Looking to September
iOS 15 Tips

By Trey Peacock, Winning Cases Based On Science & Data For Over 25 Years
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My fellow tech enthusiasts and I are eagerly awaiting the announcement and arrival of Apple's new lineup of iPhones (and potentially MacBooks) this fall. Meanwhile, we can entertain ourselves by poring over the details of Apple's release (in beta only) of its newest mobile operating system, iOS 15. In this newest iOS, Apple is unveiling some reworks and refreshes of their flagship apps like Safari, Apple Maps, Wallet, and the Weather app, in addition to updating the look and feel of their notification system. Most notable, though, are some of the innovative, exciting, and brand-new features Apple has designed and implemented in this new operating system. This article will take you through four of the best new features coming to iOS 15 and explain how you can take advantage of them to improve both your experience with and the security of your mobile device.

1. Live Text and Visual Lookup
How many times have you snapped a photo of a business card or a sign and wished you could copy and paste the phone number right from the photo? Well, thanks to Live Text, now you can. This feature allows users to copy text directly from a photo and utilize it in whatever app they choose, straight from the clipboard. Live Text will recognize printed numbers, text, as well as handwriting, so it should work beautifully across all situations, professional or personal. Even better, if your phone recognizes a piece of text as a phone number, email address, or street address, it will hotlink the text, allowing you to call, email, or navigate to it with a single tap. Additionally, this feature works on both images of screenshots and those found while browsing Safari, so it isn't limited to photos you take.

When you are out and about, the Visual Lookup feature will surely come in handy. This allows you to point your phone camera at an object, logo, animal, or product, and, more than likely, Apple's software will recognize the subject and offer up some helpful information with the swipe of a

finger. This feature may be particularly useful for travelers seeking information about a point of interest or a building.

In tandem, these features tune-up the iPhone's camera system considerably, empowering users to not only take great quality photos, but also add functionality and convenience for obtaining more information about the world around them with just a few taps on the screen.

2. More Privacy Features
Both Apple and consumers have created a lot of hubbub about the company's bold new security update in iOS 14.5, and for good reason. This patch prompts users with a popup to either refuse or allow the tracking or sharing of the user's activity with specific phone apps. While it may look like an unimportant popup, this patch represents a huge step for Apple, both symbolically and practically. Though long a fixture of its corporate ethos, the company is increasingly branding itself (quite successfully) as the lone bastion of digital privacy in the tech world. (For reference, see this brilliant ad that rolled out alongside the iOS 14.5 update). No matter how self-serving this brand initiative might be, it should be welcomed by consumers who are concerned about data security.

Apple goes even further with some of the new Privacy features built into iOS 15. First, the Mail Privacy Protection will block programs that use "invisible pixels" to track whether a message's recipient has read or interacted with the message. These pixels are not viewable by the recipient but are used by the sender to provide information on you, your location and when you opened and read the email. Additionally, for apps to which a user has chosen to grant data access, Apple allows the user to generate "Privacy Reports." These reports deliver a breakdown of how much data the app has gathered and how the data was utilized, offering more transparency, and giving the user greater insight into the use of the activity data collected by the app. Finally, and most exciting for those fearful of Alexa's eavesdropping, iOS 15 will now process Siri activity and response on-phone as opposed to through network or server processing. This removes a link in the data chain of custody, keeping your data on your phone and out of the cloud, and should better insulate users from prying eyes or corporate observation.

3. Focus
To accompany iOS 15's reskinned notification system, Apple is debuting a new and helpful notification scheme called Focus. Much as the Do Not Disturb function, Focus blocks notifications when you don't want to be interrupted, but with more specificity. With Focus, users can create app notification settings tailor-made to different situations. For example, users can curate their "Work" setting to allow notifications from the Mail and Slack apps, but block iMessage or Instagram pushes. Conversely, the "Personal" setting could flip the script and allow notifications from Instagram, Spotify, and Tiktok while keeping work emails and messages silent. Users can also redesign their home screens to pair with each Focus setting, removing not only the distraction of a notification, but the actual app icon as well. Focus wouldn't be an Apple feature without some app learning. Accordingly, Focus will begin to learn when, and for how long, you use your Focus profiles and will suggest or (with permission) automatically switch you between them according to your routine. The system is highly customizable and a little effort goes a long way toward streamlining your device usage to keep you on task when at work, and relaxed and stress-free when off the clock.

4. FaceTime Updates

After a year spent glued to our video conferencing programs, appreciating certain features that were available and longing for some that weren't, it was nearly guaranteed that Apple would try to revitalize FaceTime. Though beloved by Apple users, a year and a half of using Zoom and Teams revealed FaceTime's lack of functionality. But Apple has stepped up in an effort to remedy that situation. iOS 15 comes with a bundle of new features for FaceTime, most notable among them SharePlay, Spatial Audio, link generation, and cross-platform access. For the first time, users will be able to schedule FaceTime calls and create and distribute links to join the call ahead of time. Also, in a rare departure from Apple's "gated community" policy on their device ecosystem, users on non-Mac computers and non-Apple mobile devices will be able to join FaceTime calls from their browser. This feature is, to be frank, long overdue and absolutely necessary in the Zoom era. Not to mention, it should smooth tensions between the bitterly divided "blue text" and "green text" factions.

During FaceTime calls, users will also have access to some boosted camera and audio features. Spatial Audio, which Apple debuted on Apple Music a few months ago, should improve sound quality across most devices for most calls. Users will also now be able to select from several sound profiles to either suppress background noise or pick up every audible bit of chatter. Visually, Portrait Mode has now come to FaceTime, allowing callers to blur their background to eliminate distractions and look their best on a meeting or call.

Most exciting, however, is Apple's brand-new SharePlay function. (Editor's note: Apple has recently announced that this feature will be delayed, not appearing in the initial release of iOS 15. However, as it still appears slated for release in the near future, we have elected to leave our description of it in this piece.) This feature will allow users on a FaceTime call to watch, stream, or listen to media together, all sharing the same screen view and operating synched playback controls. This means that your entire team can watch a movie over FaceTime, and if one person pauses to get a snack, the program will pause for all members of the call. After years of browser extensions and jerry-rigged attempts to perform this exact function, many Apple users will rejoice at the inclusion of this feature in iOS 15. The seamless playback should work with most apps and streaming services (though notably not Spotify), and Apple's smooth control interface certainly beats trying to get a show or song to sync up perfectly on two different devices. This new feature caps off what is sure to be a promising upgrade to the FaceTime program that will excite both Apple and non-Apple users alike.

All in all, iOS 15 appears to be less a monumental pivot and more a steady improvement to many of the day-to-day, heavy-use apps which have been neglected in past operating system updates. Apple continues to innovate its camera technology and improve its communication systems, while still taking steps to help users lock down device usage and data privacy. I don't know about you, but I am excited to check it out. iOS 15 debuts this fall, with a user beta available for download now.

About the Author

Trey Peacock, a partner at [Susman Godfrey](), has been winning cases based on science and data for over 25 years. He has also chaired the firm's IT committee for over two decades. [Learn more about Trey here]().