

## Some little-known iPhone features you could start using

iOS is packed with lots of cool little features that don't get the love they deserve. Here are some favorites.



You probably think you know your iPhone well. After all, these days we probably look at our phones more than we look at our loved ones. But the truth is, even those of us who've remained loyal to Apple's handset since 2007 can still be surprised by the tricks in each new version of iOS. The biggest ones get explained in the tutorials for the heftiest patches, but many others must be coaxed out of the Settings app.

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### Turn on Smart Invert for an impromptu iOS Dark Mode

iOS doesn't have a true Dark Mode yet—although believable rumors suggest we'll be getting one in iOS 13—but you can approximate one with an existing Accessibility setting. This isn't the regular Invert Colors that makes everything look like a psychedelic fever dream; instead, Smart Invert Colors changes elements like the background to black but keeps the colors of app icons, photos, and similar graphical elements. (It does, however, make colored graphics look duller.) The catch is that it only consistently works well with Apple's own apps, so you'll have a better time using it on, say, Safari instead of Chrome.

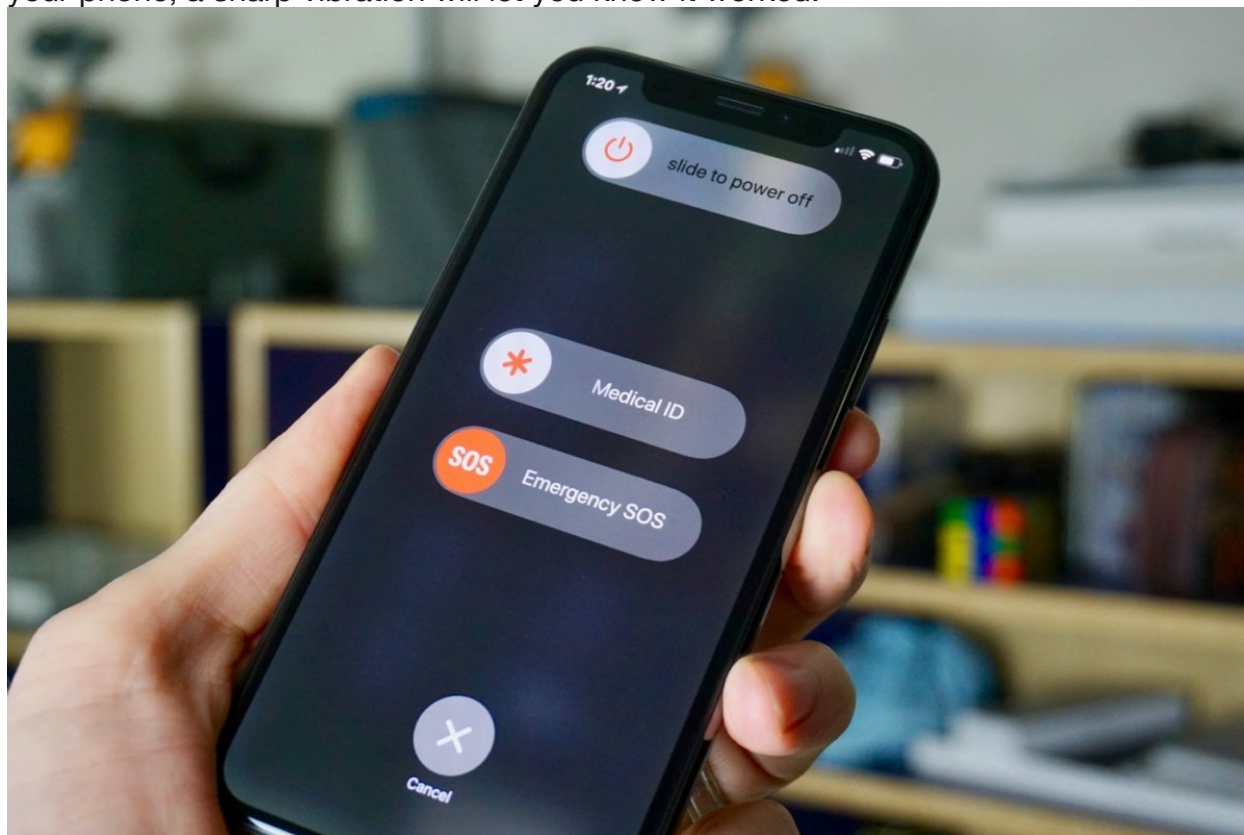
To turn it on, go to *Settings > General > Accessibility > Display Accommodations > Invert Colors*. Press it, and then select *Smart Invert*. iOS will immediately paint it black. I wouldn't keep it on all the time, but it's a great temporary solution for making nighttime reading more pleasant.

