THANKS FOR READING THE SAMPLE

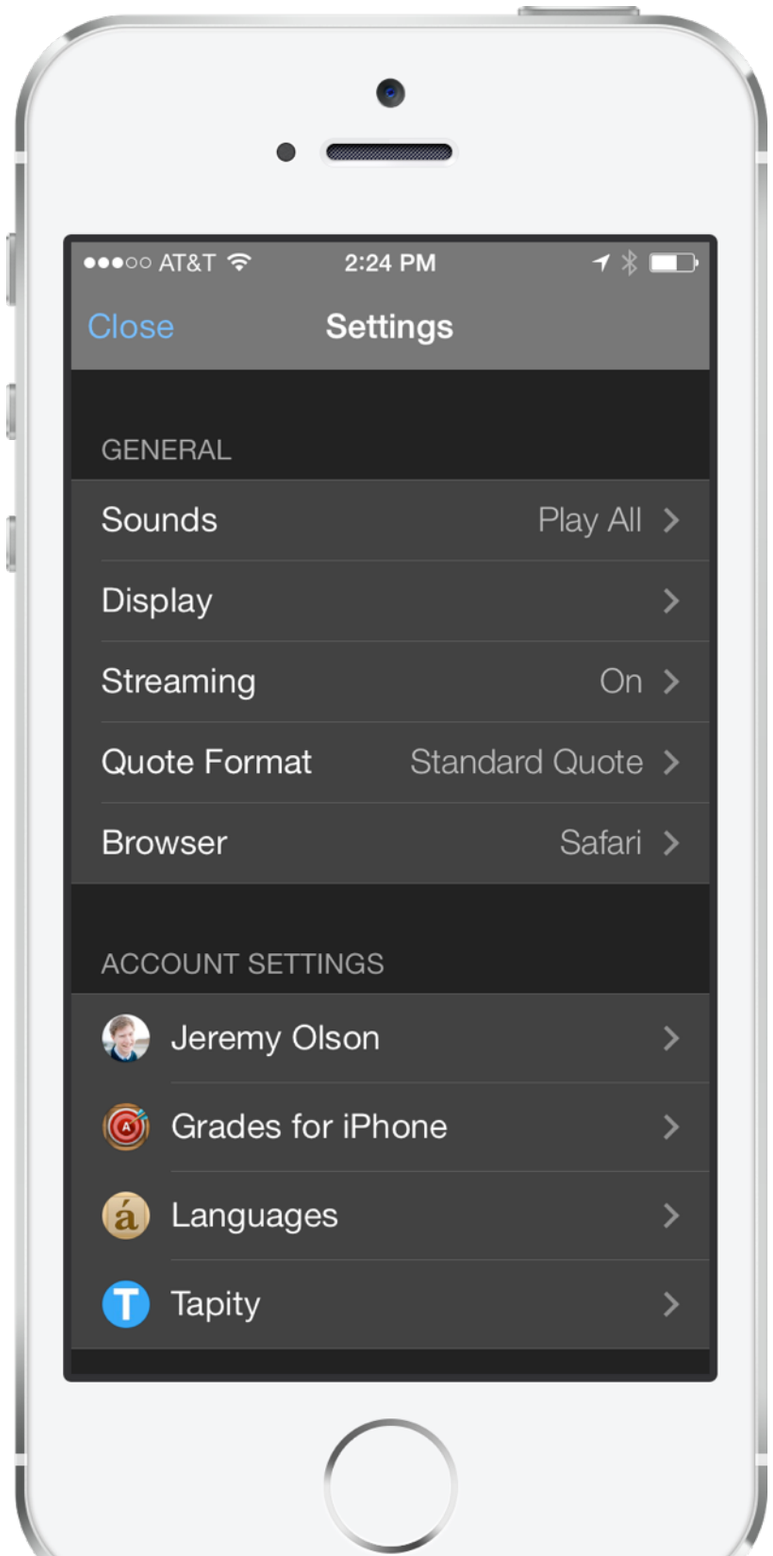
Thanks for reading this sample of The App Design Handbook, iOS 7 Edition. In order to give you a feeling for the entire book, I chose a few different sections from throughout the book to include (rather than just one chapter). Now you can see how different aspects of the design process are discussed.

