

# TT902: Getting to Know Siri

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**Note:** This handout doesn't duplicate everything I show and discuss during the presentation, but rather is meant as a reference to help you remember the gist of my talk—and provide more background information on the topic that you can dig into at your leisure.

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## Introduction to Siri

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### What is Siri?

Apple calls Siri an “intelligent personal assistant.” It's a very clever combination of software and internet service that can accomplish ordinary tasks for you with less effort. Siri doesn't really add any inherently new capabilities to your iPhone, but it makes it much easier to do many existing tasks. Some notes:

- Works on iPhone 4S only, for now
- Currently in beta; Apple hasn't said when it will be “1.0.”
- Works in three dialects of English (U.S., British, and Australian), plus French and German—with support for more languages in development.
- Some features are unavailable outside the U.S., but will be later this year: anything to do with Maps and Yelp (local search).

## How Do You Use Siri?

First, turn it on (Settings > General > Siri), and agree to let it know your location. Optionally enable Raise to Speak.

To get Siri's attention, do one of the following

- Press and hold the home button. (Depending on preferences—Settings > General > Passcode Lock > Siri), this can either work, or not, when your phone is locked.)
- Tap Siri button on screen when it's visible.
- Press and hold the center button on Apple earbuds or, on a Bluetooth headset, the call button.
- Or just hold the receiver up to your face (if Raise to Speak is on).

Then just ask a question, as though you were talking to a person.

Siri stops listening automatically when you pause, and if it asks you a follow-up question, it also auto-activates for responses.

**Note:** You can call Siri by name, but you don't have to.

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## Basics: Commands & Capabilities

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If you have no idea to start, say, "What can I ask you?" for a list of suggested queries.

**Tip:** You can correct Siri's errors by tapping on the recognized text and typing over it.

Most Siri capabilities tie into apps that come with iOS 5. Here are some example questions for each app:

- **Clock:** Set an alarm or timer; delete alarms.
  - "What time is it?" "...in Tokyo?"
  - "Set a timer for 2 minutes."

- **Calendar:** Create an appointment, review your schedule.
  - ▶ “Create an appointment for a haircut.” (Siri asks for more info when needed.)
  - ▶ “What’s on my schedule for today?”
  - ▶ “What date is Easter?”
  - ▶ “What time is sunset today?”
- **Reminders:** Add a reminder.
  - ▶ “Remind me to call Fred at 5 p.m.”
  - ▶ “Remind me to call my mom.”
- **Weather:** Ask about the weather—general, temperature, rain, etc.
  - ▶ “Will it rain here this week?”
  - ▶ “What’s the weather like at home?”
- **Maps:** Find your location, get directions—U.S. only for now.
  - ▶ “Where am I?”
  - ▶ “Give me directions to Cupertino.”
- **Local search with Yelp:** Look for businesses—U.S. only for now.
  - ▶ “Where’s the nearest gas station?”
  - ▶ “I can haz cheeseburger?”
- **Contacts:** Find a contact.
  - ▶ “Show [name]’s contact info.”
  - ▶ “Who is my assistant?” (If Siri doesn’t know, you can tell it.)
  - ▶ “[Name] is my editor/personal trainer/bodyguard”—Works only with iCloud. With Google, choices are limited to spouse, manager, assistant.
- **Phone:** Dial the phone.
  - ▶ “Call my wife’s iPhone”

- **FaceTime:** Start a FaceTime chat.
  - “FaceTime [name].”
- **Mail, iMessage:** Work with email & text messages.
  - “Tell my wife the presentation is going great.” (SMS/iMessage)
  - “Email [name] about [subject] and say [text].”
  - “Find the email from my wife yesterday.”
- **Find My Friends:** Find a friend.
  - “Where’s my wife?” or “Where is [name]?”
- **Music:** Play music (pause, skip, etc.).
  - “Play something by [name].”
- **Stocks:** Track stocks.
  - “What’s Apple stock trading at today?”
- **Safari:** Search the Web with Google, Bing, Yahoo; search Wikipedia.
  - “Search the Web for Macworld.”
  - “Search Wikipedia for Belgium.”
  - “Get [insert movie name] showtimes.”
- **Notes:** Use dictation to type a note.
  - Note that I spent \$12.95 on lunch today.”
  - Add ‘The French fries were totally worth it.’”
- **Dictation:** You can dictate text into any app that accepts keyboard input. Tap the button next to the spacebar to start; tap Done to finish.

