

# 7 iOS 27 features that make old iPhones exciting again (no Apple Intelligence needed)

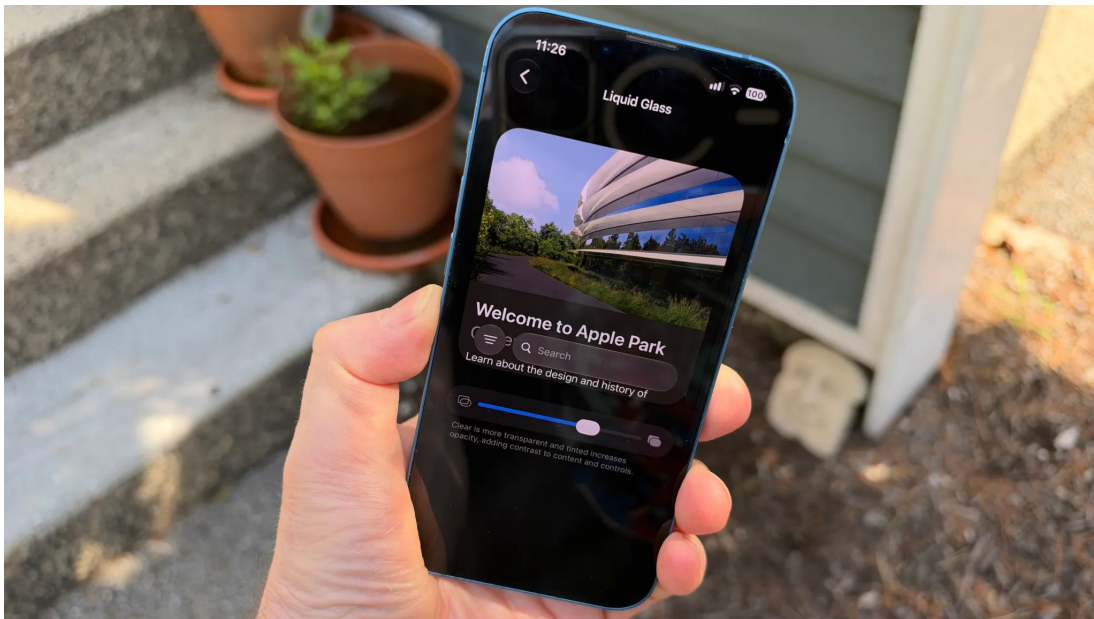
Do you own an older iPhone that doesn't support Siri AI or Apple Intelligence? Upgrading to iOS 27 is still worth the effort. Here are seven reasons why.



## Lance Whitney

Lance Whitney is a technology journalist with an IT background. He's written for TechRepublic, PCMag, Macworld, and Time, among others. He also teaches classes in AI, cybersecurity, and social media.

October 2, 2026, 12:56 pm ET - ZDNet



Lance Whitney/ZDNET

The highlight of Apple's iOS 27 is Siri AI. The new Siri is a distinct improvement over the old and often fallible Siri Classic. But to use Siri AI, your iPhone must support Apple Intelligence. And that requires an iPhone 15 Pro or higher.

Does that mean those of you with older iPhones shouldn't bother upgrading? No, even without all the AI superpowers, iOS 27 still offers a host of cool and helpful features. And though Siri AI and Apple Intelligence require at least an iPhone 15 Pro, iOS 27 itself supports every model from the iPhone 11 and iPhone SE on up.

Also: Your iPhone just got a hidden anti-scam upgrade in iOS 27: How to enable it

For those of you who own an older iPhone that can be upgraded to iOS 27, here are seven features that make the new version worth installing.

