



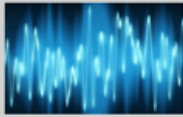
Reviewed

2010 Guide to Mobile Reporting Tools
Prices, Comparisons, Specs and more inside!

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Applications

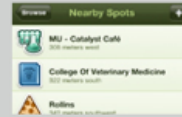
Audio Editing Apps



File Transmission Apps



Geolocation Apps



Live Streaming Apps



Micro-Reporting Apps



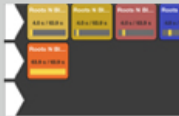
Note-taking Apps



Photo Editing Apps



Video Editing Apps



Hardware

Chargers & Batteries



Keyboards



Lenses



Miscellaneous Gear



External Microphones



External Lights



Tripods



Mobile Audio Apps

Editing

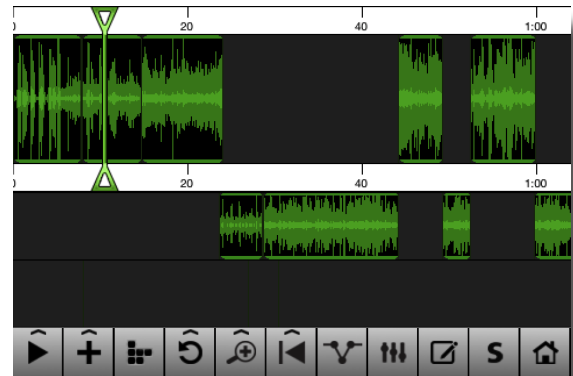
	<u>VC Audio Pro</u>	<u>Monle</u>
Cost	\$5.99	\$9.99
Size	9.1 MB	1.1 MB
Must record in app	Yes (or import track into iTunes first)	Yes
Multitrack Editing	Yes	Yes
Export/Sharing	Allows for sharing via IP address entered online	Wi-fi, FTP, Audio-copy/paste, Intua Pasteboard
Render Time	Very Fast	Slow
Volume Change	Yes	Yes
Upload From iTunes Library	Yes	No
Compatible	iOS 3.1+	iOS 3.0+
Recommended?	Highly Recommended	Not Recommended
Where to purchase	iTunes App Store	iTunes App Store
Manufacturer	VeriCorder Technology, Inc.	Ochen K.

Miscellaneous

	<u>AudioBoo</u>	<u>Blue FiRe</u>	<u>AudioNote</u>
Cost	Free	Free	Free
Size	1.8 MB	7.2 MB	2.5 MB
Export/Sharing	Publish to AudioBoo	FTP	N/A (Can on full version)
Geo-tagged	Yes	Yes	Yes
Change Quality Levels	No	Yes	No
Timer (Record For...)	No	Yes	No
Compatible with...	iOS 3.1+, Android	iOS 3.0+	iOS 3.1.3+
Recommended?	Recommended	Recommended	Recommended
Where to purchase	iTunes App Store	iTunes App Store	iTunes App Store
Manufacturer	Best Before Media Ltd.	Blue Microphones	Luminant Software

VC Audio Pro

In the beginning of this project when I was experimenting with different audio and video applications, I thought that VeriCorder was going to be my least favorite of them all. They look technically heavy with all kind of editing features that you can do. These applications really do have everything that you find on a computer, which, frankly, scared me. I didn't want to have to do all of the fine tweaking I do on a computer on such a little screen. That being said... VeriCorder products are now my favorite applications. While other applications such as ReelDirector may offer audio slideshows, these apps are not as advanced as VeriCorder. I am by no means trying to sound like a commercial for VeriCorder products, but I have definitely had the best luck with them.



VC Audio is audio editing application from the Canadian-based company. Like all of VeriCorder's products, you can buy a Consumer edition for a price, in this case \$5.99, or you if you set up a paid MIMS subscription, you can get the Networks version for free upon setup. Our school has an account with VeriCorder, so we used the Networks version. From the home page, you can manage your settings by clicking on the wheel/cog in the upper right corner. There you can turn airplane mode on and off. This allows for better recording and disables the phone features of your device. You can also manage integration settings such as SoundCloud, email as ringtone and email as M4A (AAC).

If you go back to the home screen, you can click on either the folder (where you will find audio clips and projects, or you can click on the mic to record. You MUST record in VC Audio to have the audio to edit in the program. This wasn't obvious to me and I recorded a few things in Voice Memos hoping to move it over later, only to find that wasn't an option. If you didn't record in the application, there is one bit of hope. If you can email the sound clip to yourself and get it on your iTunes, then you can import from iTunes on VC Audio.

In the editing mode, you can insert a clip by pressing the plus sign. and select a clip. You can listen to the clip, double click it and drag the sliders to where you want the clip to start and stop. Then drag your selection down onto one of the boxes below the waveform. When you are done, push the check mark. There are a lot of more advanced features on this screen. In order from left to right, you can play, zoom, undo/redo, go back to the beginning of the clip, remove the last selection you made, trash, crop, add another clip, export, close and save. Back on the home screen, the buttons are play, add a clip, a building blocks like button where you can see all of your clips and drag and reorder as you please. (This is especially helpful for checking if you have some empty space between clips). Then, there is undo/redo, zoom, back to beginning, two volume editing choices, text, export and home.

The two audio buttons confused me the most at the beginning. I was expecting to make in and out points similar to a computer audio editing program, but that is not the case. The first button which is kind of v-shaped allows you to make the ends louder or quieter. If you select a clip before you do this, it can make a clip fade out a little softer. The second button makes either a clip or the whole selection increase or decrease a percentage.

This didn't work for me every time. Sometimes I would select a clip and the whole track would turn up or down. It worried me a little.

Sharing is very simple - to get the information off of my phone, I click on Sharing and then Start Server. From there, it gives you an IP address that you can enter in a browser on your computer. You can download your files from there. This is definitely the easiest part.

All in all, I really like VeriCorder, but it is definitely built for serious audio editing. You can do simple things in the program, but this is meant for those who know what they are doing.

Monle

I really think that Monle is the best editing application for mobile journalism, if only because of its multitrack editing format. If you're used to editing in multitrack, you're going to be incredibly frustrating with some of the other audio editing applications.

Monle does allow you to fade clips in and out of each other. You can overlap clips and control the volume of each individual clip. It works well if you're planning on doing a voiceover for a slideshow, radio piece, or podcast it would be perfect, but you can't use too many audio bites or the application glitches. Also, the clips can't be too long or the application doesn't handle them well. Basically, keep it short and simple.



You can't add audio from other programs stored elsewhere on your iPhone, so if you decide to go with this application be sure to record in Monle. You can't bring in exterior songs from iTunes either. You can audiocopy and audiopaste between apps, but only certain applications use this function. You can also upload or download to/from an FTP host, but at times it's difficult to get the finished audio off the program.

It offers a really helpful video that communicates exactly how to work the editing functions and the capturing functions. Without these, the program would've taken even longer to warm up to. It's not difficult to learn but it's definitely quicker to watch the video than to go through trial and error.

I still ran into complications while trying to edit. The application closed on me multiple times. If this happens, you've lost everything you've been working on unless you saved your session. I highly recommend saving frequently. I also had an issue when I tried to delete a large portion of a clip. The program would freeze on me, and I would have to let it rest for a few minutes before I opened it again. This starts to happen more as you add clips to the session.

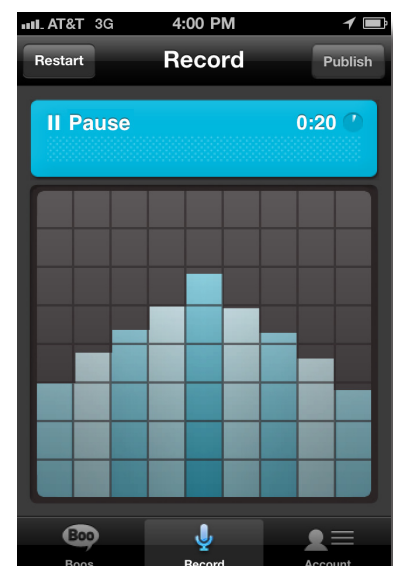
I feel like this application has potential in the future, it just needs more updates. It has some flaws right now but after they're worked out it might be one of the most useful field editing tools.

AudioBoo

I would describe AudioBoo as the Twitter of audio clips. A person can post their short audio clip to AudioBoo and the other users located near the author can click on their post to listen in. It's an interesting concept, and not unlike tweets and Facebook status updates. This way, the application allows people to really experience where the author is and what is happening. It's a simple record and publish format that can be picked up by any social media user.

Radio personalities, show hosts and musicians mostly use the application right now. It's not widely used in certain areas, so the selection of Boos you can listen to is small. In a bigger city you would have more of a chance to hear interesting and diverse Boos.

You cannot edit on AudioBoo, so once you press "Publish" you have to be ready for your recording to hit the social media waves. I highly suggest checking it out; it's a good tool to use to promote an event before or, as it is happening. For breaking news it has the potential of being a tool used by journalists as they are covering the story. People could turn to this application for current stories breaking in different parts of the world. It has the potential of being more intense, informational, and engaging as Twitter.



Blue FiRe

Blue FiRe is a recording application for the iPhone that does exactly that. It lacks many bells and whistles, but it is an effective recording tool. Blue Microphones also makes a mic called the Blue Mikey, which has been reviewed elsewhere on this site. The difference between recording with the Blue Mikey using this application and recording with the iPhone's internal mic is marked, but I can't say for certain whether this application really is, as the quickstart recording suggests, optimized for use with that hardware, or if it's just a difference in microphone quality.

Either way, when you want to actually record something, it's a simple process. The screen will flip 180 degrees so that you can point your microphone at your target. Then you just hit the "plus" button, and then press record. You can select the options on the bottom of the screen without effecting the recording, meaning you can change the quality, size, total length, name and location of the clip. You can also set markers. Once you're done, you can then export your audio file using the FTP setting, but make sure that your computer and your phone are on the same WiFi.

Other than that, there isn't much more to this application. It's a pretty solid choice for field recording, but there's no editing ability included in it, so it's literally just a recording tool. If you're wanting more from your application, then I suggest you look elsewhere.



AudioNote

AudioNote Lite is a free recorder and notepad in one. You can create yourself a voice memo to yourself about what work you need to accomplish that night. To create a new note, press the plus sign in the upper right-hand corner. As the recording goes on, you can press the text "T" tool and jot yourself notes about important things mentioned in the recording. When you type, it creates a timecode of your text. When you listen to the note in playback mode later, you can press the link on the text and it will start from that moment.

My favorite function of AudioNote is that you can make a drawing by pushing the "/" slash key. This works the same as the text tool. If you are giving yourself directions and want to draw a left and then a right, you can do this. Like the text function, when you press the link on the drawings, it will take you to that timecode that you made the drawings in the recording. You can make the drawing during the initial recording, or during playback.

This application is great because it is free, but it always asks you to upgrade to the full version when you open the app. The upgraded version has unlimited recording and you can share notes by email and over Wi-Fi. That is the main problem with AudioNote - you cannot send the note anywhere. I recommend this application if you are just recording something simple, like your grocery list or even voice notes on ideas for your next radio script. If you are just recording a note for yourself, then it is fine, but if you need the audio to be sent somewhere, such as an email address or an audio editing application, you better fork over \$4.99.



File Transmission Apps

The Basics			
	<u>DropBox</u>	<u>Pixelpipe</u>	<u>Flickr</u>
Cost	Free (up to 2G)	Free	Free
File Size	5.9 MB	0.4 MB	4.9 MB
Manufacturer	<u>DropBox, Inc.</u>	<u>Pixelpipe, Inc.</u>	<u>Yahoo! Inc.</u>
Upload speed: slow, average, fast	Fast	Depending on file size, can be extremely fast or really slow	Fast
Platform Supported	iOS, Android, Symbian	iOS, Android, Symbian	iOS, Android, Symbian
Online cache?	Yes	No	Yes
Export?	No	Yes	Yes
Recommended?	Highly Recommended	Recommended	Highly Recommended
Where to buy	<u>iTunes App Store</u> , <u>Android Market</u>	Not in iTunes store, but can be found on the Markets of other operating systems	<u>iTunes App Store</u> , <u>Android Market</u>

DropBox

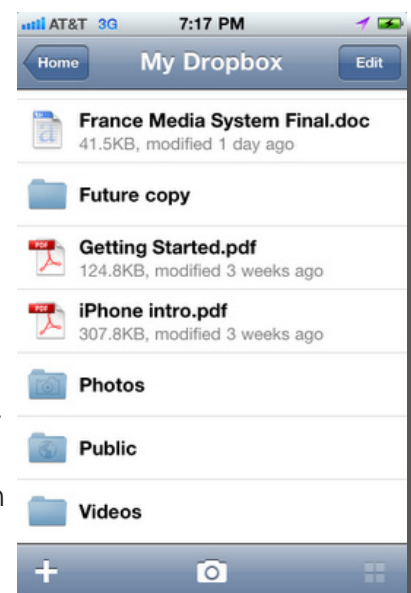
DropBox is one of my favorite finds since starting this endeavor. Dropbox allows you to sync multiple computers (including phones, both iPhone and Android), share and store files. To use on your computer, simply sign up for Dropbox and download the application to your computer. When you are finished, you should see an additional icon near your Bluetooth, AirPort and battery life meter (if you are on a Mac). It will also add an icon to your folders. So, now when you are in a folder on your Desktop, you can choose to share/store/sync the file with Dropbox.

The next step is installing the application on your phone. For the iPhone, Dropbox is great for sharing/storing/syncing photos. You can create a folder by pushing the plus sign in the lower left corner. To add a photo, click the camera on the bottom row. The application comes with an iPhone intro and a Getting Started guide. It really couldn't be any easier.

If you want to share files, go to their website and click on the Sharing tab of your account. It will ask you to pick a folder to share with others. When a file is shared, it will sync automatically to their computer.

The only thing I should note about this application is the amount of free space you get. With a free account, you get 2GB of free space, which is not a lot if you plan on storing a lot of photo files. 2GB is pretty standard for online file sharing, and can be found on other sites such as Mozy. You can upgrade the 50 GB for \$99/year or 100GB for \$199/year. For Mozy, it is unlimited storage for around \$55 dollars a year, but Mozy doesn't have a mobile application as far as I know.

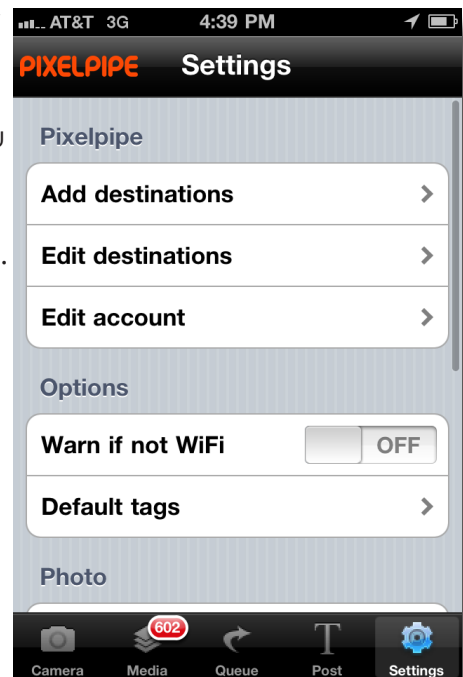
I really like this application and I would highly recommend it for all newsrooms. The application is free and you get 2 GB free. You can use it to get information to your editors quickly as long as you just keep a few things on it, you can use these features for free!



Pixelpipe

Pixelpipe is one of the applications that really does everything. They try to combine all of your favorite social media sites into one application. This way, you only need one app to control your social life. You can store email addresses and social networks within the application. This allows you to send photos, or videos to anyone you want to. You can update your blog, Tweet from multiple accounts, and check other social media sites. All you do is check the sites you want your content to be uploaded on in the settings menu. I can send multiple pictures from my camera roll to my Pixelpipe account. It sounds great, but there are definitely some bugs. They're actually kind of large kinks that really dissuade a user from picking this platform.

Here's the problem, it doesn't work as well as it's marketed. It is incredibly slow when you have big files, or too many pictures. Photos go up relatively easily, sometimes videos have issues uploading. It gets pretty frustrating. Also, it has recently been taken out of the iTunes store. This isn't the first time this has happened. If you're going to go for a file transmission app, you should probably find one that is more stable than Pixelpipe. I can still see the videos I've already uploaded to the website, and their blog is still around and says they've completed Symbian signing. Before that their post was about Pixelpipe for Android. I don't think this application is worth the hassle, considering now you can't even find it on the iTunes store. There are other apps out there that have similar functions that work better overall.

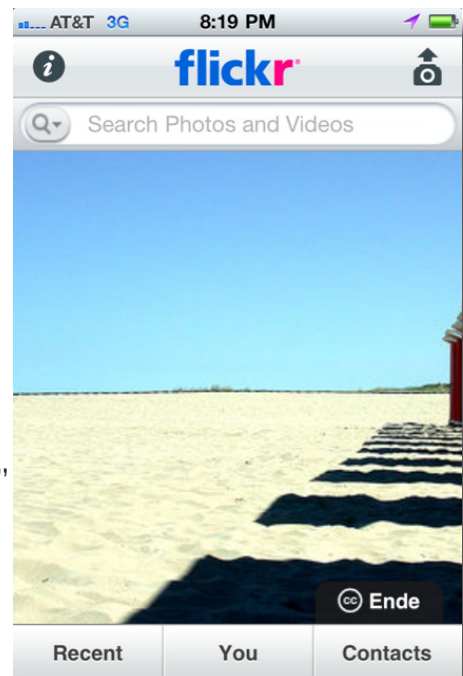


Flickr

Flickr is definitely one of my top picks for best design, easy on the eyes and easy to use. The iPhone application interface is so appealing that I actually have the desire to upload my photos to flickr, an urge that I do not have when I am using the website on a laptop or desktop computer. I know what you are thinking - could it really be that great? But, I'm telling you.. less is more is the name of the game. When you open the application, various breathtaking photos take turns more or less sliding across the screen.

