Apple announced RCS with a whimper when it should have been a bang

Apple will finally adopt RCS in iOS 18, effectively ending a yearslong fight for feature parity between iMessage and Android. But the announcement wasn’t a celebration — you could’ve blinked and missed it. Instead of showing how RCS will make things better, Apple softly announced support for the standard and focused on all the great features coming to iMessage users — not RCS ones.

Apple didn’t go over how RCS adoption will finally let iPhone and Android users send each other high-resolution pictures and videos. It didn’t even say how RCS will enable support for cross-platform read receipts and typing indicators. Apple only highlighted the flashy features coming to iMessage, including ways to bold and italicize text, improvements to Tapbacks, and the ability to schedule a text.

These are all great changes, but iPhone users won’t be able to use these features when chatting with someone on Android. And we don’t even know how the emoji created with Genmoji, Apple’s new AI emoji creation tool, will appear in texts sent to users on Android, either.

a:hover]:text-gray-63 [&>a:hover]:shadow-underline-black dark:[&>a:hover]:text-gray-bd dark:[&>a:hover]:shadow-underline-gray [&>a]:shadow-underline-gray-63 dark:[&>a]:text-gray-bd dark:[&>a]:shadow-underline-gray”>Image: Apple
The company buried RCS on its iOS 18 preview page, too. It doesn’t even refer to Android users by name: “RCS (Rich Communication Services) messages bring richer media and

delivery and read receipts for those who don’t use iMessage.” The included image shows an RCS chat on the iPhone, which has the green bubbles indicating the person you’re texting isn’t on an iPhone.

Apple first confirmed RCS support was coming last year. “This will work alongside iMessage, which will continue to be the best and most secure messaging experience for Apple users,” Apple spokesperson Jacqueline Roy said in a statement to *The Verge* at the time. But it wasn’t necessarily a magnanimous move. Apple was largely forced to support RCS in response to the mounting pressure from global regulators and competing companies. That may help explain the somewhat disgruntled approach to announcing its rollout in iOS 18.

But Apple’s adoption of RCS has been years in the making. Every major carrier already made the switch to RCS. Apple was the only holdout, and regulators, combined with some bad press (remember when Tim Cook told a guy to buy his mom an iPhone?), made it increasingly necessary for the company to address the issue.”

a:hover]:text-gray-63 [&>a:hover]:shadow-underline-black dark:[&>a:hover]:text-gray-bd dark:[&>a:hover]:shadow-underline-gray [&>a]:shadow-underline-gray-63 dark:[&>a]:text-gray-bd dark:[&>a]:shadow-underline-gray”>Image: Apple
The fact that Apple skipped over RCS during its keynote makes it seem like Apple didn’t think it was worthy enough of showing off — which is goofy. The whole population of Android users, including myself, has been stuck getting photos and videos from iPhone users that you need a magnifying glass to make out *(*while also trying to convince them to download a third-party messenger that actually supports high-res media).

This is a massive improvement for both Android *and* iPhone users! It’s just too bad that the long-awaited unification of the iPhone and Android’s messaging systems was drowned out by unsettling AI-generated emoji and jiggling iMessage bubbles.

Even without Apple’s acknowledgment, I’m just stoked that I’ll finally be able to exchange photos and videos from the 21st century with my iPhone-wielding friends and family members for once.

https://www.theverge.com/2024/6/15/24178470/apple-rcs-support-wwdc-announcement-android-imessage