

The Smartphone: Your Pocket Computer

Look around you. Almost everyone has a **smartphone**. This small **device** fits in your hand, but it can do thousands of things. You can call a friend, take a photo, or read the news. You can shop, learn a new language, or watch a movie on a long bus ride. Today, more than five **billion** people **around the world** use a smartphone. That is more than half of everyone on Earth! Smartphones **connect** people across cities, countries, and oceans. A student in Tokyo can talk to a cousin in Brazil in seconds. A farmer in Kenya can check the weather before it rains. The smartphone has changed daily life faster than almost any other invention in modern history.

The first smartphone was not made by Apple or Samsung. In 1994, a company called IBM **invented** a device called Simon. It had a touchscreen and could send emails and faxes. This was a full **decade** before most people had even heard the word "smartphone." However, Simon had big problems. It was heavy, like a brick, and very **expensive**. It also had a weak **battery** that lasted only about one hour! Because of this, only about 50,000 people ever bought one. Still, Simon proved an important idea: a phone could also be a small computer. Its **touchscreen** design, used with a small pen, was years ahead of its time.

Everything changed in 2007. Apple **launched** the first iPhone, and it looked nothing like other phones. It had one big screen and almost no buttons. A year later, Apple opened a store full of **apps**, small programs that users could add to their phone. Suddenly, a phone could become a map, a camera, or a game. Other companies, like Samsung and Google, quickly built their own smartphones too. The new phones became wildly **popular** with people of every age. The simple, clean **design** helped, but the real magic was the apps. In just a few years, the smartphone began to **change** how people worked, shopped, and stayed in touch with family.

Today's smartphones can do far more than make calls. Most people use the **camera** every day to take photos and videos. Drivers use phone maps to **navigate** new cities without ever asking for directions. Many people **pay** for coffee or train tickets just by tapping their phone. Need an answer to a question? You can **search** the internet in seconds, right from your pocket. Doctors use smartphones to check patient health from far away. Students use them to study new languages or watch online classes. Banks, hospitals, schools, and stores have all built apps so people can do things **instantly**, without waiting in long lines.

Smartphones make modern life very **convenient**, but they also bring new challenges for many users. Many people worry about how much **screen time** they spend looking at their phone each day. Some studies show that people check their phones over one hundred times daily, often without even noticing. A few experts even say that certain users feel **addicted** to their devices and find it hard to put them down. Doctors suggest taking a regular **break** from screens, especially before bed. Turning off notifications or leaving the phone in another room can help. Like many powerful tools, the smartphone is most useful when people use it in a **healthy**, balanced way.

Beyond the Headlines

Here is a secret from smartphone history. Before the first iPhone existed, Apple built a hidden **prototype** to test its new touchscreen idea. Engineers kept the project a complete **secret**, even from most workers inside the company! To explain the screen's size, one early team reportedly used a folded **newspaper** as a stand-in model. Years earlier, IBM did something similar with Simon: engineers had to **demonstrate**

a working map app using a scanned, unmoving picture instead of a real one, since the internet barely existed yet. It is **amazing** that your phone once needed paper tricks to show the future.

Vocabulary

Paragraph 1

smartphone (n.)	(n.) a mobile phone that can also connect to the internet and run apps. <i>"She uses her smartphone to check the weather every morning."</i>
device (n.)	(n.) a small machine made for a special purpose. <i>"A smartphone is a useful device for taking photos."</i>
billion (n.)	(n.) the number 1,000,000,000; one thousand million. <i>"More than five billion people own a phone today."</i>
around the world (expr.)	(expr.) in many different countries; everywhere on Earth. <i>"People around the world use smartphones to stay in touch."</i>
connect (v.)	(v.) to join people or things together. <i>"A video call can connect family members who live far apart."</i>