To upload a picture, simply click on the camera with an arrow above it. The prompt will have you select either "Take Photo or Video" or "Upload from Library." See? Couldn't be any easier if you tried. Once you select a picture, you can add a title, description, add the photo to a new or existing set, add tags, choose your image size (resolution) and even geo-tag your current location. Or, you can add another photo by clicking the "Add Item" button. If you enable the setting, flickr will share your photos on twitter for you.

On the main menu, there are three other options (besides information). You can click on your recent flickr history, "you" where you can view your sets, tags and your photostream and contacts. That's all. You cannot do a lot with it. There are no fancy gizmos, but that is why this application is fantastic. Simple and efficient.



Geolocation Apps

The Basics						
	<u>FourSquare</u>	<u>Gowalla</u>	<u>Brightkite</u>	<u>SCVNGR</u>	<u>Facebook</u>	<u>Twitter</u>
Cost	Free	Free	Free	Free	Free	Free
Size	2.7 MB	1.6 MB	6.2 MB	2.2 MB	3.5 MB	5.2 MB
Direct Messaging	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Create a new location	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
File transfer (i.e. snap a photo)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Friends' Location	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Shares with other social media	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
Awards/Points	Yes - Badges, Mayorships	Yes - Pendants, Items	Yes - Badges	Yes - Badges, Rewards	No	No
Recommended?	Highly Recommended	Recommended	Not Recommended	Not Recommended	Recommended	Highly Recommended
Where to purchase	<u>iTunes App Store, Android Market</u>	<u>iTunes App Store, Android Market</u>	<u>iTunes App Store, Android Market</u>	<u>iTunes App Store, Android Market</u>	<u>iTunes App Store, Android Market</u>	<u>iTunes App Store, Android Market</u>
Manufacturer	Naveen Selvadurai	Alamofire, Inc.	brightkite.com	SCVNGR	Facebook	Twitter

Foursquare

Compatible with Android, iPhone (Compatible with iPhone, iPod touch, and iPad; requires iPhone OS 3.0 or later)

Foursquare is a fun little application that seems to be getting the brunt of some pop culture venom these days. Many of my colleagues say that it's everything from over-reaching to lame. It seems especially to be catching flak from the college-aged population. However, if you're willing to stick with it and ignore the mild social stigma, there's some interesting features to mined from the app.

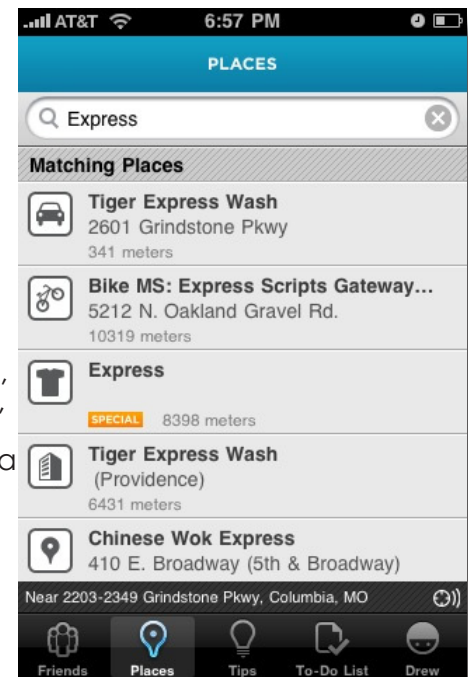
Using it isn't all that difficult, although you're going to need a solid internet connection. Less than four bars of Wi-Fi is probably a no-go, and the 3G can be iffy sometimes. Once you have the connection, though, it's a piece of cake. The Check In button gives you a list of places. You can choose from the list, use the search bar to look for a nearby location, or create a new location by hitting the "+" button at the top of the screen. Once you've chosen or created a new location, just write what you're doing (think facebook or Twitter status) and hit check in.

Now comes the addicting part of Foursquare. You get points for how many stops and new locations you go to each day. From there, medals and awards can be gained depending on how many new locations you visit, how many stops you make, or how often you revisit certain locations. If you're really lucky, you may even become mayor of a location (meaning you've checked in there the most times in the last two months).

Becoming mayor can be difficult if you're just joining the service and don't frequent a lot of places often, as someone else has probably been checking in quite regularly. However, if you can find a spot that hasn't been checked in at before, then only a few visits makes you a mayor. Alternatively, creating a new place, like for instance your home, and checking in can be a quick route to becoming mayor.

To make matters more interesting, some businesses are beginning to jump on the Foursquare bandwagon. Certain locations will offer deals if you check in at their location (or if you're mayor). Businesses are also offering unique medals to users who go to certain areas and check-in as a way of showing off your ability to get around. However, users should be careful. Only recently, I followed the scent of a "special" to a store, only to discover that it was some kind of practical joke and not at all a real business offer.

In all, the application is fun, but it's not terribly interactive. You get on when you arrive somewhere, check-in, then shut it off. You can see who else is at your location, but you can't see their status unless they are your friends, and not enough people that I'm friends with use the program that I can comb through their statuses for more than a few minutes, meaning it's a check in, log out sort of process for me. But for some people out there, it's going to be a fun new way to play around with their friends, gain some points, and hopefully some bragging rights by becoming a mayor.



Gowalla

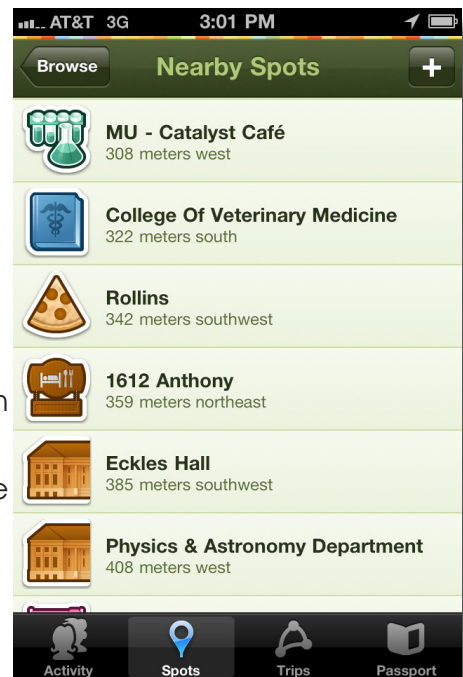
Compatible with iPhone, iPod touch, and iPad; requires iPhone OS 3.0 or later

This application is a lot like Foursquare in that it is a geo-location tool. You can see where your friends are and where you've been in the past. You can collect pins and items that people "drop." It's a good way to learn a city and know about hot spots and get tips.

However, in smaller towns this application is definitely not as effective as it would be in say, Chicago, or other larger cities. There are less people that actually play along with "dropping items" for you to find. There are also fewer locations that people have added in smaller cities and towns. I found myself adding a lot of locations to the application. That just means there aren't many people using it in my area.

In terms of journalism it's a good way to learn about the area you're in if you're not familiar with your surroundings. It's also a good way to connect with others in your immediate area. It's more of a game than Foursquare, but there's no becoming mayor in Gowalla.

The user interface has a better design than FourSquare, but for an application that is all about finding friends it fails, simply because you (probably) won't find as many friends using Gowalla.



Brightkite

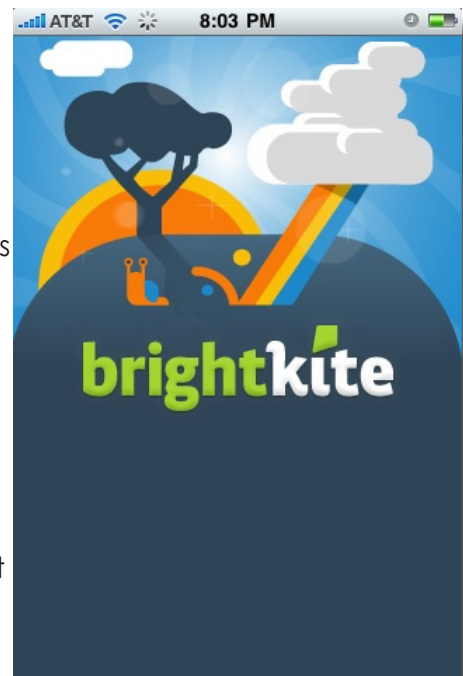
Compatible with iPhone, iPod touch, and iPad; requires iPhone OS 3.1 or later

Brightkite is another locator application along the lines of Foursquare and Facebook. It's fairly basic, as it goes. You press the check in button, then either choose your current location from the list of choices, search your location and then choose, or create a new location. You're also prompted (but not forced) to post a status update. From there, things get a little interesting.

You can search who is in your area by varying amounts of kilometers, also broken down into labels, like "neighborhood". You can search for certain people, or for places, or even for posts. And you can even comment on these posts, which is something that several similar applications don't offer.

Finding friends is fairly painless. Brightkite, with your permission, will search your Facebook, Twitter and Address book to find anyone who is currently using Brightkite. Don't know anybody? That's ok, just click on someone in your area and friend them. You can also send direct messages, if you have something you don't want to post as simply a comment.

The interface itself could use a little cleaning up and efficiency overall. It definitely took some time to find my way around the application, and some parts seemed a bit excessive. But for an application that attempts to meld Facebook and Foursquare, it would necessarily have to walk a fine line between complexity and usability. Now to see if more people sign up for the application, which is, in my opinion, its major downfall. Few people have heard of it or are using it.



SCVNGR

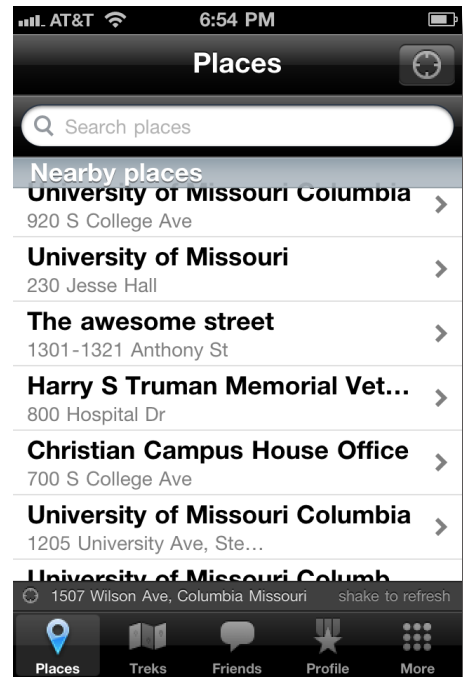
Compatible with iPhone, iPod touch, and iPad; requires iPhone OS 3.1 or later

SCVNGR is my one of my least favorite geolocation applications. Foursquare is the easiest to use, because there are a lot of graphics and it is by far the most popular of the applications. This is nice because not only can you find a lot of your friends on FourSquare, but there are a lot of places that you can check in to that have already been created. This is not the case with SCVNGR. I cannot find a single person who has even heard of this application, let alone who uses it. Therefore, all of my checking in that I have done has been for my own benefit because I have zero friends to report to on this application. The only people can see on this application are people who geotag their posts on Facebook, but only if you connect with Facebook friends and allow the application to access your Facebook page.

This application is like a game and the purpose is to receive a lot of points and complete treks and challenges. To earn points, you need to check in. You have the option of checking in for one point, a social check-in for two times the points you check in with. For a social check in you must bump phones with another iPhone to check-in with a friend. If you "say something" about the location or whatever you want, you can receive two points. Finally, you can snap a picture of the location you are at for two points. If you are knowledgeable about the location, you can create a challenge.

You can go on "treks," which I was initially very excited about. When I clicked on the trek button, there was only trek available and it said Mizzou. I clicked on it and it only had one location - Faurot Field. I was very disappointed. The only positive I found was that at three locations in Columbia you can redeem rewards if you check in at that location. The only locations available were GameStop and Journeys. I was never close enough to these locations to check in and see the possible reward, but with so few people on this application I wonder how big of a reward it could possibly be.

I like the social check in feature, but other than that, this application is a huge disappointment. There are very few people on this application, and thus very little activity on each of the locations you can check in at.



Facebook

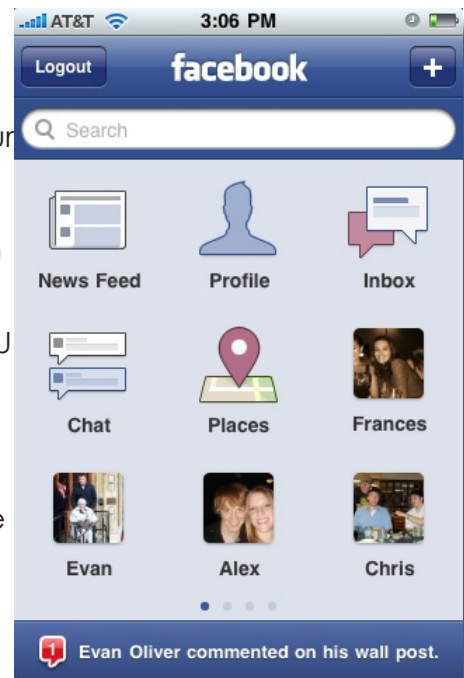
Compatible with all Phones

The Facebook application is pretty self-explanatory, especially the geo-location feature, which has been simplified to the name "Places". If you have the updated version of the application on your phone, then you have this little feature too.

The first thing you have to do is tap the Places icon. If you hold your finger on the list that shows up and drag it down then release it, you will see an updated page of where your friends have last checked in at. I know, handy for figuring out where everyone managed to get to on Saturday night. However, to let everyone know where YOU are takes a little more work on your part.

Tap the Check In button in the corner of your screen, and a new list will appear, giving you options for where you might be. It'll start with the top 5, but you can always choose to see more. If you still don't see anything, hit the "+" button in the top corner. Now you've got a Google map, a text box for a name, a text box for a description (which is optional), and your keyboard has become visible. Not too tough, type in the name of the place you're at. Once you've finished, you can check in, and you'll now be on an updated list so that friends and family can know where you're at all the time.

That's about all there is to the application as far as posting your current location. The rest of the app functions about the same as the computer version. As for the actual feature, Facebook made it functional in that it works, but they haven't necessarily developed it as other applications, like for instance Foursquare, have. Nothing is going to happen when you check in except that you are now visible in that location by your Facebook friends. So if letting everyone know where you had coffee this morning is a priority, then go for it, but anyone looking for anything more from their fun new application can find more to play with elsewhere.



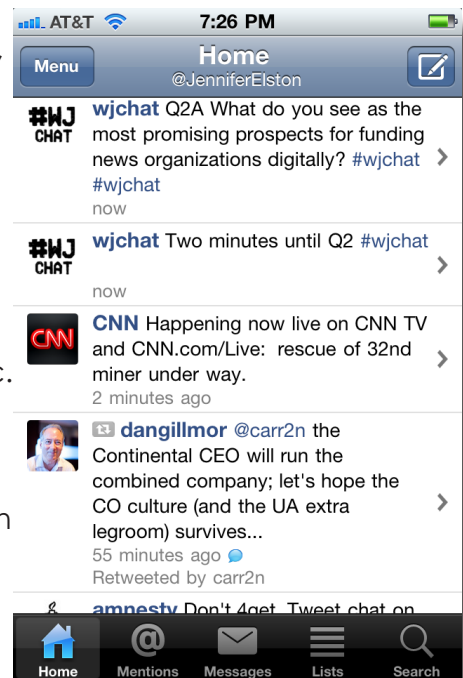
Twitter, Echofon

Twitter compatible with iPhone, iPod touch, and iPad; requires iPhone OS 3.1 or later; Echofon compatible with iPhone, iPod touch, and iPad; requires iPhone OS 3.0 or later

Twitter:

The Twitter application is pretty self-explanatory. You update your followers with a status that's no longer than 140 characters. These are used to update their friends on where they are, to share a picture, video or link to a story. It's a good way to get news from people you know or people you want to keep tabs on. For journalists it is a good way to see what news other people are looking at. Many times breaking news stories will be a trending topic. With hash tags (#) you can connect your tweet about an event or issue to everyone else's. This way it's easy to keep track of what others are saying about a topic.

There are different apps you can try that all relate to Twitter. To each their own, but I happen to like the traditional one. It's easiest to see, use, and it's not complicated to figure out. If you're looking for something like a Tweet Deck, this is not for you. I tweet already, and if you are already accustomed to tweeting about random events in your day this application will fit right in.



Echofon:

Echofon is very similar to the twitter application on iPhone. To write a new twitter post, click the pencil on a piece of paper in the upper righthand corner. To add a person, click on the button with two people on it. Simply start to type in the person you want to mention and if you are friends with them, their name will quickly appear. This is much faster than writing out their full name after an @ sign. You can also add your location by pressing the geotag button, which looks like a circle with four marks on it. This will put a line under your tweet with your location. There is also the option of adding a picture/video from either your camera roll or you can choose to shoot a video or a photo.

Everything is very self-explanatory for this application if you know anything about twitter. The bottom row of buttons has your home (your timeline), mentions where your @handle is tweeted, private messages, lists you can build to see certain groups of people and you can search tweets or for new people.

My favorite thing about this application for a long time (before #newtwitter emerged) was that it is very simple to see a conversation between two people. If two social media experts are having a conversation, simply click the tweet. Under the tweet it will say "in reply to ____". Click that and it will take you to the full conversation, which looks and feels just like text messages on an iPhone. The only

Live-Event Streaming Apps

The Basics

	<u>Qik Video Camera Pro</u>	<u>UStream Recorder and Live Broadcaster</u>	<u>CoverItLive iPhone</u>
Cost	\$2.99	Free	Free
Size	3.9 MB for iPhone	5.6 MB and 11.1 MB	0.7 MB
Live chat	No	Yes	Yes
Recommended	Recommended	Highly Recommended	Not Recommended
Where To Buy	iTunes App Store , Android Market	iTunes App Store , Android Market	iTunes App Store
Manufacturer	Qik, Inc.	UStream, Inc.	Altcastor Inc.

