

6 tricks to make Apple CarPlay better

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When buying a car in 2018, many people decided to choose a model that supports Apple CarPlay and Android Auto . They use CarPlay almost all the time while driving to enjoy podcasts or music, and get directions.

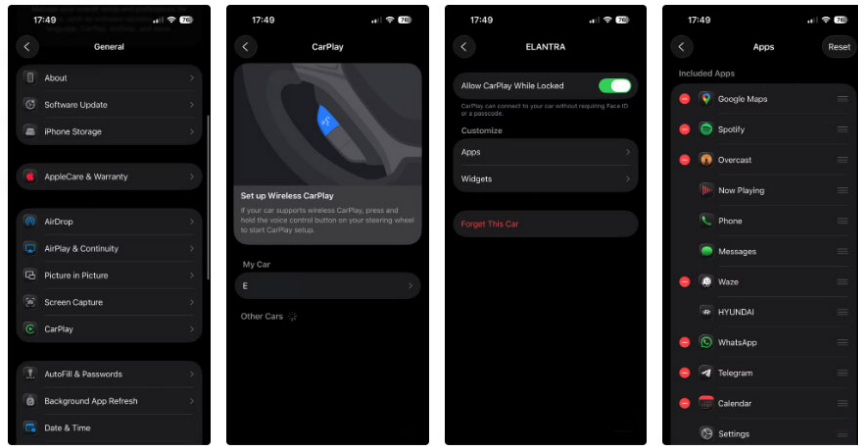
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Trim and rearrange your app list

By default, the CarPlay home screen shows icons for all the CarPlay-compatible apps on your iPhone, with Apple's default apps at the forefront. Fortunately, you can rearrange these icons to put your most-used apps at the top and remove the ones you don't care about.

You can't change this option in CarPlay; it's on your iPhone. Go to **Settings > General > CarPlay** and select your car. If you use CarPlay with multiple cars, you'll need to customize these options for each car.

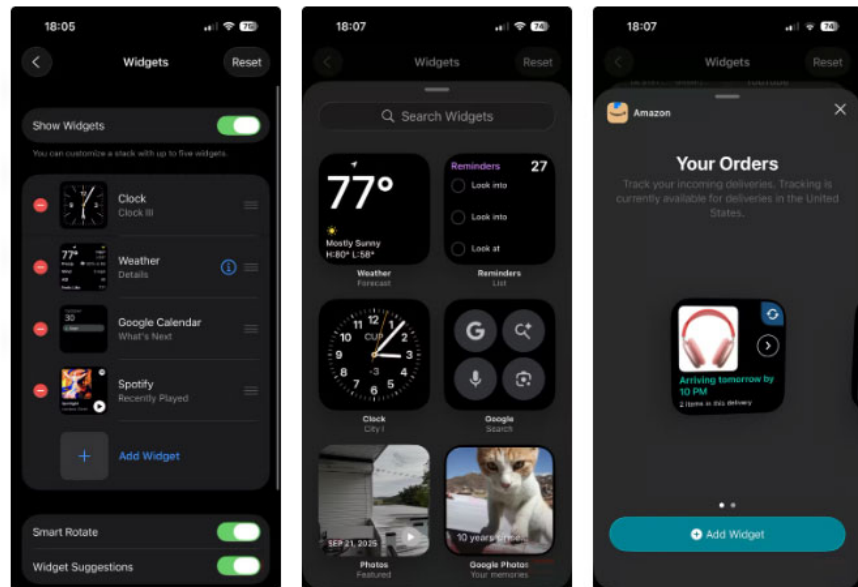
Now, tap **Apps** to see a list of the apps you have installed. For any apps you don't want to show up in CarPlay, tap the red minus sign to the left. They'll then appear in the **More Apps** section at the bottom, where you can add them back using the green plus button.



Add CarPlay widget

Widgets are one of the iOS 26 additions to CarPlay, giving you convenient access to information on your car's display in the same way as the iPhone's best home screen widgets. Open the same Settings page mentioned above, this time selecting **Widgets**.

Here, you can select up to five widgets, which will appear when you swipe left to right in CarPlay. When you tap **Add Widget**, the widgets at the top are CarPlay-compatible widgets. Scrolling down to the **Other** section will show widgets that aren't optimized for viewing in your car.

