Google adds facial expression recognition to Android Accessibility Suite beta version

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A team at XDA Developers [has discovered](#) that Google has added facial expression recognition to the beta version of the Android Accessibility Suite, which came with the beta version of Android 12. The new feature

is called collectively Camera Switches. The new features appear to be geared toward allowing those with disabilities to communicate with their phone without using their voice.

Prior versions of Android have included [developer](#) APIs to create apps for people with disabilities—voice-command-driven menuing systems, for example. In this new update, Google has added new functionality that will allow developers to create applications that respond to six unique facial cues: opening mouth, smiling, raising eyebrows, looking left, looking right and looking up. Developers are free to associate any of these gestures with commands of their choosing. An app could respond to a user opening their mouth, for example, by opening a highlighted file.

The software allows users to control the degree of sensitivity of gesture recognition to prevent undesired execution of commands or to watch more closely for people with limited facial mobility. The configuration software also allows for choosing the number of switches (one or two) involved in helping a device recognize a given gesture. This means that developers can create commands that are executed only when two unique gestures are recognized. It also allows for turning Camera Switch on and off. Google has also made sure users will know when Camera Switches is using the [camera](#) by displaying an icon on the screen. They have also added a note in the setup routine promising users that images captured by Camera Switches are not stored anywhere or sent to Google. And they have posted another note that acknowledges that Camera Switches consumes a lot of power—Google suggests that Camera Switches only be used when the phone is plugged in.

Because the [new features](#) have been added to the beta version of Android 12, they are not yet available on Google Play, but as the team at XDA Developers notes, users unwilling to wait can download the update from third-party sites.

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