

How to Talk About Apps – Video

In this lesson, you can learn how to talk about apps. You'll see how to talk about different types of apps and give your opinions about apps in English.

How many apps do you have installed on your phone? Which do you use the most? Are they easy to use, or could they be improved? Keep watching to learn the language you need to answer these questions in accurate, natural-sounding English.

1. How Many Apps do you Have?

(<https://www.oxfordonlineenglish.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/smartphone-technology-chart-graph-future-futuristic-network.webp>)

Oli: Have you ever heard of FitGrid?

Katie: No, but let me guess. Is it a new app?

O: Yes, that's right. Apparently, it's a mix between a social media app and a fitness app. It looks really cool – I'm going to download it.

K: How many apps do you have now?

O: I'm not sure exactly, but it must be well over a hundred. From time to time I delete the ones I don't use – but then I download more. I'm a bit of an addict. What about you? How many do you have?

K: I don't know. Not many. Just the basics, you know. I have WhatsApp of course, a banking app, Gmail, Google Maps, YouTube, Facebook, Netflix, and a couple of games. Perhaps about ten in total. How can you possibly have more than a hundred?! What kinds of apps do you have?

O: Well, I'm a big fan of social media, so I have all the social media apps – although I mostly use Instagram and Twitter. What I like about Instagram is that it's great for sharing photos and videos. I watch a lot of movies, so I have Amazon Prime and Netflix. Then there are shopping apps, music apps like Spotify, reading apps, and, most importantly, food delivery apps, because I don't know how to cook.

K: You know there are apps which teach you how to cook, right?

Can you remember some of the different types of app that we talked about?

There are social media apps, fitness apps, banking apps...

...shopping apps, reading apps, TV apps...

...games, music apps and food delivery apps. You heard us refer to all of these in the dialogue. Can you think of any other types of app?

There are many, of course, but one good example is educational apps and language learning apps.

Look at some questions you heard in the dialogue.

1. When was the last time you downloaded an app? What was it?
2. How many apps do you have in total?
3. What kinds of apps do you have? Why?

Think about how you could answer.

For the first two, you could answer together, like this:

The last time I downloaded an app was last weekend. It was a game called 'Dinosaur Rock'. Now I have around 25 apps on my phone.

When you answer the third question, try to give an extended response.

Don't just say 'I have lots of different apps.' Give some more details! When thinking about how to talk about apps, you can talk about the different types of apps you have.

For example, you could say:

I'm a fitness fanatic, so most of the apps on my phone are related to keeping fit. It's almost like having a personal trainer on your phone, which is great.

Learn more ways to talk about fitness with this Oxford Online English lesson: Talking About Health and Lifestyle (<https://www.oxfordonlineenglish.com/talk-about-health-lifestyle>).

OK? Pause the video and try to answer the questions now.

Could you do it? If not, go back and listen to the dialogue again.

Next, we'll cover how to talk about apps and how they work.

2. What does Your Favourite App Do?

(<https://www.oxfordonlineenglish.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Phone-and-computer-app-scaled.webp>)

Katie: So, what's your favourite app at the moment?

Oli: Well, it's been around for a while, but right now, my favourite app is Plant Nanny.

K: Seriously? It's called Plant Nanny? Does it help you to look after your house plants?

O: No, it reminds you to drink enough water – so you don't get dehydrated.

K: Do you really need an app to encourage you to stay hydrated? But, OK, how does it work?

O: Well, you download the app and you input some personal information such as your height, your weight and your level of physical activity – and Plant Nanny tells you how much water you should be drinking.

K: Right...

O: Then you choose a plant – the plants are super cute – and every time you drink a glass of water, you tap the screen, and the app records how much water you drink. Basically, if you drink enough water, your virtual plant will grow.

K: Does it send you annoying reminders all the time?

O: You do get reminders from time to time. I think they're helpful – but you can disable them if you like. The plants are really cute. You should try it!

Many apps are designed to make our lives easier.

Look at these sentences. Which verbs are missing?

Does Plant Nanny _____ you to look after your house plants?

No, it _____ you to drink enough water.

Do you really need an app to _____ you to stay hydrated?

Pause the video if you want more time to think.

OK? Let's check.

