

A Guide To Smartphones

For Beginners



Digital Skills
Sessions, by:



Much of the information in this guide is taken from the Which? Mobile smartphone advice section available at:

<http://www.which.co.uk/mobile/advice-and-support/smartphone-advice/>

The site is an excellent source of advice on smartphones and is well worth viewing for more help and explanations.

Definition

Smartphones are mobile phones that can perform a number of different functions such as surfing the internet and running applications, along with being able to play music/videos, and taking pictures/video footage.

Smartphones are sometimes confused with 'feature phones', which are lower-priced handsets that can also access the internet and perform similar multimedia tasks. Access to broad range of apps is one of the main benefits that smartphones have over basic handsets.

The difference is that smartphones have much more powerful computer processors and run a complete 'operating system', in the same way your home PC runs an operating system like Windows. So, in many ways, smartphones are more like pocket PCs than mobile phones.

Smartphone features

Not all smartphones offer the same features but here is a list of the most common ones.

High-speed internet access

One of the most useful functions of a smartphone is its ability to access the internet. As long as you have access to a mobile or Wi-Fi network, you can connect to the internet and browse web pages. This also allows you to check and reply to emails, as well as downloading many different applications, from bus timetables to videogames.

Music player

Nearly all smartphones should be able to play music files in the same way as a dedicated Mp3-player.

Camera

Most smartphones are able to take pictures and record video.

Touch screen

Smartphone touch screens were popularized by Apple's iPhone and have since been used by many other smartphone manufacturers.

Applications

Applications (or 'apps') are a key feature of smartphones. The term 'app' itself is just a shortened version of 'application software'. They broaden the functionality of your phone, in a similar way to the software you buy for your PC.

Apps are essentially pieces of software that are in essence exactly the same as the computer programs that you use on a PC. For example, if you have a PC, you probably have programs such as Microsoft Word, Paint, and Notepad; mobile phone apps work in the same way these do.

Different smartphone operating systems have access to different online stores where you can buy apps. So, not all smartphones have access to the same apps. For instance, the iPhone uses Apple's App Store, whereas Android-based phones access the Android Marketplace.

(See section 'Brands and Operating Systems and 'Getting Apps')

Brands and Operating Systems

There are a small number of smartphone operating systems available, but a wide range of brands.

The most popular operating systems on smartphones at present are:

- iPhone iOS
- Android
- Windows Phone and Windows Mobile
- Symbian (Nokia)
- Blackberry OS

Like with PCs, different smartphones can often run the same operating system, even if they're made by different manufacturers. For instance, HTC's Desire and Samsung's Galaxy S both run Android, an operating system that was developed by Google. However, some operating systems, such as the iOS, can only be found on a single brand of smartphone (in this case the iPhone).

There is such a wide range of smartphone brands available it would not be possible to look at all of them here but some of the most popular brands are:

- iPhone (iPhone iOS)
- HTC (Android or Windows Phone 7)
- Samsung (Android or Windows Phone 7)
- Nokia (Symbian)
- BlackBerry (Blackberry OS)

iPhone

Apple has released many different iPhone models, the more recent being;

- iPhone 5C
- iPhone 5S
- iPhone 6
- iPhone 6 Plus

The iPhone pretty much set the standard of what a smartphone should be when it was released back in 2007.

Unlike other brands of phone the iPhone only runs Apples iOS operating system.

HTC and Samsung

As with the iPhone, HTC and Samsung devices can perform the same basic tasks you would expect of a mobile phone, such as texts and voice calls, they are also capable of taking pictures, playing music, surfing the internet and running a large number of different applications, or 'apps'.

Unlike the iPhone, HTC and Samsung phones run one or other of the Android or Windows operating system. This is because Android and Windows are types of operating system (OS) rather than a mobile phone operator, or a handset manufacturer.

Google's Android is fast becoming the most popular operating system for smartphones. Windows Mobile and Windows Phone 7 are also smartphone operating systems, but instead of Google these have been developed by Microsoft. Like Android, the Windows Phone 7 operating system runs on handsets from many different manufacturers.

Screens

Although each smartphone can look very different the icons you can see on their touch screens tend to allow you to perform the same kind of tasks. Here is an example of two types of screen an iPhone 4 (bottom) and a Samsung Galaxy S (top)

Press here to use the phones built-in camera

Press here to listen to music stored on your phone

Press here to write and view text messages



After a short set up process press here to access your email account

Press here to access the app store and download 'apps'

Press here to write and view text messages

Press here to access iTunes and download music and videos directly to your phone

After a short set up process press here to access your email account



Press here to use the phones built-in camera

Press here to access the app store and download 'apps'

Press here to listen to music stored on your phone

Nokia and BlackBerry

Nokia and Blackberry phones are two other popular brand of smartphone. As with the iPhone each operates using its own operating system; Nokia phones use the Symbian OS and Blackberry's use Blackberry OS.

Both these brands also allow texting, voice calls, can take pictures, play music, surfing the internet and running a large number of different 'apps'.

Applications or 'Apps'

Apps are essentially pieces of software that directly benefit the user and broaden the functionality of your mobile phone; in essence they are exactly the same as the computer programs that you use on a PC.

Apps are only available for certain handsets, usually those that fall under the smartphone category. Each brand of operating system, mentioned above, has its own dedicated online marketplace. Some, like the Android Market, allow you to search and download apps from your home computer straight to your phone.

Not all apps will work with all phones - it depends on what operating system your phone runs. For example, an Android phone will not work with iPhone apps. However, many app developers release different versions of their apps for different operating systems. So you'll be able to find the official Facebook or Yahoo! Mail app on both iPhone and Android app stores.

