

Lost android device

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Today, Google released the Android Device Manager. Now, you can locate and ring your phone or tablet remotely. If you've misplaced your device in the house, you can use this service from the web to ring your phone. This function will override any silent or vibrate settings, so you won't have to worry about not hearing it. Additionally, it will show you exactly where on a map that your device is hiding. You can also elect to enable remote wipes, though this needs to be set up on your phone or tablet first before you can trigger it remotely. Android Device Manager | via Google

Google will start disabling Google Messages from working on "uncertified" Android devices starting March 31. This change shouldn't affect most of you, but it does beg the question: What exactly is an "uncertified" Android device, and how do you make sure you're not using one? What it means when an Android device is "uncertified" Uncertified devices have not passed Google's Android compatibility test to ensure they meet Google's quality and security standards. Some newer Android devices are temporarily uncertified when they're first released, but are later certified once the process is complete. In other cases, an uncertified device could mean the manufacturer hasn't submitted the device for Google's certification, or that it didn't pass. According to Google's support page, using an uncertified Android device carries several risks and drawbacks: Devices that aren't Play Protect certified may not be secure. Devices that aren't Play Protect certified may not get Android system updates or app updates. Google apps on devices that aren't Play Protect certified aren't licensed and may not be real Google apps. Apps and features on devices that aren't Play Protect certified may not work correctly. Data on devices that aren't Play Protect certified may not back up securely. These security risks are why Google is banning Google Messages on uncertified phones. Without the Play Store verifications, Google can't ensure the app's end-to-end encryption is properly configured, which could leave your messages and personal data compromised. That said, not all uncertified Android phones are dangerous. In some cases, rooting your phone or making other system-level modifications will revoke a device's certification. Many modders can work around this, and if not, are usually performing these changes knowing the risks. Luckily, you can undo a root and restore your device's certification status. How to check if your phone is certified? It's unlikely the average person is unwittingly using an uncertified Android device, especially in the U.S.—but it's not impossible. Some uncertified devices come from well-known brands that Google no longer supports. For example, newer Huawei devices are uncertified and cannot currently apply for certification in the U.S. You can confirm your Android phone is certified via the Google Play Store settings. Open the Google Play Store app. Tap on the three-lined button on the top-left corner of the screen. Select "Settings" from the sidebar. Scroll down to the "About" section. Under "Device Certification," it will say either "certified" or "uncertified." If your device is certified, you can continue using Google Messages without any issue. If it's not, you'll need to find a new messaging app or a new device (or unroot your device). However, if you think your device is incorrectly "uncertified," make sure the handset is in Google's (long) list of supported Android devices. Contact Google and the device's manufacturer if there's a discrepancy. It's the open-sourced nature of Android that has enabled it to proliferate so widely, but it's the touch-friendly interface that has had it so eagerly embraced by so many. This has enabled anyone that wanted, to direct their intellectual powers to porting Android to any device they want. This has led to disgruntled owners of Android devices that have waited a few months too long for OS updates to create their own updated builds. Owners of devices with outdated or dead operating systems—such as Windows Mobile—have devised builds of Android of their own. While people who just fancy the damn challenge have done it for perfectly functioning devices, such as the iPhone 3G. For this example we've picked the HP TouchPad, there was a lot of noise about this in mid-2011. HP announced it was dumping its WebOS division and there was a fire sale on its only tablet the HP TouchPad. This runs WebOS, which, while in itself is a fine OS, has very limited third-party app support. With the death knell sounded for WebOS the challenge was on to create a working build of Android. The renowned hacker group, CyanogenMod took up the challenge and delivered a working alpha in a month. So how do you go about replacing the OS on a device? It's just like replacing an OS on a standard PC but with the added complications of gaining the right access to the original OS; having the tools to inject a replacement boot-loader; and having access to a replacement OS with the correct drivers in place. Sounds tricky, doesn't it? Thankfully the internet is a vast and varied place, inhabited by helpful and intelligent types. Sites like and host communities of avid Android fans, dedicated to creating builds of Androids for specific devices. These gals and guys have created an armoury of tools that people can easily reuse for a host of devices. Missing a pillar Three basic pillars are required: a copy of the target OS for the device; a system to inject this onto the device; and a boot-loader to kick start the device with the new OS. The injection stage is interesting as it usually hijacks the manufacturer's built-in firmware upgrade or recovery process. Most devices provide a low-level recovery mode that involves holding down a combination of hard buttons as it's turned on. With the HP TouchPad this is the Volume Up button. For other devices, such as the iPhone this is initiated via the software itself. Beyond that initial process, of course, a build of Android is required, ideally but not necessarily with all the device drivers in place. As with Windows, lacking a driver doesn't necessarily break a device but renders that part—be it the GPS, Wi-Fi or audio for example—useless or in other cases semi-functioning or often functioning but lacking power-saving features. If you jump