

14 apps you'll use time and time again for iPhone and Android

By Kim Komando, Komando.com, March 9, 2019

There are two ways to look at your favorite app store: (1) Yay, there are so many apps! It's a treasure trove of possibilities! (2) Ugh, there are so many apps. How could I ever wade through all the junk and find something useful? Some apps can even be dangerous, like the spoofed cash app that drained this Georgia woman's bank account. Whether you prefer the Apple App Store or Google Play, the sheer number of apps can excite and confound. Thousands of apps are free, and few cost more than a few dollars. But if you're looking for the real diamonds in the rough – the apps that can ease your workload or enhance your leisure time – you can stop browsing and check out this list. How powerful can an app be? This Apple Watch app actually saved a woman's life.

These 14 apps cover the gamut of uses, from entertainment to clerical duties to the public good. They're expertly designed, and each has the potential to become a personal game-changer.

1. Make objects disappear from your photos

This first app is specific to iPhones, and it's excellent for taking spectacular photos, especially when you travel, and you want to capture photos without a bunch of strangers in the background. Say you're in Times Square in New York, and you want the lights and the buildings in your shot, but you don't want traffic.

Spectre Camera app for iPhones works like a long-exposure shutter on a camera. It holds the shutter open, so cars, people and moving objects are nearly invisible. The best thing about the app is it doesn't require a tripod for the long-exposure shutter. It's \$2.99 in Apple's store. [Spectre for iOS](#)

2. Manage your travel documents with one app

Speaking of travel, the app **Google Trips** organizes your scheduling, confirmation numbers and other details. The magic of Google Trip is that it integrates Gmail and Inbox, so you can keep your travel information in one place.

Trips also helps you figure out what to do at your destination, with half-day and full-day suggestions. This feature can replace the cumbersome travel guide with tailor-made lists of activities.

You can also tell Google Trips about the types of things you enjoy doing. You might be a museum-goer, or maybe you prefer the beach or both – Google Trips will help you find those places.

[Google Trips for Android](#) [Google Trips for iOS](#)

3. Skip the customs line

One more incredibly useful travel app, especially if you travel internationally, is **Mobile Passport**. I have been recommending it for years, and I still get people thanking me all the time for saving them time and hassles. Passports are your key to crossing borders, but they are also a source of anxiety and even panic. If you lose it, you're sunk. This app lets you load your passport's information onto your smartphone.

The best part about Mobile Passport is that it allows you to skip U.S. Customs and Immigration lines (the U.S. Customs and Border Patrol developed the app). It's available at 25 U.S. airports and three cruise ports, mostly in large cities like New York and Atlanta, and more are coming. Get it and use it. You can thank me later.

[Mobile Passport for Android](#) [Mobile Passport for iOS](#)

4. Multiplayer game for family and friends

I like this game because it blends two cultural phenomena – family game night and smart devices.

Triple Agent is a smartphone game (and family-friendly app) that'll have everyone scheming, plotting, planning – and laughing. The 10-minute game is designed for five to nine players, who pass around a single smartphone. You are secretly assigned to either be a good guy on The Service or a double-agent on The Virus – you each get to vote on who is sent to prison. [Triple Agent for Android](#) [Triple Agent for iOS](#)

5. Scan your old photos with this app

When smartphones became de rigueur, many people found themselves taking snapshots of old photographic prints. This technique wasn't perfect, but it was a simple way to archive all those fragile memories. Now, you can use Google's PhotoScan app, which digitally scans your photos. It scans to the edges of photos, pieces together multiple images and you can send your photos to apps like Google Photos, where your scanned images will be sorted and organized.

[PhotoScan for Android](#) [PhotoScan for iOS](#)

6. Share your phone's processing power

More and more, the public is acknowledging smartphones as (literal) life-savers. DreamLab is one example: Researchers use massive amounts of nocturnal data to create personalized cancer treatments. In theory, this data will revolutionize the way patients are treated and, hopefully, cured.

