



Doug Hillary – Tech Coach

## **Apps to Make your Life Safer, Healthier, and Easier**

One byproduct of the challenges we face with the COVID-19 pandemic is that it has provided an opportunity for all of us to learn more about applications (“apps”) on our devices that can help make our lives a bit better. Whether you use them to improve your health, safety, fitness, order food and supplies, or stay connected, there are many ways you can use these apps to help make things a little bit easier, and hopefully safer for you too.

In this column I will highlight some of the more popular and readily available apps you can use on your iOS or Android devices. I have not focused on apps for entertainment, travel, transportation, sports, or leisure. Perhaps we will cover these in a future article. While the list below includes many apps, it also is not meant to be complete or exhaustive since there are so many available. I have tried to highlight the most popular, readily accessible for your devices, and in some cases especially useful for our patrons here in our community. All these apps are available on both iOS and Android devices except where noted. I hope you find this useful and maybe discover an app or two of the over 50 below that makes your life just a bit safer, healthier, and easier!

### **Staying Healthy**

Most health care providers and pharmacies have now gone “digital” and have applications you can download to make it easier to schedule appointments, conduct “telemedicine appointments”, keep track of your vital statistics, fill prescriptions and manage your medications.

**MyBSWHealth** – a secure app from Baylor Scott & White that allows you to schedule appointments, view test results, email your healthcare provider, and pay bills online.

**CVS/Caremark Pharmacies** – an app that helps you manage your prescriptions. You can refill or request prescriptions, and view prescription history.

**GoodRx** – allows you to compare prices for your subscriptions, helps you find the lowest prices, and it lets you find coupons to save money on prescriptions.

**WebMD** – a good source for health content, as well as researching questions on symptoms, diagnoses, treatments, and medications.

**Pill Reminder** and **Medisafe Medication Management** – these free apps help you remember to take your medications at the right time. You can create different reminders and track your usage to help you manage refills.

**SmartBP** – this app allows you to record and track your blood pressure measurements. You can see trends in your history, share data with your doctor, and set reminders for measurements. The iOS version works with Apple’s Watch, and you can sync a blood pressure monitor through Apple Health.

**Apple Health/Google Fit** – depending on whether you use iOS or Android devices, these apps are good to keep track of things like steps, activity, distance traveled, and nutrition. They can also store health records and create emergency Medical ID cards that allow first responders to access your vital medical information even if your screen is locked. Both apps connect to many third-party apps like MyFitnessPal, or Garmin to provide a holistic view of your health (Apple Health – iOS, Google Fit - Android).

**Red Panic Button** – an app that will let you send a message to people you have designated to get medical attention like medical alert necklaces. Includes a link to your location.

## **Keeping Fit**

There are many apps available to help you get into shape, stay in shape, improve your fitness levels, monitor your progress, inspire you, and guide you through meditation if you like. Most of these apps work with Apple’s Watch or Fitbit and Garmin smartwatches or tracking devices to capture data as you walk, run, or cycle.

**Nike Training Club/Nike Run Club** – a free app with trainer-certified workouts that you can use to customize a workout plan no matter your fitness level. You can also target specific areas of the body with different strength, endurance, and mobility exercises. Nike Run Club provides guided runs, coaching, distance challenges and it tracks progress against your goals. Both apps sync with Google Fit or Apple Health.

**Johnson & Johnson 7-Minute Workout** – complete workout routines in 7 or up to 32 minutes that you can do from home without any equipment. You can create customized workouts from easy to hard efforts, and you can target specific areas on which to focus. Includes video tutorials.

**MyFitnessPal** – an app that helps you track and manage what you eat and the calories you consume each day. You can set a goal, and track progress against that goal. You can also log your workouts, track steps, and set daily goals.

**MapMyWalk/MapMyRide/MapMyFitness** – you can use these apps to find nearby routes, or plan, track, and set goals for either walking, running, or cycling activities. With MapMyFitness you can also get personalized workout routines for your gym training and you can log and track your activity.

**C25K 5K Trainer** – designed to train novice or new runners to get ready for a 5K run in 8 weeks. The app provides a training plan and works with MyFitnessPal.