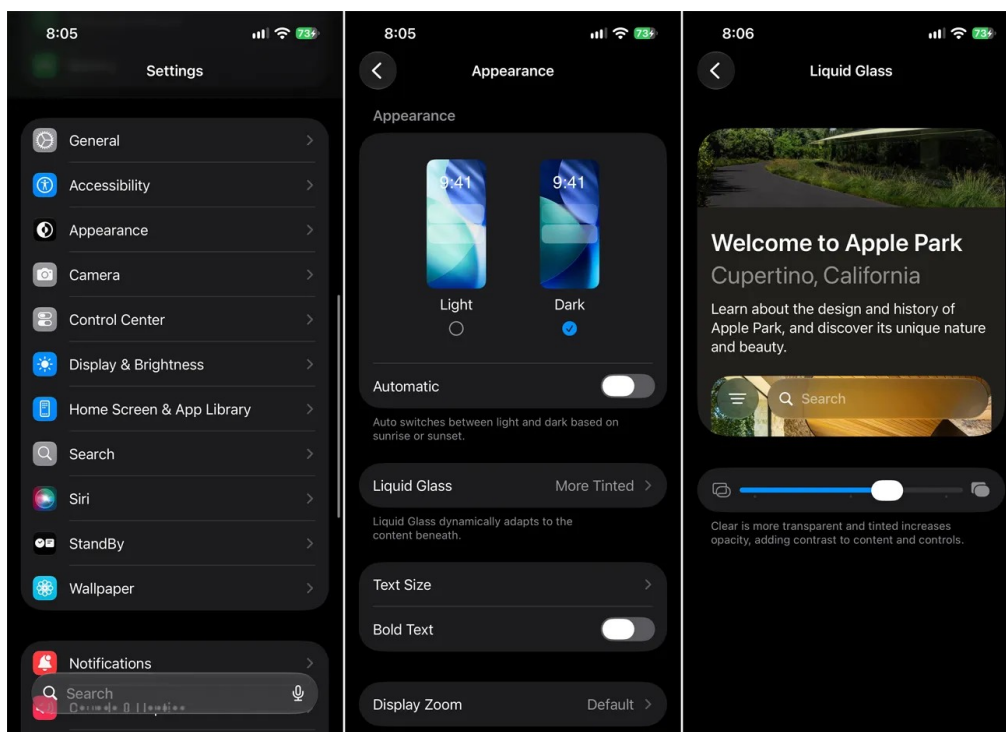
# 1. Customize the Liquid Glass effect

Painting the elements on your screen with a more translucent appearance, Liquid Glass has been a controversial feature since its debut with iOS 26. Some

people love it; others hate it. I tend to be in the middle. Whatever your feelings about Liquid Glass, iOS 27 gives you more control over it with a convenient slider that you can position anywhere you want.

Also: After your iOS 27 upgrade, do these 5 things first

To try this, go to Settings, select Appearance, and then tap Liquid Glass. Moving the slider handle all the way to the left offers the full translucent and transparent effect. Moving it all the way to the right eliminates the effect, creating a tinted look. As you move the handle, you can see the difference on the preview window to gauge how it will look. I typically set it somewhere in between the two extremes.



Screenshot by Lance Whitney/ZDNET

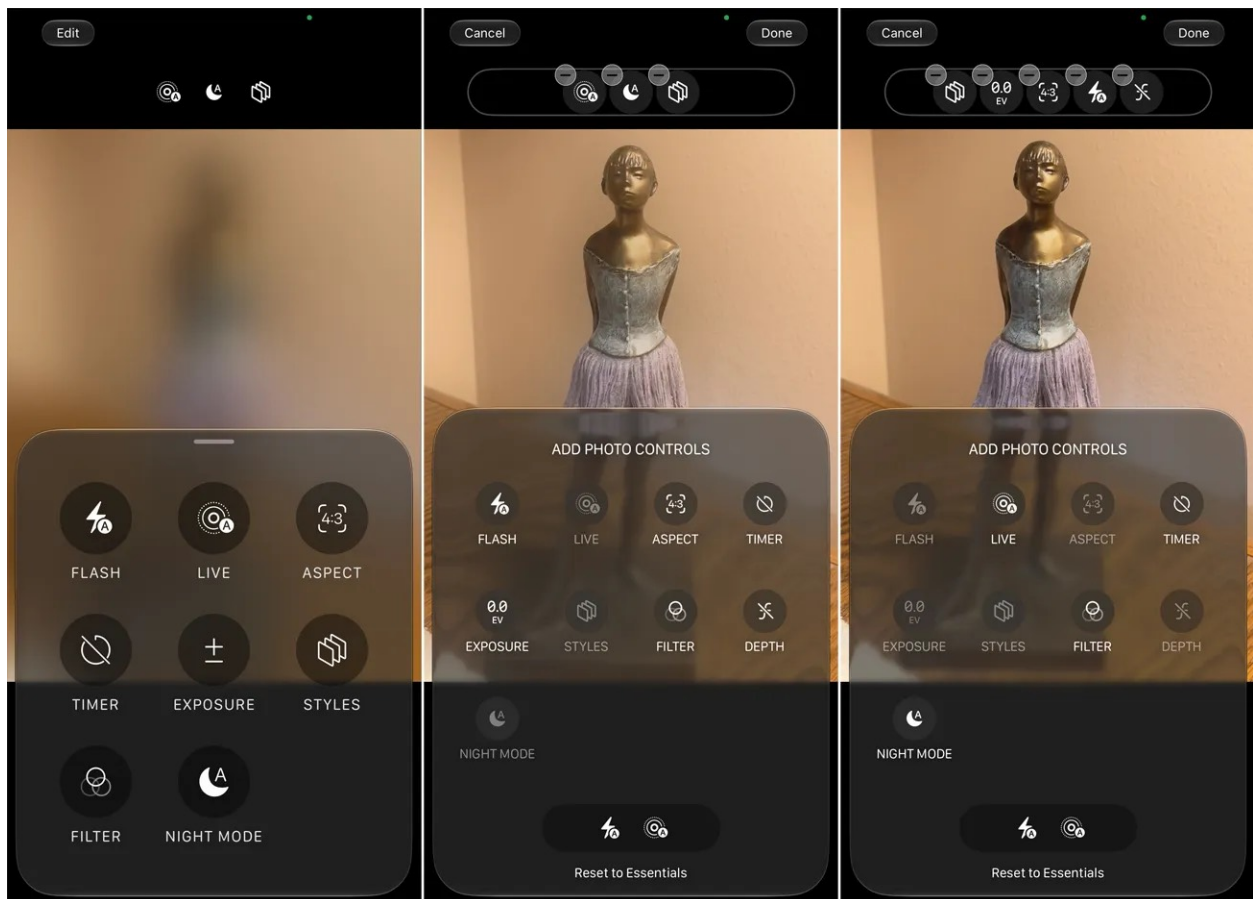
## 2. Pin your favorite camera controls

The Camera app offers a variety of controls that you can set, including flash, timer, aspect ratio, exposure, styles, filters, and night mode. Swiping up from the bottom or tapping the six-dot icon displays the controls menu. But finding the right control in that menu can take time, especially if you're trying to take a quick action photo. I've found this process frustrating because it sometimes causes me to miss the shot. With iOS 27, you can now pin your favorite controls at the top for easier access.

