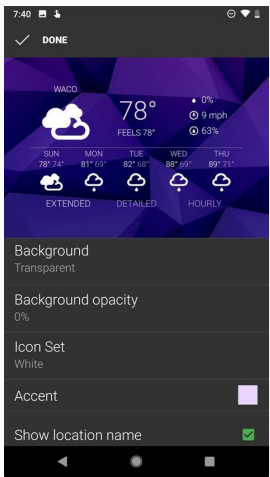


Continue

POSTER MAKER



Widgets, widgets, widgets. Has there ever been an Android feature so full of promise that's gone unloved by Google for so very long? Okay, so maybe there has been — erm, lots of times, actually. But even so, Android's widgets system is a perfect example of an exceptional advantage that Google basically buried, abandoned, and left on the brink of extinction up until its sudden revival in this year's upcoming Android 12 release. (And that revival, by the way, is happening for no apparent reason whatsoever. Just a totally random, unprompted change of heart after a decade of indifference. Riiiiiiiiight.) Google may have more or less given up on widgets for a while, but the good news is that the Android developer community has been chuggin' along and coming up with creative new ways to embrace widgets all this time. And you don't have to wait until Android 12 to step up your own Android widget game and give yourself some fresh and fruitful paths to make the most of your phone's framework. Here, my dear, are a few fantastic ways to put your favorite Android widgets to use and change the way you get stuff done on your phone. (And if you've got a Chromebook, by the by, be sure to check out this crafty hack for bringing widgets into that environment as well.)

