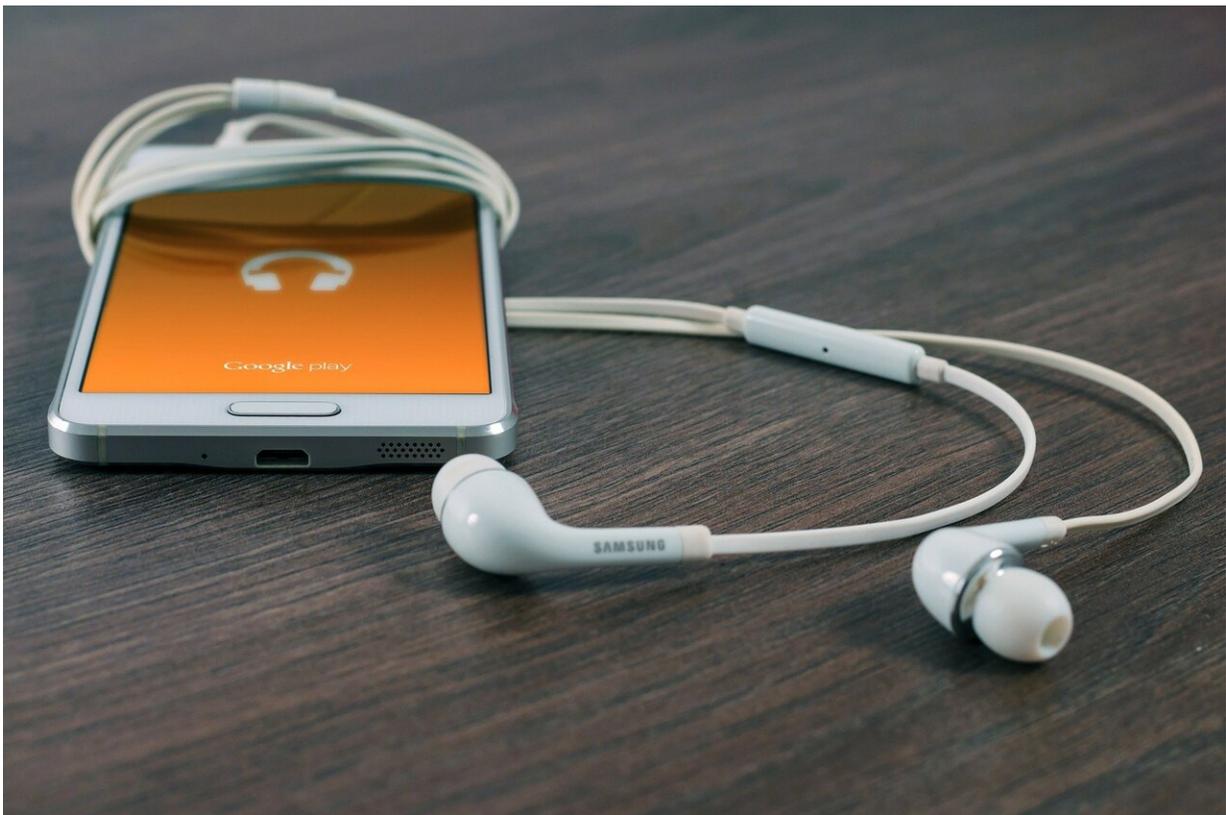


Fast Share, Android's answer to Apple's AirDrop, due soon

March 20 2020, by Peter Grad



Credit: CC0 Public Domain

It appears Google is preparing to roll out a new file sharing feature when it unveils Android 11 later this spring.

Although not yet officially announced, media analysts spotted a reference to a new Fast Share feature that will allow users to exchange files wirelessly if they are in close proximity. It had been anticipated that this feature would be called Nearby Sharing, but an edition of Android's second developer preview this week inexplicably made reference to the older name, Fast Share.

The reference was detected in a section covering pre-release bugs. "When sharing files with Fast Share between two Pixel 4 devices," the developer notes read, "the operation completes successfully, but the UI on the [device](#) which receives the file states that it did not receive the file."

Regardless of the name, the feature will be a competitor of Apple's popular AirDrop, which lets users effortlessly transfer files between iOS and MacOS devices.

Android users enjoyed a similar feature, Beam, introduced in 2011 with Android version 4.0 (Ice Cream Sandwich). Beam utilized the near field communication (NFC) protocol to exchange [contact information](#), directions, videos and other data. Users needed to tap their phones together to start a transfer. Although used by many, the system nevertheless could not compete well with newer, simpler competitors, and was dropped last year in Android 10.

A recent demonstration of Fast Share by Phonearena found that it took only 28 seconds to send a 1.1GB 8K video from a Galaxy S20 Ultra to a Galaxy Z Flip.

There were rumors the feature would be released in Android 10 last summer, but they proved incorrect. More recent estimates were that Fast Share—or Nearby Sharing—would be announced at the Google I/O developers conference in Mountain View, California, this May. But the

conference has been canceled due to concerns over COVID-19. Any announcement of the new feature will likely be online only.

Fast Share will utilize the Nearby feature of Google Play Services to detect compatible devices via Bluetooth and transfer files over a Wi-Fi connection. No Internet connectivity is required.

A "Preferred Visibility" feature alerts users when a compatible device owned by a known source is nearby.

Google Pixel phones will likely be the first devices to obtain Fast Share functionality in early fall, with other Android devices following soon after and through 2021.

Other new features expected in the Android 11 release include 5G wireless detection, a refined message notification bar, and an option to allow apps access to your location "Just this once" so users don't have to worry about unlimited snooping on their whereabouts.

More information: developer.android.com/preview/release-notes

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Citation: Fast Share, Android's answer to Apple's AirDrop, due soon (2020, March 20) retrieved 20 April 2024 from <https://techxplore.com/news/2020-03-fast-android-apple-airdrop-due.html>

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