Open the Camera app and set the mode to Photo. Swipe up from the bottom or tap the six-dot icon to display the controls menu and then tap the Edit button at the top left. You'll likely see at least a couple of controls already pinned at the top of the screen. To remove a specific control, tap its minus sign. To pin other controls, just tap any highlighted ones. By adding and removing controls this way, you ensure that only your favorites appear at the top. When finished, tap Done. You can then easily tap any of the pinned controls for quicker access.

Also: iOS 27 draining your iPhone battery? 7 ways to extend battery life

The controls also vary based on the camera mode. That means you can pin different controls for each mode, including Photo, Portrait, Video, Cinematic, Slow-Mo, and Time-Lapse.



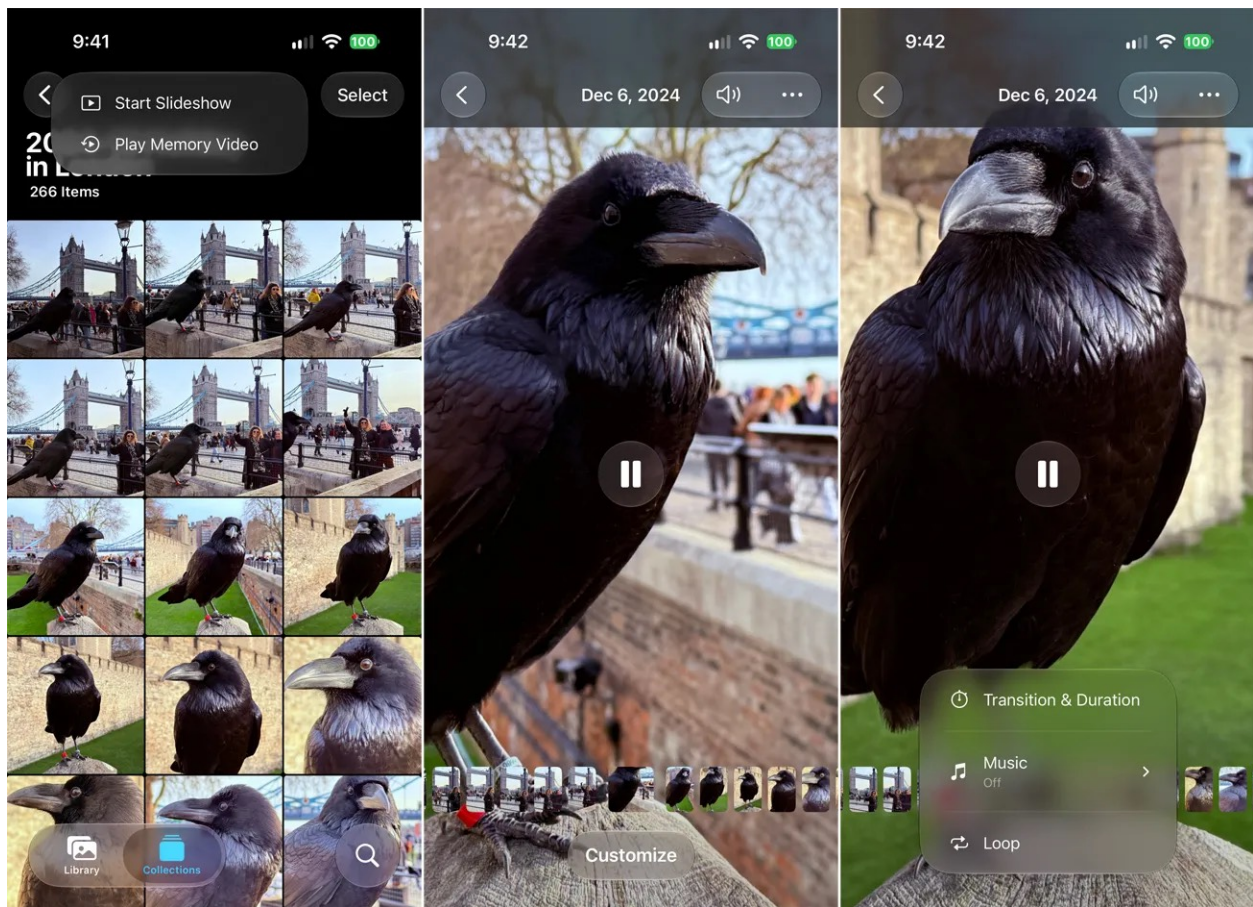
Screenshot by Lance Whitney/ZDNET

### 3. Add more effects to a slideshow

You've long been able to create a slideshow in the Photos app based on an album or collection of photos. But with iOS 27, you can spruce up your slideshow by tweaking the overall transition, the duration for each photo, and the music. I sometimes create and share slideshows of photos that I take when my wife and I travel, so I like these new options.

