

Review: Ups and downs with Google Glass apps

April 4 2014, by Barbara Ortutay



In this April 3, 2014, photo taken with Google Glass, AP reporter Barbara takes a photo of what she is cooking in New York. (AP Photo)

Google Glass is like a fickle friend. Surprises await, such as the time it took a photo of my ceiling while I was making carrot and ginger soup.

I've been using Google's Web-connected eyewear over the past few

months. Spending a day trying to get some chores done with it was frustrating at times, though it gave me a glimpse of what might be possible down the line.

Cooking with Glass, for example, frees my hands to stir, chop and season instead of leafing through a cookbook or getting grease on a tablet computer. Playing games on Glass by nodding my head around or shouting things was fun, once I got over the looking-crazy part. Or maybe that was part of the appeal. My favorite activity, hands down, is winking to take a photo, hands-free.

But perhaps I had mistakenly winked when I was trying to read ingredients on the Glass.

Glass takes a lot of time to get used to. That makes sense for a new type of device, but it strikes me as unusual when I could take most gadgets out of a box and intuitively know how to use them.

The day I spent doing chores had me calling Google's tech-support line three times and nearly breaking down in tears. On top of that, I got only two chores done.

That's a long way from a mass-market product. Google knows this and sells these \$1,500 gadgets on an invitation basis to get feedback on how they work in day-to-day living. It's as though we're on a long journey together with Google.

— DOING LAUNDRY

Don't ask me for directions. I regularly wind up in circles in my own neighborhood, and I confidently send lost tourists north when they need

south. Maps on smartphones have been a godsend, but it's annoying having to hold my iPhone in front of me when I'm trying to find an address.

Enter Glass, which sits eyebrow-level and has a tiny screen above your right eye, eliminating the need to stare down at your phone. Glass responds to voice or touch commands, and it answers back on the screen.

I had to drop off some laundry, so I asked Glass to take me to my regular laundromat less than three blocks from my apartment:

"OK, Glass, get directions to the laundromat," I said.

Glass began searching for "aundora mint," whatever that is. Let's try this again.

"OK, Glass, get directions to the laundromat," I said.

Glass returned with nine options in my neighborhood, but it didn't include my standby, KT Laundromat.



In this April 3, 2014, photo AP reporter Barbara Ortutay is photographed wearing Google Glass in New York. (AP Photo)

"OK, Glass, get directions to KT Laundromat," I said.

I got Katie's Clean & Green Laundry in Lakewood, Ohio. At this point I started to get frustrated. Turns out that KT isn't in Google's maps database.

"OK, Glass, get directions to 500 Henry Street," I said, using the KT's street address.

Glass gave me 500 Henry Street in Manhattan, not Brooklyn.

I finally got directions after specifying Brooklyn.

I was on my way, Glass on my face, sun in my eyes and directions in my ears—that is, until I walked out of my apartment's Wi-Fi range. Without an Internet connection, Glass is just a really expensive headset with a camera. No maps, no apps and no directions. Good thing I know my way home.

Glass is supposed to connect online through your phone. I called tech support and reset the Glass and its connection with my phone. That didn't help. Turns out I need either an Android phone or a personal mobile hotspot. My iPhone plan doesn't let me create a hotspot. Oh.

— COOKING

Glass has a couple of cooking apps, which need to be installed separately. You get Google-approved "Glassware" apps by scrolling through a MyGlass app on your phone. KitchMe lets people search for recipes and plan meals. Allthecooks does that and also lets you share personal recipes with others. I gave the latter a spin.

"OK, Glass, find a recipe for carrot ginger soup," I said.

After the maps debacle, I was excited to see carrot and ginger soup pop up as the first result. I tapped the photo of it and got Step One of the recipe.

Hmmm. I still had no idea what ingredients I needed. I swiped back and forth on the Glass's touchpad above my right cheek. I said, "OK, Glass, get the ingredients." Nope.

Finally a Google search (on my laptop) revealed that I had to tilt my head back to see the ingredients on the screen. Pretty cool, though sometimes Glass would take a photo when I tilted.



In this April 3, 2014, photo AP reporter Barbara Ortutay is photographed wearing Google Glass in New York. (AP Photo)

After getting the hang of it, I chopped onions and carrots and simmered the soup with the recipe conveniently visible above my right eye. When two guests arrived at our apartment, I pushed Glass above my head like a headband to greet them. That way, I wouldn't look creepy.

I then returned to cooking.

At one point, I needed to know whether ground mustard is the same as mustard seed. I searched for it on Glass, but I got paragraph-length "answers" that didn't answer my question. Because of Glass's tiny screen, many of the long-winded results included only introductions, or the questions themselves.

I gave up. Mustard is mustard.

Nonetheless, cooking is one of those intuitive, simple uses for Google Glass that makes a lot of sense.

It also implies a whole slew of other possible uses for times when you need both hands for an activity.

I could see doctors, nurses, dentists incorporating it into their profession.

In my day-to-day life, I could see using Glass to snap photos of buildings, animals and even people to learn more about them, though I realize the last one is a touchy subject for many people. It would love to use Glass to navigate inside supermarkets and department stores to find specific products. I can also see using Glass to read me news articles while I'm getting ready in the morning (a feature already available).

Before most of this happens, though, I would need a reliable Internet connection and get over the difficulties, weird surprises and somewhat frustrating experiences that come with using Glass.

© 2014 The Associated Press. All rights reserved.

Citation: Review: Ups and downs with Google Glass apps (2014, April 4) retrieved 8 August 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2014-04-ups-downs-google-glass-apps.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.