If you enjoy the sample please purchase the full book.

Thanks!

-Nathan Barry, Author

PREFERENCES & SETTINGS



As you design an application you will inevitably make design decisions that not all your users will agree with. In trying to make your app as great an experience as possible there will be disagreements on the best implementation. Or sometimes the majority of your users will use the app a certain way, but with a few tweaks it could serve a new audience. This is where preferences and settings come in.

Some of Tweetbot's users use Chrome as their primary browser and want links from tweets to open in Chrome instead of Safari. Without that option, Tweetbot becomes much less useful.

Similarly, some of Tweetbot's users love the audio feedback when navigating the app. Unfortunately, a large group of users think they are irritating.

These are some examples of settings that help meet a broader range of uses and fit the need of more people.

Too Many Settings

You know those apps you use that have all kinds of buttons, cluttered screens, and are so complicated you can barely use them? Often the culprit is too many settings. Those options that the designer added to help make the app usable and customizable for more people are actually what cripples it. With this in mind we need to find a balance.

Cabal Sasser, co-founder and designer at the Mac software company Panic, says that every time you add a preference you are forcing a decision on the user. In many cases adding a setting is reflective of designer laziness. Rather than research and design the best solution you just add a preference and force the decision onto the user. Should the navigation be on the left or right? I don't know. Make it a setting and let the user decide.

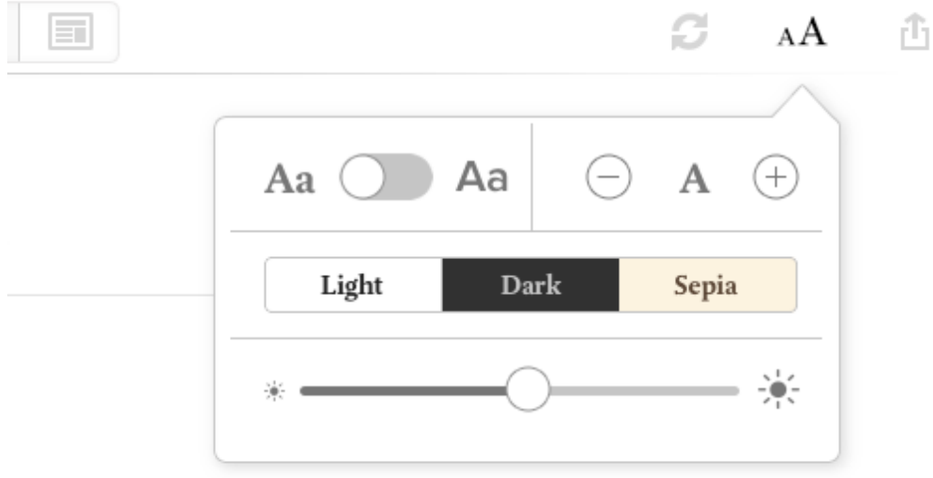
Obviously, I don't think every setting is bad. I add them to my applications. But you do really have to think carefully about adding just the right settings and nothing more.

Where should the settings go?

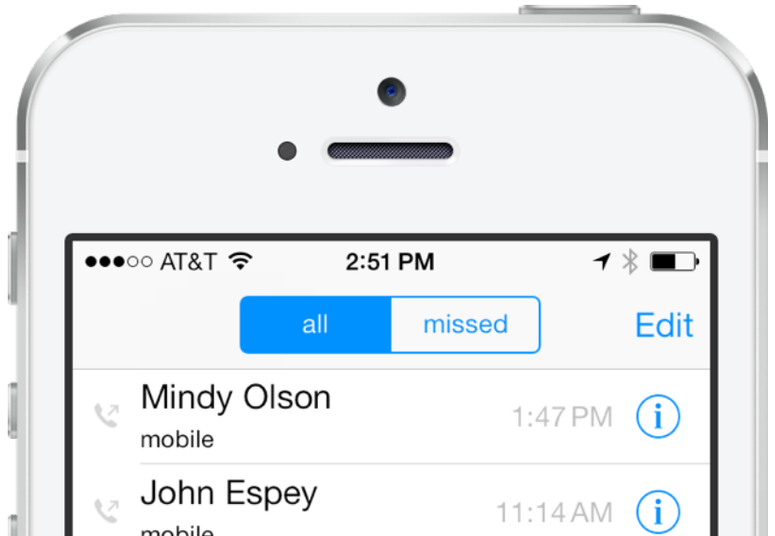
When placing settings within your app you have three basic choices: inline, on a settings page in-app, or separately in the Settings app.

