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Android® SmartPhones For Seniors

by Marsha Collier

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Android® Smartphones For Seniors For Dummies®

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Android® Smartphones For Seniors For Dummies®

To view this book's Cheat Sheet, simply go to www.dummies.com and search for “Android Smartphones For Seniors For Dummies Cheat Sheet” in the Search box.

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Introduction

This book is for you, even if you're not a senior. You no doubt live a busy life and may rarely have the desire (or time) to learn to operate every last feature of your Android smartphone. Android has *so* many options, and in this book, I share some of my favorites, some hidden nuggets, and some basic tricks for beginning (and not-so-beginning) users.

I've met too many people who refuse to learn anything regarding technology, and it upsets me. As you grow older (don't we all?), improving cognitive abilities is a top way to fend off mental decline. What better way to boost brainpower than to master the tiny computer in your pocket? Challenge yourself — think of spending time on your smartphone as a form of self-care (and having fun at the same time).

Hopefully, this book can keep you from making embarrassing calls to your kids to "fix" your phone. And even better — this book might help you teach your kids a trick or two. My editors don't necessarily identify with the over 55 crowd, but even they found some good ideas in this book.

So, buy the book. I know we'll have fun learning together.

About This Book

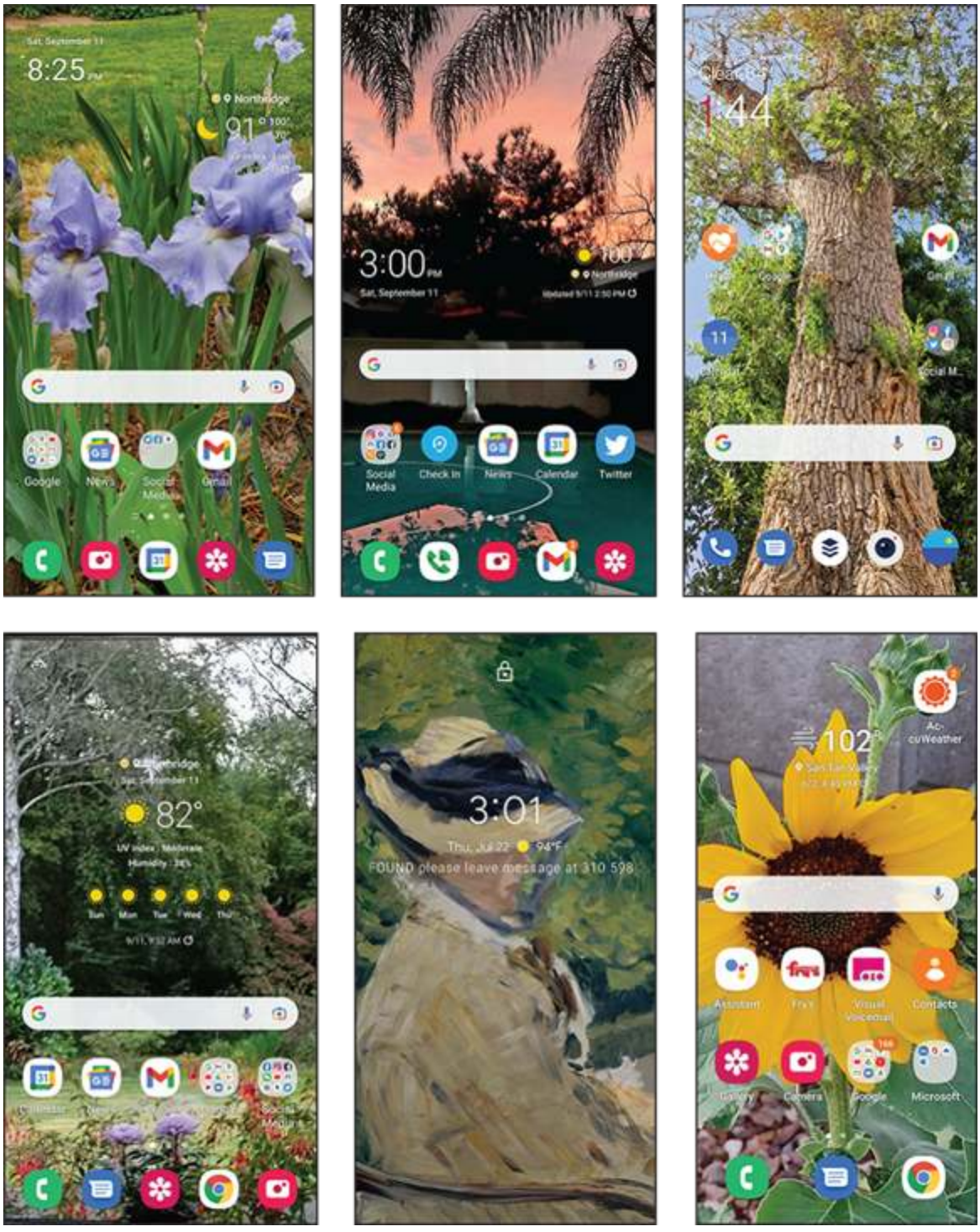
The idea for this book was born during the coronavirus pandemic, on the day that vaccinations became available in Los Angeles. I scoured the Internet, found the active link from the misleading information, and wanted to be

sure that my over-65 neighbors could sign up for the vaccine as well.

