Newsletter

Find Constellations in the Sky With Your Phone

A star-studded night sky is a beautiful sight to behold. You might think a glowing rectangle would ruin the experience—and it can—but it can also enhance it. Finding constellations is easy with the right app.

When smartphones were first entering the mainstream, apps like Google Sky Map showed off their potential. Those apps weren't just a gimmick to show off the accelerometer, though. There are still great apps that let you find constellations by simply pointing your phone at the sky.

Stellarium

A favorite app for sky gazing is Stellarium, which also has a great web interface for desktop. The Stellarium app is available for Android, iPhone, and iPad. It's free and open source with an optional on-time "Plus" upgrade for $19.99.

The basic idea of the app is it uses your location to know which constellations will be visible. You can use your finger to pan around or take advantage of your device's sensors and see the constellations on the screen for exactly where you're looking.

Stellarium also shows where planets, comets, satellites, and other deep space objects are in real time. You can even zoom in and out to get a different perspective on our planet. It's a great app to have in your back pocket.

Skyview

Another great app for Android, iPhone, and iPad is Skyview. It's available for a one-time purchase price of $1.99, or you can use the "Lite" version for free. Skyview doesn't receive as many updates as Stellarium, but it still works well. Skyview is the same general idea as Stellarium.

The main difference is there's no way to pan around with your finger, it only moves as you move your phone. One neat thing is its "Augmented Reality" camera, which puts the constellations, planets, and other things on top of your camera's viewfinder.

The SkyView experience is a little rougher around the edges, but it's still a great option. The "Lite" version has enough features for most people. If you find yourself using the app a lot, the $2 upgrade is easy to digest.

It's pretty cool what all the sensors in your phone can enable. Finding constellations and planets in the sky used to require looking up coordinates and knowing where things are at different times of the year. Now you can just point your phone at the sky and be amazed by space.

Preventing CyberSnooping
Critical story affecting common smart devices many of us use in our homes.

Imagine you're getting ready for work in a room where you keep your laptop or smart device, or your relaxing after a long day in front of your smart television with built in camera, or maybe you've set your infant down in their crib for a nap below their smart baby monitor.

Without you realizing, someone may be on the other end of this device, watching any activity it captures through the cameras or listening in on conversations with a device's built-in microphone, putting your privacy at risk.

It's called "camfecting", as in, infecting a camera. Sounds complicated and farfetched right? Unfortunately, these stories are all too real and cybercriminals are abusing the massive growth in the use of webcams to discreetly take remote control of the device. By watching personal life events, capturing device keystrokes, or eavesdropping on a phone call, a cybercriminal has enough ammunition to use against their victim in a blackmailing scheme.

So how are these cameras getting hacked? There are several ways a camera may get camfected. Cybercriminals can use a special type of malware called Remote Access Trojans, or RATs, which

gives them access to the camera, computer files, and ability to record keystrokes performed by the user. This malware can be created by the criminal or purchased online and delivered to their victim via a phishing link or attachment. Watch out for phishing emails. Another method of infiltrating a camera is done by exploiting known vulnerabilities within the device's software.

Smart electronics commonly have exploitable vulnerabilities, but once discovered, the manufacturer issues patches to remediate the vulnerability. Many times, these updates are required to be completed by the consumer and failing to do so could leave the device vulnerable.

Poor authentication controls, such as a weak or reused password, are another common vector cybercriminals use to gain control of a device. With credentials they may have found on the Dark Web or were able to piece together from social media pages, cybercriminals can access a device right through the front door.

How to Protect Yourself

It is more common today that televisions, baby monitors, and doorbells all have micro-sized digital cameras built-in them. Cover the lens of a camera that is not in use with electrical tape. Watch for indicators that a camera is on, such as a light. Here are a few Do's and Don'ts to stay safe from Camfecting.

Do's-

- Use a high quality and upgraded operating system.
- Ensure your system uses a good quality premium antivirus.
- Change your system and email account passwords regularly.
- Tape the attached web cameras with a sticker or cloth.

Don'ts-

- Do not open emails from unknown contacts.
- Do not download content from unsecured websites.
- Do not download unverified free applications.
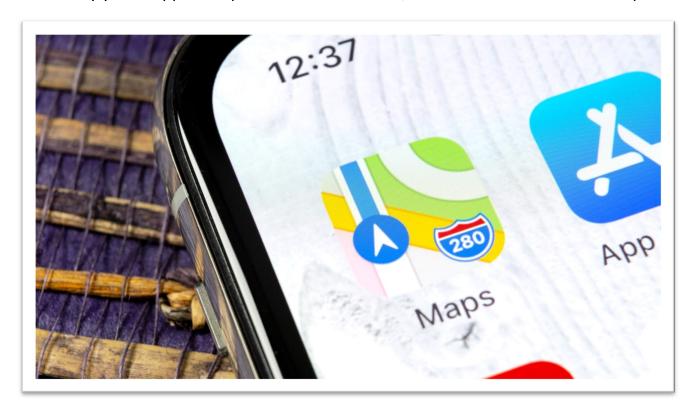- Do not leave the webcam on while the system is on standby.

