

ANDROID LAUNCHERS

WILL ELDER, ENTERTAINMENT AND MEDIA WRITER

“Have you heard of these things called launchers for Android phones?” It is an increasingly common question, especially with the growing demand and quality of phone apps. While many students may have heard of the new launchers for Android phones, few actually understand or use them. Students Alex Auchus and Merideth Morris claimed that they knew about launchers, but have yet to use one. This guide will explain what a launcher really is, how to get one, and what some good examples are.

WHAT IS A LAUNCHER?

In layman’s terms, a launcher is a different way of displaying applications on your phone. Home screens, lock screens, and icons can all be changed with a launcher. Different launchers have their own customized settings; shortcuts, widgets, and icons can be switched by selecting which launch-

WHERE DO I GET LAUNCHERS?

Launchers can easily be found on the Google Play Store. Searching for “launchers” under applications shows a very large and daunting list of launchers for free or for a price. They are easily installed by pressing “install” or “purchase” when looking at the launcher’s store page.

Atom Launcher (free, with premium)



Despite its initial appearance as a generic theme for a random launcher, Atom launcher features its own variety of applications to change the home screen, app drawer, widgets, and even the lock screen. It has preset themes and wallapers for fast and easy installation, while supporting custom icons, condensed shortcuts, and hiding unwanted applications. The stock theme is very well done and looks nicer and cleaner than most other launchers. However, the launcher also has purchasable options to expand its capabilities, but the total cost is less than five dollars.

Buzz Launcher (free)



Buzz launcher features the customization and simplicity of most launchers, while allowing for the easiest and fastest setup for home screens. Users can browse from over 500,000 free premade themes and wallpapers to find exactly what suits them the best. The launcher also has customizable widgets that can be easily made and installed through a separate application. Though it’s rich with features, the interface for customization is rather confusing to use. As such, the launcher is much better for quick setups or very advanced customization, but lacks the middle ground that most users would desire.

Windows Phone 8 (wp8)



The Windows Phone launcher works just as described. It is a complete clone of Windows Phone 8’s interface, which is based off of Windows 8’s Metro UI. The launcher’s main focus is on tiles, which can change color with notifications. The tiles can be transparent or opaque on a static or live wallpaper, while also providing the option to switch to stock android-like interfaces on demand. It still retains the status and notification drawer that Android has natively.



Solo Launcher (free)

Solo launcher’s main feature is its clean and extremely fast interface, while offering its own platform for easily downloading live wallpapers, widgets, themes, and icons. It offers notification numbers similar to iOS’s, a customizable notification and status bar, and nine convenient gestures for quick access. Unlike most launchers, Solo launcher’s potential features are completely free, since the launcher is run by a community base.



Nova Launcher (free, with premium)

Nova launcher is one of the most popular launchers for android phones, and for good reason. With between 10 million and 50 million downloads, the launchers high customizability, smooth transitions, high performance, and premade wallpapers for easy and fast but in-depth customization. It features a customizable app drawer, infinite scrolling, backup/restoring, scrollable docks, color and icon theming, resizable widgets, and the ability to import layouts from other popular or stock launchers. For \$4, Nova Launcher Prime allows for gestures, unread message/notification counts, custom drawer groups, the ability