

# **Make Your iPhone Run Its Best By Changing These iOS 15 Settings**

There's a few things you can do to get more from your iPhone, no matter the model.

Changing these settings can help you get the most out of your iPhone.

Do you have an iPhone 13 or iPhone 12? What about an iPhone 11, iPhone XR or even the iPhone 7? Each of Apple's iPhone models slightly differ from the other, but most of them run iOS 15 -- Apple's latest major mobile software update. The tech giant's mobile OS rolled out last year, and has seen subsequent minor updates. iOS 15.1 brought bug fixes, Apple SharePlay support and the ability to store your vaccine card on your iPhone, while iOS 15.2 introduced App Privacy Reports. Now, the iOS 15.4 developer's beta brings Face ID while wearing a mask.

If your iPhone is running iOS 15, you might want to jump right into using some of the more popular features, like SharePlay in FaceTime or text recognition in your camera, but there are many important settings that you should consider changing.

Below, we'll take you through the steps to configure these settings that could make your iPhone even better. If you're looking for more about the latest from Apple, check out all the rumors we've heard so far about the iPhone SE 3 and iPhone 14.

This incoming call alert isn't ideal for everyone.

### **1. Bring back full-screen incoming call alerts**

Prior to last year's iOS 14 update, the incoming call screen would take over your entire display when your iPhone is unlocked and being used. It's disruptive, sure, but it also got the job done.

Starting with iOS 14, however, Apple changed the incoming call prompt to look more like a typical alert. That is, a small notification that shows up near the top of the screen when you're using your phone. On more than one occasion I've nearly missed a call because I dismissed the alert as yet another annoying notification that didn't immediately need my attention.

To get the more attention-grabbing full-screen alerts back, go to **Settings > Phone > Incoming Calls** and tap **Full Screen**.

### **2. Change Siri's voice**

Siri gained two new voices when iOS 14.5 debuted last year. And for the first time ever, Siri no longer defaults to a female's voice. Instead, the first time you set up a new device you'll be asked which Siri voice you want to

use. Once you make your selection, Apple will change Siri's voice across all of the devices linked to your Apple ID. It's pretty slick.

You can check out the voice options by going to **Settings > Siri & Search > Siri Voice**. To learn more, check out our complete guide to changing Siri's sound.

5G is nice, if you have access to it, but it can also be a battery hog.

### **3. Turn off 5G coverage you don't want or have**

Apple touts a Smart Data feature that's specific to its 5G phones (the iPhone 12 and iPhone 13 lines) that will automatically switch between 4G LTE and 5G networks -- without you having to know or do a thing -- based on how you're using your device. The automatic switch is part of an effort to improve battery life. However, you may find that your iPhone's battery drains faster than it did before. If you don't want to sacrifice battery life for faster 5G speeds, shut it down. You can always turn 5G back on when you want it, or when service in your area improves.

To turn off 5G on your iPhone 12 or iPhone 13, forcing it to always use 4G LTE even if you have 5G coverage, open the **Settings** app then go to **Cellular > Cellular Data Options > Voice & Data** and tap **LTE**.

Alternatively, if you want your iPhone to exclusively use a 5G connection when available, you can select **5G On**.

#### **4. Fine-tune how much data is used on a 5G connection**

If you're happy with 5G performance, here's a network-related setting you should check out. Go to **Settings > Cellular > Cellular Data**

**Options > Data Mode** where you'll find three different options: Allow more data on 5G, Standard and Low Data Mode.

Even though there are brief descriptions below the three different settings, they don't paint a complete picture for the first option. According to an Apple support document, allowing more data on 5G will give you high-quality video and FaceTime calls, and it also means that your phone can download software updates, stream high-definition Apple TV and Apple Music content, and allows third-party developers to also improve their respective apps.

The default setting on this page will depend on your carrier and your data plan, so it's a good idea to check your iPhone and make sure it's set to your preference.

You can unlock your iPhone with your Apple Watch if Face ID isn't working.

#### **5. Unlock your phone while wearing a face mask**

One of the frustrating aspects of wearing a face-covering in public while using an iPhone that has Apple's Face ID tech built-in has been the inability

to unlock the phone. Because half of your face is covered, Face ID just doesn't work. And entering your passcode to unlock your phone works, but it's not as convenient.

Conveniently, you now have the option to turn on a face unlock feature that makes it super easy to unlock your iPhone when your face is covered -- as long as you own an Apple Watch.