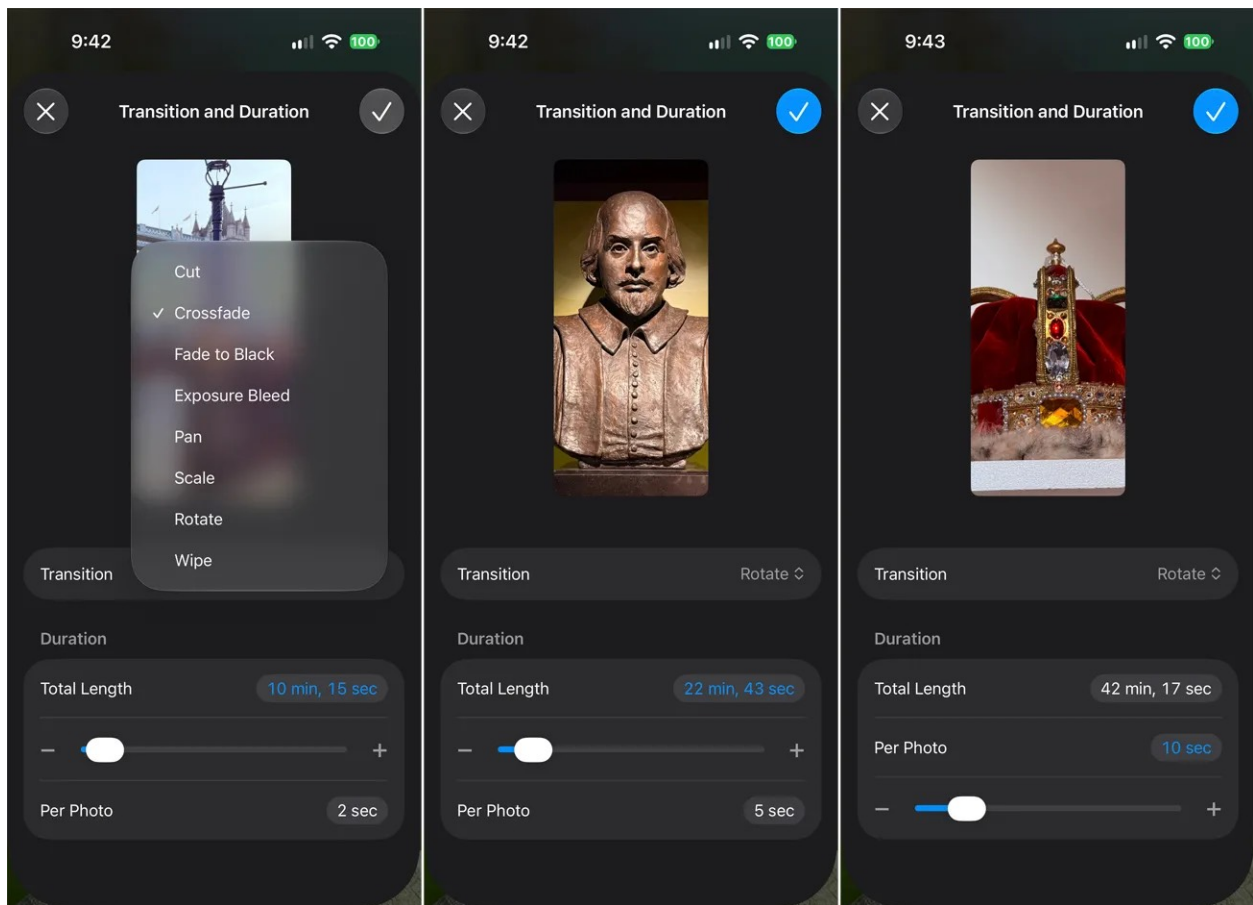
Also: 5 hidden iOS 27 upgrades that make a big difference – and why I love them

Open the Photos app and open a specific album or collection, or select a group of individual photos. Tap the ellipsis icon at the top and choose "Start Slideshow." After the slideshow kicks off, tap the screen and select the Customize button. From the menu, tap the first option for "Transition & Duration."



