Rooting a phone means

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Rooting a cell phone means what. What does rooting a phone means. What do you mean by rooting a phone.

If you've done any internet research on the topic of Android phones, you most likely ran across either forums or articles discussing rooting your device. But what is rooting, exactly, and should you do it? This is a summary of the advantages and disadvantages of rooting an Android phone. The information in this article should apply no matter who made your Android phone: Samsung, Google, Huawei, Xiaomi, etc. The Android phone runs an operating system designed for commercial and private use. Like most operating systems, several features are disabled. Phone manufacturers lock their devices to prevent you from unintentionally damaging the phone or exposing the phone to security risks. They also lock devices to prevent you from removing apps they installed, or from switching carriers. Rooting removes all limitations and grants full access to the operating system. Andrew Mason/CC by 2.0/Flickr Once your Android device is rooted, you have more control over the settings, features, and performance of the phone. You're not limited to what the phone manufacturer says you can do with the device. Instead, you can do anything the device's hardware allows. Basically, rooting grants administrative (or root in Linux and Android terms) privileges in the operating system and the ability to make global changes. These are the primary disadvantages of rooting your Android phone: Voids the phone warranty. After a phone is rooted, it cannot be serviced under the warranty. Risk of "bricking" a phone. A bricked phone is completely unusable. Breaks the phone contract. This depends on how you purchased the phone. If you lease the device or make payments, you're definitely breaking your contract with your carrier by rooting it. Poor performance. The intention of rooting a phone is to improve your phone's performance. However, some users who root their phones to speed it up or add additional features find their devices lose both performance speed and features. Viruses. Even phones get viruses. A common practice with rooted phones is to flash ROMs with custom programs. When you install an app or ROM from an unreputable source, you risk installing malicious programs. Rooting your Android phone offers benefits that include: Running special apps. Rooting allows the phone to run apps that it cannot run otherwise. Many of these apps give greater control over the phone, like more customization and battery management options. Removing pre-installed apps. When you root a phone, you're able to remove unwanted pre-installed apps from it. Freeing up memory. When you install an app on your phone, it's stored in the device's memory. Rooting lets you move installed applications to an SD card to free up system memory for additional files or apps. Custom ROMs. This is the most powerful feature of rooted phones. There are hundreds of custom ROMs that increase a phone's processing speed and change the look and feel. Extended Phone Life. Rooting a phone allows you to install custom ROMs and remove bloatware. It also lets you install certain apps that require root, many of which manage phone resources. Because the Android ROM community develops new releases for Android long after manufacturers stop supporting a device, you can keep getting updates. brownpau/CC by 2.0/Flickr It should be noted that rooting an Android phone is not the same as unlocking it. Unlocking a phone allows it to be used on other carriers. For a time, it was illegal to unlock a phone—even if it was no longer under contract with a carrier. That changed in 2014 when the Unlocking Consumer Choice and Wireless Competition Act was signed into law. This law permits any cellphone or smartphone owner to unlock their phone and move to another carrier if the phone contract's requirements are satisfied. Thanks for letting us know! Get the Latest Tech News Delivered Every Day Subscribe Tell us why! Now is arguably the best time in the history of the platform for Android users—the OS is getting better, updates are getting (slightly) quicker, and there are several excellent handsetS to choose from. If you’re not into the whole “manufacturer skin” that most are offering these days, however, it can be slightly less exciting to buy a non-Nexus phone. But giving your phone a “stock Android” look and feel isn’t as hard as you think. If you’re rooted, of course, you could just flash a custom ROM based on stock Android, but most people don’t want to go through that hassle these days. If you have a Samsung phone, we recommend checking out our Samsung-specific guide–there are a few extra things Samsung has in place that let you make your phone feel like stock. For all other phones, read on. RELATED: How to Flash a New ROM to Your Android Phone Change Your Launcher This is the first thing that I do on any phone, because it easily makes the biggest different right out of the gate. With Android, basically everything is managed through the launcher—the app that handles your home screens—so it’s one of the most dramatic changes you can make to your phone’s look and feel. Even better, there are several really good launcher replacements out there. If you’re looking for a one hundred percent stock experience, you can get that on the home screen with the Google Now Launcher—the same one that you’ll find on stock Android