

Best New Features In iOS 17.1.1

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It's that time of year again! The air has taken on a slight chill, the first leaves of Autumn have begun to fall, and the newest iOS software is available for download. That's right – it's update season! iOS 17, the latest edition of Apple's flagship mobile operating system, is rolling out alongside the updated iPhone 15 lineup, and we're here to unpack its best and most useful features for all of you.

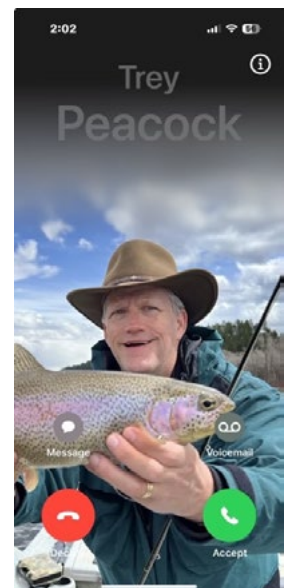
First and foremost — to use any of the brand new, fancy features, you'll need to update your phone to iOS 17. To do this, open the Settings app on your phone, tap the General category, and then select Software Update. From there, you can download and install the update with ease. It takes roughly a half hour to download, install, and reboot your device, so plan accordingly.

Once you're up and running with the new software, plug back in to the breakdown below for a tour of what's new on your phone this fall.

1. Contact Posters

You can now create a unique contact poster for yourself, complete with your name, a picture, or an emoji or Memoji that will display on others' phones when you call them up, so long as they have your contact saved on their device. To edit or create a contact poster for yourself, simply navigate to your "My Card" contact page at the top of the contact section, tap "Edit," then tap your profile image or circle. This will bring up a mockup page to customize and create your own poster. The process is the same in case you'd like to make custom posters for any of your other contacts as well.

It's a handy feature to help round out the personalization that Apple has been advancing bit by bit in iOS over the last few releases.



2. Name Drop

In another improvement to the Contacts system, Apple has introduced a peer-to-peer transfer feature called NameDrop. This feature allows you to seamlessly transfer your own contact information (name, phone number, email, address) to another mobile device by simply holding your phone next to it, awaiting the pleasant animation, and presto! You're connected.

This one is a bit gimmicky, and reminiscent of the Bump app from over a decade ago, but it's a nice addition and sure to work well for the networking crowd as a sort of digital business card.

3. Check In

Check In is the most robust new feature to be added into iOS 17, but using it can be a little tough to get the hang of. Basically, the feature allows you to notify a friend that your phone has arrived at a given location, automatically pinging their device to "check in" and let them know you've arrived safely. You can also choose from the feature settings what information gets shared with your friend in the event that you don't arrive, such as your location, battery percentage, signal, and an emergency contact.

This is a great feature for anyone who already shares their location with friends, but is also looking for a slightly more active way to use that technology. You can send a Check In from the Messages app, by tapping "More" (the plus icon on the left) on the message composing screen. From there, you can edit the specifics of your Check In like your destination, method of travel, ETA, and notification specifics. You can also add extra time or extra info from the same messages interface on your phone.

4. Live Voicemail

In one of the more futuristic-feeling updates to iOS, Apple has unveiled Live Voicemail, a feature that lets your phone operate like an old-fashioned answering machine, but with transcription. Now, when you receive a phone call and it goes to voicemail, Apple will display a live transcription of the message being left on your home screen.

If, from this transcript, you realize that the message is timely or urgent, you can choose to pick up the call, connecting you to the caller immediately and keeping a recording of the voicemail for your reference.

This one is extremely handy for screening calls, as you can let the message inform whether or not you want to answer the call.

5. Swipe to Reply in iMessage

A simple fix but a necessary one. Now, rather than tapping and holding a specific message in a stream of texts with others, then tapping reply from the pop-up menu, you can simply swipe right to trigger a direct in-line reply to that text. This functionality has existed forever in WhatsApp and Android messages, so it's about time that Apple added this one in.

6. Safari Private Browsing updates

For our privacy-minded readers, this next feature is a must. Apple has added the option to customize your default search engine while using Safari in Private Browsing mode. Previously, users were only able to default to Google Search. But in its overarching push towards emphasizing user privacy and data safeguarding, Apple has now allowed users to choose whichever engine they please.

We recommend switching to a search engine that doesn't track or record your search activity such as DuckDuckGo, by far the most popular and best engine of its type. Just make sure to add that preferred engine in your Safari settings in the Settings app, and you'll be good to go.

7. StandBy mode

This is a convenient, yet tricky to set up, new feature that allows you to use your phone as a sort of ambient display while it's charging and positioned on its side. While this feature is best utilized with a sideways MagSafe charging stand, it works well enough without one. To enable this feature, connect your iPhone to a charger in the horizontal position, keeping it stationary, then press the side button. You should be presented with a screen with various clocks and widgets. You can swipe left and right to move between the dedicated widgets page and the clock page, and swipe vertically to change between visible widgets. A long press allows you to edit your widgets and swap in the ones you want.



You can also use this feature to turn your phone into a nightstand clock, and even set your screen to illuminate with a soft red light that won't jar you awake if you need to look around in the dark. Plus, you can set it to stay on, dim, or brighten on a timer as a sort of DIY-nightlight.

While this feature is neat, it likely needs a bit of refinement from Apple in the next update to operate as effectively as the company wants it to, especially on the pre-iPhone 14 devices that lack always-on displays.

8. Convenience Updates

These next features are pretty minor but very necessary changes that help smooth out the user experience in iOS. First of all, Apple has changed the Siri voice activation phase from “Hey, Siri” to just “Siri.” The removal of one word is hardly groundbreaking, but it does make it faster to say and theoretically should make Siri better at understanding and learning your voice.

Also, Apple has allowed users to enable an option that automatically deletes two-factor authentication texts from your inbox once they’ve been used. This keeps your information more secure, ensuring that no pesky access codes are laying around in case someone gets access to your phone. It also just helps minimize clutter in your Messages app. A nice fix!

To enable this feature, navigate to the Passwords section in the Settings app. Then, tap Password Options, scroll to the Verification Codes section and enable “Clean Up Automatically.”

Finally, improved and more efficient AirDrop transfers. Thanks to this new feature, if someone is sharing high-res media with you and it’s going to take some time to transfer, you don’t need to stand next to them and wait for the transfer to complete. You can step away and the files will be sent over the internet. This makes it simple and easy to share big photo albums or other large files with friends without having to stand by and twiddle your thumbs while you wait for it to finish.

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All in all, the newest version of Apple’s iOS 17 platform is a potent new upgrade with plenty of features to sink your teeth into. However, most of these features tend to function only in concert with other users’ iPhones or other Apple devices in a given user’s ecosystem. While that’s often expected given Apple’s strong inter-device-dependency, it may also be a sign that while integration may still be a priority for the now-3-trillion-dollar company, innovation may be more elusive in the coming years.

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.](#)