

# iOS 18.4 is a bigger iPhone upgrade than I expected: Try my 5 favorite features

The iOS 18.4 update may not be huge but it's made a big difference in my iPhone. Here's how.

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Reviewed by Elyse Betters Picaro



Jason Hiner/ZDNET

I've been snooping around my iPhone since updating to iOS 18.4 to see what's new and improved. I've been disappointed with some of Apple's iOS 18 updates this year because they have failed to deliver certain promised improvements (Hey Siri, this means you). However, I've been happily surprised by the latest features in iOS 18.4 and their proven usefulness.

Also: iOS 18.4 update draining your iPhone's battery? Try these 6 fixes

If you haven't yet updated to this latest version or if you did update and haven't yet checked out what's new and improved, you may want to dive in. To give you a head start, here are five of my favorite iPhone features courtesy of iOS 18.4.

## My favorite iOS 18.4 features

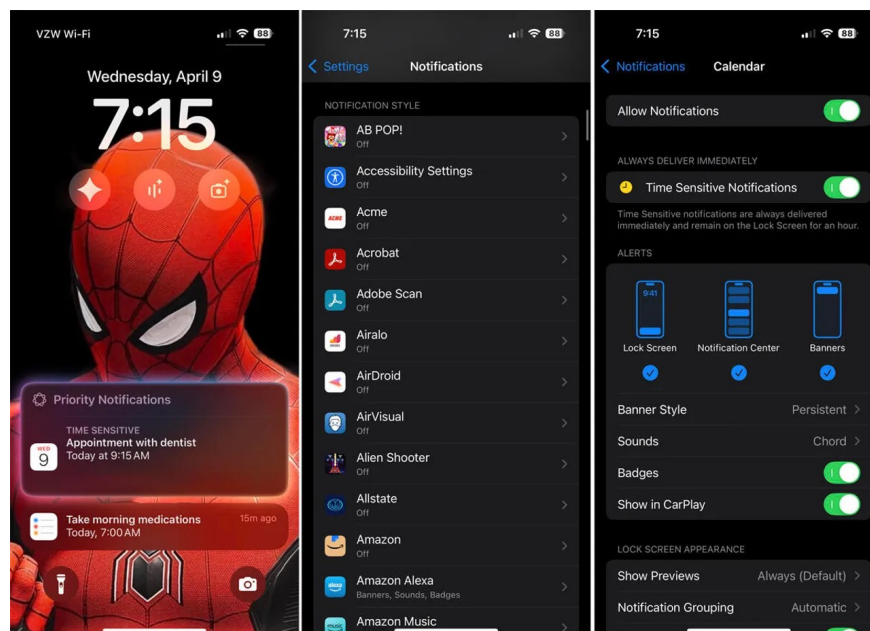
What you need: Before you read further, keep in mind that you'll need the right type of iPhone to enjoy many of the new features, particularly the ones that tap into Apple Intelligence. That means any iPhone 16 model, the iPhone 15 Pro, or the iPhone 15 Pro Max.

# 1. View priority notifications

The lock screen on my iPhone can sometimes get cluttered with notifications, causing my eyes to glaze over the screen and forcing me to miss important ones. Using Apple Intelligence, iOS 18.4 looks at all your notifications to determine which ones seem the most urgent and important.

Also: Change these 10 iOS settings right now to instantly get better iPhone battery life

The notifications that pop up will be labeled as priority to grab your attention. To view all your notifications, just swipe up on the screen. To control this option, go to Settings and select Notifications. From there, you can turn it on or off and choose which apps you want included in the mix.