As a general rule however, it must be said that no system is totally secure, so it is essential to do everything possible in order to protect our own privacy by taking notice as soon as soon as we detect any unusual pattern of webcam operation (such as if it suddenly switches on for no reason).

Staying safe from webcam hackers requires alertness and best practice security. Cybercriminals are trying to watch your private moments and listen in—stay diligent to avoid becoming camfected!

How to Add Multiple Stops in Apple Maps

Many trips only have a start and an end, but sometimes you need to stop somewhere in-between. Apple Maps allows you to add multiple stops to a trip, making it easy to plan it all out before you leave.

Introduced in iOS16, Apple Maps finally gained the feature that had been present in Google Maps for many years. Apple's implementation is similar, and it can include over 10 stops.

Here's how:

•First, open the Maps app on your iPhone and find the end destination of your trip. Tap the driving icon to bring up directions.
•Next, tap the "Add Stop" button in the direction list.
•Select another location to add to the trip.

That location is now listed in the directions. You can move its position by dragging the handle (depicted with three lines) with your finger. You can remove a stop by swiping it to the left. Repeat this process until you have all your stops listed in the directions. When you're done, tap "Drive" - or whichever transportation mode you're using.

That's it! Apple Maps will take you to the locations in the order that you put them. This is a super simple, but very handy feature that probably should have been included a long time ago. Apple Maps has slowly gotten pretty good.

Selecting text is a common thing to do on a computer. Just click and drag your mouse to highlight the desired text. Couldn't be simpler, right? There's actually a much better way of doing this, and you'll never go back.

Why You're Doing It Wrong

First, let's look at the way most people typically select text on their Windows, Mac, Chromebook, or Linux PC. You position the cursor at the beginning of the text, hold the mouse button down, drag the cursor to the end, then release the button. The text is highlighted letter by letter.

This works fine, but there's one problem—and you've probably noticed it. When you're selecting text letter by letter, it's easy to accidentally only highlight part of a word. You might not have the cursor in the exact right spot to start or you miss the last letter. It can be annoying.

Why is this method "wrong"? Think about the times when you've highlighted text. Are you trying to highlight full words or only parts of words? Most of the time, you're most likely aiming for full words. So let's make that easier.

The Better Method

Instead of a single click and drag, try doing a double-click instead. This will highlight word by word rather than letter by letter, which is much more efficient.

The double-click selects the full word you have the cursor on, then you can continue to drag the cursor to highlight word by word. Punctuation marks are highlighted independently from the words. If you triple click, it will highlight the entire paragraph with any punctuation marks included.

This method makes a lot more sense for most situations. You don't have to worry about dragging to the exact right spot. The best part is this isn't an exclusive trick for any specific platform. It works on Windows, Mac, Linux, and Chromebooks.

For Keyboard Lovers

Not everyone prefers to use a mouse for text selection. There are keyboard shortcuts for selecting text both by letter and by word. To select text letter by letter, place the cursor at the starting point, hold down the Shift key, then press the Left or Right arrow keys.

To select by word, place the cursor at the starting point or double-click the first word. Now hold **Shift + Ctrl and press the Left or Right arrow keys.**

Little tricks like this can make a world of difference. You may have never even considered there was another way to highlight text. The buttons on a mouse are a lot more versatile than we realize. Now you know!

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Is Pumpkin Spice Actually Made From Pumpkin?

Fall is upon us, and people are just as obsessed with all things pumpkin spice as ever before. If you're one of those spicy meets sweet flavor lovers, you might wonder if pumpkin spice is actually made from pumpkin, and the answer might surprise you.

As it turns out, there's actually no pumpkin in pumpkin spice, but it does have a connection to the beloved autumnal gourd.

So what is pumpkin spice? To boil it down, it's a spice blend made from cinnamon, nutmeg, ginger, and allspice—generally speaking at least. The spice blend is the exact amalgamation of flavors often used when flavoring a pumpkin pie. That's how a seemingly unrelated group of spices got the connection to pumpkin without, you know, having any pumpkin in it.

Despite its seemingly meteoric rise to fame in the past few years thanks to items like Starbucks' Pumpkin Spice Latte, the flavor is actually pretty old. According to Food and Wine, it originated back in a 1798 cookbook. Then, made its way into stores thanks to brands like Thompson & Taylor Co as well as McCormick & Company. McCormick is actually the brand that dubbed the flavor pumpkin pie spice, an all-in-one blend to dump in your pies.

Now, pumpkin spice has evolved and you can find everything from pumpkin spice Oreos to pumpkin spice doughnuts. If you're a fan of the beloved spice, it might not have pumpkin in the blend, but that doesn't make it any less delicious.