Android widget enhancement No. 1: The on-demand home screen pop-up Widgets are a wonderful way to interact with all sorts of info without ever having to open up apps, but having too many widgets can quickly lead to a cluttered and overwhelming home screen. Well, here's a neat way to give yourself the benefit of a widget while still maintaining a neat and minimal space for working: An excellent app called PopUp Widget 3 lets you create an on-demand pop-up widget (get it?) that looks like a regular ol' icon on your home screen but then loads any widget you want when you tap it. See? JR You can even get really wild and set up a single icon that opens multiple widgets at the same time — like your inbox and your calendar together: JR Not bad, right? PopUp Widget 3 costs two bucks and doesn't require any special permissions or manners of access. And it's pretty simple and self-explanatory to set up. Once you install and open the app, it'll walk you through adding in whatever pop-up widgets you want. You can choose the name and even the icon associated with each one along with its precise placement on your screen and how much the screen behind it should dim when it's loaded. The app will offer to add the shortcut directly onto your home screen for you then, or you can also find all of your Pop-Up Widget creations by pressing and holding the main Pop-Up Widget icon in your app drawer. And that, my widget-loving wallaby, is but our first winning widget possibility. **Android widget enhancement No. 2: The on-demand universal pop-up** If you like the idea of having a widget on demand but would rather have it be available to summon from anywhere instead of just from your home screen, this next wacky widget option is just the thing for you. It comes from a spectacular app called Edge Gestures, which works in conjunction with Pop-Up Widget 3 to take that same concept and make it universally accessible. (I told ya it was wacky!) When you first install Edge Gestures, the app will prompt you to enable it as a system accessibility service and to grant it the ability to display over other apps. These permissions sound scary — and they should! — but in the case of this specific utility, they're absolutely appropriate and necessary in order for it to operate. The former is the only way an app is able to create a custom system-wide gesture, which we need for this setup to work its magic, and the latter is how your widget is able to be shown on top of whatever else you're doing. (If you're at all worried, note this: Edge Gestures doesn't request any other system permissions, including the ability to access the internet. That means it would have no way to send any information off of your device and to any theoretical bogeymen lurking in the virtual shadows, even if it wanted to. But it seems safe to say that it doesn't. The app is reputable, it's been around for quite a long while, and it has a large number of overwhelmingly positive reviews.) Where were we? Oh, right: Once you're inside the Edge Gestures configuration area, you'll be able to select exactly what gesture you want to use for pulling up your widget. I'd think carefully about finding something that won't interfere with anything else, like the system-level Android gestures, and that'll be convenient to access without being a command you're likely to trigger by mistake. So, for instance, you might make the gesture a simple swipe downward along the left side of your screen. To do that, you'd find the "Swipe down" option within the app's "Left" tab, and you'd set it to "PopUp Widget" — and then create or select whatever PopUp Widget item you want. And remember: You can select one widget or multiple widgets, too. Prepare yourself for some serious ooohing and ahing: JR As you can see, this opens up a whole new world of mobile multitasking potential. I mean, really. How could you not love that?! The final thing worth doing is going into all the other gesture options in that same configuration area and tapping "Clear" for each of 'em to get rid of Edge Gestures' default actions. I'd also go into whichever side of the screen you aren't using — left or right — and tap the toggle to turn the gestures for that side off entirely. That way, you won't inadvertently activate any gestures that you don't actually want or need. Oh — Edge Gestures costs two bucks to use. And we've got one more intriguing possibility to think through yet... **Android widget enhancement No. 3: The floating bubble** Here's an interesting twist on that same on-demand Android widget idea: If you like the notion of having a widget always available but aren't so keen on the hidden gesture concept, an app called Overlays will let you create a small floating bubble that you can position anywhere on your screen and then tap to pull the widget up when you want it — just like with Android 11's Bubbles system for messaging. Check it out: JR By default, Overlays gives you a bunch of its own little widgets to choose from, but the real power comes from adding in widgets from the Android apps you actually rely on. To do that, tap the "Triggers" tab at the bottom of the Overlays configuration area, then tap the red plus button in the lower-right corner of the screen. Select "Manual," then type in whatever name you want for your widget and tap the icon to pick any icon you like. Tap "Save," then select "Widget" and find the widget you want from the list. At that point, you'll see a preview of the widget; move or resize it if you like, then hit the arrow in the upper-left corner of the screen to exit out of that interface. Last but not least, tap the name of your newly made widget on the screen that comes up next to change its status to "Always on." As soon as you head out of the app and back to your home screen, your fancy new widget should pop right up. All you've gotta do is tap the little downward-facing arrow in its corner to minimize it down to a bubble, which you can then press and hold to move anywhere your widget-worshipping heart desires. Overlays can also create widgets that automatically appear based on context — so you could have something show up every time you connect to a certain Bluetooth device or Wi-Fi network, for instance. To explore those options, just follow the same steps from above but pick "Event" instead of "Manual" when you reach the "Triggers" tab configuration. Overlays is free with an optional \$4 in-app upgrade that removes some ads from the configuration tool and unlocks a handful of advanced features. And there ya have it: three wacky, wild, wonderful ways to make widgets even more wow-inducing. Some days, you've just gotta love Android and the creative thinking it enables. Want even more Googley knowledge? Sign up for my weekly newsletter to get next-level tips and insight delivered directly to your inbox. Copyright © 2021 IDG Communications, Inc. A home screen widget is a unique feature of the Android OS—other mobile operating systems don't offer them at all. If you aren't sure what a widget is, it is a shortcut to accessing basic functions of an app. Some widgets will show the time or weather, while others will show calendar appointments, battery information, or let you raise a digital pet. Keep in mind that widgets can be a little more of a battery drain than not using a widget, but in most cases they are extremely useful and well worth the trade-off. **HD Widgets HD Widgets** are some of the most configurable information widgets in the Google Play Store. They have a lot of different sizes, with some of the large sized ones being 6x2 so they fill up the width of a 7 inch Android tablet; pretty well. Within the different sizes are different set configurations: some of the sizes allow for parts of the widget to be changed, while all of them allow for colors and style to be changed. **Evernote Widget** The Evernote widget is configurable and lets you have fast access to some of the most popular note options. For example, you can start a note from an image in the widget. You also have a search tab for quick access to search for a tag, notebook or note. **Android Pro Widgets Android Pro Widgets** are a combination of different widgets. In this combo pack, you will see separate ones for Agenda & Calendar, Contacts, Bookmarks, Messaging, Facebook, Twitter, Google Reader. All of which have the option to be styled and look, and many of the widgets allow for scrolling as long as your Launcher allows for it as well. - Scroll down to continue reading article - - Scroll down to continue reading article - **Beautiful Widgets Beautiful Widgets** are, well, beautiful. :) This group offers a lot of different configurable sizes from 1x1 to 4x2. Depending on the size you can easily make changes like removing the weather icon and add a more useful battery level icon, and then you can choose the look of the battery icon. Add the animation add-on for an even better-looking widget. **Battery HD** Having a hot-looking battery widget will add to the aesthetics of your home screen rather than detracting from it. Depending on the location available on your home screen, you can choose from either a horizontal or vertical battery widget. When clicked, you can see a lot of information such as usage and battery health. **BeWeather & Widgets BeWeather** is a fantastic weather widget: not only will you love the look of it, you will have access to features like the weather radar so you can see if bad weather is on the way or if it looks like it will miss you. You will also have the temperature displayed in the notification bar. **DroidPet Widget** People love to take care of pets. For people with allergies or who can't have pets where they live, **DroidPet Widget** is a great way to fill the void you feel. Take care of up to 5 pets at the same time by petting them, playing with them, and keeping them happy or they will go to the special farm where animals go to live when no-one wants them. - Scroll down to continue reading article - - Scroll down to continue reading article - **On a busy day, you just need to see what appointment is next and when you have time to schedule other things, like a lunch break. Agenda view is ideal for this and that's what you get with Agenda Widget Ultimate: a great-looking, easy-to-read widget that lets you have fast access to some of the most popular note options. For example, you can start a note from an image in the widget. You also have a search tab for quick access to search for a tag, notebook or note. Android Pro Widgets Android Pro Widgets** are a combination of different widgets. In this combo pack, you will see separate ones for Agenda & Calendar, Contacts, Bookmarks, Messaging, Facebook, Twitter, Google Reader. All of which have the option to be styled and look, and many of the widgets allow for scrolling as long as your Launcher allows for it as well. - Scroll down to continue reading article - - Scroll down to continue reading article - **Wizz Widget Wizz Widget** is a collection of different widgets for commonly-used apps. The Stacks are pretty cool, and they let you flip through the days in your calendar or the tweets in your Twitter timeline. The widgets are resizable and configurable—just set the refresh interval, color, transparency and more. **Tabr widget** Tabr widget is a pretty unique take on widgets, and within one widget you can have different modules. These modules show up in tabs, making it super easy to switch to the information you'd like to access. Add modules for your calendar, social networks, contacts and more. **Chameleon Launcher for Tablets** While **Chameleon Launcher for Tablets** is not a widget, it increases your productivity through the use of widgets. You choose the area of the screen where you'd like to have a widget for Twitter or an RSS feed, and place it there. The widgets fit together really tight to maximize your screen space. What widget do you absolutely love that's not on this list? Let us know what it is and why you love it in the comments below.

