

TECH TIPS

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Useful and Entertaining Augmented Reality Apps

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If you've been in a Zoom meeting or seen a Tik Tok video where people add animated funny hats or animal ears to their on-screen picture, you're already familiar with Augmented Reality (AR). The heads-up displays on vehicle windshields are another example of AR. AR imposes information or images on the real world, augmenting the reality around you.

While some AR apps are exclusive to Apple or Android, most are available for both devices.

AR apps help you try before you buy

AR apps scale and position virtual objects so that you can see how they would look in your existing room and with your furnishings. For example, IKEA Place is an AR app that lets you "see" how IKEA furniture and décor items might look in your house.

Lowes, Home Depot and Wayfair have all added AR capabilities to their shopping apps to let you view their products in your home before you decide to buy them.

There are AR apps like Replay that let you see

how you look in different eyeglasses and sunglasses. AR-watches let you see how different designer watches might look on your wrist. Other apps let you try on makeup, nail polish, clothes or other products before you buy.

Some mall stores have Magic Mirrors that let you see how you look in their products.

AR apps for home design

The following link describes four different AR home design apps and their features – roOomy; Houzz; Build.com; and Housecraft.

The best AR home design apps for iPhone and iPad (October 2020): <https://tinyurl.com/AR-home-dsgn>

AR apps for gaming and learning to draw

In 2016, AR pioneer Pokémon-Go had people running around the city looking for Pokémon characters and treasure clues linked to map coordinates and hidden in different locations.

Quiver brings AR to coloring books for kids that can bring your grandchild's colored pages to life. Da Vinci Eye: AR Art Projector lets you project a virtual image of a photo onto paper and shows your hand and pencil as it outlines and draws the projected image.

AR apps for education

Star Walk 2 is my favorite AR app for viewing the night sky. It gives you a live view of the night sky with labels identifying the stars and planets. It also superimposes drawings identifying the constellations that change as you point your phone or tablet in different directions.

You can optionally display images and 3D videos from NASA of the planets, nebulas and galaxies that are visible. The app can notify you of upcoming

meteor showers, eclipses and other celestial events visible from your location.

The BBC's Civilisations AR is related to the broadcaster's "Civilisations" documentary series. It uses AR to let you examine more than 30 artifacts from across the ages and great civilizations of the world. This app includes X-ray views and narrations as well as 3D videos.

Museum Alive is an AR book guided by Sir David Attenborough that shows you photo-realistic 3D images of ancient creatures and the fossils they left behind.

AR on Google Maps

Google Maps now features an AR mode that adds virtual signs and directional arrows over the live view on your phone to help point the way to your destination.

More examples of AR apps

The best augmented reality apps for Android and iOS (from "Digital Trends," March 2021):

<https://tinyurl.com/D-trends-AR-apps>

22 Best Augmented Reality Games for 2022:

<https://tinyurl.com/22-AR-games>

Best AR apps in 2021: Augmented reality comes to your phone: <https://tinyurl.com/toms-2021-AR-apps>

11 Brilliant Augmented Reality Apps for Education in 2022: <https://tinyurl.com/11-AR-educate>

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