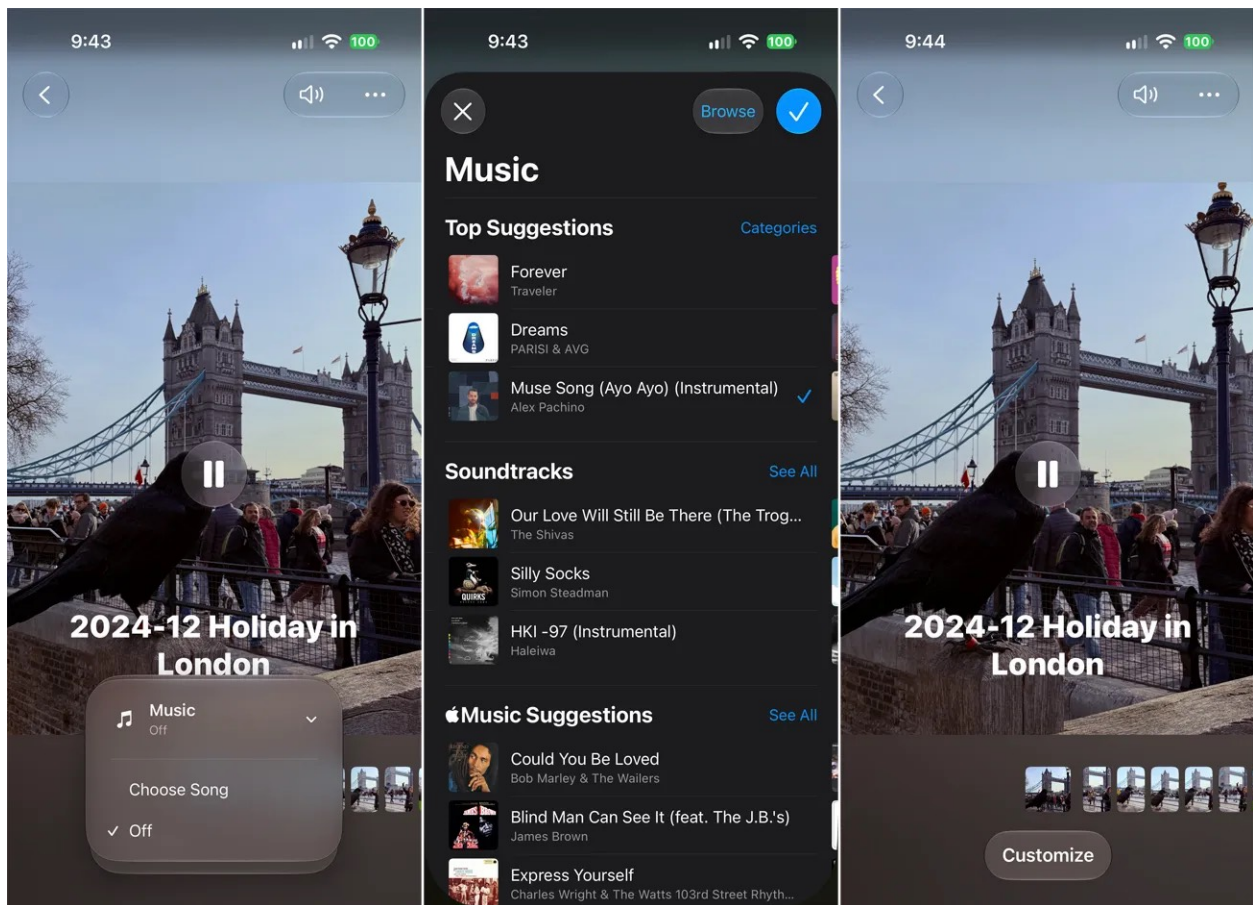
Screenshot by Lance Whitney/ZDNET

Select the drop-down menu for Transition, and you can change the mode to Cut, Crossfade, Fade to Black, Exposure Bleed, Pan, Scale, Rotate, or Wipe. Next, move the handle on the slider for Duration to set how long your slideshow should run. Then tap the time for each photo and move that handle to determine how long each photo should stay on the screen. When done, tap the checkmark at the top.



Screenshot by Lance Whitney/ZDNET

To set the music, tap **Customize** again, select **Music**, and then tap **Choose Song**. Browse through the categories and select the song you wish to accompany your slideshow. Note that some songs require a subscription to Apple Music. When done, tap the checkmark. Tap the **Play** button to view your slideshow with the music you selected.