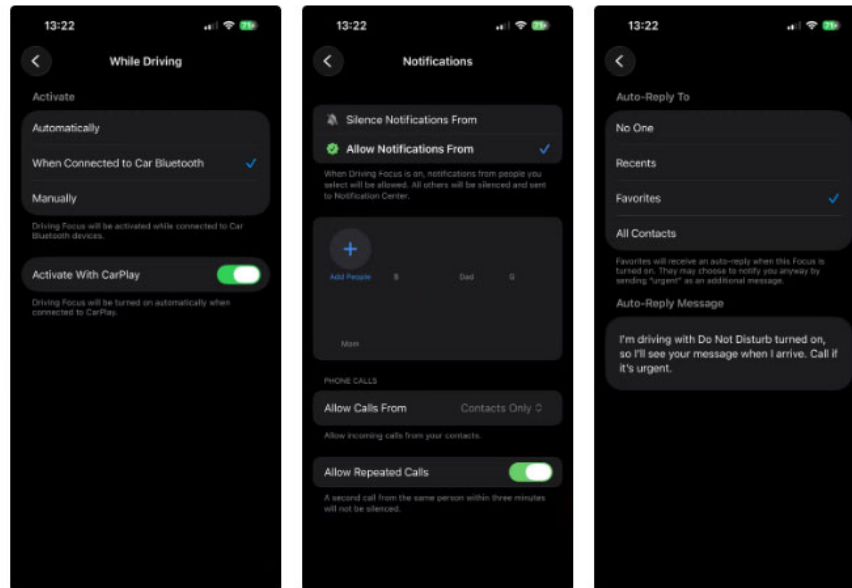


Using Driving Focus with CarPlay

People don't want to be distracted by notifications while driving. They won't respond to them until they get there anyway, so it's best to turn them off. The easiest way to do this is to use the customizable Focus modes on your iPhone.

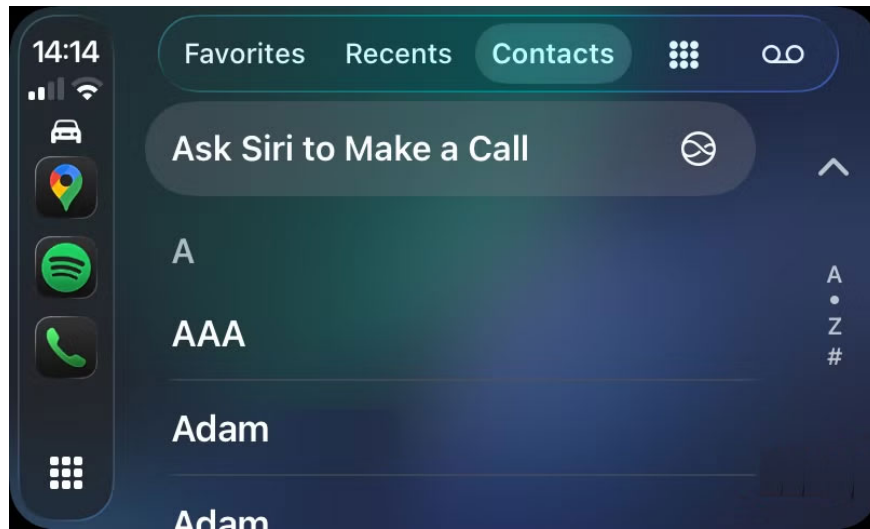
On your phone, go to **Settings > Focus > Driving** . At the bottom, tap **While Driving** under **Turn On Automatically** , then you can turn on **Activate With CarPlay** .

From there, like customizing other Focus modes, the other options on the page let you control how notifications appear while driving. Tap **People** and select any contacts whose notifications you want to display while driving; be strict about this. For **Allow Calls From** , use **Contacts Only** , so you don't get distracted by spam calls on the road.



Make contacts easy to use with Siri

Using your voice while driving is much safer than interacting with a screen, so when you want to call or text a contact, it's important that you can speak to Siri without being distracted by any name issues.



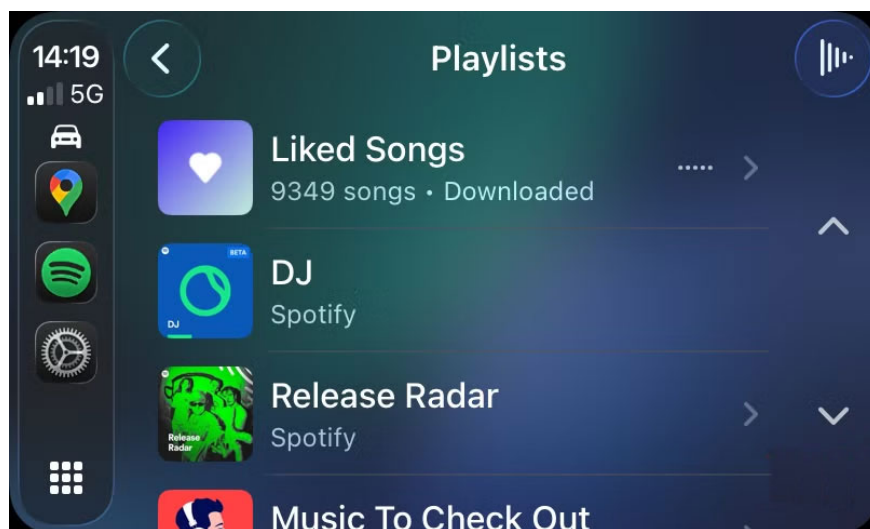
Tip : Siri will remember your relationships. For example, after saying "Maria Smith is my girlfriend," you can say "call my girlfriend" to make a call to Maria.