Once both devices are updated, open the **Settings** app on your iPhone and then open the **Face ID & Passcode** option. Scroll down until you find the **Unlock with Apple Watch** section (you must be connected to an Apple Watch for the setting to appear), where you can turn on the feature for any watches linked to your iPhone. It's pretty awesome.

## **6. Move the address bar in Safari back to its original spot**

Apple moved the address bar in Safari to the bottom of the screen by default in iOS 15. This should theoretically feel more natural since it's closer to the keyboard and where you typically place your thumbs. But it can be off-putting since many people are used to seeing the URL bar near the top of the screen, as is the case on laptops.

You can change this by opening **Settings**, tapping **Safari**, and choosing the **Single Tab** option under the Tabs subheading.

## **7. Organize your alerts with a notification summary**

Apple wants to help you manage your notifications in iOS 15, starting with the Notification Summary feature. Rather than letting notifications pile up on your home screen, you can schedule non-urgent alerts to arrive in a bundle at a specific time of day. Important notifications like calls, direct messages and other time-sensitive alerts (like the status of your Uber or Lyft ride for example) will still appear immediately.

To try this out, open **Settings**, press **Notifications**, and tap **Scheduled Summary**.

You can decide which features you want to access when your phone is locked.

## **8. Customize the features you can use when your iPhone is locked**

There are times when you might need to have certain information handy even when your phone is locked. That's why Apple allows you to enable some features without having to unlock your device. These include the notification center, Control Center, ability to reply to messages and the Wallet app, among others.

Customize the features you'd like to access on the lock screen by launching the **Settings** menu, tap **Face ID & Passcode** and enter your passcode

when prompted. Scroll down until you see the **Allow Access When Locked** section, and toggle the sliders based on your preferences.

You no longer have to use Safari or Mail as your default iPhone apps.

## **9. Set your favorite email app or web browser as your default**

It's been a long time coming, but 2020's iOS 14 update finally brought the ability to choose your own default apps -- at least for email and web browsing. That means when you tap a link or a button for sending an email, your iPhone will automatically launch the web browser or email provider of your choosing rather than Safari or Mail.

To get started, open the **Settings** menu and select the app you'd like to set as a default (e.g., Google Chrome, Outlook, etc.). You should then see a button that says **Default Mail App** or **Default Browser App**. Tap that option and select the app of your choosing instead of Safari or Mail.

## **10. Show full notifications on your lock screen**

The first time you experience Apple's Face ID tech, you'll notice that you can't see the content of new alerts and notifications on the lock screen. For example, instead of seeing who sent you a text message and what it says, you'll only see a generic Messages alert.

By default, all iPhones with Apple's Face ID tech will hide the content of an alert until you pick up your phone and unlock it by looking at it. It's a

privacy feature that I rather enjoy, but I also get how it can be annoying (and have heard a few complaints from readers and family members alike).

You can change how notifications appear on your lock screen by going to **Settings > Notifications > Show Previews** and select **Always**.

Conversely, you can select **Never** if you want to keep the content of your notifications always hidden on the lock screen.

HDR video looks great, but it doesn't work everywhere yet.

### **11. You might want to turn off this camera feature... for now**

Phones in the iPhone 12 and iPhone 13 lineup can record HDR -- or high dynamic range -- video with Dolby Vision. All that jargon means your videos will be brighter with more accurate colors and improved contrast. Sounds awesome, right? It is. But there's a problem -- not every app or service will work with HDR video.

Developers will need to update their app(s) in order to accept HDR video, but even then, the person viewing the video will need a capable device to see the HDR difference. For Apple devices, that includes the iPhone 8 or newer, the 2020 iPad Air, second-generation iPad Pro and some Macs.

So, what can you do? Well, you have a few options:

- You can turn off HDR video by going to **Settings > Camera > Record video** and turn the switch next



to **HDR Video** to the *Off* position. Going forward, all videos will be captured in standard dynamic range, and you won't have any issues sharing or editing it.

- Leave **HDR Video** turned on, but when you want to share the video with, say, Facebook, use the Photos app instead of going into the Facebook app and uploading it there. By using the Photos app, your iPhone will automatically convert the video to SDR and upload it. When you send the video to another iPhone user, Apple will detect if their iPhone, iPad or Mac is compatible with HDR Dolby Vision. If it's not, Apple will convert the video automatically.
- If you leave **HDR Video** on and need to edit your video, you can use Apple's iMovie app or the Photos app that's built into your iPhone. You can even use iMovie to export the video as SDR if needed.

