Installing Mobile Apps

Google doesn't try to lock you into its ecosystem on Android, nor does it rely on licensing individual computers with a desktop application like iTunes. You can manage your Android apps and games from any device, or forego Google's store completely and look elsewhere. There are a lot of options for Android users, and the specifics can change often. Let's check out all the ways you can get Android apps on your phone or tablet.

Samsung Galaxy S6: **How to Install APK File**

Samsung Galaxy S6 users can normally use Google Play to install apps on their devices. You can install APK files on your S6 as well. Follow the steps listed below:

- Select "Apps" from the Home screen, then open "Settings".
- Select "Lock screen and security".
- Scroll down and select the "Unknown sources" option.
- If you don't have the APK file on your phone yet, you can transfer it over by connecting your S6 to your computer and moving the file to the device. You can also download it from the web browser on the device. Another option would be to email it to yourself, then download it via your email account on the S6.
- Once the APK file is on your phone, select "Apps" from the home screen, then open "Tools" > "My Files".
- Select "Local storage", then navigate to the place where the APK file is saved.
- Tap the file. You will be walked through the process of installing the app.

The Google Play Store

Most apps are going to be obtained from the Google Play Store. On your phone or tablet, tap the Play Store icon to open the store. The main page in the Play Store will offer you access to books, movies/TV, music, and magazines in addition to apps. There are links on the main page for both Apps and Games. The Apps link contains all the apps and games in Google Play, but the Games link is only the games.

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The next screen as you dive into the app or game section will include various curated lists of content including sales, new apps to watch, and seasonal collections. If you want to install and Android app you can pick it from here or search for the one you want with the button at the top. Each app has its own details page where you can check out reviews, ratings, prices, and download size.

For free Android apps, hit the download button at the top of the page to install. Paid apps will have a button with the price listed. Tap that and you will go to the payment interface where you can choose the account to use. If you have Google Play credit, it can be used here, but only if it covers the full cost.

Play Web

To make sure apps are being sent to your device correctly, you need to verify you are connected to Google's servers. If you're getting push updates for Gmail and Hangouts reliably, you're probably fine. On stock Android devices, you can also check the connection icons for your Google cloud services status. On Android 4.0-4.3, blue icons in the status bar mean you are connected. Android 4.4 moves this indicator to the Quick Settings area and white means you're connected — orange indicates a problem. If you're not connected to Google, try rebooting the phone or cycling airplane mode on and off.

Sideloading

Some developers are good enough to post apps or beta versions of apps on a website for you to install. There are also some outside sources to buy apps and games like the Humble Bundle. If you want to install an Android app like this, odds are it comes as an application package, or APK. Installing the APK on your device is called "sideloading" and it requires just a little setup.

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You will have to go into your device settings and enable "Unknown Sources," which is in the Security menu. After that, just download the APK, and tap on the download notification to install. Alternatively, you can save the APK on your internal storage and use a file manager like Astro or Solid Explorer to find and open it. Be aware, though, some shady people will package malware with Android APKs on the open internet — make sure you trust the download source.

Amazon Appstore

Android users in the US have another option for installing Android apps, and that's the Amazon Appstore. This is essentially a glorified sideloading system, so you still need to have Unknown Sources checked. Amazon's website will send the Appstore installer to your device to make things easier. You install it like any other app.

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Then you can browse and install apps in the Amazon ecosystem from your phone or the Amazon website. The files downloaded from Amazon will trigger the same system-level installer used to sideload apps. However, you can't have the APKs pushed to your device from the web like you can with the Play Store. Instead, you have to open the Appstore app and download them manually.