**SilverSneakersGo** – a workout app with senior citizens in mind. You can tailor strength, flexibility, mobility and walking programs to suit your fitness level or goals. The app provides exercise demonstrations and suggestions to help you along. It can also help you find nearby classes and fitness locations.

**Yoga Studio** – over 100 yoga videos and meditations are available on this app for all levels of ability and fitness levels. It even allows you to create a customized workout routine from their library, along with instructions for each.

**Daily Yoga** – provides guided step-by-step yoga instructions for beginners to serious practitioners. Includes meditation classes and online guide.

**Headspace** – this app helps improve mindfulness throughout your day. It includes hundreds of guided meditations to help manage stress, productivity, sleep, exercise, and physical health.

### **Shopping & Delivery**

It seems that nearly every grocery store, restaurant, chain store, and local “mom and pop” stores either have their own apps or work with apps like Favor, Instacart, and Grubhub to make it easy for you to buy groceries and supplies from the comfort of your home, or arrange a convenient pickup time. While these apps are generally free to download and use, you may experience charges for services like home delivery and curbside pickup.

**Amazon and Whole Foods** – what can’t you buy through Amazon these days? You can also order groceries for delivery or pickup from Whole Foods through Amazon’s app too.

**My H-E-B** – HEB’s app which allows you to choose your groceries and schedule either curbside pickup or delivery. The app includes coupons to save money as well as a search feature that helps you find where the item is located in the store and it keeps track of your order progress.

**Randalls Delivery & Pick Up** – Randalls also has an app to choose your groceries and arrange either delivery to your home or pick-up at the store. Their app also includes coupons to help you save money.

**Favor** – this app allows you to search local restaurants, select your food, and arrange delivery. They will also deliver beer and wine, dry cleaning, clothing, or supplies. The app allows you to contact your “runner” and track the delivery.

**UberEats** – like Favor, UberEats is an app that allows you to browse local restaurants and search for food by name, dish, cuisine, etc. Also allows you to order and have your food order delivered or picked up at your convenience. Also allows you to track your order and estimated arrival time.

**DoorDash** – another app that allows you to search, order and have food delivered from local restaurants. Allows you to schedule delivery when convenient for you and tracks the delivery.

**Grubhub** – another popular app to find and arrange food delivery from your local restaurants. Also allows real-time tracking of your order.

**Instacart** – an app that lets you shop for groceries, produce, wine, spirits, and household items from various retailers like HEB, CVS, Petco, and Costco. You can arrange either delivery to your home or pickup at a store of your choice.

**Chewy** – an easy way to shop online for your pet supplies, food and medicine to be delivered to your door. You can track your order status, and you can arrange “autoship” to have food and supplies automatically shipped to you.

**Twin Liquors** – use this app to shop for wine, beer, and spirits for delivery or pick up.

**Specs** – like Twin Liquors, you can use Specs’ app to shop for wine, beer and spirits for delivery or pickup. You can also order party trays, deli, and “finer foods”.

## **Staying Connected**

There are many choices for you to stay connected with family, friends, or business colleagues. These apps are free to download and generally free when you are connecting with someone else using the same application. However, if you are using cellular service to make or receive calls, you may incur data charges, and if you are dialing a landline or mobile you may also incur charges (especially internationally). It can get a bit complicated, but when you use these applications, make sure you are aware of these additional charges you may experience. I have included some footnotes in “References” below to provide further information.

**Whatsapp**<sup>1</sup> – a text and voice messaging app that lets you send and receive messages, calls, photos, videos, documents, and voice message, even internationally. The app uses your phone's Wi-Fi or cellular connection, so it is free – no fees or subscriptions. Although data charges may apply if you use cellular data access, you can avoid this if you use Wi-Fi instead.

**Skype**<sup>2</sup> – an app you can use to make local and long-distance calls, send instant messages, and video conference. There are several subscriptions available depending on whether you wish to

call a mobile or landline or make international calls. However, there is no charge for calls, video chats and messaging between Skype users.

**Zoom Cloud Meetings** – allows you to invite up to 100 people to join you on a video call with chat and messaging features. Free group meetings are limited to 40 minutes. You can also make or receive phone calls and increase time for group meetings if you pay for a subscription. Works with iOS and Android smartphones, tablets, PCs, and laptops.

