

iPhoneLife

INSIDER

Cheat Sheet

iOS 26



iOS 26

THE MOST EXCITING NEW FEATURES & A COMPLETELY REDESIGNED EXPERIENCE

iOS 26? WHAT HAPPENED TO iOS 19–25?

The previous iOS update was iOS 18, and since iOS 1 was released with the first-ever iPhone in 2007, the numbers have gone up consecutively each year. This year, Apple decided to make it a little easier to keep track of the numbers by adapting a year-based system for the software updates. All of this year's software updates have the number 26. Why not 25 since it's 2025? The public update comes out in the fall, just three months before the year ends, so the new software update will be primarily used in 2026 rather than 2025.

DID YOU KNOW?

Both iPhones and iPads used to run iOS software. Now, iPads have their own software version called iPadOS. iOS is currently just for iPhones, but once you update your iPad to iPadOS 26, you'll notice many of these features available there too.

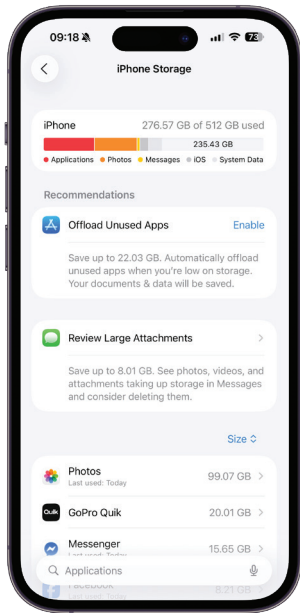
WHICH DEVICES CAN UPDATE TO iOS 26?

First, let's make sure your iPhone is compatible with the newest software. Check this list to verify that your device is able to run the latest iOS:

- The entire iPhone 17 line is expected to run iOS 26
- iPhone 16e, iPhone 16, iPhone 16 Plus, iPhone 16 Pro, and iPhone 16 Pro Max
- iPhone 15, iPhone 15 Plus, iPhone 15 Pro, and iPhone 15 Pro Max
- iPhone 14, iPhone 14 Plus, iPhone 14 Pro, and iPhone 14 Pro Max
- iPhone 13, iPhone 13 mini, iPhone 13 Pro, and iPhone 13 Pro Max
- iPhone 12, iPhone 12 mini, iPhone 12 Pro, and iPhone 12 Pro Max
- iPhone 11, iPhone 11 Pro, and iPhone 11 Pro Max
- iPhone SE (2nd generation or later)

WAIT, THERE'S A CATCH!

Everyone with the above iPhone versions will be able to download and run iOS 26, but some features will only work on newer devices. All Apple Intelligence are only available on the iPhone 15 Pro and newer models. Also, the 3D Lock Screen effect is only available on the iPhone 12 and newer models.



MAKE SURE YOU HAVE ENOUGH STORAGE SPACE

In order to download the iOS software update, you may need to clear out some space.

For best results, we recommend having up to 20 gigabytes (GB) of storage

available before you start the iOS 26 installation process. While the update itself might not use up all that storage, it is recommended to have some extra free storage to keep things running smoothly. If you don't take the time to clear out enough data, you could end up having problems like your iPhone crashing and displaying what is dubbed the pink screen of death—this happened to me and was a huge pain to fix!

The quickest way to clear your storage is to delete large videos that you no longer need, followed by photos and music. For step-by-step instructions on how to do this and for other useful storage tips, please refer to our article on how to free up storage space.



BACK UP YOUR IPHONE BEFORE YOU UPDATE!

Before you install new iOS software, it's always a good idea to back up your existing data to iCloud, so you can be sure you won't lose anything if something goes wrong. To manually back up your iPhone, open the Settings app and tap on your Apple

ID profile at the top. Tap on iCloud, then on iCloud Backup. Finally, tap Back Up Now to perform a manual backup of your iPhone.



PRE-UPDATE CHECKLIST

Before you update your iPhone to iOS 26:

- Make sure you have at least 20 GB of free iPhone storage space.
- Create a secure backup of your phone to iCloud or on your computer.
- Plan for up to two hours without use of your iPhone (although it might be much faster).
- Keep your phone charging.

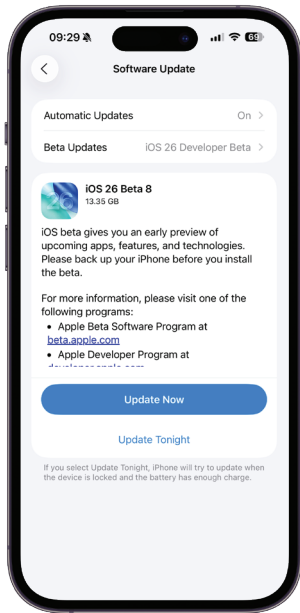
The update will start even if your phone isn't plugged in as long as your battery is over 50% charged, but it will pause if your battery drops to 50% or less. If this happens, you'll have to plug your phone in and may need to start the download again. It is best to keep your phone plugged in throughout the entire power-intensive process.

- Make sure you are connected to a stable and secure Wi-Fi network.
- If you have the iOS 26 public or developer beta installed on your device, you must remove the beta profile prior to installing the publicly available iOS 26 software version.

That's it! You are now ready to get started!

WHERE'S MY UPDATE?

Don't see an available update yet, but your friends or family members do? Don't worry; it's pretty common. Apple tends to stagger software releases. If your iPhone doesn't show you it's ready to update to iOS 26, wait a day or so and check back. Sometimes, restarting your iPhone will get it to show up.



HOW TO UPDATE YOUR IPHONE TO iOS 26

Once you've completed the pre-update checklist above, follow these steps to update your iPhone:

1. On your iPhone, open the Settings app and scroll down to tap on General.

2. Tap on Software Update.

3. If your iPhone is not set to update automatically, you should see an available update. Tap Update Now.
4. This process will take a few minutes. During this time you'll see a "Verifying update" notification on your screen.
5. Once the new Operating System is finished downloading, tap Install Now.
6. Agree to the Terms and Conditions.
7. Your phone will power down automatically. Then it will power back up and install the new software.
8. Once your Lock screen comes back up, unlock your iPhone. Follow any on-screen directions to complete the update.

OUR iOS 26 TOP TEN FAVORITE FEATURES:

Liquid Glass: A complete overhaul of the interface elements and aesthetics of iOS. We were skeptical at first, but Apple managed to keep everything feeling familiar (with a few exceptions) while also making it all new and beautiful.

Spatial Scenes: Turn your still photos into amazing little 3D dioramas. We can't get enough of this hidden trick.

Call Screening: When a number your phone doesn't recognize calls, you can have the phone ask them why they're calling before the phone even rings, and then read their answer before you pick up.

Conversation Backgrounds: Beautify your Messages chats with backdrops customized to each conversation. We all need a little more beauty in our lives, right?

Polls in Messages: Poll your friends in the Messages app, and find out where you're going for dinner, or which of you has the most infectious laugh.

Live Translation: See translations of live conversations in FaceTime and Messages. Break down the communication boundaries!

Visual Intelligence: Easily run image searches or ask questions of ChatGPT straight from screenshots. A fast and fun way to check prices, compare products, and dig deeper with ChatGPT.

Password History in the Passwords App: At last! A much needed update to Apple's built-in password manager. You can now see the passwords you've used in the past, but had to update. A simple and extremely practical little update that stands to save us a lot of time.

Apple Maps Visited Places: Ever forget the name of a restaurant you loved? Find it again with this neat feature for Apple Maps, that can record the places you've navigated to, even in different apps.

Snooze Duration: At long last, you can set your snooze length to one that works for you. Send that alarm clock back to sleep with confidence.