

Continue







Back in the good old days, the primary aim of many arcade games was to top the highscore table. Having spent countless hours shoving coins into a machine and mastering its intricacies, you'd finally achieve the coveted prize of being the very best - at least until the machine was unceremoniously turned off. Modern gaming is rather more enlightened, if only because it tends to have a better memory - these days, high-score leaderboards and achievements are often stored online. Better, these can be worldwide tallies or tailored specifically to your own group of friends who enjoy the same kind of dot-munching, alien-killing, bird-flinging, puzzle-solving, breakneck racing that you do. Game Center is Apple's take on what's become a kind of multiplayer gaming version of social networking. Not surprisingly, it's rather popular: many tens of millions are signed up to the service, and a vast number of iOS games support it. Depending on the title in question, you can compare scores with friends and battle to collect achievements, all the while adding to your Game Center points tally for extra bragging rights. The service also provides a foundation for multiplayer gaming. It supports both turn-based titles like Super Stickman Golf 2 and Letterpress, and also live efforts such as racer Asphalt 6. Depending on the game, you can challenge a friend or be automatically matched with people with a similar level of experience. Check out our collection of guides on how to use iOS 9. The Me screen is your Game Center overview. Important statistics sit inside floating balloons, and these or the toolbar buttons are used to access Game Center's sections. You can also personalise the Me screen a little: tap the speech balloon to add a short catchphrase; tap the photo and select Choose Photo to use a photo from your on-device library, or tap Take Photo to take a new one with the iPad's camera. 2. Making friends The Friends list can be reordered alphabetically, reverse-chronologically or by points earned. On selecting a friend, tap a game and then Points to compare achievements. To make a new friend request, tap the + button. In the Friend Request window, add a Game Center ID/ email address and a message, then tap Send. Received requests will appear above the buttons for reordering the list and can be accepted or ignored. 3. Games collection The Games tab provides access to recommended games (or, as we call them, 'adverts') and then your own games; a search field enables fast access to a specific title - useful, given that the games list is only ever ordered reverse-chronologically. Each game's icon is displayed, along with when it was last played and the number of achievement points you've won out of a possible total. Tap to access leaderboards. 4. Scoreboards Individual game pages vary. At most, you'll get tabs for Leaderboards (high score tables), Achievements (one-off in-game targets that award you Game Center points), and Players (friends who own the game). If a game has multiple leaderboards, you'll have to select one from the list. On accessing a leaderboard, high scores specific to your friends list will be displayed at the top. 5. Be alert! If you're a keen gamer, it pays to know how to tone down Notification Center, otherwise you'll be driven bonkers by constant updates. In Settings, tap Notifications and then Game Center. You can then define how you're alerted to updates, such as multiplayer moves and challenges. (We recommend turning off sound!) Individual games will also often send their own notifications, some of which will be rather spammy/magging in nature. These can be reduced or turned off entirely using the same controls in the Settings app. 6. Rise to a challenge Challenges sent to you appear in the Challenges tab. Tap Play Now to accept (a price tag that links to the App Store replaces this if you don't own the game) or Decline to pass. To issue a challenge to all Friends, tap an achievement or score on a game's page and then Challenge Friends. For an individual challenge, select someone from Players on a game's page, tap Send a Challenge, then tap a score or achievement. 7. Taking turns Turn-based games (either asynchronous or live) work on iOS in various ways, but many games use Game Center. Although you can receive updates regarding new moves and challenges as notifications, Game Center's Turns tab also provides a recent history, along with access to currently active games. To take your turn, simply tap an active game, tap Play to take your turn, and the relevant game will open. 8. Get set! Game Center has its own section in Settings, which warrants exploration before you use the service. It enables you to define which Apple ID is used, whether your profile is public (tap on the profile, sign in and set the control as appropriate), and which contacts are used as the basis for friend recommendations. The controls for invites are also important; if Allow Invites is turned off, your friends won't be able to invite you to new games - only the reverse will work, assuming they have Allow Invites activated. 