Customize your home screen on iOS 14 and the iPhone 12.

## **12. Avoid home screen app clutter**

Since the release of iOS 14 in 2020, iPhone users have more options and control over what their home screen looks like than ever before. The App Library, for example, acts as an app drawer, allowing you to remove apps from your home screen without deleting them. Heck, you can even fully

customize your phone's look with different app icons and widgets -- it's very Android-like, and there's nothing wrong with that.

If you like the minimal look, then you'll want to make sure that newly installed apps aren't automatically placed on your home screen every time you download an app. Or, on the flip side, if you don't want new apps to go directly to the App Library where you're sure to forget about their existence after a day or two, go to **Settings > Home Screen** and select either **Add to Home Screen** or **App Library Only**.

On an iPhone with 3D Touch, you can use a third-party app to play longer duration "Live" photos on your lock screen.

### **13. Use fancy wallpapers**

Another home screen tweak you should make involves your wallpaper or background. Apple has added some new wallpapers of its own in recent updates, with a pretty cool twist.

Open the **Settings** app on your iPhone and select **Wallpaper** from the list. Make sure the switch, labeled "Dark Appearance Dims Wallpaper," below the two thumbnail previews of your wallpaper is turned on. Now, tap **Choose a new wallpaper** and select either Stills or Live. See the circle near the bottom of each wallpaper? It's half black, half white.

That circle means that the wallpaper has a light and dark mode version and will change automatically based on the system status of your phone.

You can also set live wallpapers as your background if you're not sold on dark and light mode.

Dark Mode on the iPhone sure looks good.

#### **14. Turn on dark mode. You won't regret it**

Speaking of dark mode, if you don't want to have to repeatedly adjust your screen's brightness, you can use your phone's dedicated dark mode that's been proven to save on battery life. Dark mode converts all of the white backgrounds in apps to, more often than not, a black background. In turn, your phone is able to save battery power thanks to the darker colors.

Turn it on by going to **Settings > Display & Brightness** and selecting the **Dark** option at the top of the screen.

Apple's apps will automatically switch to a dark color scheme and most third-party apps have also adopted the feature.

Apple has put all of its privacy controls in one place.

#### **15. Set up a Focus to manage your notifications**

We get a lot of notifications every day, but not all of them are relevant all the time. With iOS 15, Apple introduced a new feature to address this called

Focus Mode. Think of it as a sort of custom Do Not Disturb, but tailored to specific circumstances.

This allows notifications from important people and apps to come through so that you don't miss anything, while blocking out less relevant alerts. You can set up different types of Focus modes for specific circumstances. Apple currently offers options for Do Not Disturb, personal, sleep, work, driving, fitness, gaming, mindfulness and reading, but you can also create your own custom mode. You can schedule Focus modes so that they turn on automatically when needed, and display a status in apps so that others know when you have notifications silenced.

To get started, open the **Settings** menu, tap **Focus**, and choose one of the available options to set up your notification preferences. Tap the **plus (+) symbol** in the top right corner to add a new Focus.

## **16. Make screen text easier to read**

With a couple of taps on your iPhone's screen, you can adjust the font size to make it easier to read. Open **Settings** and go to **Display & Brightness > Text Size** where you can use the slider until you're happy with the font size.

For a little added oomph, you can turn on **Bold Text** (it's just below the Text Size button).

Face ID doesn't always get it right.

### **17. Add an alternate appearance to Face ID**

Apple's facial recognition feature, Face ID, constantly learns and relearns different aspects of your face with each scan. If you're struggling to get Face ID to consistently recognize you, try the **Alternate Appearance** option.

Go to **Settings > Face ID & Passcode >** enter your PIN **> Set Up An Alternate Appearance** and go through the process of enrolling your face again.

Keep your screen dim to save battery life.

### **18. Disable auto brightness for longer battery life**

Your iPhone's screen brightness level can have a big impact on battery life.

By default, iOS will automatically adjust the display's brightness based on how much light the ambient sensor detects. But if you want to take complete control, you can disable auto-brightness, meaning whatever you set the brightness level at is where it will stay until you adjust it again.