I went from house to house, helping others sign up for an appointment (much to their relief). The problem was not necessarily determining where to go for shots, but rather how to schedule the appointments on their phones.

The over 55 crowd had problems with both Apple and Android phones. Although I've had short stints with iPhones, I am a loyal Android user. I prefer the interface, I love the idea that I can personalize what information I share (and with who), and most of all, because "Android is for everyone."

From my research, I've found that not everyone rushes out to buy the latest, most expensive phones. I suspected as much because that's my philosophy as well. So, I used six different phone models and brands, and not necessarily the latest-and-greatest. The introduction's figure shows some of my "coauthors" for this book.



The Coauthors

The coauthor phones ran the latest version of Android, 11. They include a 2021 OnePlus 9 Pro 5G, a late 2019 Samsung Galaxy Note10+, 2019 Samsung Galaxy S10+,

2021 Samsung Galaxy A32 5G, 2018 Google Pixel 3XL, and a 2017 Pixel 2. I also checked the between Android versions on a 2019 Huawei P30 Pro running Android 10. Using all these phones was confusing at worst, but at best, I learned that the Android experience flows similarly through all the brands, with additional features, which I'll show you in the book.

All these phones are *impressive,* and the manufacturers did a great job with the design and functionality. The oldest, the 2018 Google Pixel 3XL, is quite a surprise; I enjoyed using that phone as well.

I wrote this book using the pictured phones, all but one of which was running the Android 11 operating system. Android 12 launches in late 2021, so I used a OnePlus 9 5G on the beta tests of Android 12. Chapter 17 has my impressions on the beta-testing experience.

Foolish Assumptions

I assume that you have used a smartphone — or at least used a computer. I also assume that you may be in the market for a phone or have just acquired one. I guide you through the intricacies of buying a phone that best meets your needs, the specific features to look for in a mobile service provider, the basic operations of navigating your Android smartphone, and the most important apps you need to master (even for photography and entertainment). I highlight ways to use your phone that we (my editors and I) expect will improve your Android experience. Most importantly, I present the content in nontechnical language!

Icons Used in This Book

I'm all about illustrating a book. Many figures illustrate the phone screens and tasks laid out in the chapters. You'll also see small icons that point to special advice from me — here they are:

Tips are short notes — from me to you — that make the process of using your smartphone easier.

These notes are like tips, but a bit more technical sounding. I provide only the technical info that's both important and worthwhile to know.

Don't forget these notes. They show up often and are good to stash in the back of your mind.

Warnings contain information that you need to heed. Sometimes, performing certain actions can cause an expensive problem, but *don't worry:* You won't find many of these.

Beyond the Book

You can find a section on www.dummies.com with more Android tips and Android 12 features (after the Android 12 operating system fully rolls out). While visiting dummies.com, type **Android Smartphones For Seniors For Dummies** in the search box to find the book's Cheat

Sheet. I also have a blog at https://mcollier.blogspot.com, where I post related articles.

In this book, I give you links and contact information for the tech support department for several major phone manufacturers, which should help with any immediate issue.

If you have specific questions, feel free to reach me by completing the contact form at my website (www.coolebaytools.com/contact) or on any of the social media platforms. I'd love to hear from you about the topics you want me to add to the next edition.

I also have a podcast, "Computer and Technology Radio," which I host with Marc Cohen. You can find it on your favorite podcast platform.

Where to Go from Here

Start reading this book anywhere you want. An incredible index can help you find almost any topic you need to learn about. Go to the table of contents and pick a chapter that interests you, or read the book from the beginning.

Interesting and helpful nuggets of information for you abound everywhere in this book. I really hope you enjoy it.

Part 1

Your Phone in the Android Universe

IN THIS PART ...

Meeting the Android OS

Setting up a Google Account

Choosing a smartphone and accessories

Starting up and connecting your phone

Minding privacy and security

Chapter 1

Why Android? What's the Deal?

IN THIS CHAPTER

- **Knowing the origins and scope of Android**
- **Seeing why you need a Google Account**
- **Recognizing the many choices**
- **Practicing privacy going forward**

The smartphone is undoubtedly the most common yet powerful personal technology in your life. In the United States market, you have basically this choice: an Apple iPhone (iOS) or an Android-based phone.

The smartphone platform you choose is a matter of preference. Some people use both Apple and Android products, but in the end usually tend to favor one platform over the other.

Because the iPhone lives in a *walled garden,* Apple makes the decisions and takes the profits on the phone, accessories, services, and apps. Apple products and software work in sync; you have few choices to make.

Conversely, no matter the brand, all Android phones have similar genetics and are the same at their core. But you find a variety of options for accessories, phone brands, services, apps, and (most of all) prices.

