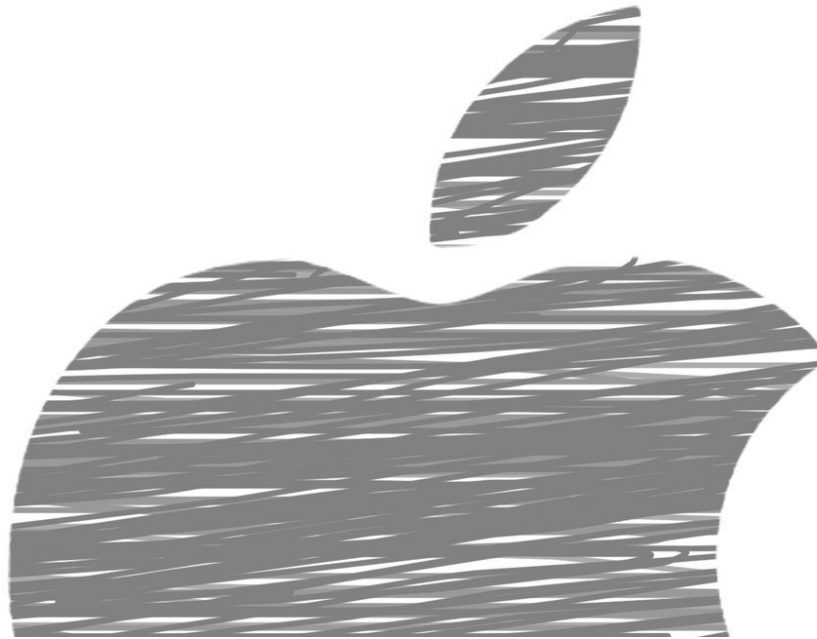


Apple launches iOS 13 public beta: 10 reasons to get the software now if you're feeling brave

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Apple will unveil new iPhones in September, assuming the company sticks to its usual playbook. The fall timeframe is also when Apple officially releases the latest flavor of iOS, the software that will not only

be at the core of whatever new handsets Apple introduces, but that will also add fresh features to the iPhones already out in the wild, likely including the phone in your pocket.

iOS 13 is compatible with models dating back to the iPhone 6s and 6s Plus that were released in 2015.

If you want to get a head start on the latest software, Apple on Monday unleashed the public beta of iOS 13 available to anyone willing to assume the risks the come with beta software.

The usual caveats apply: Prerelease beta software is considered a beta for a reason, so I wouldn't recommend installing the software on the device you count on daily.

Beta software may be buggy and [new features](#) may not be finished yet. And not all the apps you currently use may work at this early stage.

(If you have an iPad, the same admonitions apply to the public beta of iPadOS, the newly spun-off software for Apple's tablet, that was also made available Monday).

If you're willing to proceed anyway, enroll your current device with Apple at beta.apple.com and back the phone up inside iTunes so that you can restore it to its former state should anything major go wrong.

Apple says there are more than 300 new [features](#) built into iOS 13, some of which were highlighted during the company's Worldwide Developers Conference earlier this month.

Here are 10 of the features that grabbed my attention.

Dark Mode

This is all about aesthetics. The new dark motif, which Apple is also opening up to third-party developers, is said to be easier on the eyes in a low-light environment. If you don't think so or prefer things the way they are, you can stick with the status quo. You can also schedule Dark Mode to turn on during sunset or some other designated time.

Sign in with Apple

This is Apple's answer to the familiar "Sign in with Google" or "Sign in with Facebook" methods to log into certain apps and services via Apple's rivals, which Apple will tell you comes with privacy risks.

Apple claims signing into participating sites through its upcoming method instead provides better privacy safeguards. Apple says it won't track you or build a profile based on your activity. Developers can only request your name and email address. That email address can be anonymized too. If so, the contents you need or want to see will be forwarded to your actual address.

Apple requires developers with an app in the App Store or who use a third-party log-in to offer the "Sign in with Apple" option.

Redesigned Photos app

This feature is largely about aesthetics, too, though it is also meant to make it easier for you to find pictures you want to see. That appears to be the case.

The Photos tab is organized into separate Years, Months, Days and All Photos views.

The Years view is contextual, meaning you'll see events from years past

tied to the current date. And if the date in question happens to be the birthdate of someone in your People album, past photos of the person will be highlighted on the day.

Your photos library will be livelier, too, with videos and Live Photos—that's the feature where you'll see a few snippets of video at the start and close of a still photo—playing silently in small windows behind you.

Video editing

With iOS 13, Apple will let you apply many of the same tools you use to edit photos to do the same with videos. For instance, you'll be able to rotate and crop videos, and apply various filters.

Apple Maps

Apple's Maps app has had a poor reputation compared to Google Maps. As it plays catchup to Google, Apple is, indeed, beefing up its own app, all for the better. One way is through what appears to be a handsome new Look Around feature that resembles the Google feature known as Street View.

Apple says it has driven more than 4 million miles across the U.S. to offer a more realistic view of roads, buildings, parks, beaches, airports, and more.

The new map is already available in select cities and states, Apple says, and will roll out across the whole U.S by the end of this year and to more countries in 2020.

CarPlay

Apple Maps ties into CarPlay, too, and some five years after introducing its dashboard for the car, Apple is polishing up that in-dash experience. The main thing is you'll be able to see more info on the home screen: the map, your next turn-by-turn instruction perhaps, and play controls while listening say to music, all without diverting the driver's attention from the road.

And the new CarPlay dashboard surfaces more album art within Apple Music.

At last count, CarPlay was compatible with more than 500 vehicle models.

Speed

Zipper performance is always welcome, though it remains to be seen if or how much you'll notice. For its part, Apple is claiming apps will launch twice as fast, and that unlocking an iPhone X, iPhone XS, iPhone XS Max, and iPhone XR with FaceID is up to 30% faster. Apple is also promising smaller app download sizes.

Voice control

In lieu of tapping, swiping and so on, this accessibility feature will let you pretty much control the iPhone with your voice. It remains to be seen if the feature will work as well as it does in this promotional Apple video. If it comes close, it promises to be a godsend for some people with physical challenges.

Quick Path typing

There have long been third-party alternatives to the iPhone's built-in

keyboard that give you the option to swipe instead of tapping on keys. That's just what the Quick Path typing feature will let you do in iOS 13. You'll be able to swipe your finger from one letter to the next to type without lifting it from the keyboard. The feature exploits machine learning to figure out the path you drew on the keyboard as it converts everything into words. If you like the old method, you can still tap to type. Or employ both methods interchangeably.

Silence unknown callers

You receive all too many calls from strangers, marketers, and robo-callers out to scam or sell you something. A new feature in iOS 13 lets you send any caller from an unknown phone number directly to voicemail without ringing your phone.

To which I say bravo!

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