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### Quickly disable Face ID in case of an emergency

I'm a big admirer of Face ID, but unfortunately it makes it easy for someone to unlock your iPhone against your will by merely holding it up to your face. If you know you're about to be in a situation where this might be an issue, you can disable Face ID in about three seconds.

To do this, hold down at the same time the side button (on the right) and either the up or down volume buttons on the left for about two seconds. Even if you're not looking at your phone, a sharp vibration will let you know it worked.

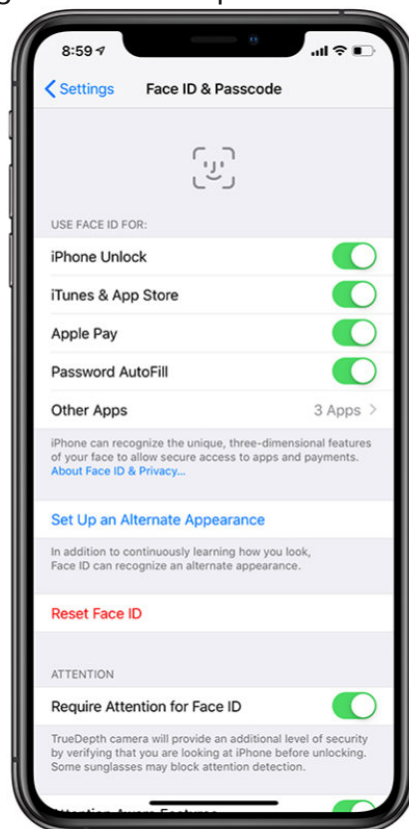


Anyone who wants to get into your phone after this will be forced to enter the passcode. (This is also how you access the Emergency SOS and your Medical ID.) For detailed information, be sure to check out [our how-to](#).

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### Customize what Face ID unlocks

You may think Face ID completely replaces the passcode when it's active, but Apple actually grants a huge degree of control over what Face ID unlocks. If you're worried about a situation like the one described above, for instance, you can set Face ID so it works for things like Apple Pay and Safari passwords but doesn't actually unlock the iPhone itself. Anyone wanting to unlock the phone will still need the passcode.



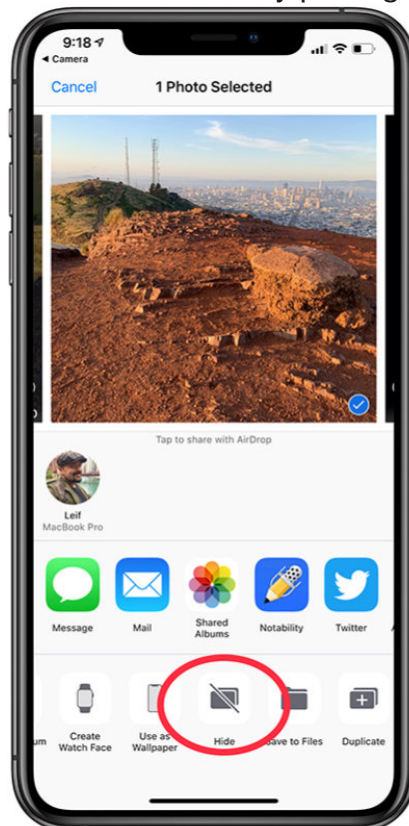
There's more if you scroll down.

To change what Face ID unlocks, go to *Settings > Face ID & Passcode*. At the top, you'll see the “big picture” options that lets you choose whether to use Face ID for things like iPhone Unlock, Apple Pay, and the App Store. Scroll to the bottom, and you can decide whether Face ID allows access to features such as the Control Center, Notification Center, or even Siri when the phone is locked.