Yet such a massive amount of data requires far more processing power than institutions can muster on their own. That's where your smartphone comes in – they'll borrow your phone's processing power while you're sleeping, and your little device can help compile and analyze all that information. [DreamLab for Android](#) [DreamLab for iOS](#)

7. Best weather app

You'll find lots of [weather apps for your smartphone](#), but Dark Sky has become a leader in its field. By zooming in on precise locations, Dark Sky provides minute-by-minute forecasts of upcoming weather conditions in your neighborhood. Dark Sky will also send you alerts, maps, and continually updated forecasts. [Dark Sky for Android](#) [Dark Sky for iOS](#)

8. Reserve tables at pretty much any restaurant

It's a challenge to find a good restaurant, whether you're in a foreign country, on a business trip or driving around your neighborhood. You can spend hours searching review sites and sending texts to friends to ask for suggestions. The OpenTable app can help save you a lot of time and frustration. You use it to make reservations, look over menus and read reviews, all from one app. [OpenTable for Android](#) [OpenTable for iOS](#)

9. On the West Coast? Get alerts about earthquakes

ShakeAlert is an app that's triggered during an earthquake. The seismic waves are recorded by seismometers and, in seconds, sends an alert to ShakeAlert users. Those few seconds, like a recent 8-second alert in San Francisco, is enough time for many people to find a safe place. It's available only in California, Oregon, and Washington, and let me tell you: It works! I was in Los Angeles last month, and sure enough, while I was there, the app notified me that an earthquake occurred. It was subtle. I didn't feel it, but my phone sure did.

[Get ShakeAlertLA for Android](#) [Get ShakeAlertLA for iOS](#)

10. Edit photos on your iPhone or iPad

There are a lot of photo editing apps for mobile devices, but very few as good as Enlight for your iPhone or iPad. It starts with easy-to-use, high-quality photo editing. But Enlight also has tools that are routinely used by professional photographers. Enlight makes those tools simple and streamlined, no matter how limited your graphics experience. For example, you can superimpose images on top of one another, add text and even design posters. One tool also makes photographs look hand-painted. [Enlight for iOS](#)

11. Manage your TV shows with one app

Suppose you want to see a favorite movie, but you've subscribed to several streaming services, and you don't want to run a search on each one. You'll find several apps that will help you manage your TV binge-watching, but this one will also help you track and plan your movie theater outings.

JustWatch tells you when new movies and TV show episodes are added to streaming services like Netflix, Prime Video, Hulu, YouTube Channel, The Roku Channel and dozens of others. It's similar to having your onscreen TV guide on your smartphone, but for all the streaming channels you watch. Plus, you can even find out when movies are playing at your local movie theater. Select the movie you want to see and type in your ZIP code - you'll see theater locations and movie times. [JustWatch for Android](#) [JustWatch for iOS](#)

12. Get recipes based on your dietary needs and limits

Dietary science is more sophisticated than ever, and more people are benefiting from vegan diets, gluten-free diets, paleo cuisine, and lots of other dietary parameters. The downside: You may struggle to develop new and exciting meals. Yummly can recommend recipes based on the ingredients you already have on the shopping list (or in your refrigerator). You can save recipes that you'll use over and over. Just input your dietary preferences, and Yummly will suggest recipes that are right for you. [Yummly for Android](#) [Yummly for iOS](#)

13. Scan documents and share

CamScanner is a huge time-saver, especially if you send documents to clients or you're in the process of sending documents back and forth with a real estate agent or lawyer. You can scan documents from your smartphone and they're turned into PDFs that you can send by email or message.

Just think of all the times you've needed a PDF, say in a hotel when you were on vacation. With CamScanner, you no longer need to ruin your vacation to run back to the hotel's business center to print a document and fax it - just do it from your phone. [CamScanner for Android](#) [CamScanner for iOS](#)

14. Create photo books, gifts from your photos

Shutterfly has been around for years, but some photographers still haven't used it. The Shutterfly app is kind of like having your own, personal greeting-card store on your smartphone.

In short, you can print your photographs onto just about anything, from coffee mugs to pillow. Shutterfly is best known for their photobooks, and these beautiful books are still easy to create and publish. But the service has radically branched out into other printing services as well. [Shutterfly for Android](#) [Shutterfly for iOS](#)