



Your Smartphone Basics

A beginner-friendly guide to buttons, taps, apps, Wi-Fi, settings, and everyday phone confidence.

A Lumaset Foundation guide • Part of the free Digital Skills series

Who it's for: anyone brand new to a smartphone, or anyone who has one but never felt comfortable with it. **Plain language, no jargon.** Works for iPhone and Android.

WHAT'S INSIDE THIS GUIDE

- 1 Meet the buttons
- 2 Tap, swipe, scroll, and zoom
- 3 Find apps without hunting
- 4 Connect to Wi-Fi and adjust settings
- 5 Stay safe and use everyday tools



Who we are

Lumaset Foundation is a nonprofit that helps everyday people feel safe and confident online. We make patient, plain-language lessons on using technology and avoiding scams, and we keep everything free, with no account and no catch. We are a registered 501(c)(3) charity based in Fort Wayne, Indiana.

Why we made this guide

A smartphone is just a helpful tool, and nobody is born knowing how to use one. Pew Research Center reported in January 2026 that 78% of U.S. adults ages 65 and older own a smartphone. Many people already have the device; the missing piece is often a calm, step-by-step explanation.

Remember: You cannot break the phone by tapping the screen. If you open the wrong thing, go back or go home and try again.

Jump to what you need:

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Meet the Buttons

What it is. The glass front is the screen. The side button wakes the phone or turns the screen off. The volume buttons make sound louder or softer. The charging port is where the cable plugs in.

Why it matters. Once you know the few physical parts, the phone stops feeling mysterious. Most daily use happens with just the side button, the screen, and the volume buttons.

Example. Your screen is dark. Press the side button once, look at the phone or type your passcode, and the home screen appears.

Do this now

1. Find the side button and volume buttons on your own phone.
2. Practice turning the screen on and off.
3. Notice where the charging cable plugs in.

Learn it free: Your Smartphone – Level 1: iPhone & Android Basics starts at this same beginning: <https://lumoset.org/allcourses/getting-comfortable-with-your-smartphone-iphone-android-basics/>

Tap, Swipe, Scroll, and Zoom

What it is. A tap opens something. A swipe moves across the screen. Scrolling moves a page up or down. Press and hold shows extra choices. Pinch or spread with two fingers changes size.

Why it matters. These few movements work almost everywhere. You do not need to memorize every app before you can begin.

Do this now

1. Tap an app to open it.
2. Swipe up or press Home to return to the main screen.
3. Scroll a long page up and down.
4. Pinch and spread on a photo or map to practice zooming.

Learn it free: The free smartphone course lets you practice the five basic gestures at your own pace.

Apps, Home Screen, and Search

What it is. Apps are the little pictures on your screen. Each one does a job: Phone calls, Messages texts, Camera photos, Weather forecast, Maps directions.

Why it matters. You do not have to remember where every app lives. Search is the freeing shortcut.

Do this now

1. Tap Phone, Camera, or Weather to open it.
2. Leave the app by swiping up from the bottom, or pressing Home on older phones.
3. If you cannot find an app, swipe down on iPhone or swipe up on Android and type the app name.
4. Install new apps only from the App Store or Google Play.

Learn it free: Your Smartphone – Level 1 shows the home screen, apps, and search trick step by step.

Wi-Fi and Settings That Help

What it is. Wi-Fi is internet from your home, library, clinic, or another local network. Cellular data is internet from your phone company. Settings is the gear-shaped app that controls the phone.

Why it matters. Wi-Fi is usually best for video calls and updates. Settings can make text bigger, sound louder, and the screen easier to see.

Do this now

1. Open Settings, tap Wi-Fi, choose your home network, and enter the password once.
2. Use home Wi-Fi for video calls and updates.
3. In Settings, make text size, brightness, and volume comfortable.
4. Try saying Hey Siri or Hey Google and asking for a timer.

Learn it free: The course covers Wi-Fi, text size, brightness, volume, and voice assistants.

Keep the Phone Safe

What it is. Basic phone safety means a screen lock, software updates, official app stores, and caution with strange links or one-time codes.

Why it matters. If your phone is lost, a lock keeps other people out. Updates fix security problems. Official app stores reduce the chance of fake or harmful apps.

Red flags

- A text says your phone has a virus and tells you to tap a link.
- Someone asks for a one-time code that just arrived by text.
- An app download link comes from an ad, text, or email instead of the official app store.

Do this now

1. Set a 6-digit passcode and face or fingerprint unlock if offered.
2. Let updates install, usually overnight while charging.
3. Install apps only from the App Store or Google Play.
4. Never share one-time codes with someone who contacts you.

Learn it free: Your Smartphone – Level 1 includes a full lesson on lock, updates, and safe apps.

Everyday Wins

The point of learning the phone is not the phone. It is calling someone, taking a photo, getting directions, setting a reminder, checking the weather, and looking something up when you need it.

Do this now

1. Make one phone call from Contacts or the keypad.
2. Take one photo, then find it in Photos.
3. Open Maps, type an address, and look at Directions.
4. Ask Siri or Google to set a timer or reminder.
5. Search the web in plain words for one simple question.

Remember: One small win at a time is how everyone learns this.

Keep learning, free.

This guide is a companion to **Your Smartphone – Level 1: iPhone & Android Basics**. The free course teaches the same skills slowly, one lesson at a time.

- **No account. No cost. No catch.** Ever.
- Start with the course at lumoset.org/allcourses/getting-comfortable-with-your-smartphone-iphone-android-basics/.
- Know someone who feels nervous using a phone? Please share this with them.

Sources

Pew Research Center, What We Know About Internet Use, Smartphone Ownership and Digital Divides in the U.S. (Jan. 8, 2026) – Apple Support, iPhone User Guide and Accessibility – Google Android Help, Android basics and accessibility – FTC/CISA device-security basics.

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