Inline Settings

In iBooks text size needs to be quickly customizable based on the user's preference. Because of this Apple made the text-size setting readily available while reading. This is an inline setting. By placing the setting right next to the objects it controls, the context is very clear and changes can be made very quickly.



When viewing the recent phone calls on your iPhone there is a setting at the top of the screen. Do you want to see all calls or just missed calls? With the segmented control in the navigation bar you can quickly filter the list to your preference.

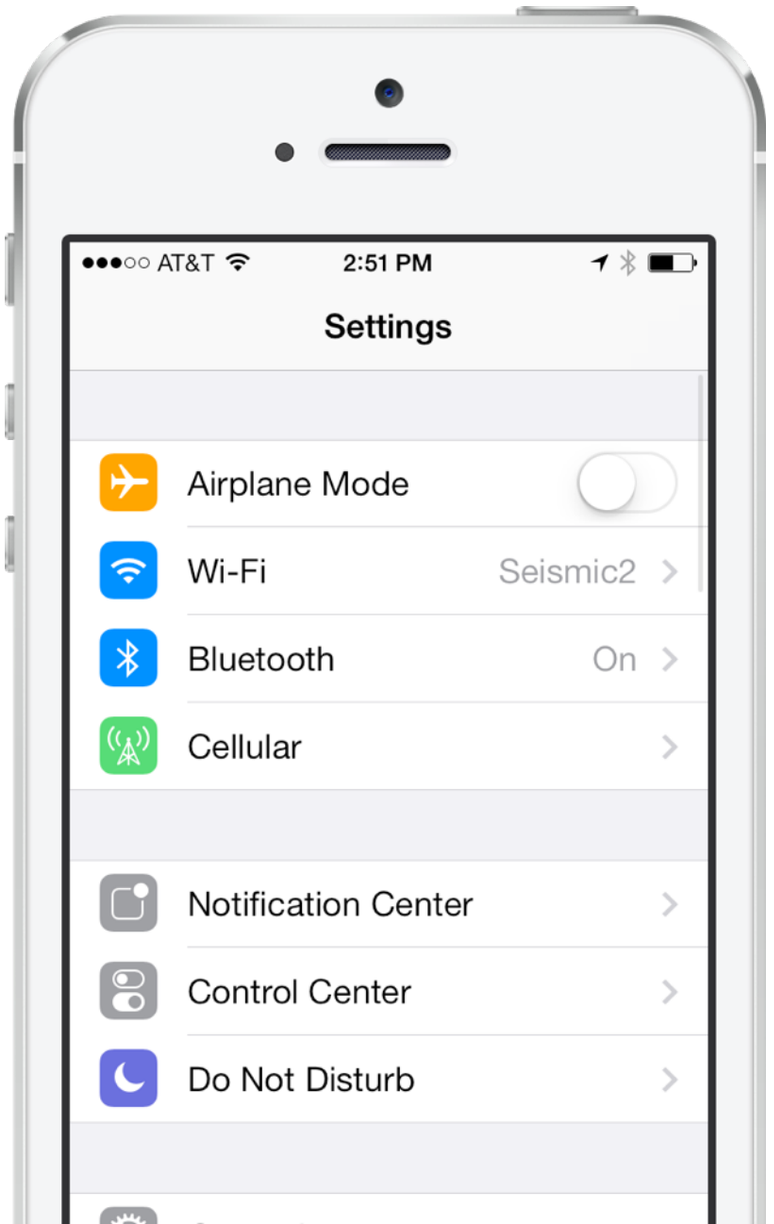


In-app Settings Page

If you have several settings that affect the general functions of the app, but don't closely relate to a specific screen, it is common to have a dedicated settings screen inside the app. This could include account functionality, interface preferences, a log-out button, and anything else your app needs. By separating this functionality into its own screen we are able to make sure the rest of the interface does not become cluttered while still allowing the settings to be accessed relatively quickly.

