

Now that you have Siri set the way you want, close Settings and give Siri a try.

Using Siri to Run Apps and Find Information

You can get Siri's attention in several ways:

Press the Home button until you hear two beeps. This works whether the phone is locked or not, unless you have configured your phone not to allow Siri to work from the lock screen.

Press the center button on your wired or Bluetooth headphones until you hear two beeps.

Raise the phone to your ear if it's unlocked and you've turned on the Raise to Speak feature in Siri's settings screen.

Now speak to Siri. When you're done, you should hear two higher-pitched beeps, and then you may need to wait a while for Siri's response. When Siri is ready to answer, you may hear a spoken response, or if you asked Siri to do something, such as open an app, the action will be performed, and Siri won't say anything. If you asked for something complicated, such as directions to the theater or the weather forecast for next week, Siri won't speak all that information, but it will be available onscreen. You can flick through the information, and VoiceOver will read it. Similarly, Siri won't read back what it thinks you said, but you can read that information with VoiceOver.

Sometimes Siri will need more information. Siri will ask a question, and then beep twice. You don't need to do anything special; just speak your answer.

You can also usually double-tap an item on the screen to go directly to the app it's using. If you tap information about the weather, for example, the iPhone's Weather app opens.

A good thing to ask right away is, "What can you do?" Suggestions for what to ask Siri are also displayed when you activate Siri. These suggestions change every few seconds, so you can bring up Siri, focus on one of the questions, and listen as it changes. Here are a few things Siri can do:

Open apps. You can say, "Launch calculator" or "Open Ocarina," and Siri will locate and open it, no matter which screen or folder it's in. If you have a lot of apps, this feature will save you a great deal of time.

Control various aspects of your phone. You can say, "Turn off Bluetooth," "Turn on Airplane mode," "Turn up the brightness," "Turn off Do Not Disturb," "Show VoiceOver settings," and more. One of the most useful commands of this type is "Turn on VoiceOver." If you need to get your phone talking, use a friend's, or try out one at the Apple store, this feature is incredibly useful since it doesn't need to be configured in advance.

Tell you about the weather. You can say, "What's the temperature today?" "What's the weather going to be like in Paris?" or "Will I need an umbrella?" If you ask about your current location, Siri will need to be able to access your location. The first time you ask for something location-based, Siri will ask if it's okay to use your location; say yes.

Work with the phone and contacts. You can say, "Call Jack at home," "FaceTime Jill," or "What's Old Mother Hubbard's address?" Siri will dial phone numbers in your Contacts list or display contact information on the screen. You can also ask, "What calls have I missed?" and Siri will tell you; if you want to return a call, double-tap after Siri speaks the caller's name, and say, "Call back."

Play music. You can ask for a particular artist, album, or song in your Music app, and Siri will play it for you. You can also skip to the previous or next track, shuffle your songs, or find out the name and artist for the track that is currently playing.

Work with the clock, alarm, and timer. You can say, "What time is it in Moscow?" "Wake me up at 7 tomorrow," or "Set a timer for 15 minutes."

Work with calendars and reminders. You can say, "Remind me to take out the trash when I get home," "Remind me to walk the zax at 5:30," or "Make an appointment tomorrow at 4." Siri will show you the reminder or appointment and ask you to confirm or cancel it.

Work with text messages and email. You can say, "Tell Dad I'll be home soon" to send a text message, or "Email Mom about the party." What you say after "about" will be the subject of the email. The message appears on screen. You can edit the text by double-tapping it and making changes as needed. The first time you refer to your father, husband, brother, etc., Siri will ask who you mean and will remember that relationship from then on.

Read email. You can say, "Check for new mail." Siri will read a list of new messages. To have one read, double-tap after you hear the name, and say, "Read it," or something similar.

Read notifications. You can say, "Do I have any notifications?" or something similar, and Siri will tell you. You can also ask Siri to open the relevant apps, thus clearing the notifications.

Use the iPhone's dictionary. You can say, "Define catharsis."

