

# Your iPhone won't recognize you in a face mask—but a Samsung Galaxy might

April 13 2020, by Jefferson Graham and Michelle Maltais

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Credit: CC0 Public Domain

You're wearing a mask, as encouraged by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and possibly by your local government during this coronavirus outbreak, and you want to use FaceID to open your

iPhone or Android phone. Is there a way?

Yes, says a Chinese researcher from Tencent's Xuanwu lab. But according to Apple, this is frowned upon big time and could affect the integrity of your [phone](#).

There are several hacks available online, and most will send the user to reregister for FaceID on the iPhone by covering the left and right side of their face separately. After the researcher from Tencent originally demonstrated and popularized this setup, many others copied and tweaked with videos on YouTube.

Apple is adamant, however, that this shouldn't work.

"Face ID is designed to work with your eyes, nose and mouth visible," the company said in a statement to U.S. TODAY. The company discourages iPhone users from using FaceID with a mask on and instead encourages just using the six-digit passcode to unlock the phone.

Apple says that users who manipulate Face ID enrollment with face coverings are more likely to end up with iPhones or iPads that aren't as secure.

In Apple's own words, "Face ID automatically adapts to changes in your appearance, such as wearing cosmetic makeup or growing facial hair. ... Face ID is designed to work with hats, scarves, glasses, contact lenses and many sunglasses."

But not [masks](#).

The blog 9to5 Mac followed the Chinese researcher's demo, and "in our testing, that worked, but not very consistently."

In our half-mask tests, the iPhone flat-out refused to unlock for us.

## What about Samsung Galaxy phones?

Samsung premium Galaxy phones offer both facial recognition and a [fingerprint sensor](#) to unlock the phone and encourages using the fingerprint, for more security. With Facial ID, "your phone can be unlocked by someone that looks similar to you (such as a twin)," says Samsung.

That said, we were able to open a Samsung phone with a mask on.

In our tests with a couple of Samsung Galaxy S10+ phones, we were able to set up an alternate look with a [face mask](#) on. The phones were able to distinguish between different masked [faces](#), unlocking only for the face that was saved in that particular device.

To set it up, go into the settings to Biometrics and security and select Face recognition. There, you'll tap Add alternative look.

Apple had used the fingerprint sensor (TouchID) to unlock phones but killed the feature with 2017's iPhone 8 and 8 Plus. The iPhone X introduced FaceID in 2017, and Apple has continued using it through the XR, XS and the most recent 11 and 11 Pro series.

CNET notes that the best method here is to probably just turn off FaceID altogether until we're not wearing masks in public. Because the point of the mask is to keep out germs. So if you take the mask off to unlock your phone, you're letting germs in.

To disable FaceID, go to Settings, Face ID & Passcode, and where it says iPhone Unlock, move the tab off the green dot to go white. Do the same for Apple Pay, and App Store. This will bring you back to solely

typing in the passcode.

If you have a Google Pixel phone or Samsung phones, also go to Settings to make the changes.

## **Will my phone respond when it's in a plastic bag?**

Some phone users have noted on social media that they feel safer placing their phones inside sealed plastic bags when they're out, say, shopping.

For what it's worth, when we tested tapping the phone screen with gloved fingers, both the iPhone and Samsung Galaxy S10+ responded from inside both a plastic sandwich bag and a plastic bag for produce.

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Citation: Your iPhone won't recognize you in a face mask—but a Samsung Galaxy might (2020, April 13) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://techxplore.com/news/2020-04-iphone-wont-maskbut-samsung-galaxy.html>

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