The Settings App

iOS has a dedicated settings app that includes everything from wi-fi networks to screen brightness. As an app developer you can add settings screens for your app inside of the Settings app. This is great for settings that aren't commonly used that you want to keep hidden from the majority of your users. Because they are in an entirely separate application they aren't likely to be discovered easily. If you want to accommodate a small minority of users with a preference without cluttering your interface, this is a great way to go. Those users can be told about the preferences inside the Settings app, and the users who don't need them will never know about it.



Also the API to add a screen is quite simple. You won't be able to customize the look or control styles as much as you could if they were within your app, but it does have a consistent look across the Settings app.

Here are a few questions to ask yourself while deciding where to place your settings:

•How often will this setting be changed?

•Does it directly affect an element on a specific screen?

•What portion of your users will use this setting?

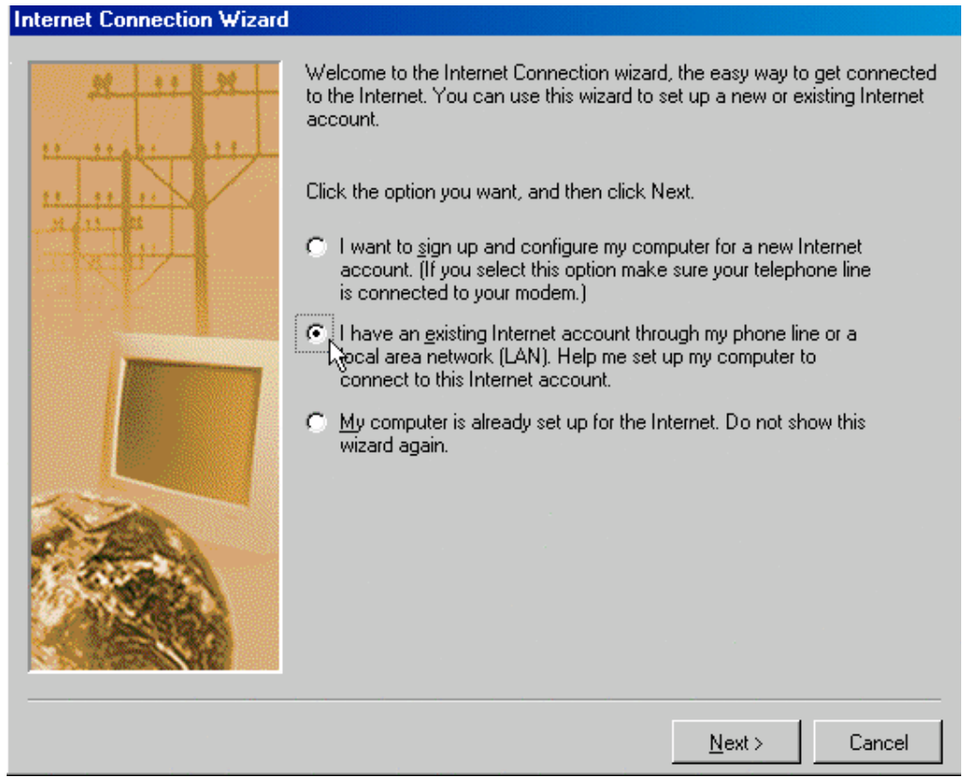
Text size in iBooks will need to be changed often if different users are sharing the same device, as it directly affects the reading screens. Users will want to see their changes immediately to tell when they have selected an appropriate size. And finally, quite a few users will use this setting, so it should be an inline setting.

See how our test works? Try it with each of the preferences you plan to include in your application. But first you need to decide if the setting should even be included in the app. Too many settings will cripple the app experience, so set the bar very high.