Qik Video Camera Pro

Qik is one of the most popular, and easy to use applications for mobile devices. The app has numerous uses from a journalistic standpoint as well as in your everyday life. For example, if you are hanging out at a local venue and you run across an interesting performer of some sort you can take a video and upload it to Qik right then and there. It's the same for performers that have family and friends that can't see their show. Just tell people when and where to go to see it broadcast. In terms of journalistic value, this application can be used for breaking news. Not by newsrooms, but a free lance journalist could be the first to get footage of a breaking news story in the field. That footage could then be picked up by stations in order to tell the public what's going on.

It is incredibly useful for vloggers. While you are filming video for a blog a person watching can send you comments that appear in your screen, which you can then respond to right then in the video. It's just an interesting concept and allows for a more open discussion with your followers. It opens up so many more doors than simply having a comments box under a blog post or video.

Qik even has the ability to save your videos if, for some reason, you lose your signal. As soon as you regain Internet access the videos are uploaded without anything getting lost. The application offers many effects like frosted glass and black and white. It's one of the fastest ways to upload to Facebook and YouTube, as well as many popular blog hosts and Twitter. The render time isn't long so you have a little less frustration.

Right now there's no way to edit your videos, so what you record is what you get. That means be careful. Don't say anything you would need to edit out then.



UStream Recorder and Live Broadcaster

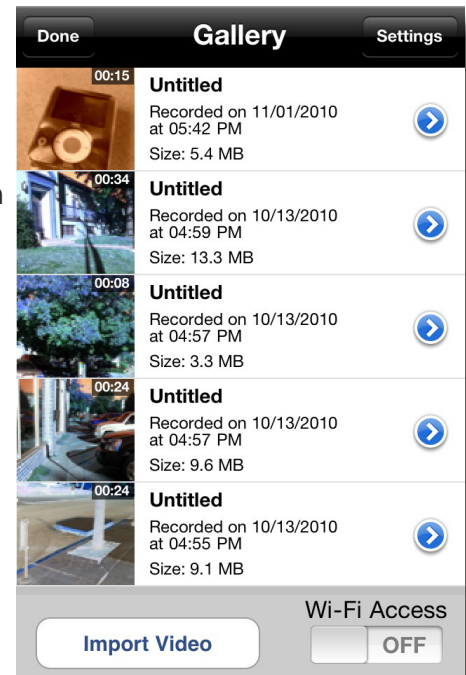
There are two different UStream applications. One is UStream Recorder and the other is UStream Broadcaster. Both have their own uses that would benefit you in different situations. The UStream Recorder is a good tool; it's easy to upload videos that are in your camera roll. You can also record a video in the application but you have to be careful. If you don't hold it the correct way the video may end up side ways or upside down when you upload it. This can happen with the camera roll videos as well. Overall, it doesn't take long to upload to UStream and it has similar qualities to Qik. I happen to like Qik a little more. UStream is a bit laggy sometimes and the videos come out dark if you don't have excellent lighting.

Now, UStream Broadcaster allows you to see people tweeting at you while you're actually broadcasting live. Some people find that distracting, but it's an interesting concept. Say you're filming a vlog or a show; you can answer those tweets as they come up on your screen. It would be incredibly useful to cover a concert or performance. If you alert people before the actual event they can tune in and watch as you stream it. This can be a little laggy as well. As technology improves I'm sure this will stop being such a problem.

You can't edit these videos either. So again, be careful with what you say when you're streaming live, or if you want to upload the videos. Technically you could just edit the video in a different application, save it to your camera roll and upload it from there. That's always an option.

UStream also has its fair share of glitches, but it was definitely more successful than CoverItLive. I (Jennifer) set up both the Droid and the iPhone on the mobile tripod throughout election night to compare the two video qualities and ease of use. The Droid video quality was a lot poorer than the iPhone, but the Droid allowed you to film horizontally, which my tripod was made for. The iPhone forces you to shoot vertically. Since I put the phone in the tripod, all of my video from the iPhone is sideways. The iPhone has much clearer images, but it was really dark at The Blue Note so it kept trying to refocus and adjust on lighter flashes and images, so the video is a little weird.

I really like the concept of UStream. You have the option of recording to your phone, or going live. You can include a hashtag to appear with the chat for your channel online. This allows for conversation in multiple ways. The only real problem with using UStream on a mobile device is the sound quality. For Mizzou's Homecoming skits, the audio techs connected UStream to the main audio. You could hear the techs talking over their radios, but the sound quality was perfect and there weren't any audience mumbles. The only problem is I'm not sure you can connect a mobile device to the stereo equipment like you can a laptop. To view Jennifer's UStream account and see the videos from election night, go to <http://www.ustream.tv/channel/elstonjen>



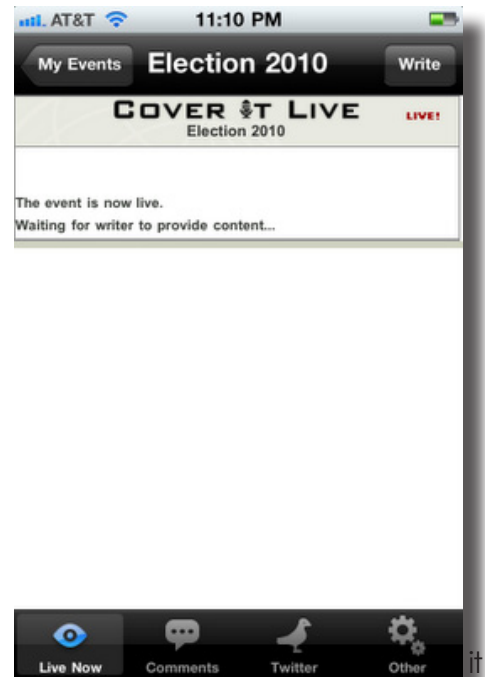
CoverItLive iPhone

This would be a great idea if all the features worked how they are supposed to.

You are able to broadcast your written messages and photos easily. Essentially what you're doing is live blogging an event of some sort. It is very simple and has great potential. You can use video captured on your phone or you can capture video through the application. It works the same with photos. Audio is captured through the app.

Right now it needs an upgrade though. It keeps saying something is wrong when I tried to upload audio or video. It didn't matter if I used the video already stored in the camera roll, it still didn't work. I tried making the video shorter, that didn't help at all. Same with audio. I can try to capture audio through the application and it still says I'm doing something wrong. The audio can only be 30 seconds long anyway, so shortening that didn't do anything. It is glitchy and gets frustrating if you're trying to cover an important event. I think that if they fix the kinks, it will be a really good tool to use. They just need to tweek a few aspects. Multiple aspects actually.

I couldn't find CoverItLive in the Droid Market, so I had to use on the iPhone. Since we were stationed at a table for a night, I set up the Apple Wireless Keyboard to my iPhone 4 and the application wouldn't register the keyboard, but every other single application I have tried it on has worked. After I turned off my Bluetooth, I finally got the application to work, but it had all kinds of quirks (which we have heard from another capstone group). It wouldn't let me post videos or even photos sometimes because it said there wasn't enough space, but it would post audio clips, which were just as large. I could post text, but it was too glitchy to be successful. It was a good idea, but it just didn't work.



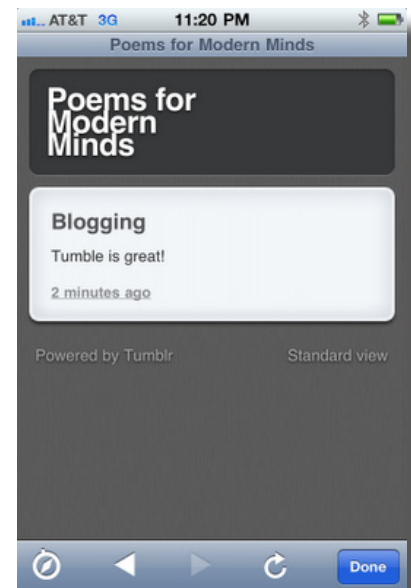
Micro-Reporting Apps

The Basics				
	<u>Tumblr</u>	<u>Twitter</u>	<u>WordPress</u>	<u>Posterous</u>
Cost	Free	Free	Free	Free
Size	2.0 MB	5.2 MB	4.2 MB	2.8 MB
Can upload video	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Uploads to Blog	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Recommended?	Recommended	Highly Recommended	Recommended	Recommended
Where To Buy	<u>iTunes App Store</u> and <u>Android Market</u>	<u>iTunes App Store</u> and <u>Android Market</u>	<u>iTunes App Store</u> and <u>Android Market</u>	<u>iTunes App Store</u> and <u>Android Market</u>
Manufacturer	<u>Tumblr Inc</u>	<u>Twitter, Inc.</u>	<u>Automatic</u>	<u>Posterous</u>

Tumblr

In terms of blogging Tumblr is the easiest way to get accustomed to the blog-o-sphere. You simply set up your blog about whatever topic you choose, pick your layout and you're set. The application from your mobile phone is as easy to use as the online version. You can see the blogs you follow and their posts on your dashboard and you can upload text, photos, quotes, links, chats, audio and video all from your mobile device. You can take the video through the application or get it from the camera roll, same with photos. But, you can only record audio through the application.

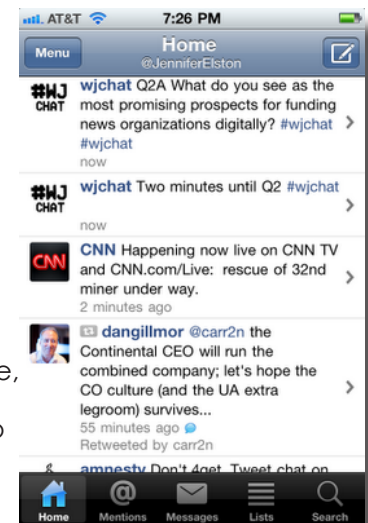
It's super simple and doesn't take long at all. I highly recommend this application and blog host if you're just starting to get into blogs or looking for a user friendly site. Also, with many other hosts you do not have the option of uploading video without upgrading. This host allows you to post whatever you want. This application would allow someone to easily manage a page for a performer. Someone could cover events as they unfold in a certain area. Really there are unlimited uses for this blog site. A lot of blogs are just random things people find interesting, sometimes they're themed. The sky's the limit here.



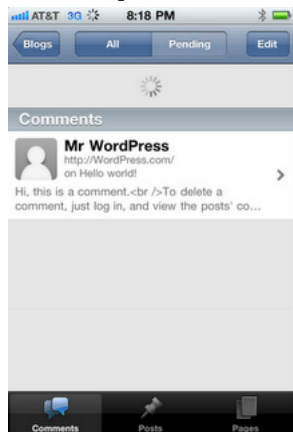
Twitter

The Twitter application is pretty self-explanatory. You update your followers with a status that's no longer than 140 characters. Statuses let your followers know where you are, share pictures, videos or links to a story. It's a good way to get news from people you know or people you want to keep tabs on. For journalists it is a good way to see what news other people are looking at. Many times breaking news stories will be a trending topic. Trending topics are simply phrases, words or hash tags (#) that are popular and have the most mentions. With hash tags you can connect your tweet about an event or issue to other users thoughts on the same topic. This way it's easy to keep track of what others are saying.

This application allows you to upload photos and video from your camera roll, or to record in the application. There are different apps you can try that all relate to Twitter. To each their own, but I happen to like the traditional one. It's easiest to see, use, and it's not complicated to figure out. If you're looking for something like a Tweet Deck, this is not for you. I tweet already, and if you are already accustomed to tweeting about random events in your day this application will fit right in.



WordPress

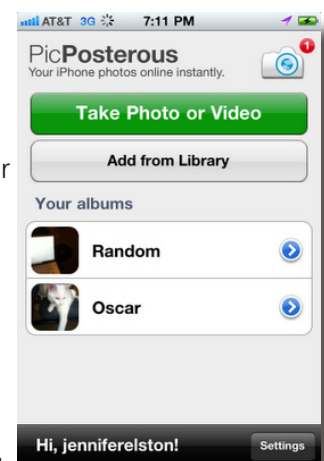


WordPress is a free application that allows you to control your WordPress account through your mobile device. If you like WordPress already you're going to like this application. Personally, I find it kind of obnoxious to navigate. The site on a desk or laptop is irritating enough for the casual blogger, so the application isn't much better. It is pretty handy in that you can take pictures and video through the application as well as import them from the camera roll. You can type up a post and publish it all from the palm of your hand. You can even organize and approve comments you receive. You can even add pages. That's great if you want to do that from your phone, but it makes things a little difficult. It's not a straightforward application. If you already use WordPress this is a handy tool, but if you have the choice to go through another blog host, I'd go with that if you want to blog from your mobile device. If you've done some blogging in the past and are used to different hosts you may be all right, if you are a first timer this will be difficult to learn through. Because it's free though, if you're interested, try it out, it couldn't hurt.

Posterous

Posterous is a place to share, well, anything that you think is fit to share. You can upload photos, videos or files or anything that you see fit to share. There are many ways to upload to Posterous - through a mobile device, email or directly from the web. It is really easy and a really good way to create a low-maintenance photo blog of sorts. It is so accessible. That is the great thing about this application - whether you are on your mobile device, on a friend's computer or your own - you can update your Posterous account. Another cool feature is that you get to choose whatever name you want for your account. For instance, mine is jenniferelston.posterous.com, but if you have a developing business or another blog and want another outlet to share with your friends and fans, this is perfect. One successful example is imjustcreative.posterous.com/ for a logo/design blogger. Graham puts most everything that he would put on his website and tumblr account, but more importantly, everything else that wouldn't quite fit in.

The iPhone application is specifically designed to be a photo-sharing app. When you open the application, you are given the choice of taking a photo or video, or adding an existing one from your Library. You can create different albums on your phone of different people, groups or whatever you feel inclined to make. If you want to share the fun in different ways, you can change the settings so that PicPosterous automatically posts to twitter, Facebook or your existing blogs by visiting <http://posterous.com/autopost>.



I would recommend this application for anyone who loves to share every aspect of their lives. It is one step above TwitPic and Plixi because you get your own professional-looking website that features all of your favorite pictures/videos.

Note-taking and Audio Transcription Apps

Note-taking Apps

	<u>Dragon Dictation</u>	<u>Catch Notes</u>	<u>Evernote</u>
Cost	Free	Free	Free
Size	4.7 MB	2.2 MB	9.1 MB
Geo-tagging	No	Yes	Yes
Export	SMS, email, Facebook, Twitter	Email	Email
Website Synchronization	No	Yes	Yes
Platform Supported	iOS, Android, and Symbian	iOS, and Android	iOS, Android, and Symbian
Recommended?	Recommended	Highly Recommended	Highly Recommended
Where To Buy	<u>iTunes App Store</u> , <u>Android Market</u>	<u>iTunes App Store</u>	<u>iTunes App Store</u> , <u>Android Market</u>
Manufacturer	<u>Nuance Communications</u>	<u>Snaptic, Inc.</u>	<u>Evernote</u>

Dragon Dictation

Dragon Dictation is an extremely simple, fairly interesting little transcription application for the iPhone. Right here in the beginning, I should say that the best thing about it is that it's free. If it weren't free, I highly doubt it would be worth the cost to buy it, especially because it literally nothing more than a dictation device. That being said, there's some cool things about this application.

The first thing that you'll notice when you boot it up is that it updates itself with your contact names. This isn't to say that it will necessarily be able to recognize them when it hears them, but it certainly adds to the probability that it will.

From there, the process is pretty straightforward. Tap the screen and start talking. I would suggest that you talk slowly and enunciate for the best accuracy. When you're finished, tap again. It will now show you its best guess at what you just said. You have the option here of opening up your keyboard and altering the text (sort of defeats the purpose of the application when it makes a lot of mistakes), tapping the red circle and re-recording, or sending the text.

The sharing part is the most intriguing. It will allow you to text whatever you want to upload, email it, post it to facebook and/or twitter, or copy it all as a block of text for you to then paste somewhere else.

In all, it's really not great at what it does. There's probably a better version of this type of application somewhere. But balance the faults against the fact that it's free, and I feel that you will find it's worth the download to have this in your toolbag. It can definitely be handy if you're driving back from somewhere to record a script on the way. Also, it's important to mention that attaching an external mic, such as the Blue Mikey (it's small and decent), it vastly improves the accuracy of Dragon Dictation. I can't recommend it as the best thing out there for dictation, but it's pretty good for being free.

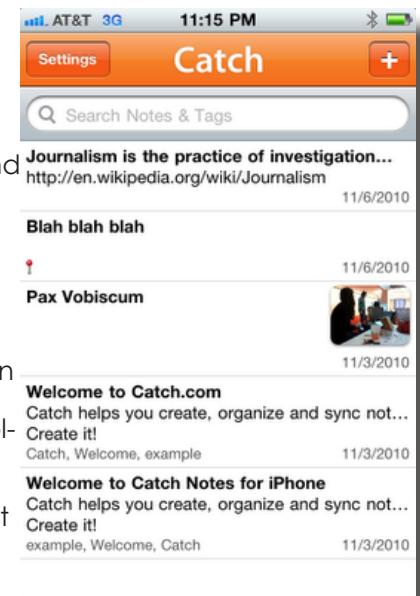


Catch Notes

Catch Notes is a simple application that allows you to type out notes, add pictures and hashtags to keep yourself organized. The hashtags allow you to search for specific notes on a certain topic. Just like Twitter, similar ideas are bundled together. Pictures allow you to remember snap a shot of something you want to remember. An interviewee perhaps, or a detail of your surroundings. It's a simple format and helps when you're out in the field interviewing and trying to remember what actually happened at an event so you can review your notes later.

There are other cool features that really come in handy. If you set up an account online at Catch.com; it allows you to pull up those notes from the web on your mobile device. This way a links, facts or question you wrote can be easily accessed in the field. You can also backup your notes and save them on this account directly from your phone. This is a reassuring ability, because you never know when you might lose everything when you're working with technology.

It's a good application, but there are other great note taking applications that pass this one up. It's free, so if you're looking for something that is simple for note taking and storing pictures to jog your memory, this works fine. It doesn't have audio or drawing capabilities like some other good note taking apps. It really depends on what you're looking for and what you'd use. The Internet account portion is definitely worth having.