devices. However, if you’re looking for an experience that’s more customizable and still very close to a stock look and feel, I vote for Nova Launcher. It’s powerful, insanely customizable, and fast—what more could you possibly want? You can even change your icons in Nova to match those of stock Android, so you’re not stuck looking at Google’s Launcher with LG or Samsung’s icons. It’s a win-win all around. RELATED: How to Install Nova Launcher for a More Powerful, Customizable Android Home Screen Switch to Google Keyboard Touch keyboards on Android have come a long way over the last few years, and Google’s own offering is now one of the best out there. Like most other things Android, it’s clean and minimal, not full of “fluff” features that no one ever uses, but rather has a focus on accuracy and meaningful settings. Like Now Launcher, this is the same keyboard that you’ll find on stock Android devices out of the box. Grab it from the Play Store, install it, and enjoy your next step toward stock. Use Google Camera There’s a good chance that the stock camera app that comes with your phone is robust and full-featured, which is nice, but sometimes you just don’t need all that. If you want something simple and easy to use, Google Camera is the app for you. It does a good job of keeping the picture taking process a clean one, as it doesn’t have all the bells and whistles that you’ll find on most other cameras—just hit the button and snap the picture. The idea here is that Google Camera will do most of the heavy lifting for you, automatically setting exposure, ISO, shutter speed, and all that other good stuff. But there’s one catch: it’s not available directly from Google Play. If you want to install the official Google Camera, you’ll have to grab it from APK Mirror and sideload it. Keep in mind that there are two different versions of Google Camera—one for 64-bit phones, and one for 32-bit phones—and you’ll also have to enable “Unknown Sources” in your phone’s Security menu. Honestly, your phone’s default camera app is probably just as good, if not better–but if you want a truly stock experience, grabbing Google Camera is worth the extra work. Drop the Stock SMS App and Switch to Messenger There is no shortage of messaging apps in Google Play, and even Google now has a bunch to choose from. But I think Google really got it right with Messenger, the new(ish) stock SMS app for Nexus devices. It uses Google’s Material Design user interface for a clean, sharp look, but it’s not just a pretty face—it works exceptionally well, too. But really, I just mostly love how good it looks. I don’t understand why so many other messaging apps can’t seem to get this right. Messenger is my jam. Give Google’s Other Apps a Shot Your phone probably ships with the manufacturer’s choice of various apps—Calendar, Gallery, Clock, etc. The thing is, Google’s stock offerings are probably better (or at least a lot cleaner), and you can use those instead: While that won’t get you a perfectly stock phone, it’s definitely several steps in the right direction. Switching to Google’s own apps will give your phone a much more stock-like look and feel, which can be a big improvement on many handsets out there. And really, if you don’t like it, you can always switch back. That’s the power of choice, baby. Recently, Google fans finally got what they've wanted since the HTC Hero first came out: stock Android versions of the most popular, non-Nexus handsets. However, if you aren't able to pick up one of those phones, you can still get the stock experience, without having to root your device.Yesterday at Google I/O, the company announced something it hasn't before: a stock version of an…Read moreThere are a number of reasons why you might not be able to get a stock Android handset. The Nexus 4 costs $300 and the other handsets are $600 or more. They only work on certain networks and aren't available in all countries. That still leaves an overwhelming majority of people that might prefer Google's vision of the platform that might never know for lack of access. Or you might just not want a Nexus—some of the other phones have arguably better hardware, even though their software might not be the stock experience.Obviously, the nuclear option is to root your phone and install a custom ROM that's based off stock Android, like CyanogenMod. We highly recommend doing this, in fact—but if that sounds too work-intense or intimidating, you can still get pretty close without risking your warranty or reading a single guide (well…aside from this one).We love Android, but rooting your phone can give you the opportunity to do so much more than your…Read moreGet a New Home ScreenYour home screen is like your…well, like your home. Technically, the app that contains your home screen is called the launcher, and it also includes your app drawer and widget selector. Manufacturers skin this pretty heavily (for example, HTC's new BlinkFeed feature is built in to the launcher).Apps like Nova and Apex Launcher are custom launchers that are very similar to the Google-y default. They do add some new features like changing icons (which we'll get to in a bit), but they're largely similar, if you want them to be. They'll have their own dedicated set of preferences to tweak things like animations or number of home screens. It's actually better than stock—it gets you the stock look with a bunch of other features so you can tweak things to your liking.Replace the KeyboardThis