Think of a reasonable default for each of your settings and don't require your users to make a choice. Then your app will work out of the box and the users can decide if they want to make customizations.

Reasonable defaults

Imagine launching an app for the first time and it takes you through a series of steps to configure the app and set it up just right for you, just like an installation wizard on older versions of Windows. This is a terrible experience. As a designer your goal should be to get the user actually using your application as quickly as possible, not doing a bunch of configurations.



The first problem is that we include too many settings in our apps. Then the second problem is requiring the user to fill out those settings up front. Instead you should provide reasonable defaults for everything possible. Then the user only has to make a change if the selected default doesn't work for them, allowing the user to make fewer decisions before your app is useful to them.

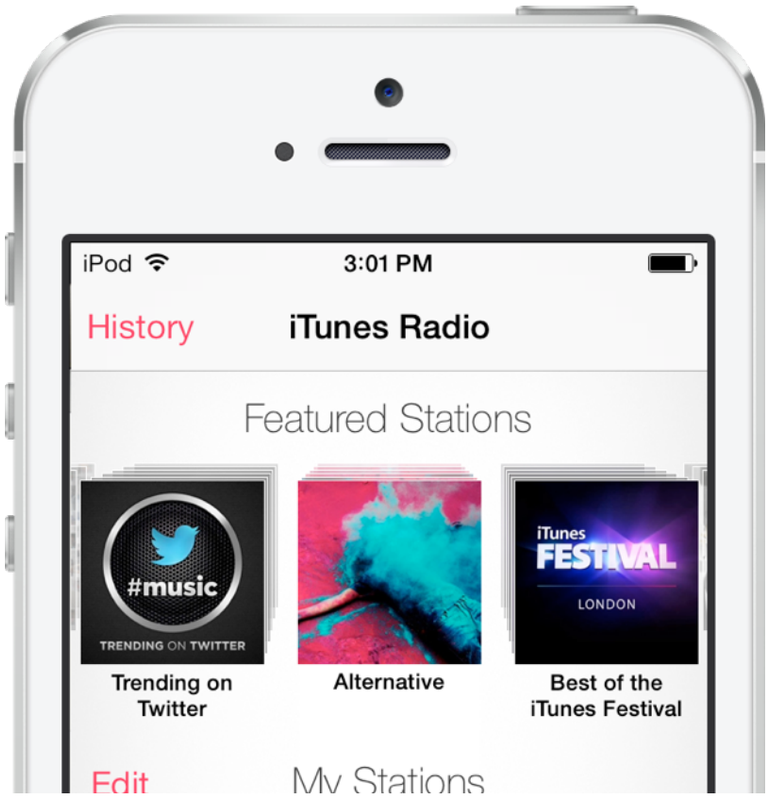
Siri lets users choose between two different voices to change the style of speech. Each voice has its own style. Rather than require the user to select a voice before using the app, Apple chooses one for them. The default voice, is an adult female. If the user of the app is male they will want to select a new voice that better matches their speaking style, but I don't force a choice before the app is usable.

FOCUSING ON THE CONTENT

Now that you have de-emphasized the UI, how can you emphasize the content?

Use the whole screen

Avoid unnecessary UI elements that only serve to frame the content; you want to give your content as much room as possible so that it takes center stage in your app. This doesn't mean to make content go from edge to edge — you always want padding between the edge of the screen and your content. The point is to have your interface go from edge to edge so that the content can have as much room as possible.



