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7 Easy Ways to Make Your Android Phone Less Annoying

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Smartphone frustrations can snowball and add real stress to your day. Here are seven quick and simple things you can do to make your life just a bit easier.

I once took a music-recording class taught by a studio veteran who told the class he found mixing tracks on a computer more stressful than the analog days. I was skeptical; working with digital files was *more stressful* than having to literally cut-and-paste reels of tape together?

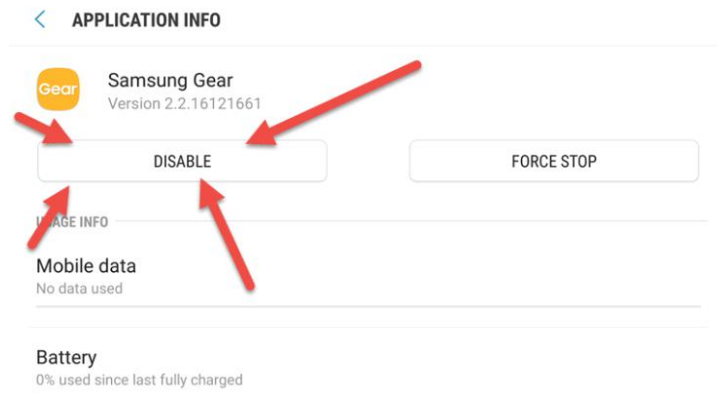
But he explained that before computers came along, he was at least occupied doing *something*. Today he just hits a button and sits around waiting for the computer to render a mix; those small bits of idle time can feel like an *eternity*. In 2017, we expect instant gratification, so small barriers between us and what we want—no matter how miniscule—become tiny little stressors.

This may all sound like #FirstWorldProblem preciousness, but these frustrations can snowball and add some real stress to your day. Fortunately, there are ways you can mitigate some of these small annoyances to make your day just a little bit calmer. *Namaste*. Here are seven quick and painless things that Android users can do right now* to make their devices a bit less annoying.

**Note: There are many versions of Android; [Android 7.0 Nougat](#) is the latest (Android 7.1 for Google Pixel users). Even if you have the most up-to-date version, your version of*

Android may work differently than someone else's device. These tips were tested on a [Galaxy S7 Edge\\$789.99 at T-Mobile](#) and Nexus 6 tablet, both running 7.0 Nougat.

1. Disable Bloatware Apps



Here are some facts that should be completely unrelated: 1) AT&T is my wireless carrier. 2) AT&T [acquired DirecTV](#) in 2014. 3) I am not a DirecTV subscriber. However, a DirecTV remote app came preinstalled on my phone. And I can't delete it! Welcome to the world of undeletable [bloatware](#)!

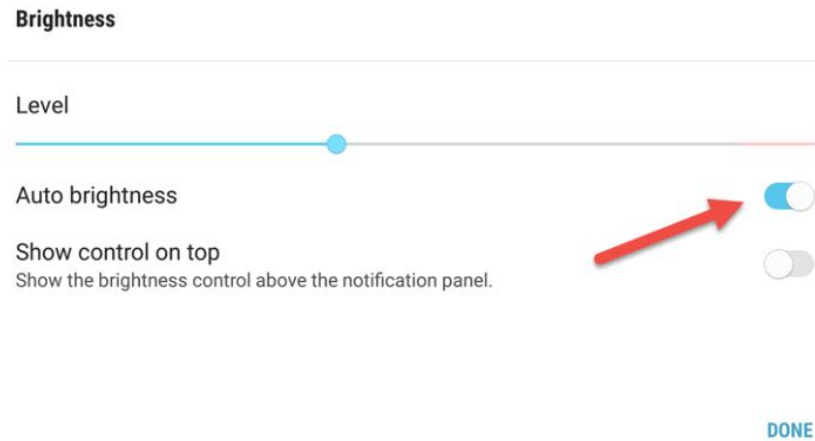
Bloatware is a blanket term used to describe preinstalled apps that take up space and resources on your phone. These apps—many of which you'll never ever use—come courtesy of your phone's manufacturer, carrier, and Google itself (plus a few licensed third-party apps thrown in for good measure). If you look through the apps on your phone, you'll almost certainly find a bunch of apps you never downloaded and will never use. While bloatware is not unique to the mobile age ([it's long been a blight on PCs](#)), it's most insidious on phones because computational resources are necessarily in short supply.

Without [rooting your Android device](#), you can't really delete these apps (if you don't already know what rooting means, then it's probably not for you). However, most Android setups allow you to "disable" them—while these apps aren't gone from your system, you won't see them and they won't tap into your phone's background resources.

On most Android devices, you can long-press on the app icon to prompt the disable option (you'll notice that there's no "delete" option such as you would find on an app you downloaded from Google Play). Alternatively, you can access individual app options including disable by going to Settings > Applications and tapping on the app.

#Poof. (Sorta.)