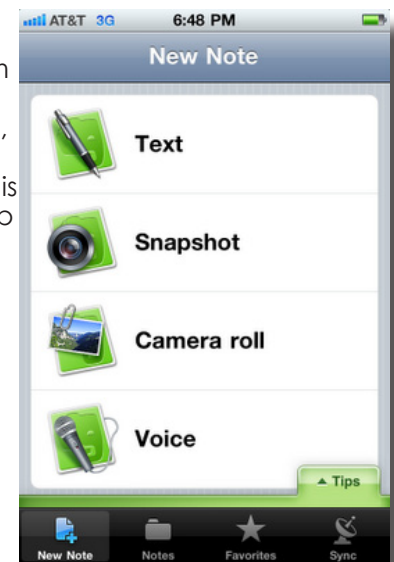


Evernote

Evernote's motto is "Remember Everything" and that is exactly what this application is designed to do. You can capture your notes and ideas in any form that you can imagine and then access it on many different types of computer, mobile phone or device. On the Evernote for Mac/PC laptop or desktop version, you can save notes, store PDFs and store links to important web pages. As the introduction video says, the best part about this product is that your information is available everywhere - on you computer, mobile device and online. The desktop version will add an icon on your computer allowing you easy access and easy uploads. To save text from the web, copy it and push the icon. You can paste it directly to Evernote.

An interesting feature is that you can search title, tag or even handwritten/printed text in an image. This is not true with many different search engines.

You can download Evernote on your Mac/PC or get the free application for iPhone/iPad and Android. If you buy the premium version (\$5/month or \$45/year), you can search PDFs, upload up to 500 MB per month (the free amount is 40 MB/month), receive an added layer of security (SSL encryption) and upload virtually any file type to the application (think Microsoft Office documents, videos, etc...).



The mobile application is very similar to the desktop application, only much more streamlined. When you open the application, you can create a new note, view all notes, see your favorites or sync with other devices and the web. Notes can be in the form of text, picture/video or voice notes. Your notes are geotagged for even more help in remembering tasks. To save as a favorite, simply click the star next to the name of the note on each note.

I have heard of people using this application for everything - for remembering where you parked your car with a photo note to keeping a grocery list. This application is a lot like Dropbox in that you can store/share/sync files with multiple devices, only this one is aimed more at little notes, reminders and photos than serious file sharing, but you can do that too. The only improvement I would make to this application would be to make text out of my voice memos, like Dragon Dictation.

Photo Editing Apps

The Basics						
	<u>Photoshop Express</u>	<u>Photogene</u>	<u>CameraBag</u>	<u>Camera Plus</u>	<u>Pano</u>	<u>Hipstamatic</u>
Cost	Free	\$1.99	\$1.99	Free	\$2.99	\$1.99
Size	6.6 MB	4.1 MB	0.2 MB	10.6 MB	\$2.9 MB	18.8 MB
Mobile Platforms Supported	iPhone (iOS 3.0+), Android	iPhone (iOS 4.0+)	iPhone (iOS 2.0+)	iPhone (iOS 2.3+)	iPhone (iOS 3.1+)	iPhone (iOS 3.1+)
Editing Capabilities	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
Export/Sharing	Photoshop.com, Facebook, TwitPic	Twitter, Facebook, Flickr FTP, Email, Copy to Clipboard, Save to Camera Roll	Email, Save to Camera Roll	Twitter, Facebook, Email, Flickr, Camera Roll	Camera Roll	Facebook, Flickr, Tumblr, Email, Camera Roll
Filters	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Recommended?	Recommended	Highly Recommended	Highly Recommended	Recommended	Recommended	Not Recommended
Where to buy	<u>iTunes App Store, Android Market</u>	<u>iTunes App Store</u>	<u>iTunes App Store</u>	<u>iTunes App Store</u>	<u>iTunes App Store</u>	<u>iTunes App Store</u>
Manufacturer	Adobe Systems Inc.	Omer Shoor	Nevercenter Ltd. Co.	Global Delight Technologies	Debackle Software	Synthetic Corp.

Photoshop Express

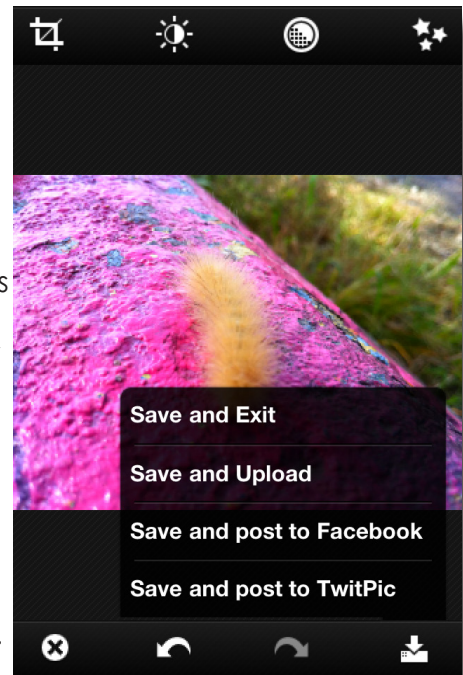
Photoshop Express is a very simple photo editing application for the iPhone. The best thing about this application is that it is free, unlike many of the other photo applications we tested.

There are five buttons along the bottom of the application: Adobe, Edit, Online, Upload and Settings. Adobe is simply sample photos and links to more effects, tips, etc... The edit tab is what you will probably use most. On the edit tab (see photo right), you can crop, adjust the exposure, saturation, tint, contrast or make the photo black & white. The next button over is used to give the photo effects such as sketch, soft focus or sharpen. The final button on the top row (the stars) allows you to add more effects, such as vibrant, pop, vignette blur, etc... and borders.

Those are your only options, but that should be enough for journalistic uses. The bottom buttons let you cancel, redo/undo and save. Under the save menu, as you can see in the image, you can save and exit, upload (Photoshop.com), post to Facebook or TwitPic.

This application is geared for quick edits to photos. To edit a photo, click a type of edit that you want to make, such as Saturation. It will give you a tip (unless you turn them off) on how to best use this edit. For instance, the tip on how to change the saturation says "slowly slide your finger left/right over the image to adjust the saturation level." All you have to do is pinch or push like you would to zoom in/out and the levels will change.

I would definitely recommend this application. It is easy, powerful and free.



Photogene

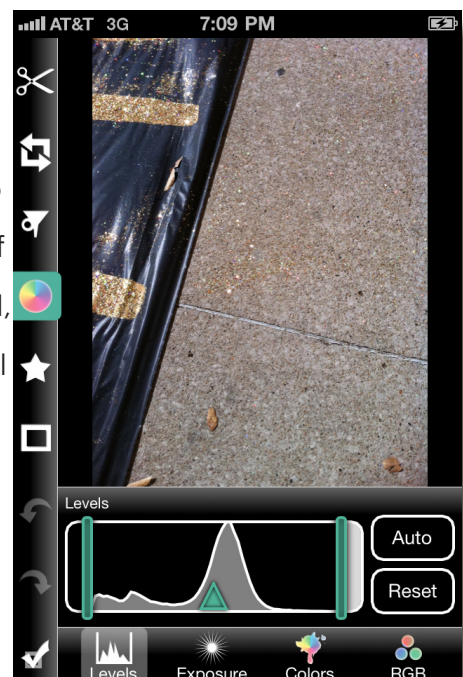
Photogene is easily my favorite photo editing application on the iPhone. It is very simple, yet effective. It does everything that you would want to do to edit your photos in a journalistic function and then some.

The buttons on the side are fairly self-explanatory, but I will briefly go over them. The scissors button is for cropping - simply drag the size of the box you would like and hit crop. The two arrows in the form of a box is for rotating the image. The filter button is the one that looks like an oil filter. This is for more drastic effects such as sharpen, pencil, blur, black & white, posterize, sepia, night vision and heatmap. You can adjust the strength of each of these filters or reset to the original photo. The color wheel button allows you a great deal of control when it comes to color adjusting. You can change the levels (auto levels works wonderfully), the exposure, the colors and the red-green-blue balance of the photo.

The next two buttons are something that you will most likely not use for journalistic function - the star button allows you to add shapes such as a speech bubble and the square allows you to add a border or frame.

If you make a mistake, click on the back or redo arrows, which are the next buttons down. The final button is used to save your edits. You can change the resolution of the photo (200, 320, 640, 800, 1024, 1600, 2048 and 2592 for high resolution images). You can also preserve geotags, and share your image in a variety of ways such as email, FTP, flickr and Facebook. Photogene is only \$1.99 and I would highly recommend it!

If you don't take my word, take the word of Glyn Evans, the founder of iPhoneography. His website, <http://www.iphoneography.com/> features all photos shot on mobile devices.



CameraBag

CameraBag is an extremely easy to use photo application for the iPhone. It uses the built-in camera on the phone to take pictures, so you don't need any extra equipment (although lenses and flashes wouldn't hurt), and it's pretty cheap to buy.

The specialty of this application is to put filters on the pictures you take. There are several different ones, although some, like color cross, I can't see anybody using for professional reasons, and others look very much the same. But there are enough different, useful filters that this application deserves a download and a look.

CameraBag doesn't require that you use the application to take the pictures, and in fact the application works better if you just take the pictures and put them on your camera roll. If you have it open when you're shooting, each picture will open on the camera, and before you take another, you will have to click on the phone to open our camera back up. Instead, you can go out and take your pictures, then upload them to CameraBag.

Either way, once you have your picture, it's a simple process of flicking the screen from side to side to see which filter works best for what you're using. Helga has ended up being my favorite, but really the story would warrant the filter, if you use one at all. Once you've chosen, you just have to tap the save button and your picture will be saved to your camera roll, so that you can text, email or upload it like any other picture you take.

In all, the application is a pretty neat little deal. It's certainly something you wouldn't use every time you go into the field, but if you were working on a story that was a bit more featurey than normal, I could certainly see it coming in handy. If you do use it, it's simple and quick, and getting the pictures off your phone is virtually effortless.

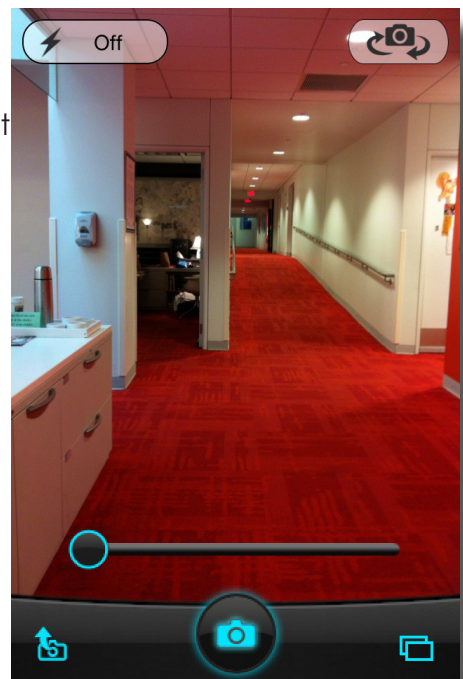


Camera Plus

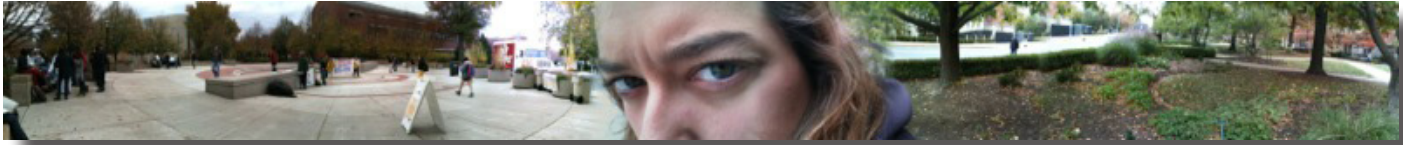
I love this application. It's not a fancy app, but it really does good work. All you do is take a picture and the application allows you to make it black and white or crop it. The cropping is probably the best part about this tool. You can choose from a circle or rectangular crop. Then once you get the size you want you can turn the crop any direction you need. There's a zoom capability, but as always, it makes the picture fuzzy, so be careful what you use it for.

You can send the finished picture to your camera roll, or you can send it straight to Facebook, Flickr or Twitter. You can also attach it to an email. It doesn't take long. The application would allow you to cover stories then immediately display your photos on whichever medium you choose. Again, breaking news stories or events would be good places for this. You could live Tweet from an event and add in some pictures of the goings on. There are other applications that act similarly, but it does the job and is trustworthy. Plus, it's free, so it couldn't hurt.

There is an upgrade you can purchase called Camera Plus Pro that allows you a lot more flexibility and options on doctoring photos. Recently, the manufacturer took away the video zoom capability, which has upset many users. If you need video zoom, don't buy this app. Overall though, it looks just as simple as the free version, just with a ton of more options.



Pano



Pano is a pretty simple application for the iPhone designed to take several pictures, piece them together, and form one panoramic shot. Now, the final image isn't perfect, but it's adequate for both the price of the application as well as what it's attempting to do.

Firstly, it's extremely simple. You start the application up, let it boot, and then you take your first picture. The icon showing the rectangles lets you choose whether you will be moving your camera vertically or horizontally to take your panoramic. I like horizontal more, simply because I'm usually more focused on what is happening in front of me rather than trying to take in a great height of something.

Once you've taken that first picture, line up the translucent afterimage with the real image on your camera (basically moving it to the side), and then take the next one. You keep doing this until you've got everything you want, and then you hit the check mark. It takes a moment to render, as it places all the images into one coherent line, and then you've got your panoramic.

The AI in the application to make your picture is pretty decent. It's by no means perfect, and you'll wind up with a few odd angles, particularly if there are a lot of angles in the area you're shooting, but in all, I couldn't find much to complain about. It didn't look wrong, just a tad off.

As far as actually using this application for journalism, I think you'd be hard pressed to find a way to employ it. The situation would definitely have to warrant it, and unfortunately (it really is, because this thing is nifty), that that just doesn't come around too often. Still, if you find yourself pretending you're a tourist to write a feature about something, consider this before you head out.

Hipstamatic

Hipstamatic is my personal least favorite application, which is odd because as far as features for photography (NOT editing) go, versatile barely describes it. Part of the reason I'm so negative is because it takes a lot of getting used to, you really can't jump into it and go. Also, it comes with a pretty bare shelf of features for the money you invested in the application's purchase. How do I get more features, you ask? A dollar at a time, I say.

Open the app and it may take you a moment to orient yourself. You can click the flash to activate the camera's "flash", and it will make the charging noise and take a moment to get set (you can shoot while it charges, the charge is just for aesthetic appearance). The slot on the left will tell you what film you're using, and you can view your pictures by tapping on the bottom left.



To get into the meat of this thing, hit the arrow in the bottom right corner. If you're a photographer, it'll take you a moment to realize you're in familiar territory. If you're not, make sure you play with this application for several minutes to figure it out. You can select different films, and by tapping the film you can see the effect it will have. Same for flashes, and then for lenses. Want more choices? Go buy them, cause they don't come free. On this screen, you can also change the quality of your pictures by adjusting the lever in the center of the main screen. Once you've mixed and matched to take the desired style of picture (good luck if you don't have any training, here), go back to the camera taking screen and get after it.

Hipstamatic looks the best. It does. It's got this old timey, film and dark room feel to it, and in theory having the ability to choose all the aspects of your picture taking process would be awesome. And if you know what you're doing and have experience with these tools, then I would imagine it's intriguing. But it's just too complicated for a lot of journalists to take this into the field without any experience using it. You're not going to get an image you can use for news, most likely, because all the "equipment" it comes with will cause all different tints. And even though it's only a dollar each, to spend the money to figure out what does and does not work costs too much cash and time.

There are two details about this program I DID really like. Your photos can be grouped into "stacks" for easy organization. Not a big deal, but it's often overlooked in photo programs, and it's something that makes life easier. Second, Hipstamatic hosts contests, and you can submit your photos to these contests. Not something you would normally do while out in the field, but I'm sure photographers would enjoy the ability to submit their work. I can see this particular feature carrying this application, especially if photographers and Synthetic Corp. (makers of Hipstamatic) take it seriously.

Simply put, Hipstamatic is a cool idea, and has a lot to offer to the feature writers and artists of this world who know how to work a camera. If you don't fit that criteria, steer clear.

Mobile Apps for Editing Video

The Basics					
	<u>1stVideo</u>	<u>Showcase</u>	<u>ReelDirector</u>	<u>iMovie</u>	<u>iTimelapse Pro</u>
Cost	\$9.99	\$7.99	\$3.99	\$4.99	\$2.99
Size	18.7 MB	19.1 MB	9.2 MB	35.1 MB	11.0 MB
Titles/Supers	No	No	Yes	Yes	No
Multitrack Editing	Yes	Yes	No	No	N/A
Export/Sharing	Allows for sharing via IP address entered online	Allows for sharing via IP address entered online	Save to Camera Roll, Email or Upload to YouTube	Save to Camera Roll and Export From There	Send to YouTube, Facebook, Vimeo, Email or Camera Roll
Render Time	Very fast	Very fast	Slow	Fast	Fast
Compression Time	Very fast	Very fast	Very slow	Fast	N/A
Upload From iTunes Library	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Only their music
Recommended?	Highly Recommended	Highly Recommended	Recommended	Recommended	Recommended
Where to purchase	<u>iTunes App Store</u>	<u>iTunes App Store</u>	<u>iTunes App Store</u>	<u>iTunes App Store</u>	<u>iTunes App Store</u>
Manufacturer	<u>VeriCorder Technology Inc.</u>	<u>VeriCorder Technology Inc.</u>	<u>Nexvio</u>	<u>Apple</u>	<u>Laan Consulting Corp.</u>

1stVideo

Compatible with iPhone 3GS, iPhone 4, and iPod touch (4th generation); requires iPhone OS 3.1 or later

So, I've pretty much just been working with the 1st video application in one way or another so far, and I have to say, it's a surprising application that takes a little getting used to.