onboard a part-done build you'll often find such issues. Last, the boot-loader kicks the whole thing off. For some devices, usually those that cannot be flashed, this is a one-time process that has to be rerun each boot. The HP TouchPad gets the best of all worlds as it can be partitioned and have a multi-OS boot-loader installed called Mobooot. You won't be aware there is a chance of bricking your device. We strongly advise backing up your data and any files on it. It's well worth fully charging the device beforehand and leaving it plugged in as well. Once the 'upgrade' is initiated don't interrupt it, even if nothing seems to be happening. Once Android is in place there can be issues with Android Market and it will often need installing separately, but we cover that below. On some devices it may also block many apps as the device isn't correctly recognised. This can often be fixed by clearing and force stopping the Google Services Framework and then the Market via application settings. Beyond this there's a world of Android enjoyment to be had. The Android 4.0 source code has been released too, so we're expecting a slow update for many devices to the tasty Ice Cream Sandwich. Disclaimer: Future Publishing Limited provides the information for this project in good faith and makes no representations as to its completeness or accuracy. Individuals carrying out the instructions in this project do so at their own risk. Whenever you walk out your front door with your phone, you carry with you the contents of your life. "Security" may seem like a boring topic, but your phone has all kinds of important, personal, and sensitive information on it—even if you think it doesn't. When it's so easy to lose your mobile device or have it stolen, you have to ask yourself: why take chances when protecting your data is so simple? Sure, security is important for all your tech. But putting a password on your desktop is one thing, if you want to keep your kids or roommates from prying. Your phone goes with you everywhere. As a result, it's much easier to misplace (or worse, get stolen). Think for a moment of all the personal information you probably have on your phone: photos of your family, emails from your boss, texts from your spouse, not to mention phone numbers, addresses, and possibly even passwords. You may not think you store sensitive information on your phone, but you'd be shocked at what someone with nefarious intentions could do with simple access to your email account. That means a moment of forgetfulness can equal long days or weeks of worry and suffering. Good device security is a top priority so we'll talk about everything you can do to keep your stuff locked up safe and sound. So, with that in mind, this lesson is dedicated to the many ways you can, and very much should, secure your phone or tablet. Almost everything we talk about in this lesson will be in one place: Android's security settings. To access them, first head into the Settings menu by either pulling down the notification shade and tapping the cog icon, or jumping into the app drawer and tapping the "Settings" shortcut. From there, just scroll down to the Security entry. On some devices, this name may be slightly different—Samsung names it "Lock screen and security," for example. Some of this stuff is pretty simple, while some requires a little more explanation. We mostly want to zero in on the stuff that will help keep your device locked tight. Screen Locks: Patterns, PINs, Passwords, and Fingerprints By default, you can unlock your phone with a simple swipe—but that means anyone else can, too. Changing that is first thing you can and must do to secure your phone. Yes, they're a hassle, but they're extremely important—and we'll show you some ways to make them more convenient after we set them up. To start, tap the Screen Lock option and take a look at the variety of screen locks you can employ. On most modern phones, you can even unlock devices with your fingerprint. We'd say that out of these, the most useful to you are pattern, PIN, and fingerprint. Pattern locks seem to be the most popular, but you can use whatever works best for you. Let's run through your options. Pattern Locks: Clever, and Very Secure Pattern unlocks are really interesting: instead of typing in a number or password you remember, you draw a little "connect the dots" pattern to unlock your phone. When you first set up a pattern, it will ask if you'd like to require a pattern to start the device. It's your call here, but we recommend requiring a pattern to start the device. Note that you won't receive any sort of notifications or alarms after rebooting your phone until the pattern has been entered. Then, draw a pattern on the 3x3 layout of dots to create your lock. Whatever you do, don't forget your pattern. Pattern unlocks have proven to be extremely hard to crack, fooling even the FBI. However, note that when you draw your pattern, you leave smudges in the shape of your pattern on the screen—so you may want to get into the habit of giving your phone a quick wipe every time you put it back in your pocket. PIN Codes: Easy to Remember, and Decently Secure A personal identification number—or PIN—works just as your PIN works with your ATM card, but you can choose a longer string if you'd like—the minimum length is four digits. This setting will also ask if you'd like to require a PIN to start the device. Obviously, the longer the better. PINs are easier to crack than passwords if someone is determined, but let's be honest: even a four-digit PIN is going to foil common snoops... unless you choose something simple, like 1111, or something easy to guess, like your birthday. Passwords: Strong, but a Big Hassle Passwords will also be familiar to you and will work much the same way it works on your computer. You can choose a password four to 17 characters long. The longer the password the better, but we think inputting a password every time you want to use your phone will quickly become a pain. Which leads us to the last option... Fingerprints This is a relative newcomer to the security game, but it's easily the best and most secure—after all, you're not going to forget your fingerprint, and it's basically impossible to spoof. On most devices, this is simply called "fingerprint," but on Nexus devices, it's called "Nexus Imprint." For all intents and purposes, though, they're the same thing. Settings