Open **Settings > Accessibility > Display & Text Size** and at the bottom of the page, you'll find a switch to turn off **Auto-Brightness**.

Now, whenever you want to adjust your screen, you can do so by opening Control Center with a swipe up from the bottom of the screen on a device

with a home button, or a swipe down from the top-right corner on newer iPhones.

## **19. Triage your privacy settings**

The first time you set up a phone and all of your apps, you're bombarded with prompts asking for permissions to access personal information ranging from tracking your location to your Apple Health information or your camera roll. It's far too easy to get in the habit of approving everything just so you can use the app, but take a few minutes and go through your privacy settings and tailor what each app can and can't see. We walk you through the process in two quick steps.

Control Center has a lot of potential, you just have to customize it.

## **20. Control Center puts everything a tap and swipe away**

Control Center is a convenient spot to quickly change songs, turn on airplane mode, connect to Wi-Fi or start a timer, but there's so much more to it than that. You can quickly turn your flashlight on, check on a timer or start recording your screen with a quick swipe and tap.

Customize which apps and features are available in Control Center by opening **Settings** > **Control Center**. Remove an option with a tap on the red minus button or add an option by selecting the green addition button.

Drag features up or down using the three-line icon on the right side of the screen.

Personally, I like having quick access to the Wallet app, turning on low-power mode and toggling dark mode.

As a reminder, if you have an iPhone with a home button, like the 2020 iPhone SE, you can swipe up from the bottom of the screen to open Control Center. If you have an iPhone with Face ID, like an iPhone X , XS or 13, you'll need to swipe down from the top-right corner of the screen where the battery icon is.

For more, here's how to set up your new iPhone and how to transfer your data from your old iPhone. Plus, this iOS 15 trick gives you more iCloud storage for free.

Apple will let you upload digital ID cards to the Wallet app in iOS 15 -- eventually.

Apple's iOS 15 and iPadOS 15 are here. Both followed the tech giant's "California streaming" event in September, 2021, where Apple announced four iPhone 13 models, new iPads and the Apple Watch Series 7. If you haven't downloaded Apple's new operating system yet, you can do it now for free and get access to upgrades for FaceTime, iMessage and more.

Our first look at Apple's iOS 15 update came at the company's virtual Worldwide Developers Conference in June, followed by a developer beta and then a public beta. The new OS came a week after Apple released iOS 14.8, which addressed a security issue and brought new features to several generations of the iPhone.

While we saw a lot of new features arrive this spring and summer with iOS 14.5, iOS 14.6 and iOS 14.7, including being able to unlock your iPhone with Face ID while wearing a mask, stop apps from tracking you for advertising purposes and choose from four Siri voices, iOS 15 adds even more. New iOS 15 features include the ability to start FaceTime calls with Android users, easier sharing in iMessage and better directions in Maps. Keep reading for everything we've learned about iOS 15 so far, including how to download it and some of the biggest new features.

Apple initially revealed iOS 15 at its annual Worldwide Developers Conference on June 7, 2021, as is typical. The new OS was first available for developers to test and became available to download as a public beta on June 30.

At the iPhone 13 event on Sept. 14, Apple announced that iOS 15 would be generally available for free download on Sept. 20. This means you can download the new operating system now if you haven't already.



This follows Apple's typical iOS release pattern, with the software typically arriving within a week of an iPhone launch event.

And if you've been holding onto the same iPhone since 2015 or later, you will likely be eligible to receive iOS 15. Apple's iOS 15 is available on the iPhone 6S and every iPhone onward.

### **iOS 15 new features**

Apple's iOS 15 gets a bunch of new features.

Apple

Here are a few of the key new features that come with iOS 15, unveiled at WWDC 2021

### **FaceTime upgrades: Spatial audio, support for Android and Windows**

FaceTime offers spatial audio to make people's voices appear to come from their position on the screen, making your video chats feel more natural and lifelike. FaceTime also starts to look more like Zoom, allowing you to see all participants in a grid view, schedule calls and share links to calls that can be accessed via browser on Google Android and Microsoft Windows devices.

### **iMessage sharing features**

iOS 15 adds some new iMessage sharing features for photos, news articles and playlists. When a friend sends you multiple photos over iMessage, they'll appear in a dynamic collage formation that allows you to swipe through them or tap through to view the whole bunch in your photos app. If you want to access the same photos later, you'll find them stored in a new Shared with You folder, as well as mixed in with your own featured photos and memories. You'll also find news articles and playlists shared through iMessage in new Shared with You tabs in your News and Apple Music apps.