Now, at first, it seemed like an incredibly time consuming process. I assumed I would need to go clip by clip and trim them all before I could drop them into a timeline. This was my fault for not understanding how the application works. I'm sure it probably saved me a little time in the REAL editing phase, but it doubled my clips and took about an hour before I even so a timeline, at which point I commenced to cut and clip things without regard for my earlier trimming. Once you start a new project, though, this baby shines.

The video editing section of 1st Video just WORKS. My fingers are a little big, so sometimes it got frustrating trying to snag the indicator, but once I got the hang of it I was zooming. Plus, the feature where you can tap the screen with two fingers to enter into a menu of abilities, chief among these being copy, paste and cut was a godsend. It was intuitive, worked where I needed it to, and didn't bite back too many times. I say too many times because I found myself cursing after five minutes of getting exactly the right selection, only to skip the drag and drop step and insert the entire clip into my timeline. Aligning sound was also a cinch, although something weird was going on with my leveling. Still, I took to it with the attitude that, if I repeated my command enough times, the program would eventually become agreeable. A little tyrannical, maybe, but overall effective.

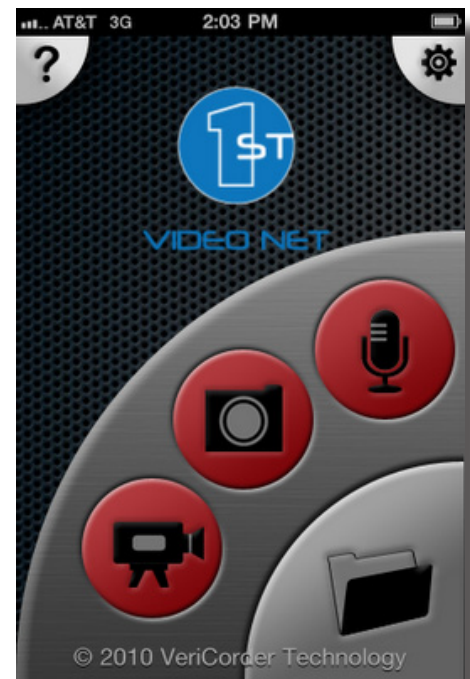
The audio recording feature on this application is also pretty astounding. the meters are actually handy, and you can cut and clip just like with video. Plus, there's a separate track for audio in the project timeline, so there were absolutely no difficulties (other than the leveling from before) in putting it all together.

The picture taking facet of the application worked exactly like taking pictures with the phones internal application, except that every picture was put into a queue after being taken. Eventually, you hit a button, give a name to the pictures you want taken, and it files them all. Call it "Roots and Blues" and you will get every picture you've taken saved as "Roots and Blues 1, Roots and Blues 2...". I suppose this would be annoying if you wanted to name every picture individually, but you can go back through and rename if you really want/need to, so no problem.

When you get to showcase, things get trickier. Getting the pictures to time out to the audio can be a trip and a half. The phone may have a new little scratch from repeated hurling. However, with enough patience, it can eventually be done. It works in separate tracks again, like with the video and audio.

Finally, exporting. I haven't seen how this works on another camera, and it could simply be that I am not registered with Vericorder yet (it's a phone that was a trial phone by Vericorder a year ago, so the MIMS expired. However, I have yet to find a way to get this stuff off my phone. In fact, it doesn't eve show up on my phone under my pictures or videos. It's off in some memory bank I have no access to. I'll have to go see the tech department about that. Still, this is a serious problem. At the very least, there should be an option to export to your phone's memory.

In all, a useful application for video and voiceover, but when it comes to pictures, you can do better. That goes for audio slideshows and exporting too.



Showcase

Compatible with iPhone, iPod touch and iPad;
requires iPhone OS 3.1 or later

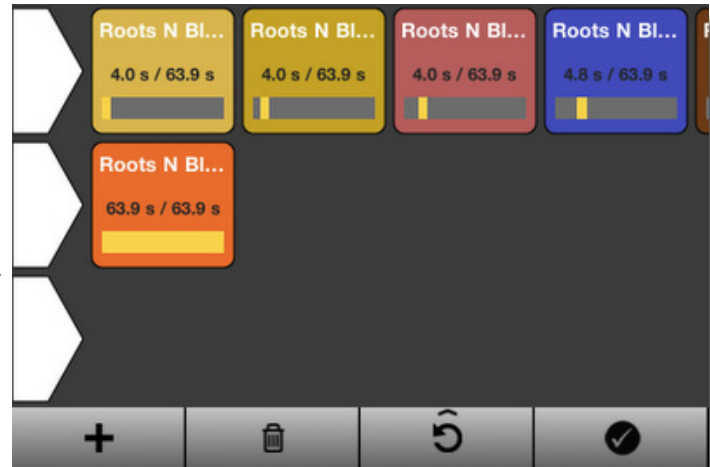
Showcase is the Soundslides of VeriCorder Technology. If you are looking to save money, I would recommend purchasing 1stVideo because you have the option of making a Showcase presentation under the 1stVideo application. The same rules and buttons apply as VC Audio. For the VC Audio review, [click here](#). Just like the other VeriCorder applications, the Networks version is free with a subscription and the Consumer version for Showcase is \$7.99.

The only major problem I had with Showcase was the building blocks type button where you can see all of your clips. You cannot see an image on the blocks, simply just a colorful box with the amount of time on it. Also, half of the time it wouldn't let me slide over and I would have to drag one of the first pieces over to see the end clips. Then, it wouldn't let me rearrange them at all. This only happened one time, but I was quite frustrated.

If I were to recommend two changes for VeriCorder's programs, it would be to be able to see an image on the 'blocks' and not just a colorful square and also the ability to make points and change specific volume parts of clips.

Sharing is the same with Showcase as it is with VC Audio. To get the information off of my phone, I click on Sharing and then Start Server. From there, it gives you an IP address that you can enter in a browser on your computer. You can download your files from there. This is definitely the easiest part.

All in all, I really like VeriCorder, but it is definitely built for serious audio editing. You can do simple things in the program, but this is meant for those who know what they are doing.

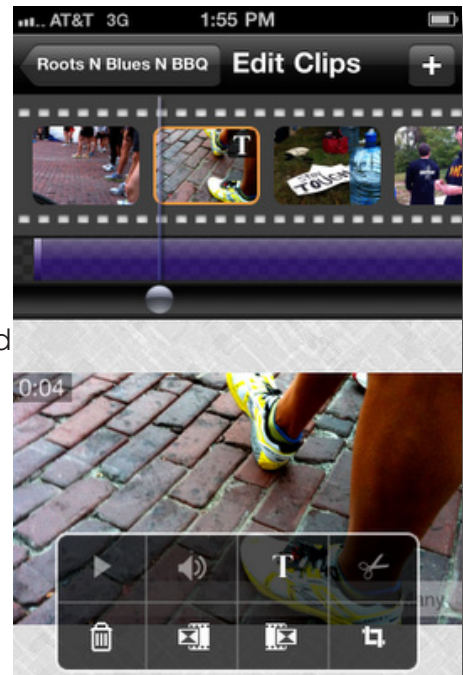


ReelDirector

Compatible with iPhone, iPod touch, and iPad; requires iPhone OS 3.1 or later

There are a lot of reasons why this video editing application is not on par with traditional video editing, but it is not all bad. The main problem I found with ReelDirector was the extensive amounts of time it takes to perform a task. When selecting a video clip to add to your movie, it must compress, which ranges from fairly fast to a few minutes. To view the piece as a whole (and not just individual clips), you must render the video which takes anywhere from 5-22 minutes for a 2 minute finished product. This defeats the purpose of mobile journalism. Mobile journalism should be fast and easily edited for the web.

Another reason applications such as 1stVideo and iMovie, as well as traditional film editing tools, blow ReelDirector out of the water is the should-be simple action of cutting clips. You cannot watch the clip while editing – you have to just guesstimate and hope that you didn't cut off something important. I was forced to memorize the raw videos and look for visual cues. Another problem with cutting is the editing software is only sophisticated as rounding to the nearest second. If your clip begins in the middle of the 10-11 second range...well, that is a problem.



My recommendations for this software is only use this for short interviews with no editing needed besides possibly cutting off the beginning and the end. If you want to use this app to clean up a short feed, or for a single interview, then it is fine. I would recommend this application for those who do not know what they are doing or if they only want light video editing software. If your goal is more advanced editing, then I would wait to buy this app until there are multi-track editing and a shorter render time.

The Breakdown:

Pros:

- * In my opinion, ReelDirector looks a lot more professional than iMovie in terms of fonts and super styles and placements.
- * The audio software allows you to fade in and fade out clips.
- * You can easily drag and rearrange clips on the timeline.
- * Very easily create a slideshow with pictures and audio if you edit the audio in another application such as Monle or VC Audio Net.

Cons:

- * Render time is absolutely too long for any serious editing and especially for mobile journalism.
- * The clips cannot be watched while being edited down.
- * There is no multi-track editing, and thus, the audio that is put under the video is there as is. It may muffle the audio associated with the video clips.
- * Cannot edit to the exact place desired; the software rounds the edit.

iMovie

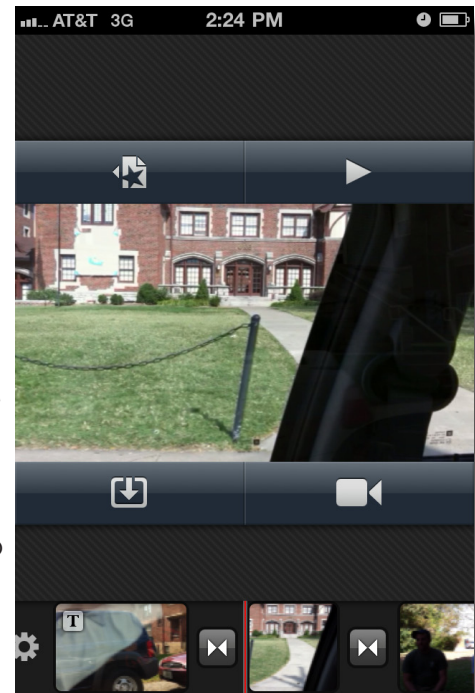
Compatible with iPhone 4, and iPod touch (4th generation); requires iOS 4.1 or later

I've used iMovie multiple times for various videos and I've found that it works best as a tool to put together clips in a string, and that's about it. I am a big fan of the application, it's easy to use, doesn't glitch, and exports quickly to your Camera Roll. It's incredibly easy to get off of your iPhone when linked to your computer and simple enough to upload to whichever video site you want.

The issue is you can't do voiceovers like a conventional news story because there's no multitrack editing. You would need to time your clips and voiceover separately, which would really defeat the purpose of mobile journalism. So if you are doing breaking news and film a standup of yourself at the site and then edit different b-roll with an interview clip, that would be your story. No voiceovers, trust me. You can't actually control the volume of the sound, which can get unfortunate if your video was taken from too far away and without a stick mic.

In actuality the application is ideal for putting together short movies. For people that like to put together little films of their day, or of an event, this is a great tool. You have the ability to add music from your iTunes or choose from theme music the application provides. You can't control the sound once you put it in, so if you want to make a movie that has different songs you need to edit that music on a different application and send it to your iPhone's iTunes. It's simple to add the clips directly from your camera roll, to add supers and to cut or shorten the clips. The supers/titles only come in a minimal number of themes, and you can't use too many words. You can also add a transition between clips.

I've edited videos while watching TV on this program because it's so easy. Just don't expect to have the highest professional quality because of the aspects of your video you can't control. It is possible to come out with a pretty polished looking clip though depending on the video you gather and how you piece together your raw footage.



iTimelapse Pro

Compatible with iPhone, iPod touch, and iPad; requires iPhone OS 3.1 or later

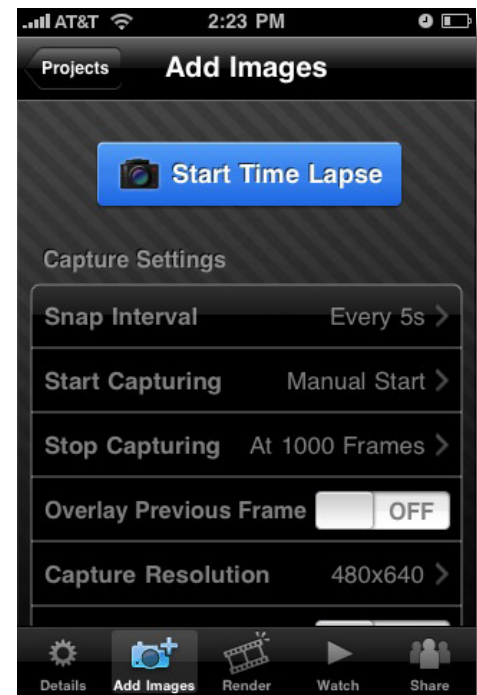
iTimelapse is an interesting animal. We weren't sure whether to categorize it as a video editing or photo editing software. What we DO know is that it does exactly what you would expect a time-lapse application to do, and it makes it pretty easy. You can click a couple buttons, set the camera up, and let it go.

Once you let it go, though, you run into the normal problems. You need a tripod to really use this application to its fullest extent. You could conceivably hold it in your hand and take pictures, but after taking pictures every 3 seconds, I needed at least 5 minutes of capturing before I had enough material to make a 10 second video. Long story short, you can either skip the tripod and wear your arms out, or you can invest in a little tripod and have some nice pictures.

Once you're done, there aren't that many options, so it is both simple and frustrating. On the one hand, to render it into a movie is really, really easy. But you also have very little control. You can't re-order or adjust your pictures in any way. You can designate resolution size and frames per second, but you can't, for instance, designate a set amount of time and then have it fill that amount evenly with the pictures you've taken. They also thoughtfully provided you with a few music tracks to lay over your video, but you better really like the ones they give you, because uploading from iTunes is not a possibility with this application.

After you've gotten your video rendered comes the part of the application that absolutely SHINES. You can export to youtube, vimeo, facebook, send it to email, or export to your camera roll. And using only the 3G, I was able to upload a 20 second video to youtube in about 5 minutes. It's not bad at all.

The only downfall to the application aside from the lack of control you actually have is that you can't store multiple videos. You can export them, or save them to a camera roll, but if you were hoping to save several time-lapses before doing anything with them, then you're out of luck. There's also not a way to use only certain [pictures you've taken. Either you use all the pictures you've taken in your video, or you delete the ones you don't want to render. You also can't upload pictures to the application. So, get what you need and make the video and export it quickly if there are several things in a given time you need to capture.



Chargers and Batteries

Editing

	<u>VC Audio Pro</u>	<u>Monle</u>
Cost	\$5.99	\$9.99
Size	9.1 MB	1.1 MB
Must record in app	Yes (or import track into iTunes first)	Yes
Multitrack Editing	Yes	Yes
Export/Sharing	Allows for sharing via IP address entered online	Wi-fi, FTP, Audio-copy/paste, Intua Pasteboard
Render Time	Very Fast	Slow
Volume Change	Yes	Yes
Upload From iTunes Library	Yes	No
Compatible	iOS 3.1+	iOS 3.0+
Recommended?	Highly Recommended	Not Recommended
Where to purchase	iTunes App Store	iTunes App Store
Manufacturer	VeriCorder Technology, Inc.	Ochen K.

Miscellaneous

	<u>AudioBoo</u>	<u>Blue FiRe</u>	<u>AudioNote</u>
Cost	Free	Free	Free
Size	1.8 MB	7.2 MB	2.5 MB
Export/Sharing	Publish to AudioBoo	FTP	N/A (Can on full version)
Geo-tagged	Yes	Yes	Yes
Change Quality Levels	No	Yes	No
Timer (Record For...)	No	Yes	No
Compatible with...	iOS 3.1+, Android	iOS 3.0+	iOS 3.1.3+
Recommended?	Recommended	Recommended	Recommended
Where to purchase	iTunes App Store	iTunes App Store	iTunes App Store
Manufacturer	Best Before Media Ltd.	Blue Microphones	Luminant Software

Mophie Juice Pack Air and Mophie Juice Pack Boost

Mophie Juice Pack Air

I think this is the best battery to use when you're on the go. All of the external charges need to be plugged in so they can charge, so that's something you need to do before taking it to report. But this particular tool saved me when we went to cover an event once. Let's say you completely forgot to charge your phone and now you need to go out and report. Or you have been using your phone all day and then a breaking news story erupts but your phone might die at any moment. This tool comes to the rescue.

The Juice Pack Air is light and fits right onto the phone. It's not distracting or annoying to try and store.



Mophie Juice Pack Boost

The Juice Pack Boost is efficient, but awkward to hold. Try using this while idle so you don't have to worry about it detaching.

It basically just feels like you have a case on your phone, but it's really a battery. Certain external batteries get in the way when you're trying to use the phone to capture audio and video, but this one does a good job of being mobile. It's secure and you don't need to baby it or hold the phone a certain way. Just leave it on your iPhone until it's charged, or keep it on until you're done with your assignment. It can really be a lifesaver.

The Boost is something you'd use if you didn't bring your charger. It's not really a mobile battery, it's something you'd plug into your phone and leave in until it's ready to go. It's just another option. It's useful if you don't need to actually do any work right away. They both charge the iPhone within a couple of hours. If you leave the Air on, it doesn't really matter how long it takes to charge because you can use the phone while it's doing its job.



Casemate Extender

The Case-mate Extender is right about in the middle of the pack as far as our recommendations go. The version we have was made for the iPhone 3G or iPhone 3GS, so I can't speak to whether the Extender for the iPhone 4 works better. I'm not saying that it was a waste of money, but it could have performed better.

The Case-mate Extender charges via USB cord and USB cord only, which makes me automatically knock it down a few pegs. I prefer to have multiple ways to charge. That being said, it only takes about an hour to and hour and a half to fully charge this battery. Once that's done, fitting it to your iPhone is fairly simple. It's a snug fit, though, so make sure you line up all the grooves correctly.

After it's on, it doesn't begin immediately charging, which is a positive in my book. In fact, you can have your phone already in it while it charges up without it wasting battery keeping your phone alive. Because it's a pretty sturdy case, this means that you can use it as a protective device for your phone when your phone doesn't need charging.