it up is easy-peasy: just touch your phone's fingerprint reader several times while it records the print. It's good to move your digit around at different angles to ensure the most accurate reading. You'll also have to set a PIN, Pattern, or Password lock in addition to your fingerprint—which is useful when, say, your phone is lying on a desk and the fingerprint sensor is covered up. Keep Reading... Unlock Your Phone Automatically with Smart Lock While lock screen security is essentially a must, it can get annoying. Entering a pattern or a PIN every time you pull out your phone is exhausting, and can quickly make you wonder whether the extra security is worth it. Enter Smart Lock. This feature allows you to set specific situations in which you don't need to enter your pattern or PIN. For example, you can set your home address as a "trusted location"—as long as you're home, the device will stay unlocked (it uses GPS to determine your location). And that's just one example. You can also keep your phone unlocked while it's connected to a Bluetooth device (like your car, headphones, or smartwatch), when it sees your face (using the front camera), hears your voice, or when it detects that it's on your body. The latter could be a bit sketchy, however, since it can't tell your body from someone else's—it just detects the movement. Trusted place and trusted devices, however? Solid choices. Between the fingerprint scanner and my Android Wear watch, I almost never enter my PIN—but it would still stop a thief if my phone were stolen. Get Your Lost Phone Back with a Lock Screen Message If you enable a lock screen, here's an idea: fill in your owner info so that if you do lose your phone, any honest person that finds it can then easily return it to you. You can do this under Settings > Security > Lock Screen Message. Simple enough. Encrypt Your Phone for Serious Protection Here's something scary: A tech-savvy thief doesn't actually need your PIN to get data off your phone. If they know what they're doing, they can access the phone's storage directly, using a computer or other device. That's where encryption comes in. Encryption is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, if you use encryption, then no one can access your phone's contents without the PIN or password. Your data is basically jumbled nonsense unless you have that info. That said, encryption requires your phone to work harder, which can in turn slow it down. This may not be such an issue with today's better performing devices, but if you have an older or slower phone, it may. Also, encryption is irreversible: once you turn it on, you cannot undo it unless you wipe your phone. So if you do decide it's dragging your phone down, you'll have to set your phone back up from scratch. RELATED: How to Encrypt Your Android Phone (and Why You Might Want to) Finally, if you do encrypt your phone, and you forget the passcode, you are forever out of luck or until you remember how to unlock it. You can never get back into your device without that code. No tricks, or hack, or backdoors exist to help you out of this jam. For the full rundown on how to encrypt your Android device and why you want to, check out our article here. Keep Your Cellular Account Protected with SIM Card Lock Locking your SIM card doesn't mean you can't access your phone, but you won't be able to use it until you key in a code to unlock it. RELATED: How to Set Up SIM Card Lock for a More Secure Android Phone This does nothing to prevent someone from swapping in another SIM card and just using your phone that way. Still, it does deter someone from taking your phone and using it to rack up costly bills on your account. For a more detailed look at SIM lock, including how to set it up, head here. Set Up Android Device Manager and Track Your Phone if It Gets Lost RELATED: How to Find Your Lost or Stolen Android Phone So what happens if, even after all of this, you still lose your phone? Android actually includes a feature that will allow you not only locate where your phone is, but will also let you ring it loudly if you've misplaced it, lock it with a password, as well as wipe it remotely. It's called Android Device Manager, and it should be enabled by default. If not, however, you can manually turn it on by jumping into the "Device administrators" menu. Then, if you lose your phone, you can track it from the Android Device Manager website, or by using the Android Device Manager app on another phone or tablet. We have a complete tutorial on how to use this feature here. We encourage you to check it out and explore further. Virus Protection: Do You Need It on Your Phone? The short answer: no, we don't see the point. RELATED: Android Has a Big Security Problem, But Antivirus Apps Can't Do Much to Help Android can get viruses, but we think getting a virus on your device is actually far more difficult than anti-virus makers would have you believe. In years of owning multiple Android devices, and installing many different applications from the Play Store, we still have yet to contract a virus. And anyone who tells you need virus protection is likely trying to sell you AV software, or doesn't know what they're talking about. (Even if you did get a virus, there's not much Android antivirus apps can do to help.) Still, here are a few tips we can pass along to better guide your judgment: Only install well-known apps from the Play Store. Avoid seemingly nonsensical, one-dimensional apps. Make sure you check for permissions that don't seem right (see Lesson 2 for more on permissions). Don't install apps from outside the Play Store (also known as "sideloading"). There are plenty of legitimate apps you can download on the web as APK installers, but it bypasses one of Android's best security mechanisms: Google's vetting process. At the end of the day, viruses aren't what you need to worry about. You're more liable to be at risk from apps that spy on you, but if you do your research and you pay attention to permissions then we feel that's the best way to avoid most malware. When it comes down to it, old-fashioned good sense will usually keep you out of trouble. Apart from that, keep your device protected from thieves, and you'll be just fine. Our final lesson we'll cover the whole range of data management including managing storage space and keeping your data backed up.

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