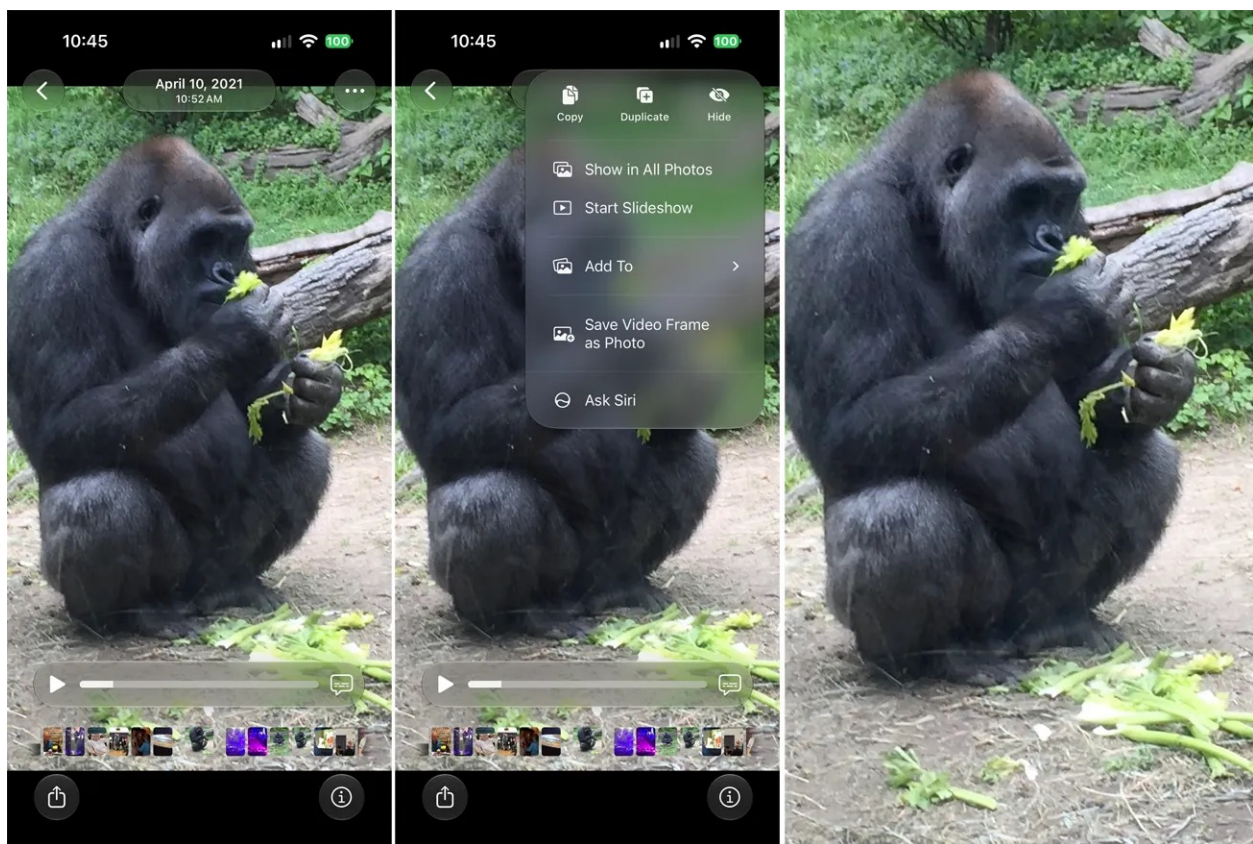
Screenshot by Lance Whitney/ZDNET

## 4. Save a video frame as a still photo

Ever take a video of a scene and then wish you also had shot some still photos of it? I've done that a number of times. Now you can save any frame in a video as a still.

Also: Your iPhone's Action button can trigger a whole folder of shortcuts in iOS 27 – here's how

Open the Photos app and start playing a specific video. Pause the video when it reaches a scene that you'd like to save as a photo. Tap the ellipsis icon at the top and choose "Save Video Frame as Photo." Return to your library. You'll now be able to open that frame as a still picture to edit or otherwise use as you would any other photo.