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### Hide photos from your main Photos feed

Many of us have images in our Photos feeds that we don't want parents or coworkers to see when we're showing them photos of our vacation (or whatever). Thankfully, iOS lets you hide those photos from the main feed by putting them in a special folder.



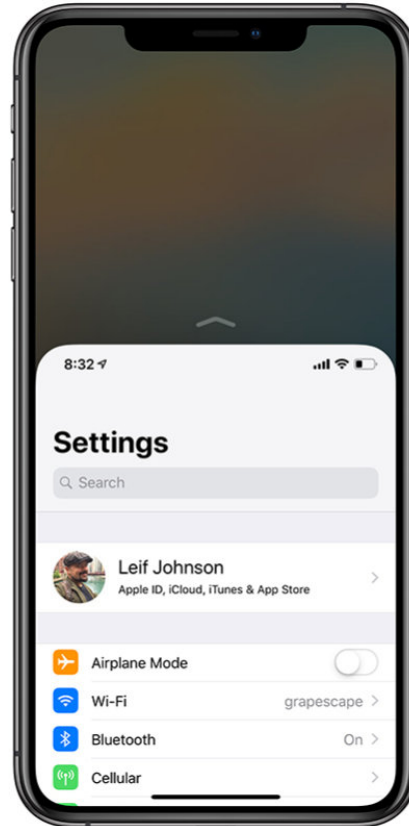
In the Photos app, the Hidden folder also won't have a photo-based thumbnail. To hide a photo, go to the Photos app and open the offending photo. Then press the *Share* button—the box with the arrow pointing upward—in the lower left. Along the bottom bar that pops up, scroll right until you see *Hide*. Press it. The photo will vanish from the main feed and be viewable only from a new *Hidden* folder.

You can't protect the Hidden folder with a password, unfortunately, so anyone who knows about this feature will still be able to find the hidden shots.

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### Use Reachability to reach upper-screen elements from the bottom

I love my giant iPhone XS Max, but even I admit that pressing options at the top of the display gets annoying when I'm holding the phone with one hand. That's where the Reachability feature comes in handy.



You can do this anywhere except for the home screen.

When you've got an app open, swipe *down* on the (usually white) digital bar at the bottom of the screen, and the top part of the app will shift halfway down the screen so you can more easily press the buttons there.

To turn on Reachability, go to *General > Accessibility > Reachability* and tap the toggle there.



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### Switch to a one-handed keyboard for easier typing on larger iPhones

Even if you've got big paws, typing with one hand gets awkward when you're trying to use one hand to type a message on digital keyboard of the iPhone XS Max or iPhone 8 Plus. Happily, Apple lets you use a one-handed keyboard that's entirely usable with one thumb.



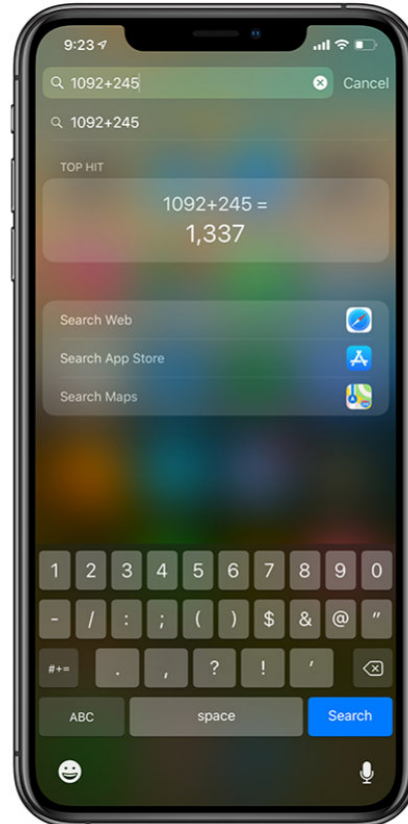
You can easily switch it to the left side, too.

Whenever you can see the iOS digital keyboard, hold down the smiley-face button for emojis in the lower left. (Don't tap it.) A menu will pop up showing options for the standard keyboard and either a left- or right-handed one-handed keyboard. Select the one you want and type away.

