

Settings Overview

Often represented as a gear icon on a smartphone or tablet, "settings" is an app that lets you customize your device. In general, a smart device will have settings for wireless connections, device-related options (such as screen brightness, notification sounds, and date and time), and privacy and security controls (such as location services and screen lock set-up).

Most of the apps that you download to your smartphone or tablet also have settings, which often include notifications, sharing options, and app-specific functions.

Here are some of the common settings that you'll encounter on a smartphone or tablet, many of which you'll also find on any number of smart devices.

1. Wireless Connections

Smart devices have to connect to the Internet, and many will have a wireless and networks section in settings where you can connect and disconnect your device from various wireless connections.

You can:

- Set up Wi-Fi to connect your device to your home Internet connection or a wireless hotspot at a coffee shop, airport, or other location.
- Turn on Bluetooth to connect to other smart devices, such as a keyboard, smartwatch or fitness tracker, or accessories like wireless headphones.
- Put your device in Airplane mode, which automatically disables the device's radios. This will make it impossible to receive incoming and outgoing calls and messages. It also turns off your web connection.
- Connect and disconnect from your mobile network (which you might want to do when traveling abroad to avoid roaming charges or to save on data usage).

NOTE: On a smartphone, data refers to any way that you use the web, including email, web surfing, or getting turn-by-turn directions. In this area of settings, you may also be able to view how much data you've consumed for the month and which of your apps are using most of it.

2. Notifications

Notifications will vary depending on the device and connected apps. Notification settings include:

- The types of alerts you'd like to receive (new email message, calendar reminders)
- How you'd like to receive them (text, email, on-phone) and whether you want a sound, vibration, both or neither.
- Managing the ringtone for different types of notifications is often in a separate section (see below).
- To change these settings, you may have to go into individual apps and make your adjustments.

3. Sound and Appearance

You can adjust the brightness of a smart device's display (if it has one), volume levels, and the look and feel of the interface.

- The volume area usually has multiple options: media (music, video), alarm, and ring, so that you can turn your music up without turning up your alarm clock, ringtone, or text alert ping.
- You can adjust the brightness of your screen manually or turn on auto-brightness so that your display can adapt to different lighting scenarios throughout the day and evening.
- In this section, you can also upload and change your wallpaper and screen savers, as well as change color schemes and other design elements.
- Change your ringtone and the various sounds your device makes to alert you of calendar events, new text messages, new email messages, alarms, and more. Here you can also choose whether you want your device to vibrate along with or instead of the ringtone.
- You can set a default notification sound too, and even select the screen locking sound, touch sounds, power on sounds, and more.

4. Privacy and Security

Settings are key to protecting your privacy and security. Important options include:

- Turning location services on and off. You'll want to turn this feature on when you're using a navigation app like Google Maps to get around, but there's no need to broadcast your location continuously.
- Setting up your lock screen. Android has options to unlock your phone with a pin code, pattern, fingerprint, or a password, while Apple's unlock options are either a pin code or a fingerprint reader.
- Enable Android Device Manager or Find my iPhone. Both Android and Apple offer options to geolocate your device if it's lost or stolen, and even remotely lock it or erase all data if it can't be retrieved.
- Backing up your device regularly. Android lets you save your data to Google Drive, while the iPhone connects to your iCloud account. You may also consider using a third-party app if you prefer, or back up to your computer if you have one.
- Hide notifications from your lock screen. Ever received a personal text message or embarrassing reminder while your phone is in view of others? Put a stop to that and keep certain types of notifications from bursting through your lock screen or at least hide the content of the notifications.

5. System Settings

Finally, you can access device settings including the date and time, operating system version, text size, and other elements.

- Make sure the date and time are accurate by setting it manually or having it update automatically, including when you change time zones.

- Adjust font size, or change up the color scheme for better visibility.
- Go into "about phone" or "about device" to check which version of the operating system it's running as this is helpful information to have if you need to contact tech support (even if it's a friend or family member).
- Set default apps for email, messaging, navigation, and other activities.

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