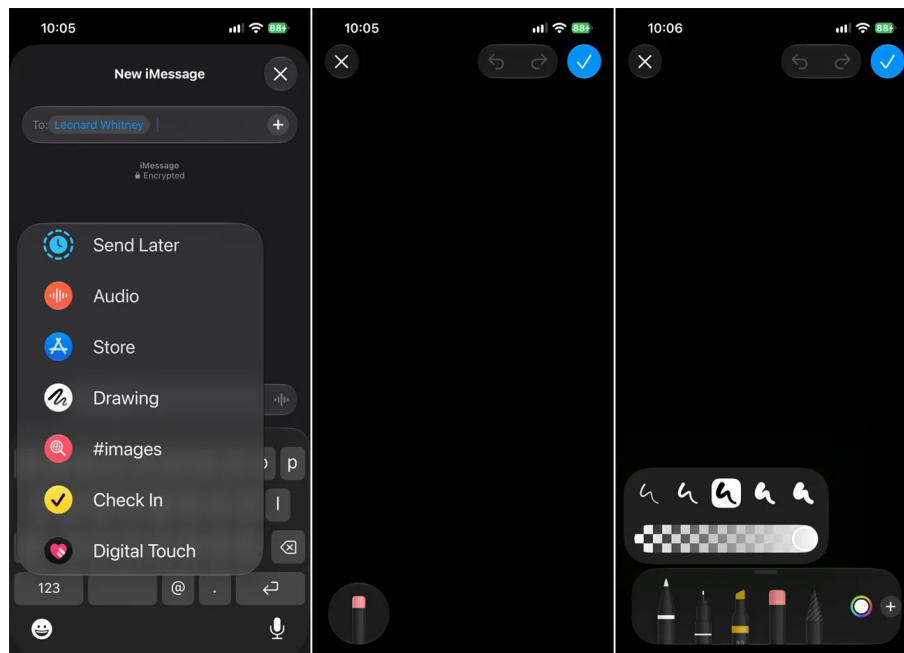


Screenshot by Lance Whitney/ZDNET

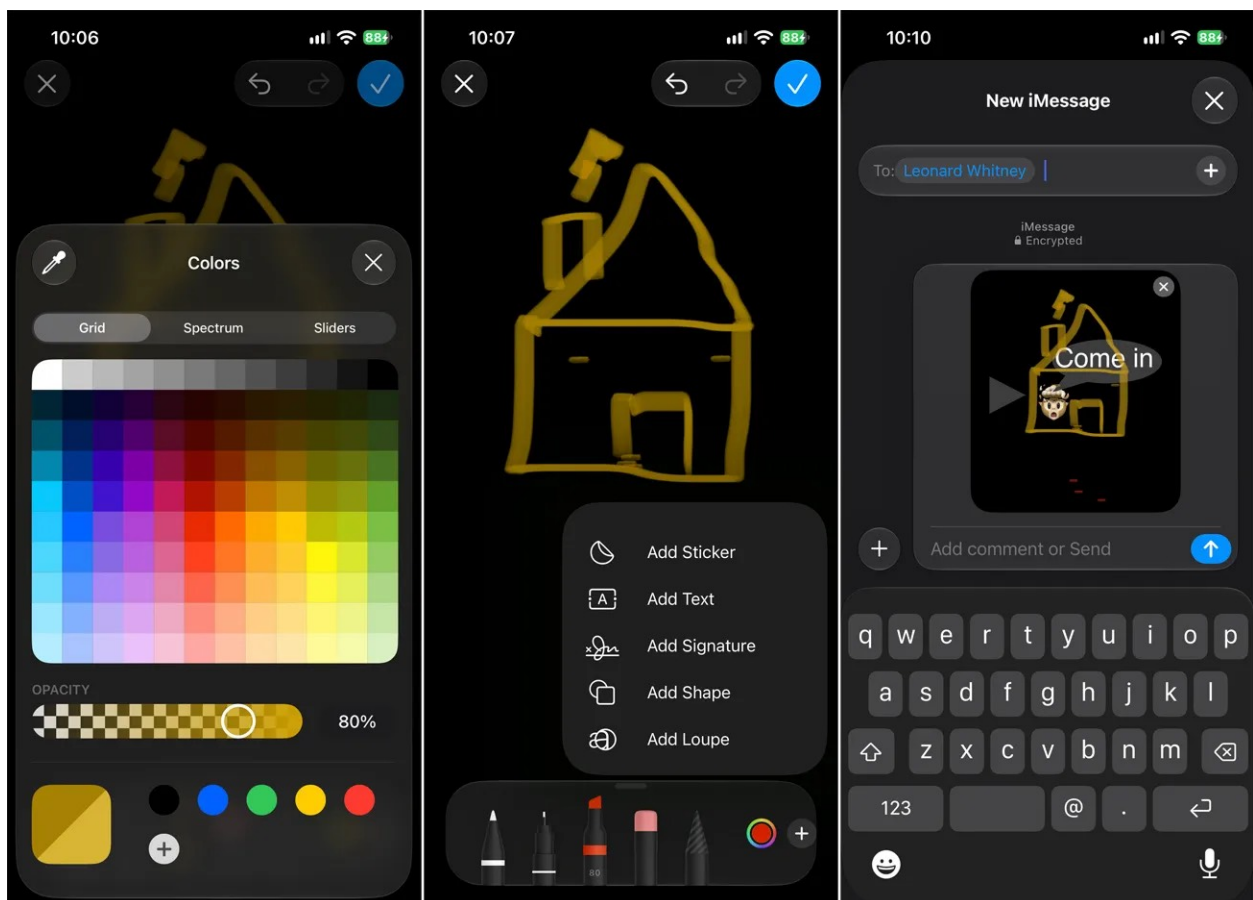
## 5. Create and send a drawing in Messages

Another cool new feature in iOS 27 taps into your drawing skills. You can now draw something directly in the Messages app and send it to the person on the other end. I'm not much of an artist, but I have been enjoying this new method of sharing.

To give this a shot, open Messages and start or resume a text. Tap the plus icon and select Drawing from the menu. Tap the pen icon at the bottom to open the full palette. You can then select a specific pen tool. Press down on any tool to display another menu where you're able to vary the thickness and the strength of the pen.



Tap the circle on the right to change the color. You can also tap the plus icon to open a menu where you can add a sticker, text, signature, shape, or loupe. Tap the Eraser tool to erase anything you don't like. Tap Undo to undo your last action. After you've created your masterpiece, tap the checkmark and then tap the up arrow to send the text to the other person.