While you're at it, you should also check your Favorites in your contact list. As mentioned above, keeping this list up to date allows you to control exactly who can contact you while you're in Focus mode.

Download music for easy shuffling

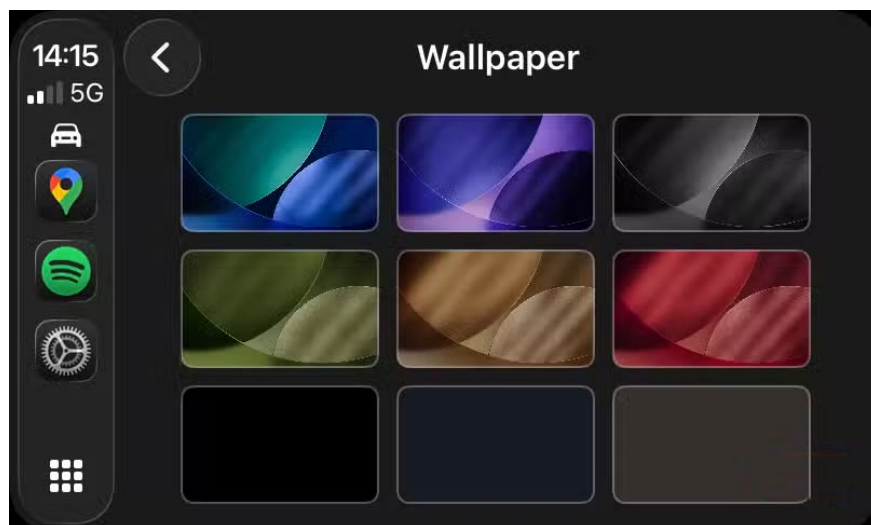
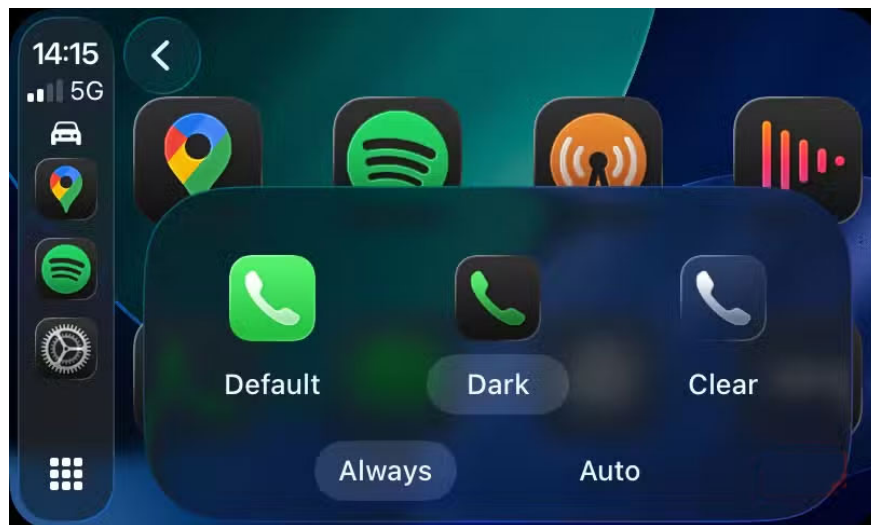
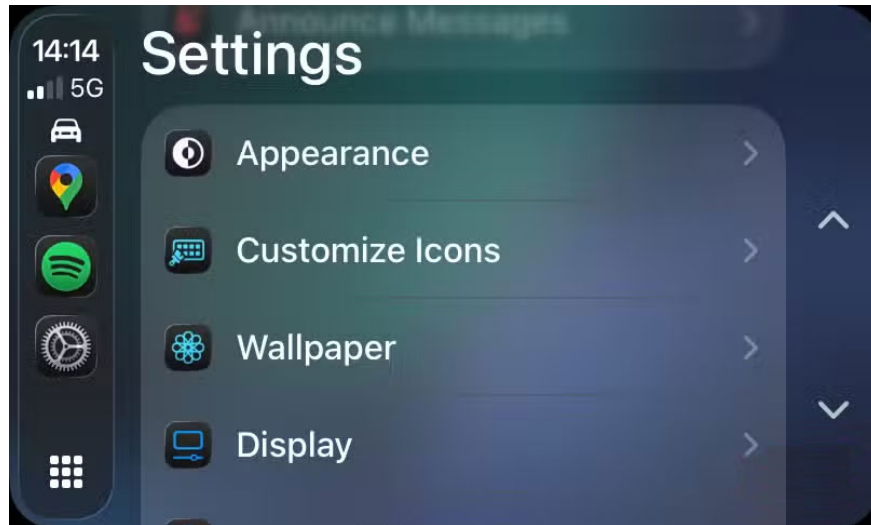
Continuing the topic of hands-free use, tapping through playlists and albums while driving is not a great idea. However, voice control is quite annoying, beyond the basics like playing a popular artist or genre. Siri has trouble with a lot of artist names or tracks that have the same name as an album.