**Tip:** For help with dictating special characters, see [More Fun with Siri Dictation](#) by Jim Rhoades.

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## Siri and Wolfram|Alpha

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Many things you ask Siri are automatically routed to [Wolfram|Alpha](#)—when Siri doesn't know the answer, but it knows that Wolfram does. For example...

- “How many days until Thanksgiving?”
- “How many calories are in a large egg?”
- “What is the sales tax in San Francisco?”
- “What's a 15% tip on \$65, for four people?”
- “What's 18 euros in dollars?”
- “Where is the constellation Capricorn?”
- “Give me a random integer.”
- “Who killed Laura Palmer?”
- “How much is that doggie in the window?”

However, there are some questions that Wolfram *could* answer, but Siri either tries to answer them itself (perhaps not with the answer you're looking for), or doesn't realize Wolfram can help. For example:

- “Why did the chicken cross the road?”

You can force Siri to direct the question to Wolfram|Alpha by prefacing it with “Ask Wolfram,” or “Wolfram Alpha,” or “Wolfram.” Try that with:

- “What is the airspeed velocity of an unladen swallow?” (Siri and Wolfram give you different answers.)
- “Ask Wolfram to generate a random password.”
- “Ask Wolfram what planes are overhead.”
- “Ask Wolfram about laser printers.” (Prices and product info from Best Buy.)

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## Tips, Tricks, and Hacks

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### Easy Tips for Anyone

- Have Siri call you whatever you want: Say, “Call me [nickname].”
- Teach Siri pronunciation: Add phonetic first and/or last name fields to the contact’s record.
- Give Siri an accent: Settings > General > Siri > Language (but keep in mind that accuracy may suffer).
- Put something on a specific Reminders list: Use the form “Add [item] to my [list name] list.”

### SMS and Email Tricks

Any service you can interact with via email or SMS, you can also get to (in a slightly roundabout way) using Siri. For example...

- Use Siri with Remember the Milk <http://www.rememberthemilk.com/services/siri/>
- Use Siri to send a tweet (Activate your cell phone for use with Twitter, add a Twitter contact with the appropriate number, and then text that contact). <http://maypalo.com/2011/10/20/top-5-best-siri-tricks-tips-on-the-iphone-4s/>
- Use Siri to update your Facebook status (also covered in previous link).
- Check your bank balance <http://www.ryanspahn.com/siri-checks-bank-balance.html>
- If your blog supports posting by email, set up the address as a contact, and create a blog post by having Siri send it an email.
- Use Siri to control things on your Mac!
  - ▶ Create an AppleScript to do what you want. Could be short, one line, such as: `tell application "Pages" to open`
  - ▶ Create a Mail rule that runs that AppleScript when a message arrives with the right from and subject headers.
  - ▶ Have Siri send an email to your own address.

- Open apps and even specific Facebook pages with Siri's help...but it still takes one tap <http://www.grabi.org/how-to-quickly-open-apps-with-siri-easy-trick/>
- Control your Mac (more) interactively by using a pair of apps—one on your iPhone and one your Mac.
  - [Air Dictate](#) [iTunes link] (\$0.99) is good for using Siri to dictate text into Mac apps.
  - [Vocal](#) (\$1.99) lets you run commands, including ones you specify yourself.

## Heavy-duty Hacking

- A blog about Siri hacks: <http://www.sirihacks.net/>
- SiriProxy lets you add custom commands that can even control devices in your home (thermostat, lights, appliances)—but it's a lot of work and pretty fragile <http://www.sirihacks.net/hacks-for-siri/siriproxy/>
- Hackers are working on ways to install and run Siri legally on unsupported (but jailbroken) hardware:
  - [i4Siri.com](#) (intended as a complete solution)
  - [Spire](#) (requires your own proxy server)

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## Fun with Siri

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### Sample Queries with Humorous Answers

*Just a small sampling of the many things you can say to Siri that may lead to funny (and sometimes snarky) replies.*

- Guess what.
- Open the pod bay doors.
- I need to hide a body.
- Make me a sandwich.
- I'm tired.
- Can you find email I sent tomorrow?

- Beam me up, Scotty.
- Where do you come from?
- What's your favorite color?
- What are you wearing? (repeat)
- Talk dirty to me.
- I love you.
- Will you marry me?
- What is the meaning of life?
- Is there a God?
- How much wood could a woodchuck chuck if a woodchuck could chuck wood?
- Have a nice day.
- What's the best phone?
- What's the best tablet?
- Do you know HAL 9000?
- Do you know Eliza?
- Tell me a joke.
- Tell me a story.
- Sing me a song.
- Take me to your leader.
- I want a happy ending.
- What do you look like?
- I'm going to kill myself.
- I'm drunk.