Make it visually interesting

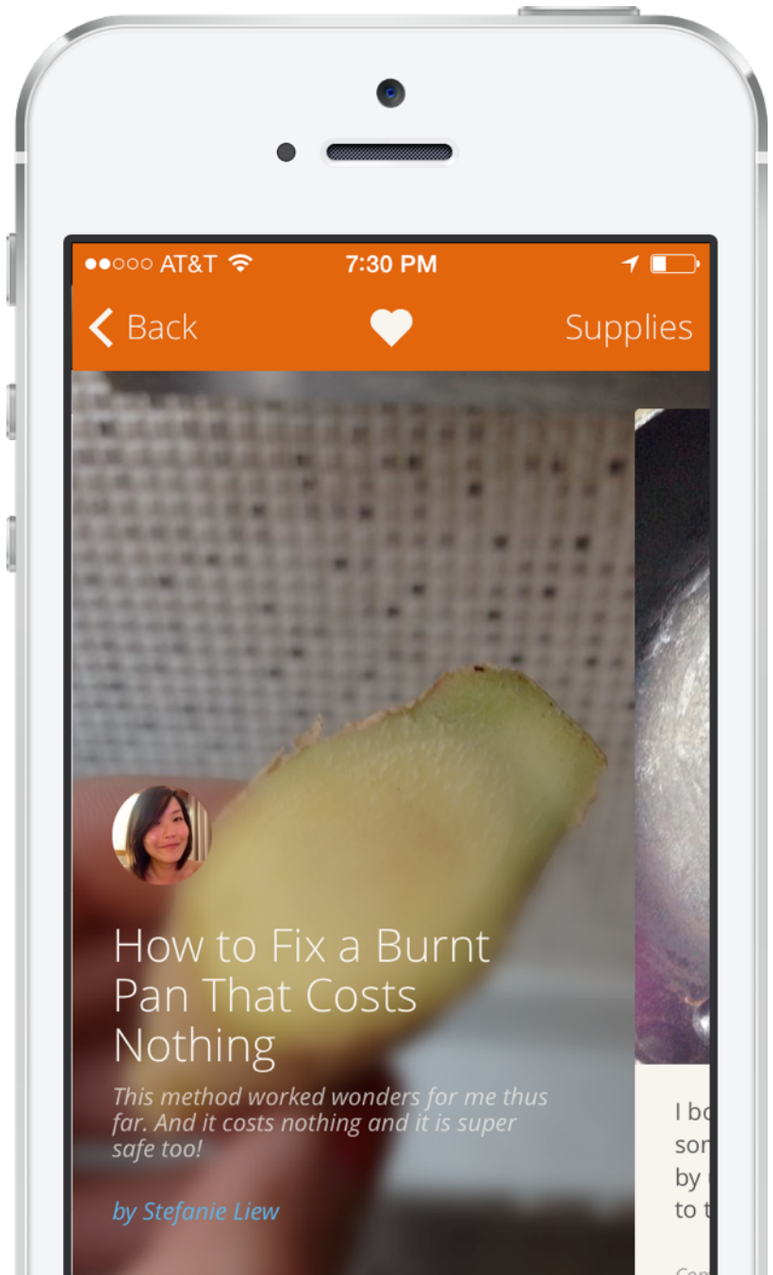
The station art in iTunes Radio changes perspective as you scroll it across the screen. Notice how the app eschews flashy UI elements, and instead adds embellishment to the content itself. iOS 7 minimizes overbearing visual UI in order to maximize content — so take the opportunity to make your content visually interesting.

