapping the icons on the left side of the list. Commands will appear at the top of the screen just like in the open email view, which you can apply to all of the selected emails. For example, you could use this method to delete several emails at once.



Other tasks

You can do many other things with the Gmail app. Search Google's support pages

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