### **Apple Maps update: 3D street data, AR walking directions and weather warnings**

Apple Maps gets an upgrade with more elevation data, road colors and driving directions, rich labels, 3D landmarks and improved night mode. In terms of public transportation, you can also pin nearby public transit stops and station information to your iPhone and Apple Watch devices, and receive automatic updates and notifications as you ride and approach your stop. When traveling on foot, a new augmented reality feature lets you scan nearby buildings in the area with the iPhone's camera to determine their precise position for more accurate walking directions, which are also presented in augmented reality.

Maps also could factor weather warnings into suggested routes in iOS 15. Redditor ChrisSDreiling, who spotted the update in iOS 15 beta 3, says Maps will let you know if there are flash floods on your journey, and suggest alternate routes to avoid the extreme weather. Although other types of weather alerts weren't mentioned in Chriss Dreiling's post, it will be interesting to see if more weather warnings will be added.

### **Facial recognition selfies to validate digital ID cards in the Wallet app**

At WWDC this spring, Apple announced that it will add ID card support for the Wallet app in iOS 15, allowing you to carry digital versions of government-issued identification cards like your driver's license on your iPhone. The ID feature isn't in the initial release of iOS 15 and it's still unclear how exactly it will work. (It will also only be for US users.)

According to code uncovered by 9to5Mac in the iOS 15 beta 4 for developers, Apple could be using facial recognition selfies to validate your digital ID cards when adding them to your wallet. Some banking apps already use this selfie validation feature to authenticate users when logging on with new devices.

### **iOS 15 updates since launch**

Since iOS 15's release, Apple has released a few updated versions of the operating system to the public and to developers. Here are some of the biggest features Apple has added since iOS 15 launched.

### **iOS 15.2**

Released in December, 2021, iOS 15.2 brought some bug fixes as well as features some iPhone users have been asking for. One feature to be added is the ability to search within an Apple Music playlist. People who have an iPhone 13 Pro or Max were also Macro Controls to take advantage of the phone's ultrawide lens. The biggest feature to be added though is the App Privacy Report. This report shows what data and sensors each app can access, network activity for those apps and other privacy-related data. The iOS 15.2 update is available for everyone to download.

### **iOS 15.3**

Apple released iOS 15.3 in early January to the public, and the update fixed several security flaws, including a Safari bug that lets websites you visit see your browsing history and other personal data. The update also resolved some security vulnerabilities within ColorSync, iCloud and other software.

### **iOS 15.4 beta**

This beta update was released to developers on Jan. 27 and included the ability to wear a mask and glasses to unlock Face ID, Universal

Control and new emojis. This update is not available to the public yet, and there is no word on when this update will be made available.

### **How do you download iOS 15?**

Now that iOS 15 is generally available, you likely got a notification from Apple letting you know you can update. Or you can do it manually, by going to the **Settings app > General > Software Update** and under the Also Available section, tap **Upgrade to iOS 15**.

If you have already installed the iOS 15 beta on your phone, you can uninstall it before downloading the final version of the OS. Here's why you might want to wait before installing the full release of iOS 15.

For more, here's everything to know about the iPhone 13. You can also take a look at the cool new features for WatchOS 8, the best things about MacOS Monterey and check if your computer is compatible with the new MacOS.

The latest iOS beta

Apple's iOS 15.4 beta was made available to developers on Thursday, and one of the features in the update supports using Face ID while wearing a mask. Bespectacled people will also have the option to "Add Glasses" to their Face ID. The feature will work for people who wear a mask and glasses at the same time, but it doesn't work while wearing a mask and sunglasses.

Universal Control, an Apple feature that lets you move content between multiple Apple devices, was also introduced in the beta for iPadOS 15. The feature was initially announced as part of MacOS Monterey, but was delayed over the fall.

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There are also new emojis, like heart hands, biting lip and a pregnant person in the update. There are over 37 new emojis in the update. The emojis were revealed last fall, and also include a melting face, a face holding back tears, a bird's nest, coral, a lotus, a low battery and kidney beans. Another feature included in the update is the ability to copy text from objects using the camera while in the Notes or Reminders apps.

**By Jason Cipriani, Nelson Aguilar**