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Top 10 Must-Have Apps for the iPhone, and Some Runners-Up

By **BOB TEDESCHI**

I'm always surprised when I come across people who have yet to fill their iPhone with apps. The most often cited excuse? Not enough time to sift through 300,000 apps to find the good ones.

True, it can be a slog. (But that's what I do for you every week.) In this column, I've compiled 10 must-have apps that will save you time, make your life easier and make you smile.

You won't see [Twitter](#), [Slacker](#) or [Facebook](#), among others, on this list. Although I find them indispensable, the services aren't unique to a mobile phone. To make my Top 10, an app must deliver an experience you couldn't find on your computer — something, in other words, that exemplifies the smartphone at its best.

What qualifies?

GOOGLE (FREE) You can find Google through your mobile browser, but the app is a major time-saver. The voice search function is seamless. Ask it for specific [Wikipedia](#) entries, for instance, and it complies. Or just say "[Starbucks](#)" and the app uses the phone's GPS to find the nearest location. A recent update put the "Goggles" service within the app, so you can snap a photo and let Google search for information on that object. And given Google's emphasis on mobile, the app will continue to improve.

SOUNDHOUND (FREE AND \$5) You've probably heard of Shazam, the app that identifies songs. SoundHound is faster, and it offers a broader range of ancillary features. You can hum a tune into the phone and it'll find the song, look up lyrics and run YouTube videos of song performances. The \$5 version lets you identify an unlimited number of songs. Users of the free

version get five tags monthly.

HIPSTAMATIC (\$2) Scores of photography titles are in the App Store. Many are terrific, but not one matches Hipstamatic's blend of simplicity, serendipity and art. At heart, the app is a filter that will unpredictably saturate, blur or discolor your images, among other things. The results are always surprising and often stunning. Add packs of lenses and film effects for \$1 apiece.

EVERNOTE (FREE) The company advertises this as a personal digital assistant, and it's an apt description. Evernote is a traveling notepad that synchronizes with desktop and browser software (also free). Use your iPhone to copy an image, take a photo, record a voice memo or jot down a note, and it appears on your computer (and vice versa). It also recognizes your written text, within limits. The free version stores a fair amount of information, but for \$45 a year, you needn't sweat the data limits.

ANGRY BIRDS (\$1) A runaway favorite among the iPhone crowd, the app tests your ability to break down the barricades that protect green pigs. The weapon: flightless birds, launched by catapult. No wonder they're angry. The game is easy to learn, yet challenging to play, with witty touches throughout. You can try a limited free version, but if you do, good luck resisting the paid version, with more than 800 possible scenes.

URBANSPOON (FREE) Not sure what to eat, or where? Spin Urbanspoon's slot machine and it will dial up a suggestion. You can also select certain attributes — Japanese food, for instance, or inexpensive food — and local eateries appear. The app includes user reviews and contact information, and you can press a button for a map and directions.

STAR WALK (\$3) Point your phone toward the heavens and this app identifies all you see — constellations, planets, individual stars — in brilliant clarity. If you pivot in another direction, the app follows. It's an astonishing app that's great to pull out during dinner parties, beach walks or sleepless nights in bed. You needn't have a clear view of the sky to experience the starry night.

FIREFOX HOME (FREE) In the same vein as Evernote, Firefox Home is a way to synchronize your desktop and mobile lives. Once you load the app and register, Firefox Home will show your browsing history and bookmarks. If you're reading an important document

online when you leave the office, you can start the app later and pick up where you left off.

QUICKOFFICE MOBILE SUITE (\$5) The next time someone e-mails you a Word, Excel or Powerpoint document, Quickoffice will open it and allow you to make quick edits from your iPhone. (Otherwise, you can open, but not edit, [Microsoft](#) Office files.) You can also create documents with the app, but it is far less useful for that purpose. Rather, Quickoffice offers a way to complete small work tasks easily while you are on the move.

REDLASER (FREE) It may not tell you if a clothing item makes you look fat, but otherwise RedLaser is a perfect shopping companion. Scan a bar code and it retrieves product information, including prices at online merchants and local stores (in case you are in the mood to haggle). Or follow a spouse or child around a store, scan what they like and you have an instant gift list. The app's scans sometimes fail, but more often than not RedLaser works smoothly.

Quick Calls

No Top 10 list is fully useful without an “honorable mention” list. The following apps should not be overlooked: Instapaper (free, with \$5 “Pro” version; for saving and reading Web pages after you’ve moved offline); CraigsPro+ (\$2; search classifieds on [Craigslist](#) more easily than on the Web site); The Weather Channel (free; great forecasts at a glance); [Yelp](#) (free; find local services, restaurants and bars, including reviews); Layar (free; see customized information about your surroundings); Ocarina (\$1; turns your phone into a musical instrument); and Glympse (free; let friends track your location temporarily and easily).