## 2. Use the Action button to launch Visual Intelligence

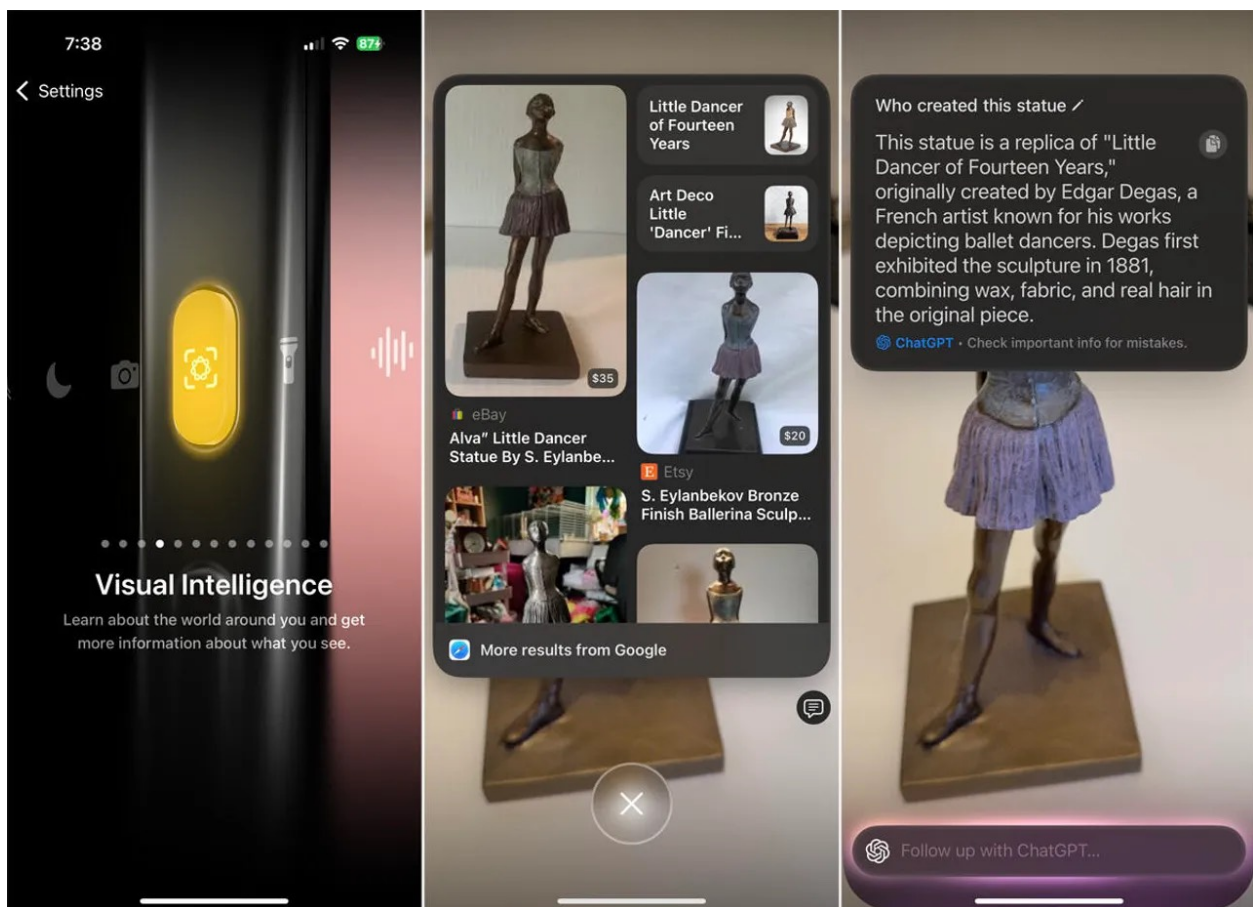
Introduced with iOS 18.2, Visual Intelligence is a cool AI-based feature. Just aim your phone at an object that has aroused your curiosity. Press a button, and you can run a Google web search or ask ChatGPT to describe, summarize, or answer specific questions about the mystery item.

Previously, you had to activate and press the Camera Control to trigger Visual Intelligence, but that limited its scope to the iPhone 16 lineup. With iOS 18.4, you can use your iPhone's Action button instead, expanding the feature to the iPhone 15 Pro, the iPhone 15 Pro Max, and the iPhone 16e.

I have an iPhone 16 Pro, though; so why would I need to launch Visual Intelligence with the Action button? Well, depending on how I'm holding my phone and the object I'm framing, I sometimes find the Action button easier to access and press. Having both the Camera Control and Action button available gives me more flexibility when I want to call on Visual Intelligence.

Also: [This useful Apple Intelligence camera feature is coming to iPhone 15 Pro - here's how it works](#)

To set this up on a supported iPhone, head to Settings and select Action Button. Swipe through the different options until you find the one for Visual Intelligence. Then just exit the Settings screen. Now point your phone at an object you'd like described and press down on the Action button. A screen pops up with two choices. Tap Ask to ask ChatGPT questions about the object; tap Search to run a Google search on it.



Screenshot by Lance Whitney/ZDNET

# 3. Access Apple Intelligence from Control Center

With a supported iPhone, you can launch and use Siri and Apple Intelligence in a variety of ways. However, one handy new method is through Control Center; I'll sometimes take this route as a quick way to activate a specific feature.

Also: [How to turn on Siri's new glow effect on iOS 18 - and other settings you should tweak](#)

To set this up, swipe down from the top right of the screen, tap the + icon at the top, and then tap "Add a Control." Swipe down the screen of controls to the section for Apple Intelligence & Siri. You can then add any, all, or some of the three features: Talk to Siri, Type to Siri, and Visual Intelligence. To access them from the Home screen, swipe down from the top and tap the control you want to use.





Screenshot by Lance Whitney/ZDNET

## 4. Play ambient music

In the midst of a difficult day, I try to take short breaks now and then by closing my eyes and meditating through deep breathing. During those moments, I like to listen to gentle, calming music to put me in the right mood. With the new Ambient Music feature, I can quickly tune up the right sounds.

To get in the right mood yourself, swipe down from the top to trigger Control Center. Tap the + icon and then select "Add a Control." Swipe down the screen to the

section on Ambient Music. You'll find controls for four categories based on different moods -- Sleep, Chill, Productivity, and Wellbeing. Add any or all of them. Return to the Home screen and trigger Control Center. Tap the control for the music you wish to hear. Tap it again to turn off the music.