Search the web. You can say, "Search the web for Lock," "Search Google for Shock," or "Search Wikipedia for Barrel." When you say, "Search the web," your default search engine is used; this is typically Bing. No web page is opened; search results are displayed on the Siri screen. The same happens when you search Wikipedia. Double-tap a search result or brief article to see more. If you make Google your default search engine on the Safari page in Settings, Google search results will be displayed on the Siri screen as well; otherwise, asking to search Google results in the Google search results page opening in Safari.

Find out about movies. You can ask things like, "What G or PG-rated movies are playing around here," and get movie names and show times. You can also ask about movie details such as actors and directors.

Ask about sports. You can ask questions such as, "How did the Orioles do last night?" or "What are the Cardinals' standings so far this year?" You can also ask about individual player statistics.

Ask about facts, statistics, and calculations from WolframAlpha. You can say, "What's 1234 times 5678?", "How many calories are in a bagel?", and much more.

Ask about things in the vicinity, depending on your country, such as "How many Mexican restaurants are nearby?" Siri allows you to make restaurant reservations via a service called Open Table. If you live in or are visiting a large city, this might be very handy.

Tweet and get information about Twitter. You can say, "What's trending on Twitter?"; "Show me tweets from" followed by a Twitter user's name; "Mention Old King Cole on Twitter," followed by the tweet text, assuming you have Old King Cole's Twitter username in your contacts list; or "Tweet" followed by the text you wish to tweet.

Siri can also be entertaining. Siri's programmers knew that people would ask Siri all sorts of odd questions, and they clearly had a great deal of fun coming up with answers. To get a feel for this, ask Siri "How much wood could a woodchuck chuck if a woodchuck could chuck wood," "What is the meaning of life," or "How old are you," among many others.

Dictating Text with Siri

When Siri is on, a Dictate button appears in the bottom left corner of the screen anytime a keyboard appears. To dictate, double-tap this button, or double-tap with two fingers anywhere on the screen, and start speaking. Double-tap with two fingers to stop. This is the same command you use to answer the phone.

If you stop dictating and then start again, Siri will add your new text to the end of the old. You can also edit the text that you've dictated. Siri seems to handle punctuation better when you are dictating than when you're using one of the email or messaging commands, so if you're sending a text or an email and want to be sure the punctuation is right, you may want to start the text or email message in the usual way and then use Dictate to compose the message.

You can speak most punctuation marks, such as "Period" or "Full stop," depending on your language setting, "Comma," "Question mark," "Exclamation point," "Left paren," "Right paren," "Quote," and "Unquote." You can say "Cap" before a capital letter, "Caps on" to capitalize the first letter of each word and "Caps off" to stop capitalizing, "All caps on" and "All caps off." You can also say "New line," and "New paragraph." If you've used Dragon Naturally Speaking, the available commands are the same.

When Siri Doesn't Work

Siri is wonderful when it works, but there are many times when it doesn't. Siri needs a good Internet connection to work at all. Everything you say to Siri is sent online for processing, so if there's no connection, there's no Siri.

Siri may not respond at all. The likely reason is that Siri's volume has gotten turned down. To fix this, hold down Home to get Siri's attention, then say something. Then turn up the volume.

Siri may have trouble figuring out what name you are saying when you try to access a particular contact. In that case, activate Siri, say "learn how to say my name," or the name of the person Siri is having trouble with, and follow the prompts. Now you can refer to that contact by a phonetic name or nickname.

Closing and Switching Apps

Now that you know how to explore screens and enter text, it's time to start running more apps. Before you do, however, it's important to know how to close and switch between apps.

We said before that when you want to close an app, you press the Home button. That statement isn't completely accurate, however. Apps continue to run in the background. Some apps can drain your battery this way, but most of the time running apps in the background is useful. The feature allows you to listen to music and streaming audio, download apps or music, use GPS, or be available for calls from programs such as Skype while using the phone for other things.

The key to returning to an app that is running in the background, and to closing apps for good, is the App Switcher. Access the App Switcher from anywhere by pressing the Home button twice. VoiceOver says, "App Switcher, Home," and if hints are on, it then says, "Swipe up with three