However, once that battery goes into the red, just press the button on the back of the Extender until it begins to charge the iPhone. From there, it will keep charging (even if you are actively using your phone) for about two hours, at which point it will die. However, it does give you roughly 70% battery power back before it does that, so the tradeoff is pretty good.

As far as usability goes, two hours isn't great. The Mophie Juice Pack Air will give you more time and is also a case. However, if you're looking for a fairly inexpensive way to keep your phone protected and charged, you won't go wrong with the Case-mate. It's also pretty light and slim, which helps keep your phone comfortable.



Griffin Reserve Battery

When I was in high school playing football, and there was an athlete who looked like an all American but couldn't really play ball, my coaches had a saying. "Looks like Tarzan, plays like Jane". Griffin reserve battery? You look like Tarzan, but you absolutely play like Jane.

The exterior is sleek. Its high gloss black and all the lines fit together. Even when it's in the charging dock, it fits so it looks like one solid piece. It connects to either of its chargers via magnets, making it seem that much cooler. Needless to say, I was psyched when I had it all charged up (you can tell by pushing the button on the top, and seeing how many lights light up). I let my battery drain to 10%, plugged in the Griffin, and then let it sit. It charged for nearly exactly 1 hour, while sitting idle, before it ran out of power. When I checked to see how much battery I now had, I was shocked to find that I had slightly less than 25%.

The Griffin Reserve Battery is just what the name says, a reserve. As I discovered, it will not be filling up your battery any time soon. It's enough to keep you going for about half an hour more than you would have, and that's it.

That's not to say it's without its positives. It charges through a wall outlet or in your car through the AC converter in your cigarette lighter. Ostensibly, you could head out on assignment using the reserve to keep your battery full, put the battery in the charger and go report, and then use the Reserve to keep you going on your way back. But honestly, for the money, I think there are better options out there.



Juicebar Solar Charger

The Juice Bar Solar Charger holds a ton of power, holds it for a long time, and gives it out quickly. However, for all the good that it does, there are some negatives that go along with this particular charger that make me wary to suggest it to anyone.

Like several other external batteries we've tested, the Juice Bar charges via USB cord. It's not a quick charge, but it's not entirely too slow. Just don't expect to have a full battery in an hour or two. You'll need probably 4 hours of solid charging to get every bit out of this thing, which can be a long time to drain your computer, if that's what you're connecting to for charging purposes. It also has a solar panel on the top of the device. Like every other solar charger, it's slow. However, it's another way to charge, and it does make the power you put into your mobile device last longer, if you're using your phone in sunlight.



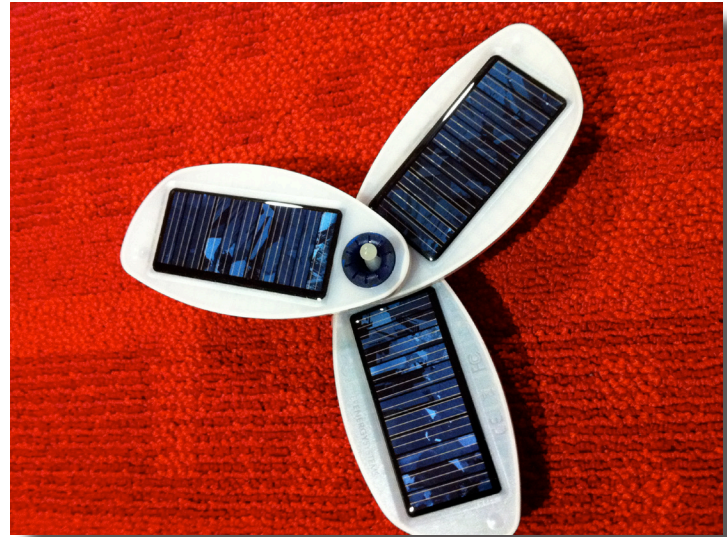
Once it's fully charged, however, the battery will keep filling up your phone for well over two hours of use. When I used it, my phone sat idle for only a few minutes, and it still took my iPhone from 20% battery to full.

Now we get into the drawbacks. Like many other devices we've tested, this is an external battery that has to be toted along with the mobile device. It's attached via cable, giving you a little more leeway, but your phone is still tethered to the Juice Bar. Luckily, it's slim and lightweight, otherwise this would be a serious issue. However, this isn't my biggest problem with the Juice Bar. This battery, when it's being used, gets hot. I'm not talking like, put it in your gloves in the winter to keep your hands warm hot, I'm talking painful to keep your skin on it hot. Which means you've got to be careful where you put it while using it. You can't leave it on something vulnerable to heat, and you definitely don't want to have it in your pocket where you might accidentally put your hand only to get a little bit of a shock. Trust me on that one.

In all, this battery isn't bad. If you can figure out a way to insulate the battery so you don't burn yourself and also a way to charge while still being able to effectively use your phone (because of the connection), then this battery is great. Having a solar panel to accentuate your charging capabilities and expand the category of areas where you can use this device is also a bonus. But I feel like there are better choices for you to purchase.

Solio Solar Charger

As far as hybrid chargers goes, this is probably my favorite - for several reasons. First of all, it comes with a bunch of adapter plugs and pins so that you can charge virtually any mobile device. According to their website, it is compatible with over 3,200+ devices. They are constantly cranking out new pieces, so if you cannot find the one you need, simply email them. Not only do you get a handful of adapting plus for the mobile device end of the cord, but you also get several pieces to suit almost any wall unit. You can charge the device through a wall socket or through a computer via a USB port. While researching this device, I came across a bold statement - that this charger will hold its charge for up to one year. This could be extremely handy for unexpected situations. Just charge it up and leave it in your backpack or car for emergencies, or use it year-round.



Another reason I love this hybrid is that there are three large panels for a lot of light energy intake. This is a very nice feature because charging this device only with solar energy can take a long time and most devices have smaller panels or maybe only one panel. According to the introductory booklet that comes with the device, it can take up to 48 hours to charge the device if it is cloudy or you are not in direct sunlight. This eco-friendly option may be time consuming, but if you can afford to wait, or you are on vacation (or simply just can't find a plug), this is a perfect solution. When you are done with it, just slide the three arms up. It is compact, which is perfect for a backpack journalist carrying many devices with them.

Keyboards

Tangible Keyboards

	<u>Freedom Pro Bluetooth Wireless Keyboard</u>	<u>Apple Wireless Keyboard</u>
Cost	\$142.94	\$69.00
Size	12.6"	12 1/16"
Weight	9.1 oz.	14.1 oz.
Mobile Platforms Supported	Symbian, Blackberry, Windows Mobile, Android, iOS 3Gs+	iPad, Bluetooth-enable Mac with Mac OS X v10.5.8 or later
Special Keys	Answer Call, End/Reject call, Open Messages/email, Open Address book, Open task and Open Calendar.	Dashboard, Brightness, All windows, Play, Volume, Eject
Power Source	2 AAA Batteries	2 AA Batteries
Recommended?	Recommended	Highly Recommended
Where to buy	Freedom Input Website	Apple Store
Manufacturer	Freedom Input	Apple

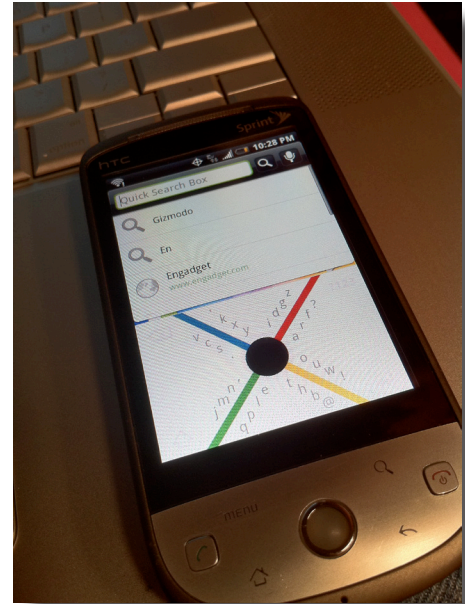
Virtual Keyboards

	<u>8pen</u>	<u>SlideIT</u>
Cost	\$1.58	\$8.22
Size	0.2 MB	~900 KB
Mobile Platforms Supported	Android 1.6+	Android, Symbian (Nikon), Windows Mobile
QWERTY	No	Yes
Recommended?	Recommended	Highly Recommended
Where to buy	Android Market	Android Market
Manufacturer	8pen	Dasur

8pen

The first virtual keyboard, 8pen, is an alternative to the QWERTY keyboard. The letters are placed on four axes and are arranged in a way so the most common letters used are closer to the middle. This keyboard is supposed to more of a natural motion than the common "pecking" of texting and typing on a mobile device. To type on the 8pen, start your finger on the black dot. If you want to type 'a,' slide your finger from the dot on the side of the red bar where the 'a' is located. Continue moving over the red line and back to the black dot. If you pick up your finger, this will create a space. The circular motions are supposed to mimic writing.

Not surprisingly, this keyboard is very hard to get used to. The letters are not imprinted in my brain like they are with a QWERTY keyboard. I had to keep looking down to find the letters, but sometimes my finger was covering the letters so had to pick my finger up, creating a space, and take a peek. It took a fair amount of time to get accustomed to this keyboard, but once I got the hang out it I started to like it. It was almost like a game - I wanted to get the process right - without any mistakes. Supposedly, with this keyboard, you will not have to look what you are typing once you memorize the letters, which could be very handy and fast for anyone in need of quick messages. I recommend this application if you have patience and don't mind taking a long time to send messages for a while.



SlideIT

The second virtual keyboard, SlideIT, is an easier way to type on the traditional QWERTY keyboard. Not trying to be cheesy, but instead of picking up your finger, simply slide it - like the name says. It makes typing so much faster than the pecking method of traditional keyboards on mobile devices. Now, people don't have to worry about their finger being too large. You can turn this writing style on and off, so it is really easy to try. It doesn't take very long to get accustomed to this style because you already know the layout and placement of the keys. The only downside of this keyboard is that it tries to guess what word you mean since your fingers don't always hit the proper keys. If you are trying to type in a word that it doesn't recognize it may come up with a "?" or guess something incorrectly. This isn't really a problem, though, because you can add words to the app's vocabulary. This application also comes complete with Graffiti mode, which allows you to draw numbers and letters, which are then read by the mobile device. All in all, I would highly recommend this version of QWERTY typing. It is fast, easy to learn and very convenient.



Lenses

The Basics

	<u>Jelly Lens Filters</u>	<u>OWLE Bubo</u>	<u>180 Degrees Fisheye Lens</u>	<u>SmartLens 2 in 1 Lens</u>
Cost	\$5.60	\$169.94	\$20.39	\$16.99
Manufacturer	Jelly Lens	OWLE	Mobile Fisheye Lens	USBfever
Size	3/4"	6.0"	1.0"	3/4"
Macro	Yes	No	No	Yes
Micro	Yes	Yes	No	No
Sticky/Magnetic	Sticky	N/A	Magnetic	Magnetic
Recommended?	Not Recommended	Highly Recommended	Not Recommended	Recommended
Where To Buy	<u>Jelly Lens</u>	<u>OWLE</u>	<u>180 Degree Fisheye</u>	<u>USBfever</u>

Jelly Lens Filters

Compatible with nearly all phones, including Android, iPhone (Compatible with iPhone, iPod touch, and iPad; requires iPhone OS 3.0 or later)

We had two jelly filters to test, one was the starburst filter, and the other was the wide-angle lens. They come in other filters, vignette, antique, you can take your pick. They are small and portable and easy to attach to your device. The jelly filters have a, well, jelly, sticky ring around the lens that allows you to attach the lens right around the camera's already existing lens. It sticks just as well as the magnetic lenses do, maybe even better. At least with the sticky application you don't have to permanently stick a magnetic ring to your device. Apparently you can clean the dirt off the sticky part with water, but eventually it's going to stop sticking.



Honestly, I don't know why you'd need these filters.

A lot of photo editing applications already have capabilities like starburst and vignette. If you use the applications you can have the original picture as well without the affect already on there permanently. I think the wide-angle lens might be the only one that is worth anything. You can get more in the shot by using it. If you're too close to an object or scene to get everything or everyone in it, it definitely comes in handy. The problem is the lenses bend the photo a little on the edges. It gives them a distorted look. Also, you can't use a flash with these lenses. If you do the lens is caught in the flash and you can't see anything except the lens. Really, I think these are a waste of money since you can doctor your photos with other applications.

OWLE Bubo

Compatible with iPhone, iPod touch, and iPad; requires iPhone OS 3.0 or later

The Owle Bubo is a pretty handy, if bulky, piece of equipment. Essentially, it's a piece of metal that you can stick your iPhone into, and has a lens over the camera area of the phone. It's meant to help steady your shots, make your camera more portable, and give you better pictures via the lens.

What the Bubo DOES deliver on is making it easier to carry around your phone (kind of) and steadying your shots. It's nice not having to hold your camera (phone) by the fingertips and then try and push the button to capture while also trying to remain steady. The grips are spaced enough that it's comfortable, your thumb can easily push the button to take a picture, and it's heavy enough to give you comfortable

stability without tiring your arms. Slightly less, effectively, it makes it easier to carry around your equipment. We screwed a neck strap into one of the cold foot mounts on our bubo, so that when we needed to jot down notes or fiddle with a microphone or something else, we could let our "camera" hang from our neck, freeing up our hands, and we highly recommend this practice for Bubo users. However, since the iPhone is placed into the apparatus using only the friction caused by putting your phone (wrapped in the Bubo's custom case) into the slot in the center of the device, I would show caution when letting it hang from your neck. My phone dropped out of the Owle twice in one afternoon.

The Bubo also has a cold foot mount on the top for any special gear you want to mount (like a flash) and has an area on the bottom where you can screw it onto a mount, giving you the ability to make it extra steady for, say, video. These are both very welcome additions to the device, and make the Owle Bubo much more versatile in the field.

Now for the lenses. You have some options, you can go with the super wide angle, which will give you a slight bend on the corners of the picture, like a less powerful fisheye lens. It's handy for crowd shots, but not preferable for a lot of other things. You can unscrew this (and stow it away, somewhere; there's no place to put it on the actual Bubo) and then use the macro lens. If you're going to do this, then be prepared to get really comfortable with your subject, because it's definitely only good for one purpose, which is to get really fine detail extremely close up. Finally, you can unscrew this lens, leaving a large hole in the Bubo where your camera shoots from, so that you can simply use the iPhone's camera.

In all, I was pretty impressed with this equipment. I eventually dropped the lenses, preferring to just use the internal camera instead of having to work around the super wide and the macro, but this was balanced by the actual usefulness of the tool. I can mount it, I can put flashes on it, I can get my hands free while not having to worry about where I'm going to put the phone, and best of all, it steadies those pictures. I definitely recommend this for shooting of any kind.



108 Degrees Fisheye Lens

Compatible with iPhone, iPod touch, and iPad;
requires iPhone OS 3.1 or later

We found this lens to be very unhelpful. It mounts via a metallic ring, just like the SmartLens 2 in 1 Lens. However, where the 2 in 1 had a wide angle and a macro, this lens does only fisheye. For artistic pictures not for news, someone can probably find a use for this lens, but for journalistic ventures you probably need to steer clear. If for some reason you ever DID need to add a fisheye effect to your picture, chances are you're using an application which can apply the filter to the picture. Now you have the original unaltered and the altered image you want to use. We're not saying this lens doesn't have its place, but we are saying this lens probably doesn't have a place in your camera bag.



SmartLens 2 in 1 Lens

Compatible with iPhone, iPod touch, and iPad;
requires iPhone OS 3.1 or later

The SmartLens 2 in 1 lens is a fun little gimmick of a device. It probably works better with a 4G or droid, where the curve of the phone doesn't interfere with the camera. On a 3G, though, it actually worked surprisingly well for me.

The only real negative to using this lens is that you're going to have to apply a magnetic ring to the back of your phone using the adhesive already on the ring. I haven't attempted to take it off, yet, because I don't know that the glue is sticky enough to put it back on, and the lens only comes with one ring. Moral of the story is, attach it to something you want to use long-term.



After that, you don't have to worry about the lens NOT working, which is maybe not a great way to look at it. I didn't notice a huge improvement in quality by using it, but at the same time, it didn't hurt. It doesn't bend the picture like the wider angle on the Bubo does, and the macro lens is decent. Sometimes it won't work, and it'll just be fuzzy, but if you can get close enough (often nearly touching) then you might be able to get some cool details.

The best part is, this thing is incredibly easy to put on and take off. So, attach the magnetic ring, put the lens in your pocket, and head out.

Miscellaneous Apps and Gear

The Basics

	<u>Zillow</u>	<u>ScannerPro</u>	<u>OtterBox</u>	<u>Shazam</u>	<u>Bump</u>	<u>Eye-Fi (Connect X2)</u>
Cost	Free	\$6.99	\$49.95	Free	Free	\$49.99
Type of Product	Application	Application	Case	Application	Application	Photo upload
Size	1.8 MB	12.7 MB	Fits iPhone 4	4.1. MB	3.3 MB	SD Card
Manufacturer	<u>Zillow.com</u>	<u>Readdle</u>	<u>OtterBox</u>	<u>Shazam Entertainment Ltd.</u>	<u>Bump Technologies LLC</u>	<u>Eye-Fi</u>
Recommended?	Recommended	Highly Recommended	Highly Recommended	Recommended	Recommended	Recommended
Where to purchase	<u>iTunes App Store, Android Market</u>	<u>iTunes App Store, Android Market</u>	<u>OtterBox</u>	<u>iTunes App Store, Android Market</u>	<u>iTunes App Store, Android Market</u>	<u>Eye-Fi</u>

Zillow

Zillow is a free real estate service that provides information on home values (price, square footage, number of bathrooms). You can also search for homes that are for sale, recently sold homes and apartment rentals. The application is very simple to use and makes home shopping infinitely easier and allows you to save on gas.