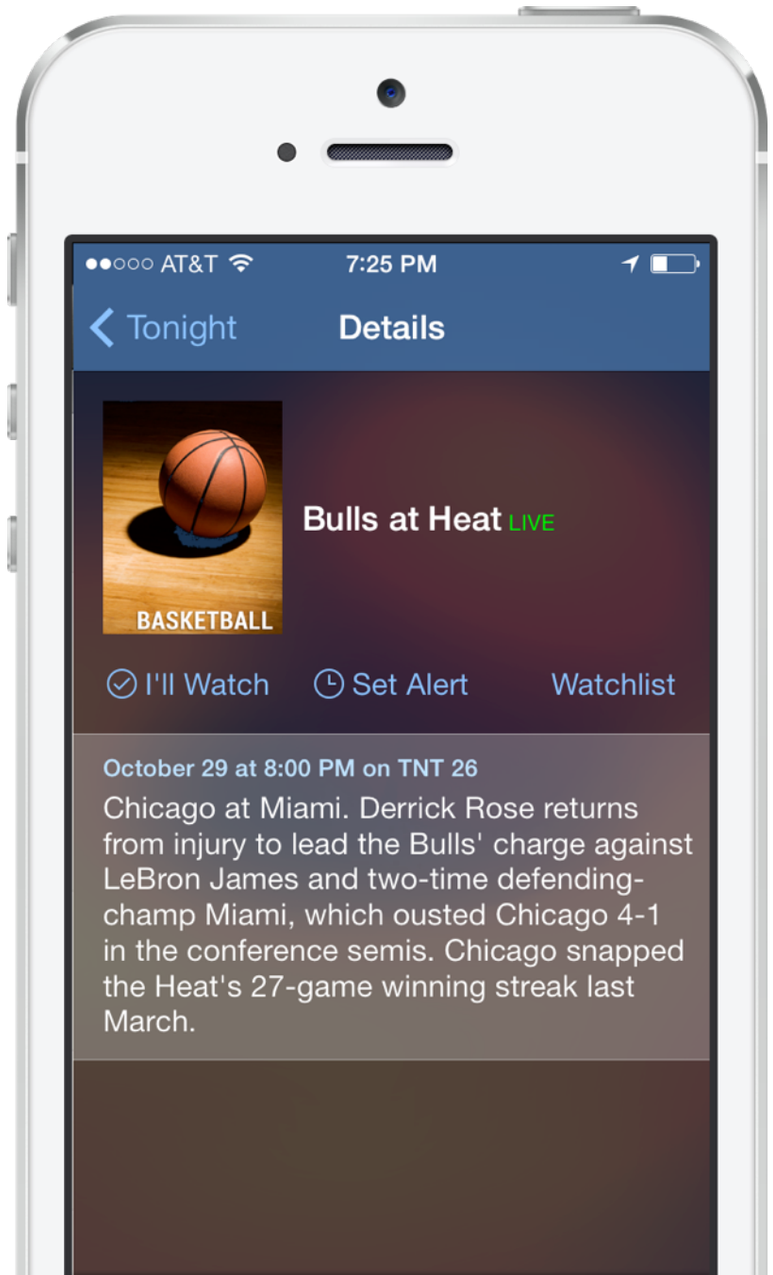
Make the content define the screen

Apple's weather app does a great job at defining the entire feel of the app based on the current weather using gorgeous animated artwork.

Snapguide uses a blurred glass effect to make a guide's main picture the background for the entire guide, defining the whole feel of the screen. Notice how some of the text is difficult to read. When using a background that could be any image, some images will be lighter or darker than others so you may need to darken the image and use a heavier blur effect to ensure that light text shows up.