Paragraph 2

invented (v.)	(v.) made or designed something for the first time. <i>"Engineers at IBM invented the first touchscreen phone in 1994."</i>
decade (n.)	(n.) a period of ten years. <i>"The iPhone arrived more than a decade after the first smartphone."</i>
expensive (adj.)	(adj.) costing a lot of money. <i>"Early smartphones were too expensive for most families."</i>
battery (n.)	(n.) a part that stores power so a device can work. <i>"The old phone's battery only lasted about one hour."</i>
touchscreen (n.)	(n.) a screen that you control by touching it with a finger or pen. <i>"You can open an app by tapping the touchscreen."</i>

Paragraph 3

launched (v.)	(v.) introduced a new product to the public for the first time. <i>"Apple launched the first iPhone in January 2007."</i>
apps (n.)	(n.) small computer programs you can use on a phone. <i>"She downloaded three new apps to help her study English."</i>
popular (adj.)	(adj.) liked by many people. <i>"The new phone became popular with teenagers and adults alike."</i>
design (n.)	(n.) the way something looks and is shaped. <i>"Customers loved the phone's simple, modern design."</i>
change (v.)	(v.) to make something different from before. <i>"Smartphones began to change the way people shop and work."</i>

Paragraph 4

camera (n.)	(n.) a tool used to take photos or videos. <i>"He used his phone's camera to film the wedding."</i>
navigate (v.)	(v.) to find your way to a place. <i>"We used the app to navigate through the busy city streets."</i>

pay (v.)	(v.) to give money for something you buy. <i>"I forgot my wallet, so I used my phone to pay for lunch."</i>
search (v.)	(v.) to look for information, usually online. <i>"Students often search the internet to finish their homework."</i>
instantly (adv.)	(adv.) immediately; without any delay. <i>"The message arrived instantly after she pressed send."</i>

Paragraph 5

convenient (adj.)	(adj.) easy and useful for a particular purpose. <i>"Paying with a phone is more convenient than carrying cash."</i>
screen time (n. phrase)	(n. phrase) the amount of time spent looking at a phone, tablet, or computer. <i>"Many parents try to limit their children's screen time."</i>
addicted (adj.)	(adj.) unable to stop doing something, even when it causes problems. <i>"He felt addicted to checking his messages every few minutes."</i>
break (n.)	(n.) a short period of rest away from an activity. <i>"Taking a break from your phone can help you relax."</i>
healthy (adj.)	(adj.) good for your body or mind. <i>"Turning off the phone at night is a healthy habit."</i>

Beyond the Headlines

prototype (n.)	(n.) the first working model of a new invention. <i>"Engineers tested a secret prototype long before the phone went on sale."</i>
secret (n.)	(n.) information that is kept hidden from most people. <i>"The new design was kept a secret inside the company."</i>
newspaper (n.)	(n.) printed sheets of paper with daily news stories. <i>"The team used a folded newspaper to show the screen's size."</i>
demonstrate (v.)	(v.) to show how something works. <i>"Engineers had to demonstrate the new map feature with a picture."</i>
amazing (adj.)	(adj.) causing great surprise or wonder. <i>"It is amazing how much a small phone can now do."</i>

Language Review

Exercise A — True or False

Read each statement. Write True or False on the line.

1. More than five billion people around the world use a smartphone today. _____
2. The first smartphone was made by Apple in 2007. _____
3. The IBM Simon had a battery that lasted about one hour. _____
4. Apple opened a store full of apps the same year it launched the iPhone. _____
5. Today, people can pay for things by tapping their smartphone. _____
6. Doctors never use smartphones to check on patients. _____
7. Some studies show people check their phones over one hundred times a day.

8. Apple used a real, finished iPhone screen to test its earliest size ideas. _____

Exercise B — Matching

Match each word in Column A with its meaning in Column B. Write the correct letter.

Column A	Column B
1. device	a. the first working model of a new invention
2. decade	b. immediately, without any delay
3. expensive	c. a small machine made for a special purpose
4. apps	d. small computer programs you can use on a phone
5. navigate	e. costing a lot of money
6. instantly	f. to find your way to a place
7. screen time	g. a period of ten years
8. prototype	h. the amount of time spent looking at a phone or screen

Exercise C — Multiple Choice

Choose the best answer (a, b, c, or d) for each question.