*Does Plant Nanny **help** you to look after your house plants?*

*No, it **reminds** you to drink enough water.*

*Do you really need an app to **encourage** you to stay hydrated?*

The highlighted verbs all use the same grammatical pattern. Can you identify it?

verb + object + to infinitive

All three verbs follow the pattern: verb plus object plus 'to' plus infinitive. When you learn verbs like this or practise, try to practise using full phrases. This way, you can remember the pattern more easily when you're speaking, and avoid mistakes.

Get more practice with this sentence structure lesson (<https://www.oxfordonlineenglish.com/sentence-structure>).

Here are two other useful verbs which follow the same pattern.

Banking apps enable us to do our banking efficiently.

Google Maps allows us to find our way.

Let's think about messaging apps, like WhatsApp or Telegram. Could you make a sentence to describe them, using 'allow' or 'enable'?

You could say: 'Messaging apps enable us to keep in touch with our family and friends', or 'WhatsApp allows me to call people I know for free.'

What about Instagram?

You could say, 'It allows us to upload and share images and videos.'

What about Google Calendar?

You could say, 'It helps you to remember important appointments.'

Just be careful with 'let'. When you use 'let', the pattern is different.

Watch2gether is an app which lets you watch videos online with your friends.

What's different? There is no 'to' in front of the verb. This time the pattern is:

verb + object + base verb

Now, it's your turn. Think of an app that you like and explain how it works.

1. What's your favourite app at the moment?

2. How does it work?

Try to give a detailed answer, using some of the verbs you saw before.

For example, you could say:

The app I like best at the moment is Mint. It helps you to track your spending, which is important to me as I'm a student and I don't have much money! Using Mint lets me see my spending habits and control my money more effectively.

OK? Pause the video and try to answer the questions now.

How did you get on? Could you use the verb patterns fluently? If not, repeat your answer several times, until you can do it easily.

Next, you're going to talk about why you like – or dislike – an app.

3. Saying Why You Like an App

Oli: Why are you such a fan of Plant Nanny?

Katie: Well, before I started using this app, I never used to drink enough water. I used to drink too many caffeinated drinks and I was always ending up with a headache. Plant Nanny is quick and easy to use. It's very convenient, because you only need to tap the screen when you drink a glass of water. I think the simplicity is one of the things I like most about it – it's very user-friendly. Obviously it's useful, because it helps you to stay hydrated, but at the same time it's fun. Plant Nanny has changed my life. I can't live without it..!

O: I'm afraid I have to admit that I don't see the point of apps like Plant Nanny. I think these kinds of apps are a complete waste of time.

K: OK – fair enough. You mentioned that you have a couple of game apps on your Smartphone. Which games do you have?

O: My favourite game is Chess.

K: Chess?! I haven't played chess for years..!

O: You probably think it's very outdated, but in fact online chess is incredibly engaging and interactive – and you can play against people all over the world.

K: Sounds good!

Think about the first question you heard in the dialogue: 'Why are you such a fan of Plant Nanny?' How could you answer this, if someone was asking about an app you really like?

You could say something like:

It's quick and easy to use.

The simplicity is one of the things I like most about it.

I can't live without it!

For the second example, you could use different nouns in place of 'simplicity'. For example: 'The convenience is one of the things I like most about it.'

You also heard the words 'user-friendly' and 'engaging'. What do you think? Do you think these adjectives have a positive or a negative meaning?

If something is user-friendly, it means that it is easy for anyone to use or understand it – you don't need any special experience or skills. You can also say that something is 'intuitive' – this has a similar meaning.

If something is engaging, it is interesting in a way that attracts your attention. Teachers (<https://www.oxfordonlineenglish.com/about-our-online-english-teachers>) usually try to make their lessons as engaging as possible.

In the dialogue, you also heard some language used to talk about apps that you don't like. Can you remember any of the words or phrases?

I don't see the point of apps like Plant Nanny.

I think these kinds of apps are a complete waste of time.

What about you? Choose an app that you like – or dislike – and explain why you feel this way.

1. What's an app that you like or dislike?
2. Why do you like or dislike it?

Pause the video now and try to make a few sentences.

