

Review: iOS 9 offers some cool new features for iPhones, iPads

September 28 2015, by Troy Wolverton, San Jose Mercury News

Apple's iPhones and iPads can do some new tricks, thanks to an update to the software that underlies them.

But it may take a while before you benefit from some of the most important features in the new software.

Last week, Apple released iOS 9, the latest version of its mobile operating system. The highlight features are for iPad users and focus on some new multitasking tricks. Perhaps more significant, both iPads and iPhones also get some new features that Apple collectively calls "Intelligence."

IOS's Intelligence brings together Apple's Siri voice assistant and its Spotlight search. Siri is able to answer a broader range of questions and respond to more commands. Spotlight now combs across a broader array of apps and information and can look inside applications. If you are looking for a particular recipe, it will now be able to find it within a particular app.

Combined, the services are also supposed to anticipate your needs, highlighting apps or information when you want them. So, if you always listen to podcasts on your morning walk, the system is supposed to be able to automatically pull up the media player controls to allow you to resume playing the podcast you listened to the previous morning.

The Intelligence features should get better over time as they collect data.

The more your phone becomes familiar with your habits, the better it will be at anticipating your needs. And as your apps are updated, Spotlight should become better at being able to search within them.

I was only able to get an early glimpse at how some of these features will work. Spotlight is already combing across a bunch of apps it didn't look at before. And Siri already has a sense of what apps I use most often at particular times.

With the new release, iPads will get a significant feature - they'll finally be able to display more than one app at a time. If you've got an iPad released in the last two years, you can use a feature called "slide over" to take a quick look at another application without leaving the application you're in. You can also use a feature called "picture in picture" to use another application while you are on a FaceTime video call.

If you have one of the latest iPads, you get one other multitasking trick - the ability to split your tablet's screen between two applications at one time, allowing you to easily copy information from one app to another.

iOS is coming late to the multitasking party. Android and Windows tablets have supported the ability to display multiple apps on the screen at one time for years. Because the features are new to iOS, only a handful of applications support them. But the slide-over app at least works well with those apps that are compatible with it.

Other than Intelligence and multitasking, there are several other highlight features in iOS 9. One is that the built-in Notes app has been overhauled.

Previously, you could only have text notes inside that app. Now the app has drawing tools that allow you to doodle, sketch or handwrite information. You can also create checklists and attach everything from a

map to a Web page. The new features make the app much more useful. My only quibble was that many of the things can be attached to a note only from another app, not from the Notes app itself.

Another welcome update: the restoration of transit directions to the Maps app. Since Apple replaced Google's map data with its own, you've had to use other applications to get transit information. Now you can it inside the Maps app again.

It works pretty well. I was able to get transit directions just by requesting them from Siri. The app will customize your directions based on when you plan to travel and what your preferences are for taking trains or buses or the like.

The only problem is that Apple is offering transit directions in just six metro areas in the United States. At least for now, if you don't live in one of those six areas, you're stuck using separate transit apps.

Apple also updated the built-in news reader in iOS. The previous app was called Newsstand and acted as a kind of folder for news applications. The new app has been renamed News and it works more like Flipboard. Instead of directing you to other apps, it shows a collection of articles itself.

You customize the app when you launch it by telling it the kind of news you are interested in and the news sources you read. It then will show you a list of articles that meet your interests.

It works OK, but it's no Flipboard killer; this is no slick digital magazine. Instead, the design of the News app is pretty basic. You see a list of headlines on a kind of homepage. When you tap on a headline, you get a story page that looks a lot like what you'd see in a Web browser, only without the ads. The lack of ads is welcome - at least to readers - but you

can typically see the same view in the Safari Web browser by going to the news sites' Web pages.

Troy's QUICK TAKE

What: Apple iOS 9 [mobile operating system](#)

Likes: Free update; available for devices up to four years old; restored transit directions in Maps app; ability to add drawings, photos, attachments to Notes; split-screen multi-tasking features for iPads; new search and Siri capabilities; new iCloud drive app allows direct access to documents stored in Apple's cloud.

Dislikes: Few standout features, especially for iPhones; split-screen features only work on latest iPads and with apps updated to use them; new search features also require updated apps; often can't attach items to notes from inside the Notes [app](#); some [features](#) can be hard to find.

Price: Free

Web: apple.com

©2015 San Jose Mercury News

Distributed by Tribune Content Agency, LLC.

Citation: Review: iOS 9 offers some cool new features for iPhones, iPads (2015, September 28) retrieved 4 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2015-09-ios-cool-features-iphones-ipads.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.