9. Deleting games When deleting an app, iOS also deletes its data from your iPad. For games that use Game Center, you get the option to keep your scores; these are then picked up if you redownload the game. Whether a record of levels you've cleared is also restored depends on whether the game previously saved data to your iCloud account or, less common, to other cloud-based storage such as Dropbox. iOS 14.5 has arrived, and for an update released in between new versions of Apples iPhone software, it's a pretty big deal. Not only do you get a refined look for the Podcasts app plus changes to News and Reminders, iOS 14.5 also delivers new tricks including additional voices for Siri and the ability to unlock your iPhone with your Apple Watch. It's not the sort of update you're going to want to ignore. Here's how you can download iOS 14.5 along with the steps you should take to ensure a smooth upgrade process. iOS 14.5: What devices are compatible? If your iPhone runs iOS 14, it will run iOS 14.5. That means anything from an iPhone 6s onward supports the latest version of Apple's phone software. We run the iOS 14.5 beta on a number of different phones, including an original iPhone SE, and the software worked without a problem (though we did notice a slight hit on battery life on that 2016-era device). Chances are you've already installed iOS 14 on your device if it's supported. Apple says that iOS 14.4 is installed on 80% of all active iPhones and on 86% of iPhones introduced in the last four years. If you haven't already upgraded to iOS 14, the release of iOS 14.5 seems like the perfect time. iOS 14.5: Back up your iPhone Before you install any software update on your phone, you should always back up your device. That way, if the update proves to be unstable, you can always reinstall that backup. We've got a full guide on how to back up your iPhone, but your options are to backup your iPhone to iCloud or save the backup to your computer. If you're running macOS Catalina or Big Sur, that involves plugging your iPhone into one of the ports on your Mac, spotting your phone in the Locations section of the Finder, and selecting Back up all of the data on your iPhone to this Mac from the Backups section. Be sure to encrypt your backup to save data such as passwords and Health and Activity data from your device and Apple Watch. (Image credit: Tom's Guide) If you're using an older version of macOS or you're a PC user, you can back up your iPhone through iTunes. Again, that's simply a matter of plugging your phone into your computer, and heading to the backup pane of iTunes. From there, select Back Up Now. (Archiving the backup makes it easier to find should you need to restore an old version.) (Image credit: Tom's Guide) Once you've backed up your phone, you're ready to grab iOS 14.5. (If you're already part of Apple's public beta program and installed the iOS 14.5 beta, congratulations - if you're using the latest version of the beta, you've got the final release of iOS 14.5 on your phone already.) You'll find that installing this update is as simple as any iPhone software upgrade, even with all the features iOS 14.5 brings to the table. 1. Launch the Settings app, and select General and then Software Update. iOS 14.5 should be there waiting for you. (Be patient if it's not: the software sometimes takes a little bit of time to appear for everyone.) (Image credit: Tom's Guide) 2. Click Download and Install. (Image credit: Tom's Guide) Given all the features iOS 14.5 introduces, we'd expect it might take some time to download the full release. Set aside a half-hour or so, and make sure your iPhone is plugged in. When the phone is ready to install iOS 14.5 and restart, it'll notify you with an on-screen prompt. Accept that prompt, and your iPhone will shut down to install the update. When the phone restarts, you'll be prompted to enter your passcode. From then on, iOS 14.5 will be the operating system software powering your iPhone - at least until iOS 14.6 comes out. iOS 14.5: Should you upgrade now? The iOS 14.5 beta process has been available for a few months, and we've been using the beta on our phones from the beginning. There haven't been any show-stopping issues, and the bugs that have cropped up here and there seem to have been resolved during the beta process. From our perspective, this looks like a pretty stable release. That said, any software update introduces the possibilities of bugs or a hit on battery life. If you feel more comfortable letting other people put an iOS update through its paces first, you can always wait a few days to install iOS 14.5 to see if any reports of problems emerge. If you've already pre-ordered the AirTag key finder, though, you'll want to have iOS 14.5 on your phone when those devices ship on Friday - iOS 14.5 is required for AirTag to work. Today's best Apple AirTag deals (opens in new tab) (opens in new tab) (opens in new tab) View (opens in new tab) (opens in new tab) (opens in new tab) View (opens in new tab) (opens in new tab) (opens in new tab) View (opens in new tab)

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