## Sites that collect funny Siri responses

*Just a few examples:*

- [Funny Siri Conversations](#)
- [Sh\\*t that Siri Says](#)
- [Siri Funny](#)
- [Siri Questions](#)
- [Siriously Weird](#)
- [Stuff that Siri Says](#)

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## The Future of Siri

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### Coming Soon

Apple has announced that in 2012, Siri will add support for Japanese, Chinese, Korean, Italian, and Spanish.

Also, some services are not available outside U.S. yet. But Apple says: “Maps and local search support will be available in additional countries in 2012.”

### Version 1.0 and Beyond

Apple has made *no* public statements about what they intend to do with Siri in the future. But, capabilities I’d very much *like* to see, and that should be possible with existing technology, requiring (I imagine) only time and work to implement, include...

- Edit and delete existing notes and reminders
- Edit appointments
- Read, file, and delete email messages
- Search all mailboxes—please!
- Tweet natively
- Take pictures and videos
- Record voice memos

- Play videos (movies & TV shows), not just music
- “Show me photos from my vacation last summer.”
- Open any app on your iPhone—or at least any *Apple* app
- Search, navigate, and even read back text in iBooks
- Change iPhone settings—turn Wi-Fi on/off, adjust screen brightness, etc.
- Use additional Web services beyond Google/Bing/Yahoo, Wolfram Alpha, and Wikipedia. IMDB, anyone? Lots of people want easier access to sports scores, shopping, medical data, and more.
- Turn on the flashlight.
- Offer more and better voices—Alex, for example?

## Developer APIs

Everyone is hoping Apple eventually releases a set of APIs that would allow third-party developers to tie their apps into Siri. Picture, for example:

- “Siri, what’s the name of the song playing on the radio?”
- “Siri, anything new in my Dropbox today?”
- “Siri, show me my Instant Queue in Netflix.”
- “Siri, ignore all the friend requests that came in today on Facebook.”
- “Siri, what’s the fastest métro route from the Eiffel Tower to Père-Lachaise Cemetery?”
- “Siri, upload this photo to Flickr.”
- ...and so on.

## Hardware support

- The iPad 2 is more powerful than an iPhone 4S. Why shouldn’t Siri run on it?
- Because hackers have successfully shown that Siri can run on older hardware, Apple should enable Siri to work on them too—at least the iPhone 4.

- How about Siri controlling your Apple TV? Even if I had to use my iPhone to do it, that's something I'd use today. "Play me the latest podcast of NBC Nightly News." "Play the next episode of Pushing Daisies on Netflix." "Search iTunes for Lord of the Rings."
- Who wouldn't want to have Siri on a Mac? If it could integrate with third-party apps there, it would be immensely powerful.

## The More Distant Future

In 3–5 years, I imagine...

- ...(some variety of) Siri working on *all* Apple devices.
- ...Siri getting much, much smarter. For example, being able to provide meaningful responses to questions like these, without requiring a web search and then sifting through the results:
  - ▶ "What were the factors that led to World War I?"
  - ▶ "To which U.S. cities can I fly non-stop from Saskatoon?"
  - ▶ "How much older is my wife than her youngest sister?"
  - ▶ "Who was on Apple's board of directors in 1995?"
  - ▶ "Has John Cusack ever been in a movie with Sandra Bullock?"
- ...Siri being able to hold onto more context and history, and make more connections.
  - ▶ "That song I asked you to play right after I woke up this morning—who was that band's drummer? What other albums did he release? Can I buy them in the iTunes Store?"
  - ▶ "What were the dates of our trip to Italy last year? Show me the photos I took near the Coliseum that have Morgen in them. OK, the restaurant in this photo—what's on their dessert list?"

In short, what I hope for the future is not merely for Apple to make Siri better, but to enable us to connect a lot more of the dots in our digital lives, with Siri as a friendly front-end.

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## Other Siri Resources

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- [Apple's Siri page](#)
- [Talking to Siri](#) [iTunes link] (\$4.99) by Steve Sande and Erica Sadun—the most thorough book I've seen on Siri, and where I got much of the information for this talk
- For out-of-the-box thinking: [SiriHacks.net](#)