

Tech Tips for Seniors

Setting Up Your New Phone or Tablet

Press the back arrow < to return to the menu.

“My daughter gave me a new mobile phone for my birthday last week,” a recent visitor to the Tech Tips session at the area’s senior center said recently. “I’m looking at it, I see my face reflected in the shiny black glass screen, but nothing happens,” he said.

Mobile phones and tablets don’t come with a printed manual anymore. It seems that we are expected to know to press the on-off button on the side of the device to turn it on.

Actually, the clerk at the store where you bought your device should help you set it up and then test it to be sure it works. If they don't, you may want to go to a different store that will.

If your new phone was delivered to you at home, the first thing to do is to charge it by plugging it in for a couple of hours.

When you press the on-off button, the phone or tablet will turn on and begin asking you a bunch of questions such as your name. You will also be asked to provide a user name (usually an E-mail address), what you want to use as a secure password and what you want as a four or six-digit passcode. It is important to write down and save those three items: your user name, your password and your passcode.

You will also be given the choice of entering a fingerprint or setting up facial ID, depending on the make and model of your phone. Those are security measures to keep unauthorized people from using your device. The latest version of Apple's mobile operating system allows you to authorize another person to access your device, should you be unable to do that.

The facial ID uses the device's camera to take numerous photos of your face. Those images are stored on your device and are used to turn on your device when you tap the screen or press the on-off button.

If you make a mistake typing your six-digit login passcode, just use the delete key to erase what you typed and start over. If you type the wrong passcode too many times, the login process will freeze until you tap

the delete key numerous times to erase all of your erroneous keystrokes.

“Now what?”, you might ask. “I see all of those pretty squares on the screen and when I touch one, another screen of information appears. All I want to do is to call my friend.”

To do that, you will find on your screen a green icon that looks like a telephone. Press it and another screen will appear. That is where you can type a phone number and press the green icon to dial the number. You can hang up by pressing the red icon.

Every mobile phone and tablet includes a few built-in functions. Thousands of other functions, called apps, are available from the App Store or Play Store and can be added to any device. Many of them are free, especially if they are from stores,

restaurants, banks and other companies. (See the Managing Apps article in the Table of Contents of this website for more information.)

You can also add websites to your home screen. They appear as icons that look like the icons for apps.

One of the basic functions is knowing how to stop what you are doing and to return to the home screen. Some models have a round button at the bottom of the device, which you can press to go “home”. Newer models don’t have that button, so to return “home” use your finger to swipe up from the bottom of the screen.

In addition to the on-off button, other buttons on the side of the phone silence the device and control the sound volume.

The basics of every device include, of course, a phone (most tablets don't include a phone). Other basic apps include a directory (often named Contacts) where you can add your friends and family, a map that shows where you are and directs you to where you might like to go, a browser to search the Web, a weather report, a calculator, a clock, an E-mail app, a notepad to jot down a grocery list or a list of your prescription drugs, a camera and an app to save your photos.

The clerk who sold you your device should guide you through all of that. Take notes during that presentation.

See the Basic App Setup articles on this website for help with several of those apps.

Some of those apps interact with each other like members of a team. The phone,

map, and E-mail apps, for example, use your directory of contacts. The photo gallery app receives photos you take with your camera and lets you send or save photos via the E-mail and text messaging apps.

If you are reading this article on a mobile phone or a tablet such as an iPad, you already know how to search the World Wide Web using your phone's browser. When you find a store or restaurant during a web search, you can save the address and phone number of that business in your directory of contacts.

The topics in the Table of Contents of this website delve into how to navigate the apps most used by seniors.

Learning how to use your new device will take some time, a large supply of patience

and some trial-and-error experiences. If you make a mistake, it is important to know that you won't damage your phone or tablet.

One last tip: Whenever you have a question about how to use your phone, go to [google.com](https://www.google.com) or Apple's Safari app and type your question in the search area.

Article last updated: 12/14/2021

Press the back arrow < to return to the menu.