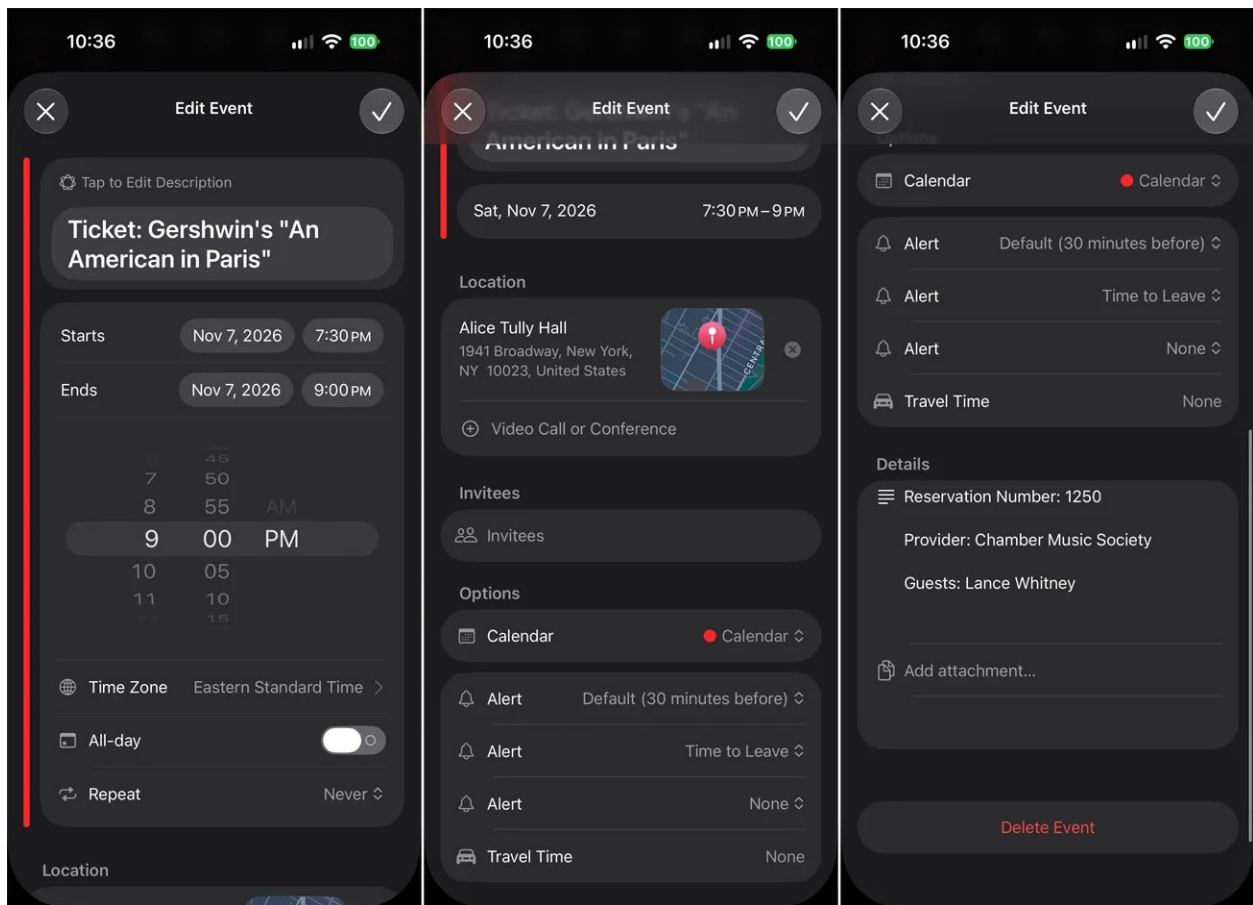
Screenshot by Lance Whitney/ZDNET

## 6. Easily add or edit a calendar event

With iOS 27, Apple has beefed up the screen in the calendar app through which you add or edit an event. You'll see more information on the screen at one time. The different details are now organized under specific headings. Plus, the time no longer points to a specific city but rather a time zone, which makes much more sense. This alone is worth the upgrade for me, as sometimes an event I'd create would list the wrong city for the time, requiring me to change it manually.

Also: Your iPhone just got a hidden anti-scam upgrade in iOS 27: How to enable it

To check this out, open the Calendar app and create or edit an event. You can now more clearly add or modify the relevant details, such as the name, location, invitees, start and end times, and alerts.



Screenshot by Lance Whitney/ZDNET

## 7. Smoothly transition between Wi-Fi and cellular

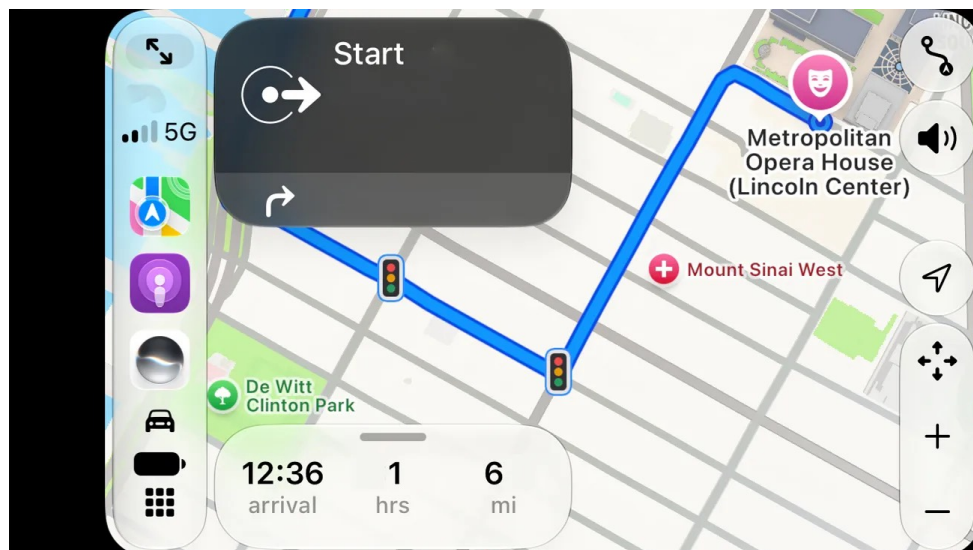
Ever bump into connection problems because your iPhone is stuck trying to figure out when and how to transition from Wi-Fi to cellular? This frequently happens to me when I'm leaving my home to get in my car, and I try to get driving directions. The Wi-Fi signal starts to

weaken, but the handoff to cellular won't work until I drive farther away.

With iOS 27, Apple has promised smoother transitions between Wi-Fi and cellular. I've tried this by setting driving directions as soon as I get in my car after leaving my home. So far, I haven't run into the connection hiccups that I did in the past.

Also: iOS 27.0.1 released: Apple fixes annoying iPhone 18 Pro restart and freezing issues

You don't need to do anything to set this up, as the transition happens automatically. Try it the next time you're leaving your home or another area with Wi-Fi to see if the switch to cellular happens more easily and quickly.



Screenshot by Lance Whitney/ZDNET

**original article:** [https://www.zdnet.com/tech/ios-27-features-older-iphones/?utm\\_source=iterable&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=newsalerts](https://www.zdnet.com/tech/ios-27-features-older-iphones/?utm_source=iterable&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=newsalerts)