2. Turn Off 'Auto Brightness'



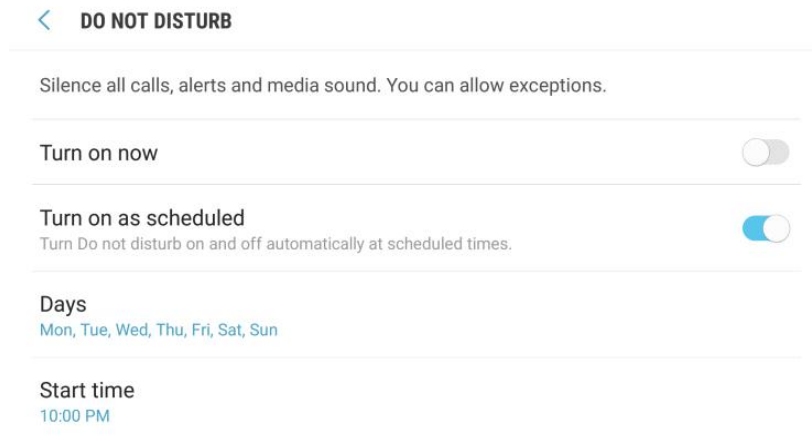
Have you ever noticed your screen suddenly dimming or brightening all by itself? No, you're not being punk'd by the world's lamest ghost; that's auto brightness at work. This feature automatically adjusts your screen's brightness depending on its environment, e.g. it dims the screen to complement the luminescence of a fancy candlelit dinner, but will brighten way up if you're outside picnicking on a sunny day.

Want to see it in action? If it's on your device, cover up the light sensor on your phone for a few seconds (it's usually on the top of the front-facing side of your device) and your screen should compensate accordingly.

In theory, the feature is great. If you primarily use your phone in similarly lit indoor environments, then you might not even realize you have it. I, however, have found it tends to overcompensate a bit too much (and too suddenly) in either direction—and I'm not the only one. "The only phone that did it well was the Note 7, but that one [exploded](#)," according to our mobile analyst [Ajay Kumar](#)

Auto brightness is on by default on most Android systems. If you don't have any problems with it, then let it be. However, if you've found it to be a little bit jarring, you can turn it off by going to Settings > Display. In some versions of Android, this screen brightness setting will be available in the pull-down shade (but more on that later). With auto brightness turned off, you can choose a static lighting setting of your liking and manually move as necessary (but keep in mind that a brighter screen burns up more juice).

3. Enable 'Do Not Disturb'

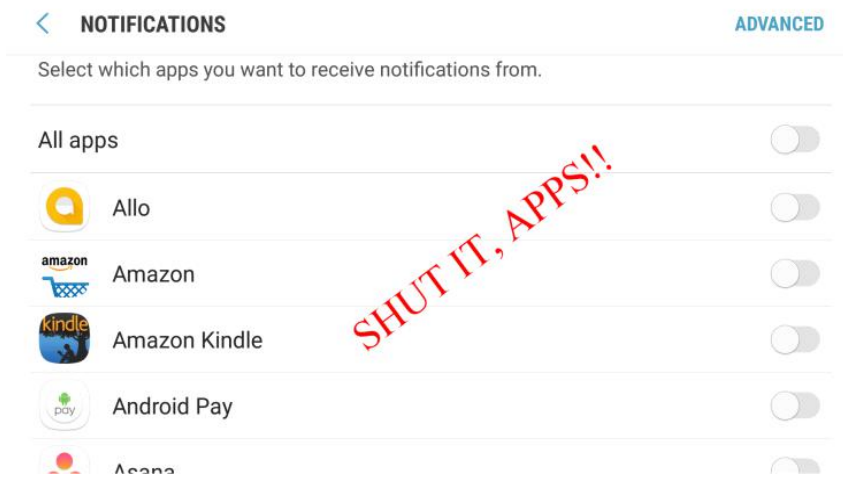


WAKE UP! WAKE UP! WAKE UP! Some schmo you went to high school left a comment on your lastest Facebook update!

Does the above scenario sound familiar? There's some information you don't necessarily need waking you from your slumber at 3 a.m. on a Tuesday. Fortunately, Android provides a way out of this: Do Not Disturb. You can schedule Do Not Disturb via Settings > Sounds and vibration > Do not disturb. Here, you can tell your phone to forgo all notifications during a specific time, even phone calls.

Of course, there will be notifications you'll want at all hours of the day. In the Exceptions setting, you can set up the feature to always allows calls and messages from particular contacts (say, all those designated as "Favorites"), from "priority" apps, or even from callers who have repeatedly tried to reach you (the type of calls you get in an emergency situation).

