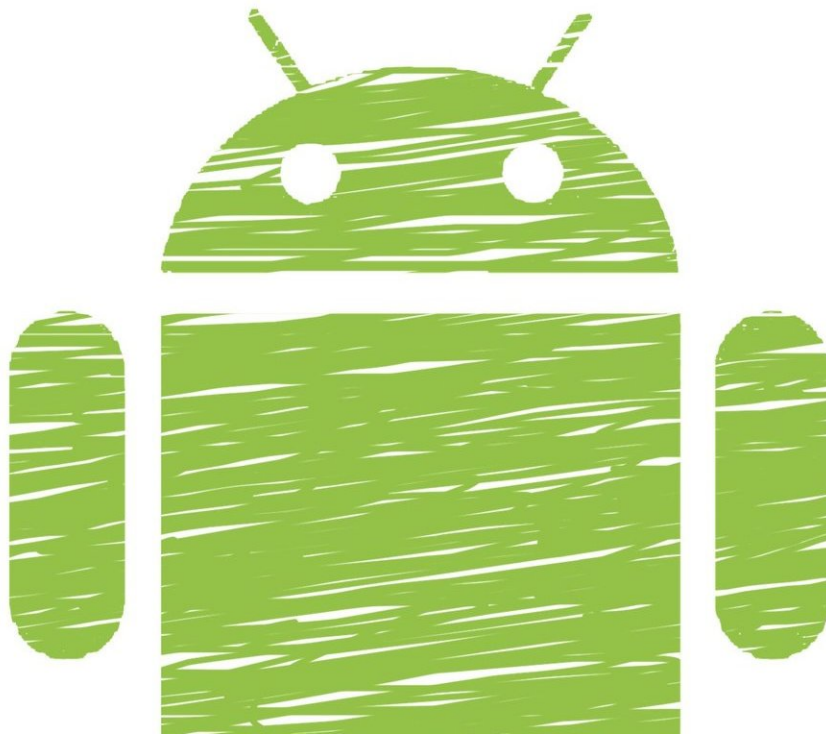


Google releases Android 10: The top 8 ways your phone will improve

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Android 10 is now available, but you'll need a Google Pixel smartphone to install the latest version of Google's mobile operating system. At least for now. The update is promised for other Android phones over the next several weeks. At its I/O developer conference in May, Google announced that Android is now operating on more than 2.5 billion active

devices.

Aside from [new features](#) and tools, Android 10, which until recently was known by its code name Android Q, represents a departure for Google. In calling it Android 10, Google company is no longer naming the operating after desserts as it did with the most recent iteration Pie and prior versions such as Marshmallow, Lollipop and Oreo.

Here are highlights of what the new software brings:

Going dark

You'll be able to choose a dark theme for your Android phone, but it's not just about the aesthetic. If you're in a battery saver mode, the phone will automatically go dark to help preserve juice. You can apply this dark theme for your Google Calendar and Photos app—Gmail comes later. Apple is taking a similar path, having announced a dark mode for its own upcoming [mobile operating system](#), iOS 13.

Smarter smart reply

Google's smart reply feature now works across all messaging apps and is built into the Android notification system. Powered by on-device machine learning, Google can help predict your next action. Should a friend send a notification with an address, for instance, a smart reply would let you tap to open that address in Google Maps.

Live captioning

By leveraging [automatic speech recognition](#), Google is adding a live captioning for almost all the audio on the device, even when you have no Wi-Fi or are in airplane mode. It's an accessibility benefit for sure, but

Google says Android users might use the feature, say, when they want to watch a video in public but don't have headphones.

Expanding Family Link

During the past few years, Google introduced tools to help you tame your kid's smartphone addiction—and, perhaps, your own. You could manage usage on some devices through what is called Family Link. And with last year's version of Android (Pie), Google focused on a slate of "Digital Wellbeing" tools, for all of us who can't seem to stop glancing at the screens. Google says every Android 10 device (and, for that matter, Pie device) will now have Family Link.

Focus mode

We are all too easily distracted by apps and notifications on our phones. With the new Focus Mode feature that is also part of "Digital Wellbeing" tools, you can choose the apps you find distracting, at least some of the time (like emails, news), and pause them with a single tap. If you're somehow lured by such apps anyway, Android will serve up a notice to remind you that you were hoping to focus elsewhere. Of course, you can override that notice by heading to the phone's settings and put such apps back in your good graces, at least until you're again distracted by them.

Privacy updates

According to Google, Android 10 has nearly 50 new built-in privacy and security features. A few worth noting: You'll now be able to share location data with apps while you're using them but also receive a reminder when an app is accessing your location when you're not actively engaging with it. If you're not cool with that app knowing where you are all the time, you can stop sharing your whereabouts until you use

the app again.

Moreover, Google Play can now dispatch important security and privacy fixes in the same way, Google says, that apps themselves update. You won't need to wait for a full update to the operating system to receive such fixes.

And Google has added a Privacy section under Settings, with controls for your web and app activity and ad settings.

Gender-inclusive emoji

Earlier this summer, Google announced 65 new emoji that would be arriving with the latest version of Android, 53 of which support gender-inclusive designs.

Google described some of the stereotypes: The emoji for "police officer" is commonly displayed as male and "person getting haircut" as female. Now, Google says, emoji that don't specify gender will default to a gender-ambiguous design, though a user can still choose between male and female presentations if they prefer.

Multitasking for foldables

Google is trying to get ahead of the fold here since foldable phones as a category have yet to make a mark. The most famous of these early devices, Samsung's Galaxy Fold, for instance, has been delayed following technical problems with the screen. Google says you'll be able to open two apps in parallel, messaging app on one screen, a video app on the other.

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