one's a slam dunk, since Google recently released their keyboard on the Play Store. You can replace the keyboard on your device with any number of alternatives, but if you want the stock version it's available right here.The bad news is that this will require Android 4.0+ and is only for English-speaking countries at first. If you happen to be stuck on an older device or in a region that isn't supported, you can download the APK separately. Of course, this will not come with updates and may not work perfectly. You're on your own if you go down this road, but it is available. Of course, they aren't stock, but you can't go wrong with keyboard alternatives like SwiftKey or Swype, either.Finding the perfect Android keyboard is no easy task—there are so many to choose from, and most of…Read moreDownload All the Google AppsFor the most part, you're probably already using some regular Google apps. Gmail, Hangouts, and Maps, for example, typically come pre-installed on every phone, or are at least the best available option. However, you're probably using some skinned versions of basic apps like the calendar. If you want to get as close to stock as possible, you'll need to add a couple things.For starters, Chrome is now the default browser on new devices. Google Calendar is also available to replace the skinned versions your manufacturer included. Unfortunately, the Google-y Messaging app isn't available. However, a modified APK that's designed to work with Google Voice is on the Play Store. If you want to use it to receive Google Voice messages, it will cost money eventually, but just for regular text messages it's perpetually free.Unfortunately, without rooting, you're still left with a few gaps. Namely: The dialer, People, Camera, and Gallery apps are still siloed within official Google builds, but alternatives exist for nearly all of them (for example, we like JustPictures and QuickPic better than the default Gallery app anyway). Also keep in mind that your manufacturer has probably made extensive tweaks to the camera app that you'd want to keep. For example, the HTC One introduces a host of custom features that the stock camera app doesn't include. In this sitaution, going pure Google does have its trade-offs.Your phone is likely the centerpiece of your digital photo collection, so you may as well have the…Read moreTweak the Icons and WallpapersIt's just not stock Android without the right icons and wallpapers. The latter is super easy to find, as your backgrounds were always meant to be customizable, so it's just a matter of downloading the right image files. Typically, XDA will have the new ones available pretty quickly.Live wallpapers get a bit trickier as they're not necessarily universally compatible. You can find helpful posts where selfless internet citizens have gone to the trouble of ripping APKs of stock live wallpapers. These might be more of a crapshoot in terms of compatibility, but search around for your specific device and LWP you're looking for and you may get lucky.Icons are similarly complicated, though mainly due to the launcher. Icon packs are often designed to work with Nova, Apex, GO Launcher, ADW, or any number of alternative launchers. If you downloaded the stock Google apps in the last section, then you're probably mostly set, but the sticklers can typically find the last few remnants on the Play Store or in the XDA forums. Just download the icon pack to your device, install it (if it's an APK), thenhead into your launcher's settings and change your icon pack to the one you downloaded.Don't Forget the Kitchen SinkYou may not be aware of it—and to a certain extent you don't need to be, as much of this happens behind the scenes—but Google has been working to bring the stock experience more out in the open. The biggest piece of that puzzle is Google Play services. You may or may not recognize it, but this is a crucial piece of the Google ecosystem that can be updated independently of a whole OS update.This became especially clear at Google I/O this year when Google introduced a host of new features, and there was no mention of a new version of Android. That doesn't mean you don't get new features, though. Synchronized notifications, better location tracking, and all those sweet new gaming features are all part of an update to the new Google Play Services.At Google's I/O conference today, the company announced some interesting new APIs as part of Google Read moreYou don't really have to do much of anything to keep this part updated. However, if you want the purest Google experience you can get, this is where the magic is probably going to happen from here on out. It will update behind the scenes and developers will tap into, sometimes without you ever seeing it happen. Don't be worried or freak out over any permissions it requests. This is just the new delivery system for key Android components.Google is attempting to separate Android from its services. The slow operating system updates cause breaks in the platform that have led to a somewhat chaotic ecosystem. With Google Play Services, combined with the unbundling of key apps like Calendar or the keyboard (which actually began with Google Maps way back in Android 2.0), the broader plan is to make the Android version you're running entirely irrelevant. It wasn't possible two or three years ago, but now you can get almost entirely stock Android just by downloading a few apps.

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