

Android 10 launches today, and Pixel phones get the day one update



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- The new Android logo.
- The new gesture-navigation settings. On the right is what each navigation bar looks like. The “Full gesture nav” option actually saves space!
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- With a transparent bar, Android will continuously sample the background and change the color of the gesture indicator.
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- Here’s the home gesture. Just swipe up from the bottom.
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- Swipe in from the side of the display to trigger “Back.”
An arrow will pop up.
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- For Recent Apps, swipe up and hold.
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- The full Android 10 settings, in dark and light mode.
- Everything in the notification panel gets colored.
- The same goes for the Quick Settings panel.
- Music notifications get working seek bars! Is it just me, or does this kind of look like Winamp now?
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- Long-pressing on a notification brings up these simplified notification controls.
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- Out of the box, notification actions can pick up addresses, tracking numbers, phone numbers, and appointments.
- You also get URL detection, which will provide a deep link to an app, where appropriate. Here a Play Store link will directly open the app in the Play Store, and a Soundcloud link will open Soundcloud.
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- Focus Mode lets you block an app with a single check box.
- Blocked apps get their icons greyed out.
- Try to open them and you’ll get a warning that you wanted to focus.
- There’s a new “Privacy” section in the settings, but right now it seems pretty empty.
- Location gets a third option that only allows location usage while the app is in the foreground.
- Dark mode can save a ton of power for OLED phones, but does nothing for LCDs.
- Folded or unfolded, Android 10 will support your extra-expensive new smartphone.
- The Galaxy Fold. Some day this thing will come out.
- The Huawei Mate X, which, again, Android will have to

deal with, again, if it ever comes out.

- The new share sheet: Copy at the top, then direct share, then a list of your last-used share icons.

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- Expand the sheet and you'll get an alphabetical (instead of random) list of app icons.

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- The "pinching hand" emoji. Remember everyone, with great power comes great responsibility.
- Wheelchairs, hearing aids, probing canes, and more.
- The "couple" emoji now has 74 different combinations of gender and skin tone.

Android 10 is finally finished! The next big Android update, which we've been examining for most of the year as the "Android Q Beta," starts rolling out to devices today. As usual, Android 10 is arriving on Pixel phones first (even the three-year-old Pixel 1), and Google says it is "working with a number of partners to launch or upgrade devices to Android 10 this year." Google has introduced a new branding strategy for Android, by the way, so there's no "Q" snack name with this release. In 2019, it's just "Android 10." Android 10 brings a number of changes to the world's most popular mobile operating system. First up, devices are getting "fully gestural" navigation, which lets you navigate around the phone with swipe gestures. Just like the implementation on the iPhone X, gesture navigation removed the need for a dedicated space for navigation buttons, allowing for more space for app content. There's finally full support for a dark theme, which will turn the entire system UI and any supported apps from the usual black text on a white background to white text on a black background. (That option significantly reduces the amount of light a phone puts out and saves battery life on OLED displays.) Google has also promised dark mode support for "all" of the Google apps in time for Android 10's launch, so we should be seeing updates to Gmail, Google Play, Google Maps, and a million other Google apps sometime soon.

Android Q

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Notifications are traditionally one of Android's best features, and Google never lets an Android release go out the door without some improvements in this area. This year, the notification panel will use on-device machine learning to parse incoming messages and offer potentially helpful action buttons right in the notification panel. One of the button types is "smart replies," which should be familiar to anyone who has used Gmail or Google Inbox (may it rest in peace). These are short, automatically generated replies to messages that you can send with a single tap. The other notification button type is an "action," which will try to pick out URLs, phone numbers, addresses, or tracking numbers from incoming messages and allow you to zip the data to the appropriate app without even opening that up. Unlike many Android features that require work from the developer, these new notification features work, by default, on *everything*. If you suffer from too many notifications at any point, Android 10 also offers a new "focus mode" to silence noisy apps and let you get some work (or gaming) done in peace.

With this latest Android release, under the hood we have "Project Mainline," Google's initiative to create a new, more powerful file type for system components. Project Mainline has allowed Google to offload key system code to the Play Store for easier updates. Publicly, Google is branding this "Google Play System Updates," and the feature will allow Google to ship monthly updates to the "Stagefright" media stack, OpenGL, and other components without the need for a full system update. Mainline support is mandatory for all devices that ship with Android 10, and that shift means Google is taking over responsibility for core system code from device manufacturers.

Other under the hood updates include a new system for dual-booting multiple versions of Android, called “Dynamic system updates.” And Android 10 ships with special support for foldable smartphones, with more robust multi-screen support, display switching, and a reworked app lifecycle that will allow multiple foreground apps to run simultaneously. This will be super useful if a foldable smartphone ever ships.

Android 10 will also continue Google’s long push for better security and privacy options. “Privacy” gets a top-level spot in the system settings now, providing easy access to app permissions. It’s now possible to give an app access to your location only when it is in the foreground, instead of the simple binary “yes, anytime” or “no, never” options that existed before. Android 10 begins the journey toward “scoped storage,” which will lock down an app’s access to your device’s storage, although in this release it is opt-in due to compatibility concerns. On the security front, we have more hardening of the media stack (and the aforementioned updatability of the media stack!), an improved biometrics API, and support for updated security protocols like TLS 1.3 and WPA3.

Even cheaper devices will see a major upgrade with a new addition called “Adiantum,” which is a method for block-level storage encryption that offers high performance on devices without support for hardware-accelerated encryption. Today, the cheapest devices with ancient SoCs like the ARM Cortex A7 ship without storage encryption turned on because it is so slow, but with the higher performance of Adiantum, encryption will be mandatory on all devices.

There are a million other features in Android 10 I neglected to mention: a much faster share sheet, a “bubbles” API for floating apps, 230 new emoji, and much, much more. So if you’re interested in reading all about Android 10’s new features in excruciating detail, Ars will have our biggest-ever Android review posted sometime soon.

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