1. About how many people around the world use a smartphone today?
 - a. About one million
 - b. About one hundred million
 - c. About five billion
 - d. About fifty thousand

2. Which company invented the first smartphone, called Simon?
 - a. Apple
 - b. Samsung
 - c. Google
 - d. IBM
3. What was a big problem with the IBM Simon?
 - a. It had no touchscreen
 - b. Its battery lasted only about one hour
 - c. It could not make calls
 - d. It was too small
4. In what year did Apple launch the first iPhone?
 - a. 1994
 - b. 2000
 - c. 2007
 - d. 2015
5. According to the article, what helped phones become useful for almost everything?
 - a. Apps
 - b. Faxes
 - c. Paper maps
 - d. Pagers
6. Which of these is NOT mentioned as something people do with a smartphone today?
 - a. Navigate a new city
 - b. Pay for coffee
 - c. Search the internet
 - d. Fly an airplane
7. What do some doctors suggest people do because of screen time worries?
 - a. Buy a newer phone
 - b. Take a regular break from screens
 - c. Use the phone only at night
 - d. Delete all their apps
8. In "Beyond the Headlines," what did one early Apple team use to show a screen's size?
 - a. A real working iPhone
 - b. A folded newspaper
 - c. A drawing on a wall
 - d. A piece of glass

Exercise D — Discussion Questions

Talk about these questions with a partner or in a small group.

1. How many hours a day do you usually spend on your smartphone?
2. What is your favorite app, and why do you use it?
3. Do you think life was better or worse before smartphones existed? Why?
4. What is one healthy habit you have, or could start, around screen time?
5. If you could invent a brand-new app, what would it do?

Answer Key

Teacher's Reference — Not for Student Distribution

Exercise A — True or False

1. **True.** The article states that more than five billion people around the world use a smartphone today.
2. **False.** The first smartphone, Simon, was made by IBM in 1994, not by Apple.
3. **True.** The article says Simon's battery lasted only about one hour.
4. **False.** Apple opened its app store a year after launching the iPhone, not the same year.
5. **True.** The article explains that many people pay for things just by tapping their phone.
6. **False.** The article says doctors use smartphones to check patient health from far away.
7. **True.** The article states that some studies show people check their phones over one hundred times daily.
8. **False.** Apple used a folded newspaper, not a real finished screen, to show the size.

Exercise B — Matching

1. device — c. a small machine made for a special purpose
2. decade — g. a period of ten years
3. expensive — e. costing a lot of money
4. apps — d. small computer programs you can use on a phone
5. navigate — f. to find your way to a place
6. instantly — b. immediately, without any delay
7. screen time — h. the amount of time spent looking at a phone or screen
8. prototype — a. the first working model of a new invention

Exercise C — Multiple Choice

1. **Answer: c** The article says more than five billion people around the world use a smartphone today.
2. **Answer: d** IBM invented the first smartphone, called Simon, in 1994.
3. **Answer: b** The article explains that Simon's battery lasted only about one hour.
4. **Answer: c** Apple launched the first iPhone in 2007.
5. **Answer: a** The article says apps let a phone become a map, a camera, or a game.
6. **Answer: d** Flying an airplane is not mentioned as something people do with a smartphone.
7. **Answer: b** The article says doctors suggest taking a regular break from screens.
8. **Answer: b** The Beyond the Headlines section says the team used a folded newspaper as a stand-in model.

Exercise D — Discussion Questions (Model Answers)

Question 1.

Model Answer: I probably spend about three or four hours a day on my smartphone, mostly for messages and music.

Question 2.

Model Answer: My favorite app is a map app because it helps me find new places without getting lost.

Question 3.

Model Answer: I think life is easier now because we can connect with people and find information so quickly.

Question 4.

Model Answer: I try to turn off my phone an hour before bed so I can sleep better.

Question 5.

Model Answer: I would invent an app that helps people practice a new language with short daily conversations.

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Model Answer: I would invent an app that helps people practice a new language with short daily conversations.