The competition for dollars in the Android marketplace begets innovation, and I believe that opting to spend *your* dollars in that marketplace is a good choice. In this chapter, I offer foundational information to help make the Android experience even better.

A Little Android History

Android is the operating system on the majority of the world's smartphones. It's an open source operating system led by Google (according to https://source.android.com):

> As an open source project, Android's goal is to avoid any central point of failure in which one industry player can restrict or control the innovations of any other player.

Translation: If you come up with a device, you too can use the Android operating system to power it for free. (I'm not that smart.)

I believe that much of the magic of Android lies with Google Mobile Services (GMS) — the collection of apps and functionalities that make the Android ecosystem a *useful* environment.

As an Android user, you may wonder why you feel more comfortable using the operating system. The answer is a surprise to many: the Android mobile operating system is based on Linux (another open source operating system) and many Microsoft patents. The influence of these two giants in the software world accounts for the familiarity, and thus the comfort, you may feel when using an Android device. The nearby sidebar "The scope of Microsoft involvement" gives a quick look at the Android–Microsoft connection.

TIP Note that many Android phones come with Microsoft Office preinstalled. Also, did you know that you can send text messages on your phone from your Windows desktop PC? Android phone owners can just go to messages.google.com/web to connect the devices.

THE SCOPE OF MICROSOFT INVOLVEMENT

It is rumored that Microsoft makes as much as $24 per Android device sold, as payment for its patents used in the Android operating system. Even smartphone manufacturers cross-license Microsoft intellectual property (IP). Based on these patents, in 2013 Samsung paid Microsoft over a billion dollars in royalty payments. In 2014, it was estimated that Microsoft made $2 billion.

Microsoft has never revealed the depth of its patent licensing, but in 2014 the Chinese Ministry of Commerce completed an antitrust investigation. The regulators published their results on the Internet, stating that Microsoft owned 310 Android-implementing patents.

Note: The numbers in this sidebar may not be independently verified but have shown up in court documents over the years.

The Many Flavors (Versions) of Android

Throughout this book, I offer stories about the beginnings of, and evolution of, the Android platform. For now, you should know that the version of Android I'm using for this book is Android 11. Chapter 17 talks about Android 12, which is scheduled to release around the time this book publishes. I got hold of a beta (not-ready-for-prime-time) version so that I can see the similarities and differences in the new upgrade.

The Android mascot (Bugdroid) is a small, green robot, shown on the left in **Figure 1-1**. Bugdroid, who gets dressed up with each new version of Android, was designed in 2008 to be an internationally understood symbol — like airport signs — because Android was designed for everyone. Since the platform's inception, Bugdroid appears in advertising and has undergone minor changes over the years. Today, the mascot's green color is updated, and just the top of the head shows (on the right in Figure 1-1).

“The Android robot is reproduced from work created and shared by Google and used according to terms described in the Creative Commons 3.0 Attribution License.”
https://source.android.com/setup/start/brands#robot-android

FIGURE 1-1

The initial versions of Android, except for A and B, had nicknames based on sweet treats. The nicknames gave a friendly, homey feeling to each update and personalized it to its users. Android 1.5 (Android C) was Cupcake, which was apparently when the naming system began. From there on, the charming version nicknames followed the alphabet, and even though Google publicly discontinued the cute code nicknames, Android 11 (Android R) is Red Velvet Cake, and (rumor has it), Android 12 (Android S) is Snow Cone.

Reasons That People Choose Android

REMEMBER Not all smartphones are iPhones.

The most excellent aspect of Android is that it’s customizable. If you don’t like one way of doing things, you

can switch to another mode. Android is as simple or as complex as you want it to be.

Also, because Android is a free, open source platform, you can buy Android phones at many price points. You can even buy a brand-new phone inexpensively. Samsung has an A series (*A* for *a*ffordable, perhaps?) and other manufacturers make basic phones that won't put a dent in your budget. The more bells and whistles a manufacturer adds, the more it ratchets up the price point. A *flagship* (top of the line) Android phone can be as expensive as any other. (Find more advice about picking out your phone in Chapter 2.)

Here are several features I love about owning an Android smartphone:

- **Keyboards and default apps:** I love having the option to try out different keyboards and browsers. You can download many new apps for free from the Google Play Store and try them out. If you come to realize that an app isn't your cup of tea, just uninstall it.
- **Sharing:** Whenever you want to share a photo, a web page, an email — you name it — tapping the Share icon brings up a simple sheet with app icons. Just tap the one you want to share to, and you're on the way.
- **Navigating screens:** As many times as I've used iOS devices (iPhone, iPad), my productivity always freezes when it comes to going back a page or a screen. On Android, you can use hand gestures or the bottom-of-screen Back arrow to navigate simply.
- **Notifications:** They're easy to control. You can control how you see them organized on the Home screen, app by app.

These are just a few features, but the truth is, Android is about choice. You're not forced to use any specific brand, and your phone can link to many different devices in your home (such as the thermostat, electric outlets, or lights).