

MOBILE

Finally, I can pretend I'm on my phone

And it's giving me an existential crisis!

BY **SIMONE DE ROCHEFORT**

Mar 10, 2025, 5:19 PM EDT



6

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It is as if you were on your phone

Swipe right.



Image: Pippin Barr via Polygon



Simone de Rochefort has been producing & hosting YouTube videos for Polygon since 2016. She co-directed the upcoming documentary *The Great Game: The Making of Spycraft*.

I know I'm not the only person who finds themselves reflexively opening and closing apps, like perusing digital window displays to feel as if I'm doing *something*.

A new game from developer Pippin Barr playfully highlights how meaningless our relationships with phones can be. It's called *It's As If You Were On Your Phone*, and you can play it, on your phone, right now.

IAIWOYP posits a situation in which you're just *pretending* to be on your phone. The site offers you intermittent orders, and actions to perform:

Watch the screen.



Widen your eyes and then frown.

Just look at your phone.

You tap circles as they pop up, swipe when asked, and occasionally are told to clean your screen.

Taken all together, it creates the ideal symphony of actions that you might need to convince a neighboring restaurant table that you're not eavesdropping on them (you're on your phone).

What I found most compelling, and disturbing, is how satisfying all this is. I like double-tapping a pink circle, and pressing my fingers pensively to my lips. Maybe it's the play-acting, or maybe this simple feedback is genuinely all I'm getting out of using my phone

anyway. I am a compulsive phone-user, with very little to show for it other than almost 2,000 victories in *Sawayama Solitaire*.

If taking orders from a clever phone game is as momentarily compelling to me as, say, scrolling Bluesky, then what the hell am I doing here?

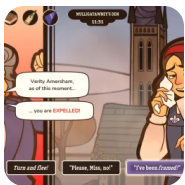
You can play *It's As If You Were On Your Phone* for free on your phone in browsers now.

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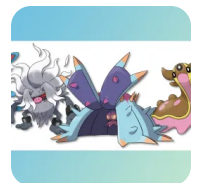
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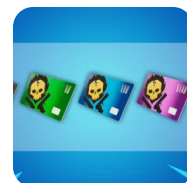
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