Facebook to enable viewing of Apple's animated photos

December 21 2015, byAnick Jesdanun

This photo provided by Apple and Facebook demonstrates the posting of an animated photo using Facebook's new app, left, and the viewing of it, right, on an iPhone. The latest iPhones come with the ability to turn still images into video, known as Live Photos. Facebook, one of the leading forums for photo sharing, begins supporting the feature on Monday, Dec. 21, 2015. (Courtesy of

Apple and Facebook via AP)

The latest iPhones come with the ability to turn still images into video—just like magic—but sharing options had been limited to other Apple apps.

That's changing as Facebook, one of the leading forums for photo sharing, adds Apple's Live Photos feature to Facebook's iPhone and iPad app. Facebook will start offering it Monday to a limited number of users initially, with a broader rollout planned in the coming weeks. Facebook's support follows a similar move by Yahoo's Tumblr service.

With Live Photos on the iPhone 6s and 6s Plus, every still shot is accompanied by a three-second video, with sound. For instance, you can snap a shot of your kid blowing out birthday candles—and get video showing the flame going out as everyone sings "Happy Birthday."

The phone automatically records video in the background when the camera app is open. The recording is immediately discarded if you do nothing. When you snap a shot, the phone saves a second and a half of video leading to that shot and continues recording until you get three seconds in all.

Why not just take video? You might not know ahead of time when you'll encounter a scene lending itself to video. With Live Photos, you always get the video option—unless you turn the feature off.

But sharing had been limited to certain Apple apps—such as the texting app Messages, but not Mail.

With tools Apple is making available to third parties, sharing can now be

done through Facebook and Tumblr, too. Your friend merely needs to tap and hold the photo to watch the image animate. The iPhone 6s models are required for creating Live Photos, but viewing can also be done on older iPhones and iPads with the latest operating system. On Android and Web browsers, you get only the still images.

Besides Facebook and Tumblr, Getty Images is also offering a selection of Live Photos through its app. It's a curated selection, though, rather than a mechanism for sharing photos with friends.

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Citation: Facebook to enable viewing of Apple's animated photos (2015, December 21) retrieved 16 April 2024 from
https://phys.org/news/2015-12-facebook-enable-viewing-apple-animated.html

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