For example, you could say:

One app I really like is Loom, which you can use to record and share videos. I think one of the reasons I like it is its simplicity. It's intuitive, so you can learn how to use it quickly and easily.

Or:

Have you ever heard of an app called Yo? It's kind of like a social media app, but you can only text one word – Yo. Seriously. I just don't see the point of an app like this!

Done? Great! Let's look at our last point for how to talk about apps.

4. Recommending an App

(<https://www.oxfordonlineenglish.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/People-recommending-smartphone-apps-scaled.webp>)

Katie: Do your students use language learning apps?

Oli: Sure – my students are a lot more tech-savvy than I am..!

K: OK. So, what are three apps you would recommend to someone who wants to learn a language?

O: Well, for starters I'd recommend Wordy. It's a great way to memorise vocabulary. It's very user-friendly and students love it because they don't feel as if they are studying – they learn while they are playing games.

K: But do they actually learn anything? Is it worthwhile?

O: Absolutely! It has its limitations of course – you're not going to become fluent overnight or anything – but Wordy has a lot to offer. It's definitely worth a look.

K: Right. Sounds good.

O: Another recommendation would have to be Get This! It's beneficial because it focuses on listening skills and it encourages students to understand language in context. It's more challenging than Wordy but at the same time I would say it's more rewarding, too.

K: OK. So Wordy and Get This. Any others?

O: Well, High Flyer has been around for a while but in my opinion it's well worth downloading it. It's designed with higher level students in mind, and many of my advanced level students tell me it's invaluable.

Do you ever use apps to help you learn English? If so, what are some apps that you would recommend?

In the dialogue, you heard some language used to make recommendations. Can you remember?

I'd recommend Wordy.

Wordy has a lot to offer.

It's definitely worth a look.

Another recommendation would have to be Get This.

High Flyer is well worth downloading.

Be careful with the form after 'recommend'

(<https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/recommend>). You can say: 'I'd recommend Wordy'. Or: 'I'd recommend downloading Wordy.' So, you can use a noun or an -ing verb after 'recommend'.

Also, remember that 'worth' is followed by an -ing verb.

High Flyer is (well) worth downloading.

be + (well) worth + verb-ing

You also heard some other adjectives, such as 'worthwhile', 'beneficial', 'challenging', 'rewarding' and 'invaluable'. These can all be used to describe language learning apps.

If an app is worthwhile, it is important and useful in some way. Similarly, an app which is beneficial to you is helpful or useful to you.

Something which is challenging is difficult – but in an interesting way which tests your ability. If you manage to do something which is challenging, it is often rewarding or satisfying.

Finally, in the dialogue you heard that the High Flyer app is invaluable. First, let's check. Do you know what 'valuable' means?

In this context, it means 'important or useful'. What about 'invaluable'? What does 'invaluable' mean?

When understanding how to talk about apps, it's important to think about the types of words used. Often we use the prefix 'in-' to show the negative of a word – like 'ability' and 'inability' or 'capable' and 'incapable' – so you might expect that 'invaluable' means 'not valuable'.

In fact, 'invaluable' means 'very valuable or useful' – so be careful!

If you're wondering why this is, it's because 'invaluable' relates to the verb 'value', with the meaning of 'put a price on something', and not the adjective 'valuable' as it's used in modern English. 'Invaluable' literally means that you can't put a price on something, because it's so important.

Do you want more adjective practice? Watch our lesson on using adjectives in English (<https://www.oxfordonlineenglish.com/how-to-use-adjectives>).

Now, it's your turn. Think about an app you would like to recommend. It doesn't have to be a language learning app. What could you say? Pause the video and try to make a sentence or two.

For example, you could say:

An app I'd recommend is Splitwise (<https://www.splitwise.com/>). It helps you to track money you spend in a group, so if you go on a trip with your friends, you can see who owes how much to whom. It's definitely worth a look, because it means you don't have to split every expense, which saves time and effort.

Finally, we have a challenge for you. Let's see if you can put together all the language we covered in this video.

Here are some questions.

1. What's an app that you like?
2. How does it work?
3. Why do you like it?
4. What could you say to recommend it?

That's all. We hope you learned some useful phrases to talk about apps in English. Thanks for watching!