

Android 11 update offers tweaks and enhancements

9 September 2020, by Peter Grad



They say good things come in small packages. This week's launch of the final release of Android 11 brings no big new attractions but rather several modest-size ones that should please most users.

Owners of Google Pixel devices can receive the upgrade now, along with owners of Android One, Xiaomi, Oppo and Realme phones.

Google released seven beta updates beginning in February before the final version was released this week. The changes target conversations, notifications, location sharing, [user interface](#) and media operations.

Here are the key changes:

- Google one year ago unveiled Live View, an AR app that overlays directions on live images to guide users to destinations. Now, Google is coupling Live View with Location Sharing. Users meeting in a park, for instance, can share their locations and be directed with arrows and directions to each other.
- Improvements to privacy settings have been made. Users have been given more control over permissions. Apps requiring access to features such as microphone, camera or location must be granted user permission to tap into those features. When unlimited access is granted, app developers can obtain confidential information even when the app is not actively being used. The upgrade makes it easier to limit access to such data to a single instance. Apps seeking access to controls and data may be forced to request access each time it is used. In addition, apps that remain unused for a certain period of time will automatically be blocked from access until manual permission is granted again.
- It's now easier to talk TO your phone. Voice Access for years has allowed users to issue vocal commands to operate their phones. Android 11 brings enhanced voice recognition that provides greater accuracy to voice commands. It is aware of content on the screen so it can act more efficiently on commands that may be used for more than one app.
- There's no longer a need to plug your phone into your vehicle to access Android Auto functionality. Android 11 brings wireless connectivity to compatible cars.
- Borrowing an element from Facebook Messenger's playbook, Android devices will now feature messaging bubbles. These are circular icons featuring the faces of friends

that float on the screen, enabling quick entry into a conversation. It is also convenient because it allows for instant access regardless of texting app being used.

- Recording activity on a device screen can be extremely helpful. Whether recording steps on how to use an app or a chat with grandma, the ability to naively record screen contents is a big plus. You can now do it with Android 11. Just select the audio source—microphone, audio device or both—tap a button, wait for a three-second countdown and the recording begins. Users previously had to install third-party apps to achieve this, some that affixed watermarks to the videos.
- The Power Menu has been expanded. A long press of the power button used to bring up options only to restart, lock or turn off the [phone](#). Now it has been broadened to include links to [smart home devices](#) associated with Google Home app, such as lights, locks, [music player](#), security cameras or thermostats. It also displays Google Pay cards or alternate apps that can be selected in the setup section. Further features are also instantly accessible through menu buttons for system settings, gestures and power menu.
- A small but handy tweak is the consolidation of all music controls in the quick settings menu. A simple swipe down displays settings applicable to all media devices. There is also quick, easier access to music streaming options—ear buds or speakers, WiFi or bluetooth.

Although Android 11 will be rolled out over the coming days, users of some model phones may have to wait longer for the upgrade. They include models from Samsung as well as phones purchased directly from wireless carriers.

More information: www.android.com/android-11/

blog.google/products/pixel/and...sive-pixel-features/

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