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### Use the iOS Search bar as a simple calculator

Apple's built-in calculator app works great, but it's not your only option if you need to make a quick calculation. You can also use the standard iOS Search bar, which you can easily find by swiping down on the home screen.



It's relatively awkward, but it's quick and it works.

Instead of entering standard text in the search bar, change the digital keyboard over to numbers and then you can make simple addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division calculations with the +, -, \*, and % keys respectively.

The Calculator app is better for more complex reckonings, but this works fine if you want to know a simple sum or calculate a tip.



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### Turn on the grid for better-framed photos

Good photography takes real skill, but you can instantly make your photos much better by turning on the grid on your iPhone's camera and heeding some simple arranging tips. To turn on the grid, go *Settings > Camera* and then toggle *Grid* to green. When you open your Camera app again, you'll now see a faint grid with nine squares.



Not the most artistic photo, but you get the idea.

At the most basic, this helps keep your subjects centered, but for the real artsy stuff, you should place the focus of your shot along one of the points where the lines intersect. I'm oversimplifying, but basically this is the "Rule of Thirds." For more information, check out [this guide](#) from our sister site that still holds up.

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### Optimize your Control Center

If you only think of your iPhone's Control Center as the place where you do things like adjust the volume and brightness and turn on Airplane Mode, you're not getting the most out of it.

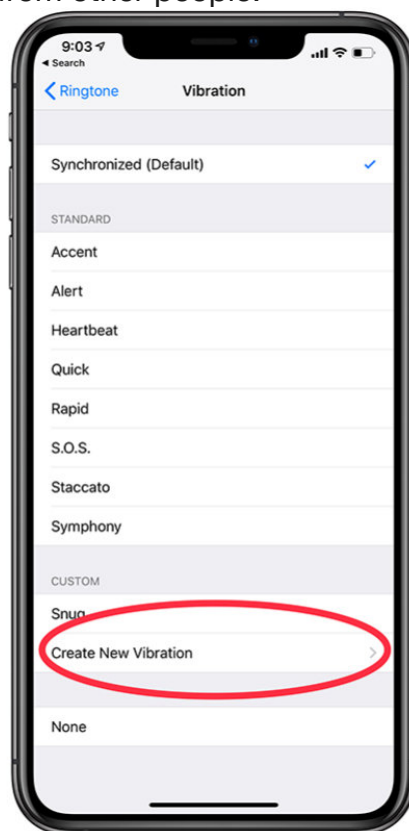


You can include all the available shortcuts, but you'll have to scroll to see them. Apple lets you add some excellent shortcuts for Control Center that can greatly improve your iOS experience, whether by turning your camera into a magnifying glass or switching on a Low Power mode or quickly accessing Notes or Voice Memos. I compiled a selection of my [favorite options](#) here.

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### Make custom phone vibrations for friends and family

Many of us just keep our phones on vibrate these days, which means it's now harder to tell who's calling than it was in the heyday of custom ringtones. But hope isn't lost: Apple lets you make and set specific vibrations for friends and family in order to differentiate them from calls from other people.



You can also choose from preset vibrations.

To set up a custom vibration for a specific contact, open that person's page in the Contacts app. Press *Edit* in the upper right, then *Ringtone* > *Vibration* > *Create Custom Vibration*. Once you're happy with it, press *Save* in the upper right and give the file a name. When you're done, it'll automatically save as the default ringtone for that Contact. (Unfortunately, this also replaces any ringtones.)

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### Use text replacement to fix incorrectly autocorrected words

There's a popular word that autocorrect likes to change to "ducking," even when that's not what you ducking meant to say. A lot of folks wrongly believe there's nothing you can do about it.

Oh, but there is. The feature's called Text Replacement, and you can find it by going to *Settings > General > Keyboard > Text Replacement*. Normally, the idea behind Text Replacement is to let iOS automatically expand abbreviations such as "omw" to "On my way!" And you can do that, sure.

But it also effectively allows you to add words to the dictionary, or at least it makes it so autocorrect won't change them. Take our "ducking" word that begins with an "f." Hit the + sign in the upper right, and then enter the "f word" (or any other word) into both the *Phrase* and *Shortcut* entries. Press Save.

From now on, whenever you write that *other* word, iOS won't correct it to "ducking."