**Facebook/Messenger**<sup>3</sup> – share photos, messages, and updates with friends, organizations, and local communities of your choice. You can also use Facebook Messenger to send and receive free instant messages and video chats. Like Whatsapp, there is no cost to make or receive calls using Messenger, but if you use a cellular (not Wi-Fi) data connection, then data rates may apply.

**Instagram** – another app to share photos, videos, and messages with friends and colleagues. You can also search for original video content from creators and accounts which interest you.

**Google Hangout**<sup>4</sup> – a communications app that you can use on your mobile or desktop to make and receive video and voice calls or chats. You can have group chats for up to 150 people, and free video calls for up to 10 friends. Calls to other Hangout users (even internationally) are free, but calls made to non-Hangout users may have additional charges.

**Simple Social** – an app described as a “cleaner, less-cluttered version of the classic Facebook app” which not only connects with Facebook, but now Twitter as well. They also claim by using their app to access social media apps, you can reduce battery power on your device over traditional social media applications (Free for basic version, or you can pay for an upgrade to remove ads- Android only).

**Tapestry** – a social media app like Facebook that allows you to share messages, photos, and videos with your families in a spam and ad-free environment.

**Twitter** – if you want to be informed of breaking news and entertainment worldwide, this app is a good option. You can also find and follow friends, influential people, celebrities, athletes, politicians, and organizations that interest you. You can also watch live stream events.

## **Staying Sharp**

There are a growing number of applications that can help you keep your mind sharp while providing games you can enjoy alone or with friends. There are also many apps that can help you remember where you may have placed your phone, or even where to find your vehicle if you have difficulty remembering (i.e., finding your parked car after returning from vacation).

**Words with Friends** – a gaming app like Scrabble. You can challenge and play with others no matter where they live, and you can play multiple games at a time. You can also play solo if you wish.

**Lumosity** – an app designed to keep your mind sharp and alert by providing hundreds of games, brain twisters, and puzzles. It is designed by neuroscientists, so it must be challenging – and fun.

**Libby** – allows you to borrow and read ebooks and audiobooks from your local public library, including the LTCL, for free. You can also use Libby to send your borrowed books to your Kindle.

**Goodreads** – this app allows you to provide a rating on books you have read and see what others have rated books that you may be interested in reading.

**Wordbrain** – an app that combines crossword and word scramble to let you transform random letters into words to progress further in the game.

**Find My Car** – a simple-to-use app to help you remember exactly where you park your car. The app allows you to take a picture of the location, share the location with others, set alarms for metered parking, and it provides turn-by-turn navigation to find your vehicle.

**Find My iPhone (iOS) and Find My Device (Android)** – apps that help you find your phone, tablet, or watch if you have forgotten where you left it.

As I mentioned in the beginning, these are just a few of the many applications out there that can help make your life a bit easier, safer, and healthier. You can find these apps by going to Apple's App Store, and Google's Play Store and enter the name of the apps I have provided in the search box. I should also point out that while most of these apps are free to download and use, you may incur charges or delivery fees to use the service (i.e., food delivery, curbside pickup). Some apps offer a free version which may include advertisements or limited functionality and paid versions which remove ads and allow more features, functions, and ability to customize your experience.

## **Tech Coach Assistance**

Tech Coaches are now providing remote Tech Coaching. Simply send an email to [techcoach@laketravislibrary.org](mailto:techcoach@laketravislibrary.org) and one of our coaches will respond to assist you with any questions or challenges you have with accessing or using these (or any) applications on your iOS or Android devices.

## **References**

<sup>1</sup> Call your friends and family for free with WhatsApp Calling, even if they are in another country. WhatsApp calls use your phone's Internet connection rather than your cellular plan's voice minutes. (Note: Data charges may apply. Contact your provider for details. Also, you cannot access 911 and other emergency service numbers through WhatsApp).

<sup>2</sup> Skype to Skype calls are free. Operator data charges may apply. We recommend using an unlimited data plan or Wi-Fi connection.

<sup>3</sup> Be together whenever, with our free\* all-in-one communication app, complete with unlimited text, voice, video calling, and group video chat features (\* Data rates apply)

<sup>4</sup> Mobile carrier and ISP charges may apply. Calls to Hangouts users are free, but other calls might be charged. View our calling rates at <https://www.google.com/hangouts/rates>