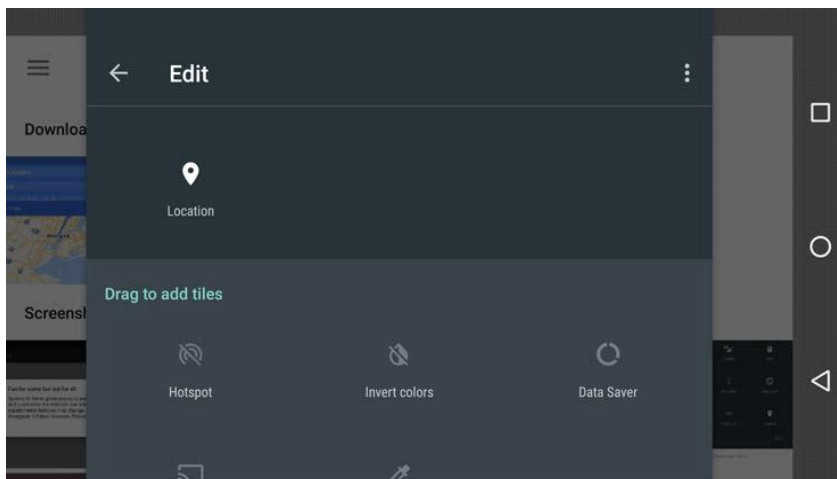
4. Manage Your Notifications



I sincerely hope this isn't news to you, but you can manage which apps are allowed to send you notifications. Perhaps you didn't need to know that that dumb mobile game you downloaded six months ago and barely played has a great new avatar you can purchase. This is about the most important setting you can master for a better Android experience.

Go to Settings > Notifications > and you can toggle all app notifications on/off or individually. Alternatively, long-press on an app icon to go directly to that particular app's settings.

5. Rearrange Pull-Down Buttons

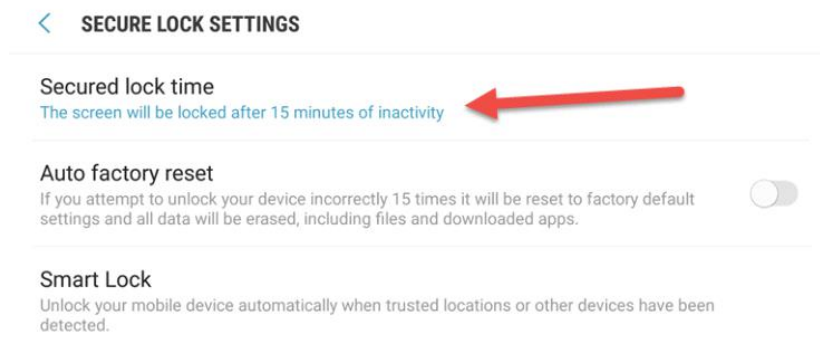


One of the things I appreciate most about Android is the pull-down shade (sometimes known as the "notification shade"). Simply slide your finger from the top of your screen

down and you'll find oft-used settings in nifty one-touch button form (i.e. Wi-Fi, Bluetooth, Location).

One of the coolest upgrades in [Android 7.0 Nougat](#) is the ability to choose which icons are included in the shade for easy access. Perhaps you're like me and don't really use things like Wi-Fi calling or NFC, but like having the ability to quickly set your phone to vibrate, toggle Location on/off, and access the flashlight—all with a single tap. In Nougat, you can rearrange which buttons appear in the shade by tapping the hamburger in the top-right corner of the shade > edit (or, conversely, your system may have a pencil "edit" icon in the top right). Don't have Nougat yet? Don't sweat it. You will. At some point. Maybe?

6. Tailor Screen Lock Settings to Your Lifestyle



You didn't set up a security login on your phone? So anyone who gets their hands on your phone can just jump right in if they wanted to? ARE YOU A CRAZY PERSON?! Set that shiz up! Like, right now. Seriously, stop reading this right now and go set it up. We'll still be here waiting.

Done? Okay. Doesn't it feel good to protect yourself with the minimal safeguards?

Requiring a password, fingerprint, or some other form of biometric adds a small barrier between you and your digital world, but it's so worth it. Still, security and convenience don't have to be enemies—for example, you can set your phone to not require a login for a set amount of time after it goes to sleep.

An informal poll of the staff here at PCMag didn't produce a consensus as to the ideal time period between use that a phone should require a login. Some find no problem logging back in each and time they open their phone. I, on the other hand, use my phone in spurts, so I use a full 15-minute window of idol time between log-ins. That way, if I'm suddenly struck by inspiration for one of my [renowned thought-sneezes of pure glory](#) after finishing reading an article on my phone, I can zip right back into Twitter to share it with the world.

Find the lock time that works for your lifestyle. Go to Settings > Lock screen and security > Secure lock settings > Secured lock time > choose the time that works for you.

Alternatively, your phone may have a "Smart Lock" setting (nested under "Secure lock settings"), which keeps your phone unlocked when it registers you are in a "trusted" location (i.e. it can tell when it's at your home via location services, or if it is connected to a trusted device like your car via Bluetooth). In this instance, you'll also just have to trust the users around you.

7. Never Use the In-App Camera

Like to post selfies to Instagram or Snapchat? Sure, we all like to show off our fabulous new dos or that time we met that celebrity at that thing. You might have noticed that the in-app camera on these apps are kinda... lacking? I don't exactly know why this is. BUT I do know that there is a very simple workaround! You can take photos with you phone's stock (and probably superior) phone app and upload to these social networks after the fact.