Apps can help with business, your social life, travel, communication and much more. There are apps to monitor your expenses, identify flowers and give you first aid advice, as well as full documentation suites that let you view and edit spreadsheets and Word documents.

Video games also generally fall under the app category and, as the smartphone market grows, more and more of the major video game companies are beginning to develop titles purely for smartphone operating systems.

The great thing about apps is that you only have to download what you need personally, so you can customize your phone to suit your individual needs. Another good thing about apps is the relatively low cost. A vast majority of apps are either free or very cheap, and many come with a free trial version.

Apps take-up space on your phone, so there is only a limited amount of apps you can have. Also, if you are running many apps at the same time, this can slow your phone down and battery power can suffer significantly.

A very small minority of apps may pose a security risk to your smartphone, because they contain malicious software. This very rarely happens and is more of a problem on Android devices than any others. You can easily avoid such problems by reading reviews of apps before downloading them, and if someone says it has badly affected their phone, stay well away.

You can read more about this at the Which? Mobile site at:
<http://www.which.co.uk/mobile/advice-and-support/smartphone-advice/android-advice/the-android-market/>

If you are new to downloading apps here is the Which? Guides list of top ten apps for the iPhone and for Android phones.

iPhone Apps

To find and download any of these apps simply input their name into the iPhone App Store search tool.

Orbital

Price: £1.79

Orbital is one of the most addictive games ever created for a phone. A simple, physics-based concept, one touch controls, and no-fuss aesthetic, along with the one-more-go factor, means this is perfect phone accessory for whiling away those long train journeys.

Tube Deluxe

Price: £0.59

A useful app for anyone living in the capital. The various multi-transport versions are a little too unreliable to recommend, but this Tube Deluxe, which deals exclusively with the underground system, is spot on. Great for delay and closure alerts as well as route planning.

Facebook

Price: £Free

Facebook can be accessed from your mobile every bit as easily as from your home computer. Indeed, much of the functionality is easier from your iPhone, such as photo uploading.

Google voice search

Price: £Free

Rather than laboriously typing in your Google searches, this useful accessory allows you simply to speak your search term into the phone, with rather surprisingly accurate results.

Google Earth

Price: £Free

Google Earth is one of the most impressive phone accessories on App Store. It allows you to zoom to anywhere on Earth in seconds to view 3D maps, satellite images and road maps. For route planning and directions, it's a must.

Petrol Prices Pro

Price: £2.99

If you don't have this functionality on your sat nav, this is the perfect phone accessory to help you save money with each journey. It's surprisingly glitch-free and, using official information supplied by the stations themselves, it will help you find the cheapest petrol on your journey.

My First Words

Price: £0.59-£1.99

This is a great app for keeping the kids entertained with educational play that builds vocabulary and familiarity with common words. Drag letters into the right boxes, and you'll hear the letters and sounds associated with the word. Aimed at pre-school children.

National Rail Enquiries

Price: £4.99

Smartphones have given birth to a number of useful travel apps, and National Rail's app is great for keeping you up to date with all the latest cancellation and delay notification, as well as allowing you to download timetables. It has some really useful functionality such as a quick 'Get Me Home' feature, showing you the best way to get home from wherever you are.

Flight Control

Price: £0.59

Another great time-killing iPhone game, Flight Control sees you frantically directing air traffic to runways on a number of different maps. Simple controls and a pleasant aesthetic make it surprisingly addictive, and well worth

Android apps

Here are our top ten apps on the Android Market. To find any of these apps, simply input their name into the Market's search tool.

Google Finance

Price: Free

This app allows you to keep right up to date with your stock portfolio performance. It streams data straight to your handset, and also lets you select stocks you want to keep up to date with. There are a variety of other useful services as well, such as financial news and market summaries.

Alchemy

Price: Free

Alchemy is a game with a very simple concept that manages to be hugely addictive. You start with four elements, fire, earth, air and water, and have to create new elements and items, by combining them (and the discoveries you have made). There are no time limits and no additional gameplay features past that, but simplicity is often the best way forward for mobile games.

Cardio Trainer Pro

Price: £9.99

If you're having trouble shifting those extra pounds, this is one of the most comprehensive weight loss and fitness apps around. Of course, it can't lose the weight for you, but it can monitor your daily exercise, give you calorie information, and record all your workout sessions.

Footprint

Price: Free

Footprints is an app to help you find places you've been to before, but can't remember. When you visit a nice restaurant or location that could prove troublesome to find in the future, simply 'tag' it with footprints, take a photo and add optional data. The next time you want to go there, you'll have directions from wherever you are. This app works best with GPS-enabled phones.

Facebook

Price: Free

Facebook can be accessed from your mobile every bit as easily as from your home computer. Indeed, much of the functionality is easier from your phone.

Google Maps

Price: Free

Google Maps is as close as it comes to a truly essential smartphone app. In fact, many Android phones already come with Google Maps pre-installed. It allows you to view maps of nearly all the cities on Earth in seconds. For route planning and directions, it's a must.

Shazam Encore

Price: £2.99

Shazam is a useful, and rather impressive, app for discovering new music. If you hear a tune you like, record with your phone's microphone. Shazam can analyse the recording and will give you loads of information about that and similar tunes.

Hotels

Price: £2.99

Hotels is an excellent way to find hotels, wherever you are in the world. It has over 73,000 hotels listed in over 70 countries, and can give you rates, directions, and contact details.

Television

Price: £2.99

This is an app for watching television on your phone. Originally only available on the iPhone, Television allows you to search and watch recorded TV selected from over 25 channels worldwide.

Astro

Price: Free

Astro lets you manage folders and applications on your Android phone. It is especially useful for 'killing' any unnecessary applications that may be running in the background, which may be using up memory and processing power.