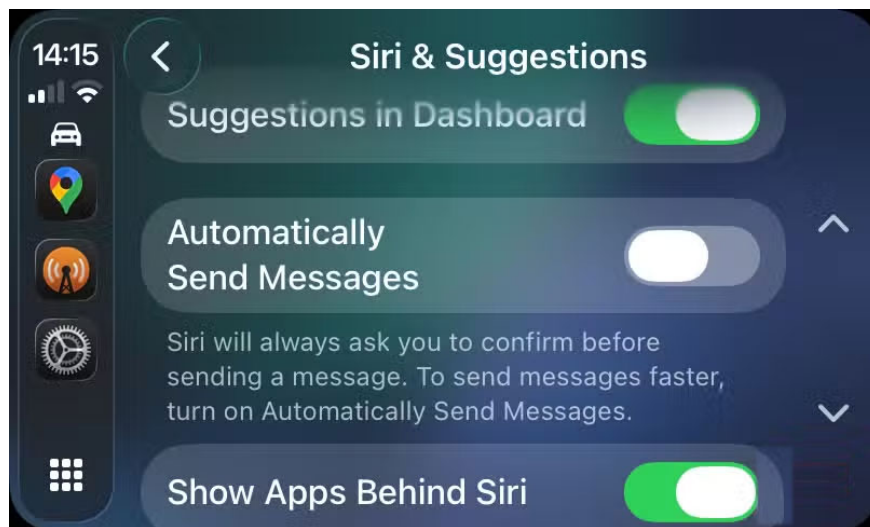
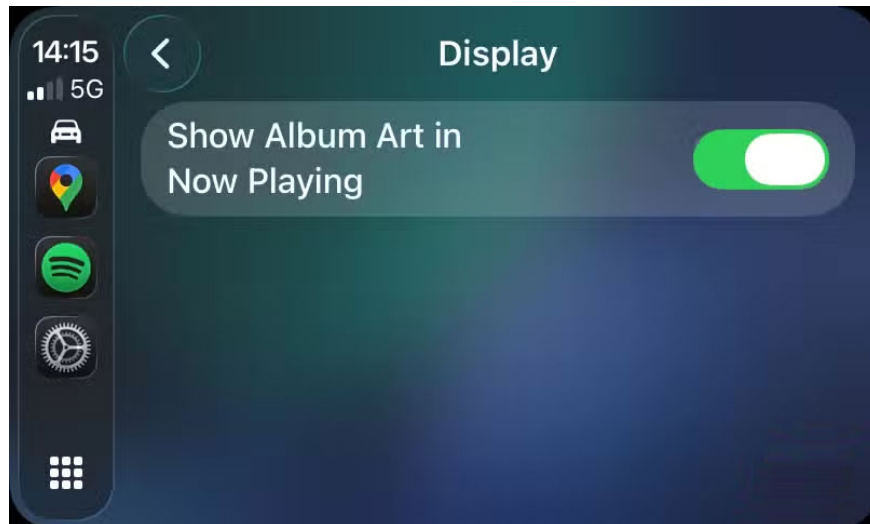
This is why many people download Spotify **Liked Songs** playlists offline on their phones; it gives them thousands of tracks to listen to while driving without worrying about data usage.



Tweak your wallpaper and other visual options

We've already looked at some of the CarPlay options you can control on your iPhone, but you shouldn't overlook the **Settings** app in CarPlay. This app has some unique options for how widgets appear in your car.





In **Appearance**, you can choose between light or dark mode, or have it automatically switch based on your car's light sensor. While many people prefer dark mode, dark maps are hard to see during the day, so having the map color automatically switch is a wise choice.

Customize Icons lets you choose between regular, dark icons and clear, cryptic Liquid Glass icons. Use **Wallpaper** to change CarPlay's background—unfortunately, this option is limited to a handful of generic wallpapers and doesn't support custom images.

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