On the home screen, you can look at a map powered by Google in street or hybrid view. If maps aren't your thing, you can view a list of homes near you. To update your current location, simply push the circle with the four lines on it in the upper left corner. If you don't even want to bother with homes out of your price range, click the filter button in the right corner where you can sort listings by price, number of beds, lot size, etc...

To find homes that recently sold in your area, click on the yellow arrows. To find homes for sale, click on the red arrow, which symbolizes a home. Under the arrow, as you can see in the photo (left), the price of the home is displayed. Once you have clicked on a red arrow, you can find the details of the home in question. There, you can find the address, the number of bed / bath, the square footage, etc... There are usually photos of the home on the detail page.

There is a lot of valuable information on the detail page besides square footage. You can email an agent, save this house as a favorite, and my personal favorite - check out a Zestimate of the home, which is Zillow's estimate for the home in a range, with a 30-day change. On this chart, you can find out the property value over the last 1, 5 and 10 years. Under the graph, you can find the last sale and tax information, as well as a property description.

If you see something you like, you can email the listing or call a listing agent featured at the bottom of the page.

All of these features make shopping for a new home so easy. This will make my future home shopping infinitely easier. I also feel like this application has an untapped potential for journalism - I'm just not sure what it is yet. Stay tuned...

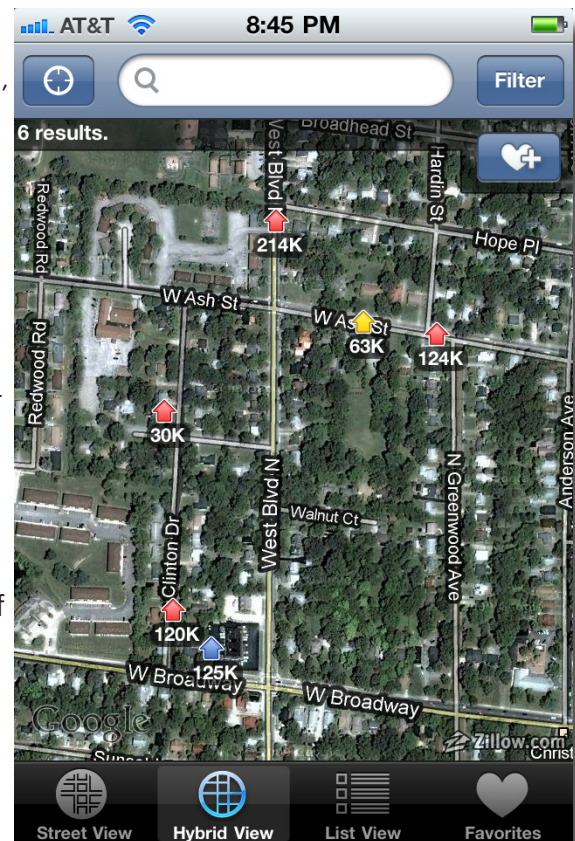
Key:

Red - For Sale

Yellow - Recently Sold

Purple - For Rent

Blue - Make Me Move (a price you put on your home before putting it on the market)

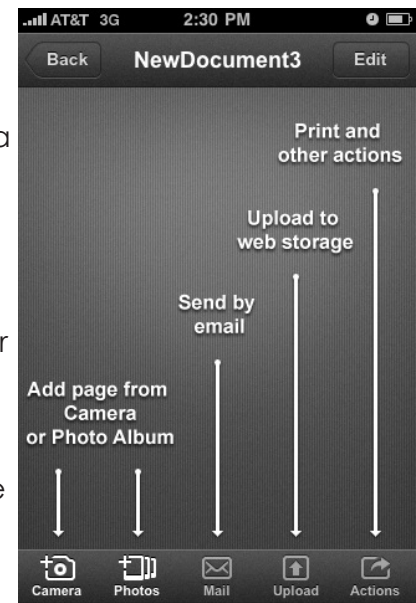


ScannerPro

Scanner Pro is one of my favorite applications for the iPhone. It's pretty cheap, and it has one job that it performs admirably, which is to combine files into one PDF document.

The best way I discovered for using this application is to use the camera on your phone. You can either take new pictures while in the application, or you can import them from your camera roll. You can choose to have these load up in Black and White, Grayscale or Color. Holding your camera over the document you want to scan and snapping your picture works wonderfully.

Once you have your picture, you have to select either a portion of it, or the full picture. I typically just hit select all, because I normally want the full image. You also need to make sure you select the correct processing type. The application automatically selects text first processing, but if you're sending an image, you want photo. You also need to choose your page size. After that, you can bundle it with other images to make a larger PDF document. When you're finished, you can hit the actions page to enable password protection. I haven't needed to do that yet, but I could see where password protection could come in handy.



Lastly, you have to get it off your phone. I really like how the application accomplishes this. You can hit the actions button to print or fax the PDF (although you have to have print n share to print things). You can email the PDF by touching the mail button. Or you can upload your file to Evernote (another application we have reviewed), Google Docs, Dropbox (again, this is reviewed elsewhere) or iDisk/WebDAV.

In all, I feel like this application is very simple, and very tight in its design. There aren't many ways to get lost in it because it's so straightforward. It works well, it gives you plenty of protection, and it has several ways to get your files off your phone to a variety of sources.

OtterBox

I have tried many different cases for iPod and iPhone, but the iPhone Defender Series OtterBox is my favorite. It is a little pricey (\$49.95) compared to some cases, but in my opinion it is worth it! There are sleeker sleeves and fabric cases if you are looking to be stylish, but if you are looking for protection, OtterBox is the best bet. Reviews say that the Defender Series can supposedly be dropped into a puddle and still protect your device, but the company's website says the case is not waterproof.

If you are looking to be stylish, this case comes in several different colors (blue, red, black, black/white and black/pink). It has a nice felt lining inside of the case, which just seems to cushion the back. My favorite part of the case is the front membrane. It helps to keep your screen clean and it is very receptive. This membrane is made in a way that it doesn't cut down on sensitivity and it doesn't get 'bubbles' under it like a lot of other cases do. The case also comes with a holster to clip on to your pocket (right) or you can use the holster for hands-free viewing.

The OtterBox makes the iPhone a little bulkier, so if you are looking for a sleek case, this isn't your best bet. OtterBox makes other cases such as the Commuter Series, for three levels of protection (\$34.95), and the Impact series, for a slimmer protection (\$19.95).

I think having a case like the OtterBox is very necessary. If you are willing to spend hundreds on a phone and data plan, then you should be willing to protect it. It is a small price to pay for the confidence in knowing that your phone is protected.



Shazam

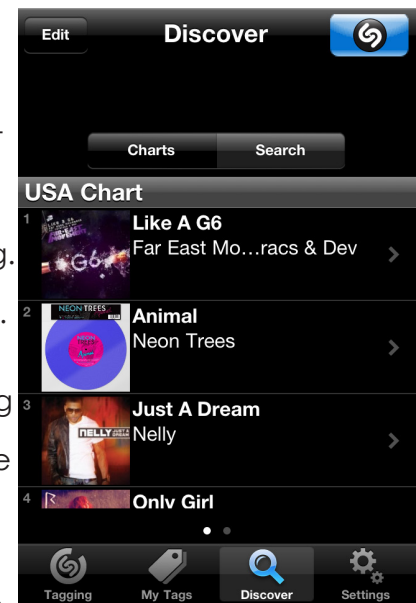
Shazam is a music discover application for those interested in mainstream, popular music. There are several cool features of this application, but I cannot find any journalistic functions of this app.

Here is the rundown - If you listening to a song on the radio and cannot for the life of you think what the name of the song or the artist is, simply push the blue button in the upper right-hand corner. It will use its recognition technology and tell you about the song in question. The only problem is the song has to be very VERY clear. No static. No talking. Not too loud, not too soft. It is very particular and half the time I have tried this application it doesn't work. This function is the opening screen.

There are other options for this application, too. On the bottom row there are four buttons: Tagging, My Tags, Discover and Settings. Tagging is the mode I already spoke of. My tags is the section where you can find identified music. You can buy tagged tracks, or related items. There is a wealth of information when it finds a track. It will give you reviews, release history and more.

The final fun tab is the the Discover option. Discover lets you look at the top songs on different popular charts, or you can search. By clicking on the album, you can listen to the song.

This application is very good for personal use, but I cannot find a good journalistic function for this application. I do, however, recommend this application.



Bump

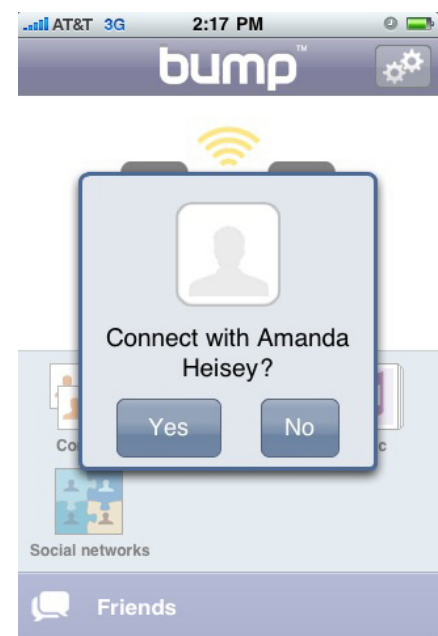
Bump is an application with a simple sounding name and purpose, undermined by a fairly complicated operational system. You'll need to bump several times before you get the hang of using it.

The first thing you'll need to do is make a contact in your phonebook that is you. Make it detailed, so that the people you bump with will have all your information. Think of it like a business card, you'll need you're name, position, email and website URL. Once you've done that, go into Bump, select contacts, and select your contact as you. This way, when you bump with people, they will be able to see that it's you.

From here, you have to have the person you're bumping with get their bump application running, then the two of you literally pump funs. A simple touch works, but we felt it necessary to put a little more oomph in our bumping. You can choose your own bumping style.

The first thing you'll notice after bumping is that there is nothing to take form the other person's phone. This is because you have to select files to send to their phone. If you exit the linked screen and go back to Bump's homepage, you'll see there are several choices of buttons on the bottom. You can select photos, music (only 100 at a time), contacts and social networks. Once you've chosen what you want to share, and they have as well, bump again. Now you can select the different options presented, skim through your choices, and download all the things you want to download.

Once you've done it enough, Bump runs pretty smoothly. And it's free, which always helps. But choosing your files to share isn't exactly intuitive, and there is usually at least a little confusion after bumping as to what is available for the taking, where it is, and whether it has actually been downloaded. Still, Bump is a fast way to share a lot of information, like contacts and pictures, and the fact that it's free means it is definitely worth putting it onto your phone.

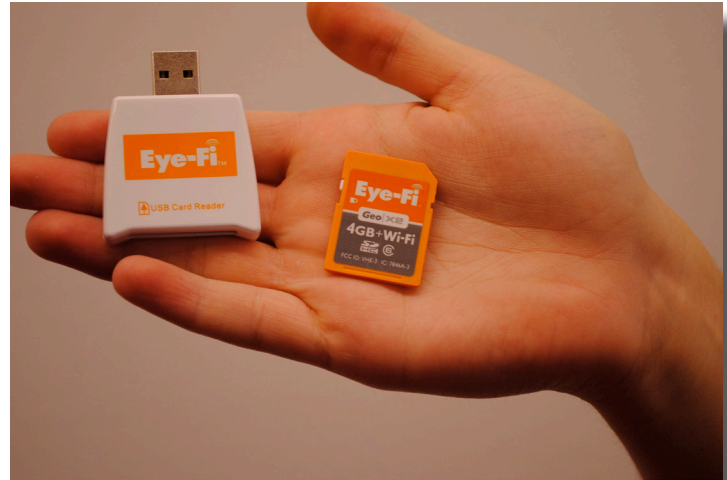


Eye-Fi

The Eye-Fi is a device that automatically backs up your camera for you. It is a SD card that comes together with Wi-Fi. We have a 4GB+Wi-Fi card, which is \$69.99 For a complete list of products, visit their website [here](http://www.eyefi.com).

To use the Eye-Fi, simply leave on your camera when you get home, or to any Wi-Fi spot that you have preset as an accepted spot on your card. It will do the uploading for you. If you choose, it will also upload your photos to Facebook, flickr, YouTube or a variety of other hosts.

It is really easy to set up - just plug the Wi-Fi card into the USB port that comes with the device and it will do the rest. It has prompts and guides to help you set up your wireless networks and other sites you may wish to publish your photos.



Some of the features of the Geo card we have are:

- * Geotags your photos
- * The photos come in via date-based folders for easy-to-find files
- * Compatible with a wide variety of cameras
- * You can select certain photos to upload instead of waiting for the whole set to upload
- * You can also set up Twitter, Facebook or email alerts to notify you when your photos are uploading online

I wouldn't recommend this tool for the serious photojournalist. It is not as quick as you might think. It takes a while because the device works through Wi-Fi. It definitely doesn't save any time, and I don't really see the purpose for a journalist. It is not that much of an inconvenience to use a card reader or connect your camera to your computer via a USB port. I could see how it would be handy for a parent or someone on the go who doesn't have time to sit there and babysit your uploading photos.

External Microphones

Microphones			
	<u>Blue Mikey</u>	<u>Alesis ProTrack</u>	<u>VeriCorder Mini Mic</u>
Cost	\$75.00	\$99.00	\$25.00 (iPhone 4)
Size	2.5"	7.25"	3 1/8"
Weight	2.88 oz.	8.00 oz.	4.00 oz.
Manufacturer	<u>Blue Microphones</u>	<u>Alesis</u>	<u>VeriCorder Technologies</u>
Platform Supported	iOS	iOS	iOS, Android, Symbian
Connection	Dock Connector	Dock Connector	Headphone Jack
Power Source	Mobile Device	4 AAA batteries	Mobile Device
Recommended?	Recommended	Recommended	Not Recommended
Where to buy	<u>Amazon</u>	<u>Alesis</u>	<u>VeriCorder</u>

Microphone Adaptors		
	<u>kV Connection Mic Adaptor</u>	<u>VeriCorder XLR Mic Adaptor</u>
Cost	\$23.50	\$60.00
Size	43"	10"
Connection	Headphone Jack	Headphone Jack
Manufacturer	<u>Sixn Technologies, LLC</u>	<u>VeriCorder Technology</u>
Platform Supported	iOS, Android, Symbian	iOS, Android, Symbian
Connection size	1/4"	1/8"
Power Source	Mobile Device	Mobile Device
Recommended?	Recommended	Highly Recommended
Where to buy	<u>kV Connection</u>	<u>VeriCorder</u>

Blue Mikey

I haven't decided how I really feel about this thing yet. On the one hand, it's pretty clear audio. And it does pick up more than the phone's internal mic. But on the other hand...it's still no stick mic.

First of all, the thing didn't work with the 4G phones. It caused them to spaz out and continually pop up an error message. It still did that with my 3G, but after acknowledging this once, it quit with my phone. Still, it would literally not be possible to use the mic with a 4G, so that already cuts into its usability and overall performance.

Now, the mic is pretty easy to use, assuming you are able to. Plug it into the bottom of the phone. It works with any application. Where things get interesting is in figuring out what kind of setting to use. There's a small switch on the bottom of the device that you can flick to select between the setting denoted by one wavy strip of bacon (probably airwaves, but really... it looks like bacon), two strips of bacon, stacked on top of each other, or three strips of bacon, a la IHOP style. The setting using one bacon is the equivalent of turning your volume down, so that you don't over-modulate. As you can imagine, increasing the bacon means your captured volume will be louder. However, when you increase the bacon to get an interview to come through clearly, you also get some REALLY loud background noise. The mic picks up in 360 degrees, so you can't direct it. And if you're using a tripod, don't even bother with the thing, because it isn't going to pick up an interview any better than the internal mic.

That said, in a quiet room, this thing sounds clear as crystal. For voiceovers, I would definitely recommend this thing. It's light, it's small, it's fairly durable, you're not going to break it by storing it in a pocket while you travel. And for what it's supposed to do (assuming you aren't expecting stick mic quality) this thing delivers.

Alesis ProTrack

The Alesis ProTrack is a pretty high performance microphone built to work with the iPhone. It's got a ton of features (though I found I only used a couple), it's fairly light, and it definitely looks legitimate (may not seem like much, but the look of your hardware has a pretty significant effect on your subject. It reassures them that you do actually know what you're doing). When I took it out reporting, I found it to be extremely handy for a couple of reasons.

It can record in stereo and in mono. I was trained to typically record in mono for editing purposes, so it's nice to be able to record in that format, but even better I can switch to stereo for music recording. Also, there's a switch on the side of the microphone that allows the user to charge their device while in use. Since the microphone uses four double-A batteries, this means you're going to run out of juice pretty fast, but if you need that extra boost to capture the last 30 minutes of something, then it's a pretty sweet switch to flick. The meters on the device are also quite accurate, giving you better control over your audio, which is good because the Microphone is pretty sensitive.

Which brings me to my next topic, the quality of sound. To say it simply, this microphone works. It's certainly better than the internal mic and several of the other microphones we tested out. The only thing that gets close is the actual XLR microphone. The sound from this device is clear, it's crisp, and it's pretty close to professional quality, if not all the way there.

The only downside is that it's a bit bulky and unwieldy. If your hands are small, it may be a little tough to grip, and it's definitely large, even if it's light, so have a way to carry it around, because there's no strap. Also, without the ball on the end, it resembles (only slightly and possibly in the dark only) a taser. I got stopped for a moment and was the unfortunate recipient of a long look in security for a street festival I went to cover while using this equipment for just that reason, which is why I mention it.

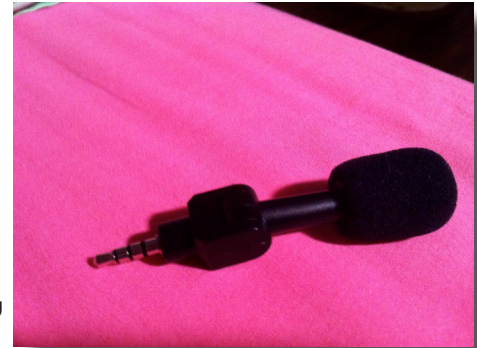
Other than those few negatives, this is a pretty solid purchase, even if it's expensive. I recommend it for sure.