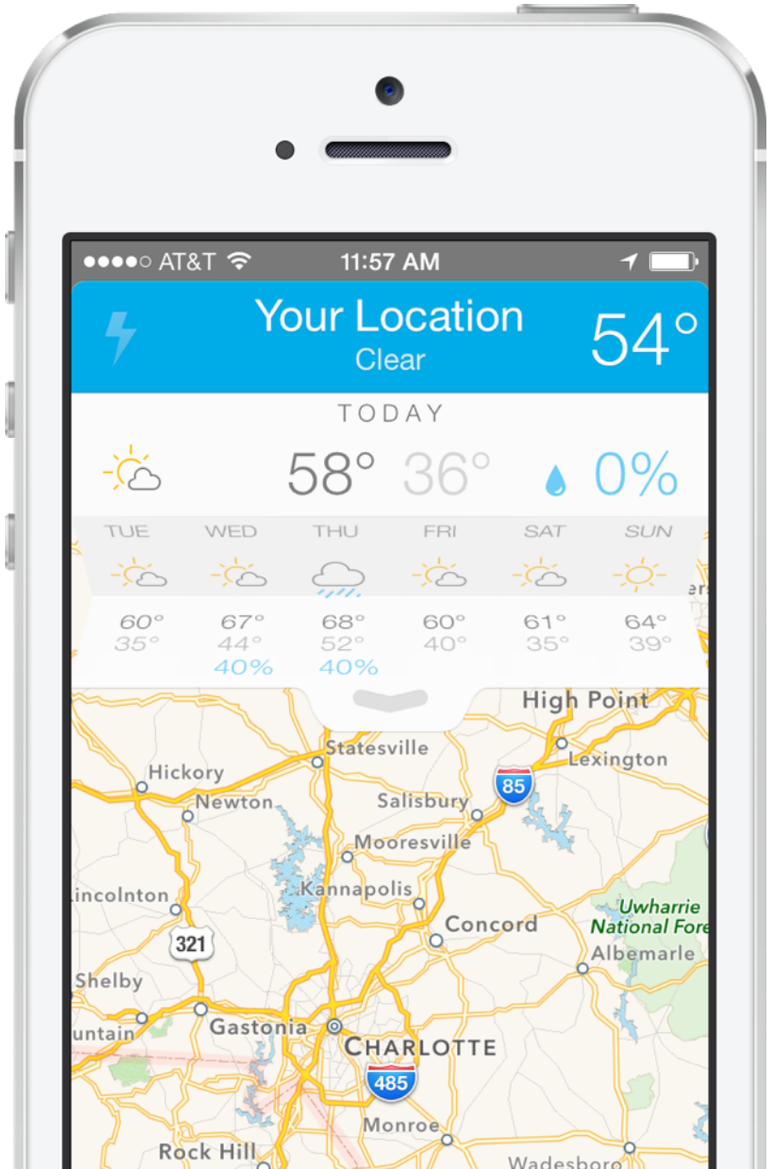
TV Guide does this pretty well with their TV Show artwork backgrounds. If you are using dark text, be sure to lighten up the image to ensure that the text is readable.





HOW TO STAND OUT IN IOS 7

App design is about to undergo a radical shift in direction. Previously, apps could stand out based on eye-popping visuals. But with iOS 7, photorealistic wood, buttons that pop out of the screen, and rich icons are a lot less relevant.



So how do you stand out on iOS 7? How do you create a delightful personality without mind-blowing graphics? In short, app design in the new paradigm will be less about how your app looks and a lot more about how it works and feels. I think the de-emphasis of visuals in iOS 7 will generate a renaissance of innovation in touch interaction design.

Simpler visuals make it easier to quickly experiment with novel animations, transitions, and interaction patterns. Resizing and morphing simple shapes is much easier than dealing with textures and bevels. The next round of standout apps will leverage that one feature alone to create interactions you've never experienced before.

Perfect Weather by Contrast is a good example of an iOS 7 app that creates some new interaction patterns in ways that delight users and make the app more useful.

Touch is magic

Touch is magic: it tricks you into thinking that you are manipulating physical objects instead of moving pixels around a screen. Apple knows this fact well; it's why the very first iPhone had 1:1 scrolling and bouncy effects.

Computers can be cold, but turning that computer into a window into a physical world the user can manipulate creates friendly, familiar, and immersive experiences. However, any lag or hiccup in the delivery of that experience immediately shatters the illusion; the magic show ends with a puff of smoke.

Didn't iOS 7 kill metaphor and realistic details? Actually, no, it didn't. While the prominence of realistic visuals is discouraged, realism is strongly encouraged through user interaction and dynamic physical effects. In fact, iOS 7 has a physics engine built in for the sole purpose of creating interfaces that feel more "real."

Great design will happen a lot less frequently in Photoshop and a lot more often in tools like Xcode and Quartz Composer; these tools allow you to explore how the app feels, not just how it looks.

Direct manipulation

Direct manipulation is the idea of performing functions in real-time by directly manipulating objects on the screen, rather than tapping a button in one place and seeing the result in another. Swiping to scroll, pinching to zoom, and dragging and dropping objects are all examples of direct manipulation.

When looking through pictures, which feels more natural and satisfying — tapping the arrow button or swiping the current picture over to see the next one? To ask the question is to answer it. Humans are very tactile creatures; successful designers create interfaces that reflect that.

Our Choice (left), a digital book for iPad, made everything in the book feel physical by making everything directly manipulatable with your fingers.

ENJOYED THE SAMPLE?

Purchase The App Design Handbook iOS 7 Edition

Learn more about the book »