

# How to Change the Ringtone on Your Smartphone

Customize the notification sounds on your iPhone or Android to show your personality — or stand out

by Ed Waldman, [AARP](#), March 9, 2022

*Hey, my phone's ringing.*

*Now where the heck is it? Not in my pocket. Not in my purse. Not on the coffee table. Darn, I know I just [put it somewhere](#).*

*Oh, wait. That's not my phone. But it sure sounded like mine.*

More than 50 ringtones from *Apex* to *Cosmic* to *Duck* to *Old Car Horn* and *Xylophone* come baked into iPhones that work on [4G and 5G networks](#). So why does it seem like everyone uses the same sound when they're receiving a call or a text? In part, that's because iPhones come with a default ringtone: You'll hear *Reflection* on iPhone X and newer; older phones default to *Opening*.

You can easily change your ringtone whether you have an [iPhone or an Android](#). And if you don't like any of the choices already there, with just a little more effort, and \$1.29 or less, you can download 30 seconds of your favorite song — perhaps “*Vehicle*” by the Ides of March or “*Proud Mary*” by Creedence Clearwater Revival or even Johnny Carson's *Tonight Show* theme — to show a little bit of your personality and to make sure that no one will confuse your phone with theirs.

You can even set different ringtones for different people so you know who's calling without having to look at the Caller ID.

## How to change your ringtone or text tone

On an iPhone or iPad, tap **Settings | Sounds & Haptics**. Under Sounds and Vibration Patterns, tap the sound that you want to change. Choices are Ringtone, Text Tone, New Voicemail, New Mail, Sent Mail, Calendar Alerts, Reminder Alerts and Air Drop.

Then tap the ringtone you want to associate with that choice and a blue check mark will appear. You'll also hear what the tone sounds like, so if you don't like it, simply choose another.

Some people like to have different sounds associated with different alerts: an old-fashioned phone ring for an incoming call, a swoosh for incoming mail, a ding for a text.

On an Android phone, the process is very similar. Go to **Settings** and then tap on **Sounds and vibration**. Tap on **Ringtone** or **Phone Ringtone** and choose from the preset choices. When you touch your choice, the circle next to your choice will be filled in. Then tap **Save**.

## How to set a separate tone for a particular contact

Setting a separate tone on an iPhone

On an iPhone or iPad, open the Contacts app — or get to your contacts by tapping your **Phone** app icon and **Contacts** in the lower middle of your screen — and tap the name of the person you want to set the ringtone for. Then in the upper-right corner of the person's contact card, tap **Edit | Ringtone** or **Text Tone**, and choose a new sound.

Again, it's a similar process on an Android phone. Open Contacts either by tapping your **Contacts** app icon or your **Phone** app icon and **Contacts** in the lower right corner. Tap the contact you want, and tap the **three horizontal dots** on the upper right. From that menu, tap **Set Ringtone** and then select the desired ringtone. Tap **Save** to set the ringtone for that contact.

Not every Android phone acts similarly. If you don't see a Set Ringtone option under the horizontal dots menu, tap the contact name once, then tap the icon with an "i" in a circle and **Edit**, the second option in the lower left corner of the next screen. Then tap **View more** and scroll until you see **Ringtone**. You'll have to **Allow** the Contacts app to access photos and media on your device, but afterward you can choose any of the ringtones you have on your phone.

## How to buy ringtones from the iTunes Store

Open the iTunes Store app on your phone and tap **More** — the ... icon at the bottom right — then tap **Tones**.

Find a ringtone that you want to buy, then tap the price, usually 99 cents or \$1.29. Your phone will ask you if you'd like to set your new tone as your default ringtone or text tone, or if you'd like to assign it to one of your contacts. Tap your choice and then tap **Done**. You'll then have to confirm your purchase with either biometrics or a double-click of the button on the right side of the phone. You can also get to the Tone Store directly from **Settings | Sounds & Haptics | Ringtone | Tone Store**.

Choose an option to automatically set the ringtone. Or tap **Done** to decide later.

## How to get ringtones from Google Play

Probably hundreds of apps — most of them free to download — offer ringtones in the [Google Play Store](#), including rap music ringtones, today's hits ringtones, Harry Potter ringtones, Metallica ringtones, military ringtones, cute baby ringtones. You get the idea.

Search for “ringtones” in the store, and you can filter your search to return only ringtone apps that have either a 4.0-star rating or above or a 4.5-star rating or above.

**And a legal warning:** You can find many tutorials online on how to turn your iTunes music into a ringtone. It surely can be done. But as unfair as it seems, it might not be legal. Because of copyright laws, even if you already own a song, you must buy it again to turn it into a ringtone, according to an answer on an Apple-controlled message board.

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