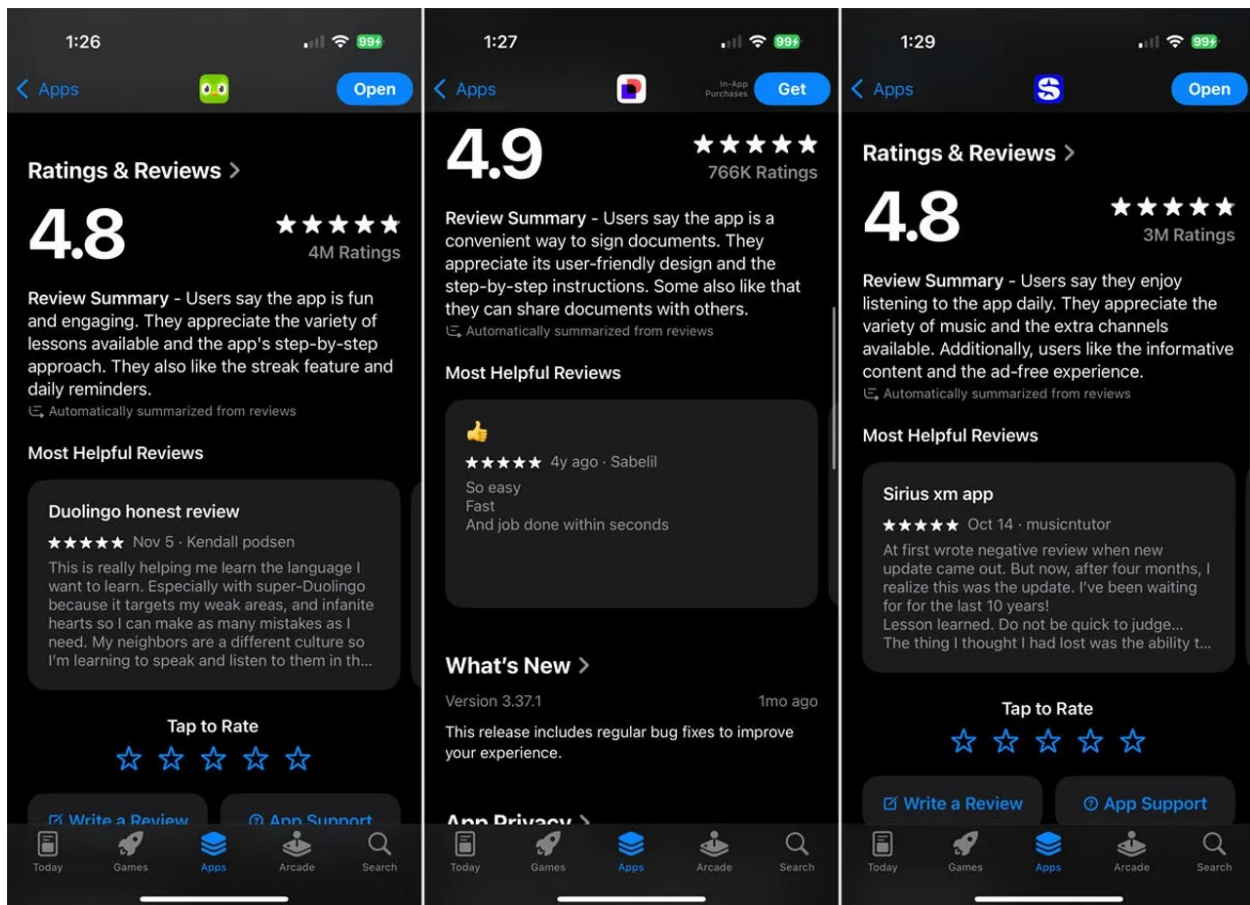
Screenshot by Lance Whitney/ZDNET



## 5. Read App Store review summaries

Here's an AI enriched feature I find helpful when I'm checking out apps in the App Store. Instead of reading each individual review for a specific app, I can get a general sense of the program through a review summary. For this, the AI looks at all the user reviews and generates a condensed summary along with an overall rating. If I want to know more, I can then read some of the individual reviews. However, the summary provides a quick head start so I know if the app is worth my time in the first place.

To check this out, just open the App Store app and select an app that interests you. Swipe down the description screen to the Ratings & Reviews section. If the app has garnered enough feedback, the review summary is displayed above the individual reviews.



Screenshot by Lance Whitney/ZDNET

**original article:** [https://www.zdnet.com/article/ios-18-4-is-a-bigger-iphone-upgrade-than-i-expected-try-my-5-favorite-features/?utm\\_source=iterable&utm\\_source=iterable&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=newsalerts&utm\\_campaign=campaign\\_13184428&zdee=\[Contact.email\\_zdee\]](https://www.zdnet.com/article/ios-18-4-is-a-bigger-iphone-upgrade-than-i-expected-try-my-5-favorite-features/?utm_source=iterable&utm_source=iterable&utm_medium=email&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=newsalerts&utm_campaign=campaign_13184428&zdee=[Contact.email_zdee])