VeriCorder Mini Mic

I was not a fan of this microphone. It's a couple inches long so really it doesn't help pick up sound. It doesn't capture any more audio than your camera's built-in microphone does. If you tap it at all you get a terrible noise that is incredibly distracting and definitely not something you want in your videos or sound bites. If you have an OWLE Bubo, this microphone attaches to it. That would come in handy if you had one, but still, the microphone doesn't help enough to make it worth it. There are so many other types of mics you could and should be using over this one.

You just put the microphone in the headphones jack and go. If you want to use a microphone at all get a chord to attach a stick mic. This tiny piece of equipment doesn't help any more than your actual phone, so I'm not sure why you'd want to spend your money on it. You're also risking the quality of your audio or video if you happen to bump it. Not a fan, spend your money elsewhere.



VeriCorder XLR Mic Adaptor and kV Connection Mic Adaptor



The VeriCorder XLR adapter cable is my favorite microphone adapter. The iPhone sound quality alone is not good enough to run on the radio, or, in my opinion, even for professional-sounding web videos. The iPhone microphone isn't focused and picks up everything in an approximately 10 foot radius.

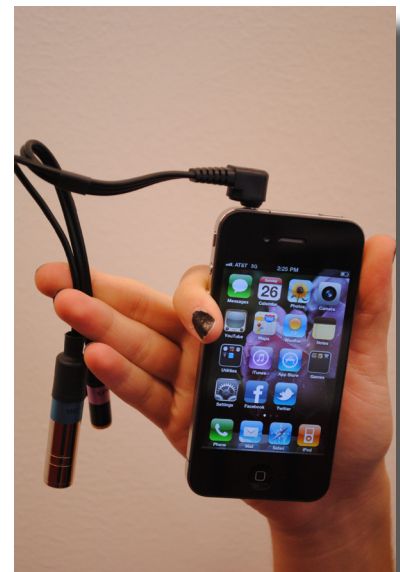
The XLR adapter allows you to direct and choose which sound you want to capture. To use, you simply attach an XLR stick mic, plug in your headphones in the other receptor and plug in the device to the headphone jack on your iPhone/iPod. This device allows for professional quality sound to be recorded on the go. It is a lot cheaper than professional quality devices, such as a Marantz. The VeriCorder adapter is \$60.00, but it is a great investment for professional-sounding audio. Some of our fellow journalism students have used devices such as these and ran the finished product on our NPR affiliate.

kV Connection mic adaptor

Like the XRL adaptor, the kV connection worked well. But you probably need a splitter to be able to use it, because 1/4 inch isn't too common anymore.

The KV Connection cable works under the exact same principle, only this kind of adapter is for a different kind of microphone. The great thing about the KV Connection cable, besides the price (\$23.50), is that the adapter fits a 1/4 microphone, but you can buy another piece, for a small price, to put inside the adapter. This makes it multi-functional, for many different microphones.

(Note: For better sound, make sure to turn your iPhone on Airplane mode).



External Lights

The Basics

	<u>Bescor LED-50DA</u>	<u>Sunpak DSLR67 LED Macro Ring Light</u>	<u>Joby Gorilla Torch Flare</u>	<u>Sima Light Panel (SL-20LX)</u>
Cost	\$74.95 (after \$15 rebate)	\$42.95	\$32.00	\$30.00
Weight	10 oz.	4.2 oz.	6.5 oz.	2.5 oz.
Manufacturer	Bescor	Sunpak	Joby	Sima
Size	4.6 x 1.62 x 4"	11.4" arm, outer ring diameter 95mm	7.87 x 2.95 x 2.56"	2.35 x 2.3 x 1"
Cold Foot	No	No	No	Yes
Hot Shoe	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Variable Lighting	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Power Source	4 AA batteries	3 AAA batteries	3 AA batteries	Rechargeable
Angle Adjustable	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Recommended?	Recommended	Recommended	Highly Recommended	Highly recommended
Where to buy	Adorama	B&H Photo	Botach Tactical	B&H Photo

Bescor LED-50DA

The Bescor LED-50DA Dimmable Light Panel is a pretty bulky yet powerful external flash. When using it, it was effective, which can't really be argued with, but perhaps not in the prescribed way.

The first thing one notices when taking the Bescor out of the box is how large it is. It's just not a sleek or sexy piece of hardware. It's not an easy shape to pack into a bag with other things, and it'll take up room, so if you're going to use it, you may as well commit all the way and not bring any other lights with you. Unless you plan to bring a very large bag.

Mounting the Bescor is also an issue. It's got a hot shoe on the bottom which can be hooked into any hot shoe mount, but this requires you to have one of those to use with your phone. Right away you'll see that this requires you to have something capable of playing host to your phone AND holding your light. I vote you use the Owle Bubo, but there are of course other options. Or you could just hold the light, which is what I did. You might be thinking that this choice would be incredibly inconvenient. And to an extent, you'd be right. It means both of my hands were full, and if I had smaller hands I might not have been able to hold my phone, press the capture button, and hold and angle the light correctly. However, give it a few minutes and you'll get used to it.

A nice feature the Bescor boasts is the ability to dim its light. This thing gets pretty bright, so you'll dim fairly often. You can do this by spinning a wheel on the side of the light (which is reachable via fingertip using only one hand, should you not have a hot shoe).

The Bescor also comes with a sepia shaded panel you can replace the normal translucent one with. It doesn't tint your light, but it does make it softer, so for interviews this is something you can play around with and decide whether you like. The important thing is that it's there.

As far as battery life goes, you can leave the Bescor going for hours. I used it in a corn maze, and had it on and off for nearly three and a half hours, without worrying about losing my batteries. I'm not saying you shouldn't keep some spares on you, I'm just saying it's less likely than some other choices.

In all, I'd recommend this light, but I would say you need to either already have the gear to use it properly (a mount of some kind) or have large enough hands and be comfortable enough with your mobile reporting that you can go out into the field and use it roughshod.



Sunpak DSLR67 LED Macro Ring Light

The Sunpak is actually meant to be attached to a camera and can attach to the OWLE Bubo. It's an interesting piece of equipment. The ring of light goes around the lens you're using or you can hold it and shine it into the area you are trying to illuminate. It covers a wide area, so that's handy depending on where you are. We tested it outside, and it helped brighten our shots. This light can wash out your subject, because it is artificial, but it's better than having indistinguishable photos. There are three levels of light settings you can choose from which is convenient. Not all external lights give you that kind of control. It has a bendable neck for you to manipulate and shine in different directions. The problem is the neck is long and gets awkward to carry around sometimes.

This is a decent tool to choose if you are looking for an external light. This wasn't my favorite, but it was definitely in the top three. If you have the money, it could definitely come in handy.



Joby Gorilla Torch Flare



The GorillaTorch Flare is downright cool. There's so many interesting features involved that I feel like any photographer can eventually, given time and patience, find a use for this device. It may not be the best light as far as compensating for a mobile phone's lack of a workable camera flash, but it acts as a bit of a Swiss Army Knife in terms of usability.

Like the Gorilla Mobile, the legs are flexible, but rigid enough to hold itself up. There's no hot shoe or cold foot, but if you can find a rail or a post or any remotely flat surface/something to wrap its legs around, then it's going to be fine. It's the same principle as putting an external flash on a tripod for a photo shoot. The only real drawback is you have to anticipate where you're going to want your light coming from, you can't really point and shoot. Another amazing feature, one I was excited about discovering, is that Joby decided to put some decently strong magnets on the bottoms of the feet. They won't hold it to everything, but they do enough to make the Torch that much more versatile.

As far as the actual light goes, it's a bit on the fluorescent side as far as color. It's also pretty narrow, so don't expect to light a big scene. But you can change the light from dim to medium to bright, and then take it a step further and make it a strobe. Keep clicking, and it will turn to a red light, and one last click makes it a red strobe. Not positive you'll ever want to use the

red light for a strobe, but if you try really hard I'm sure there's a purpose for it out there somewhere. Worst-case scenario, you're car breaks down and you strobe a red light to protect yourself from oncoming traffic as you try and fix it.

I have to recommend this device purely on the upside it has. It's light, it's small, you can bring with you pretty easily, and with minor effort you can find a use for it.

Sima Light Panel (SL-20LX)

The Sima Light Panel is one of my personal favorites as far as lights go. I like its size to light output, and I like its flexibility as far as mounting goes. Its power source is a positive and a negative, but in all, it's a pretty utilitarian device.

The Sima is small. At basically 2 x 2 x 1" this thing is sleek. That measurement isn't exactly accurate after adding the arm, but if you don't have a cold foot or a hot shoe, then holding this light isn't an issue.

This light is bright. There's no dimmer on it, no way to regulate the brightness, but if you're in a fairly dark situation, it's going to shine.

The best part about the Sima is how it mounts. First, there is an arm which attaches via hot shoe to the light panel. This arm can be manually extended and retracted, to vary the distance from your camera. The other end of the arm can be attached by either hot shoe or cold foot to a mount. Alternately, should you not want to fool around with the arm, you can attach the light panel directly to a mount using the hot shoe you would have used with the arm. Again, if you don't have a mount, it's small enough that you can carry it and use it with your hand alone.

Lastly, the power source. Unlike our other lights, the Sima is charged by cable from any wall outlet. It takes a little while to charge (I let it go for about two hours), but it holds power for quite a while. And when you're done, you can leave it somewhere to charge while you edit photos. The pro to this is the money you save on batteries, which get pretty expensive after a while. This is perhaps balanced out by the fact that, if you're in the field for a day (or night) and you don't have access to a wall outlet (or AC converter from your car), then you're out of luck once it runs out of juice. Making the Sima battery or plug-in friendly would have been a huge boost in its favor, but alas it just isn't.

Even with the minor issues of needing a mount of some kind (unless you're going handheld, which really isn't an issue usually) and the battery vs. outlet debate, this is still a good light. I'd recommend it for any mobile journalist's tool bag.



Tripods

The Basics

	<u>Mobile Tripod</u>	<u>Gorilla Mobile</u>	<u>Zacuto Zgrip iPhone Jr.</u>	<u>Monsterpod</u>	<u>Bottle Cap Tripod</u>	<u>Manfrotto Modosteady</u>
Cost	\$10.00	\$29.95 (for 3G)	\$65.55	\$30.00	\$10.00	\$89.00
Weight	3.0 oz.	2.2 oz.	3.2 oz.	6.0 oz.	2.29 oz.	17.64 oz.
Height	8.5"	5.9"	7.5"	6.0"	2.25"	5.12"
Cold Foot	N/A	N/A	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes
Hot Shoe	N/A	N/A	N/A	No	No	No
Recommendation	Recommended	Highly Recommended	Highly Recommended	Recommended	Not Recommended	Highly Recommended
Where to purchase	<u>Brando</u>	<u>Joby</u>	<u>B&H Photo</u>	<u>Photojojo</u>	<u>Photojojo</u>	<u>Manfrotto</u>

Mobile Tripod



Compatible with any smart phone

First of all, any tripod is leaps and bounds better than holding the phone steady. Your hands are not steady enough, no matter how calm or relaxed your muscles are. If you are using the mobile phone to live stream an event, you absolutely need a tripod so the characters (and not the background) are the only things that need to be refreshed. Clarity is much better and your audience doesn't feel seasick.

Brando's Mobile Tripod is a fairly good mobile tripod. You can separate the legs as you like and you can adjust the pivoting head, but it is pretty limited compared to the Gorilla Pod (which can be wrapped around fences, limbs, etc...). The portion that holds the

phone has foam and adjusts to many different phones, which is very good - not everyone has an iPhone. I would recommend this device if you are looking for a small, cheap tripod (it is only \$10.00, compared to \$29.95 for the Gorillapod). If only the legs were longer or moldable, because the price sure is right.

Gorilla Mobile

Compatible with iPhone 3G (but really with everything else, because of the adhesive clips it comes with)

The Gorilla Mobile is a tripod made to work with iPhones. More specifically, it's made to work with the 3G, which caused a bit of an issue for the team. The tripod came with a case that acts as a mount. However, the case definitely does not fit the 4G. The solution to this problem comes in the form of an adhesive clip that can be attached to the back of the case. We were hesitant to use this because, well, we don't know how easily that clip will come off, an sense we only have a limited supply of these clips, it seems a waste to use it on a case before we know the best way to use the actual tripod. That being said, the packaged case for the 3G slipped on the phone without hassle, and clipped on quite securely to the actual tripod.



From there, this thing really started shining. The problem with any tripod is its limited versatility. They are more stable, but lack the ability to fit into tight spaces, balance on small surfaces, or be completely portable in any way. Jennifer used a different tripod for the same outing, and was unable to get it to work in the same places that I employed the Gorillapod.

It's probably safe to say I loved the thing. I hung it on hand rails, balanced it on top of trash cans, ran the legs through holes to secure it to walls. I pretty much tried to run it through the gambit of possible locations to which I could affix the thing. And to a degree, it worked every time. The only shortcoming is that, while the legs have to be necessarily flexible, sometimes this can cause some slippage if you don't get the legs curled just right. This was minor, though, and easily avoidable when I figured the problem out. You just have to think in terms of applying the most amount of resistance to whatever surface you're putting it on.

Another negative, and one that could be classified to all the tripods I've yet seen for the iPhone, is that it's just not tall. It stands about 4-6 inches off the ground, depending on the tilt of the camera and the surface you're putting it on. Because of the shortness of the hardware, it forces you to keep it some distance from your subject, meaning interviews are a no go unless you've got the right equipment to compensate for that.

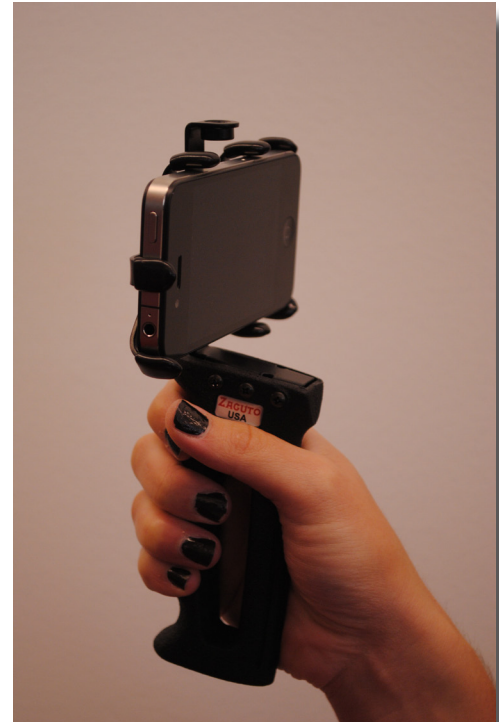
In all, I was impressed with this stout little tool. It let me get my phone stabilized in some really interesting places, and I was continually having fun with it. Plus, it just looks cool. Once it's on your phone, it's reminiscent of Doc Ock from Spider Man. If you're going out in the field, this thing is light, it's portable, it's versatile, and it makes sense to carry it with you at all times.

Zacuto Zgrip iPhone Jr.

I love this tool from Zacuto because it's hand held. I tend to have an issue with setting up tripods; they're ungainly and take time to stabilize and balance. This handy piece of equipment allows you to simply hook your iPhone into the device and hold your camera without worrying about your shaky hands. There's a mount at the top for a mic adapter or external light and another on the bottom of the grip that can be screwed into a bigger tripod if you need to get stationary shots.

I feel like this is a fabulous way to easily gain some stability without sticking a tripod in one place or sticking something like the MonsterPod onto something. This way you can achieve pans and control zoom because the device is always by your hand. This would really be perfect for documentary filmmaking, in journalism we don't tend to pan very much. It is a little more expensive than the other tripods out there, but if you're looking for something that will come in handy in most situations, this is it. It's durable and well made, so it is built to last. The Zgrip is especially good for events where there is a lot of movement and you might need to move quickly, like sporting events or breaking news.

Purchasing the Zgrip depends on how serious you are about using your mobile phone in the field, and how serious you are about your content. Because of its price it is a tool you really have to want.



Monsterpod



The Monsterpod is the strangest piece of equipment I've ever used or seen. It's a tripod that sticks pretty much wherever you need it to. It stays on branches, rocks, brick, glass, you name it, and it sticks there. Just be careful. If you leave it for longer than 10 minutes it starts to either slide down the wall, or fall off the surface where you stuck it. The circular tripod has an orange Silly Putty like material on the bottom. Simply screw your camera onto the tripod mount and you're set. You can use your mobile device as your camera; you just need to attach something to your phone that allows you to screw it into the Monster Pod.

It works in any situation. The problem is, it's very flat, so you might have to be creative with where you stick it to get the shot you want. It's small enough

to fit in your backpack or pocket. It's also a really light tool. If dirt gets stuck to it, all you need to do is wash it off with water. Also, remember to put the cap back on it when you're done so you don't get orange goop on any of your belongings. It's not a bad piece of equipment, just different. Make sure you have a way to screw your mobile device into it, and make sure you can figure out a place to stick it or you might be in trouble. There are other tripods out there that offer you a more traditional approach to tripods, but it definitely has its place.

Bottle Cap Tripod

Along with the Monster Pod, this is another very strange invention for mobile journalists. You take a bottle of water or pop, and place this tripod over the cap. There's a cold foot on top, so be sure you have a way to screw your device into it. It's a cheap way to keep your video steady. It actually works like the Zgrip in a way, and is sort of a cheap alternative to the expensive Zgrip. The Bottle Cap Tripod is a little unstable, but it's better than nothing. It's kind of cheap, so you might want to invest in something sturdier if you're serious about using a tripod. Using this tripod is better than nothing, but it's not great. Also, I don't know how many people would take you seriously with your camera mounted to the top of a Coke bottle. Without the bottle, it's the smallest tripod you'd carry around. That's a perk, overall it's kind of just a silly novelty tool. It's not expensive, so you can have it in your arsenal just in case you want a slight improvement over holding the phone.



Manfrotto Modosteady



Review in progress...