

Double-Tap to Screenshot on iPhone: The One-Handed Trick You Didn't Know Existed

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In brief

You can take a screenshot on iPhone by double-tapping the back of the phone - no button combo needed. It's called Back Tap, and it's built into iOS 14 and later on iPhone 8 and newer.

Apple quietly solved one of the most awkward iPhone habits: that two-handed button pinch you do while walking, holding groceries, or balancing a coffee. The better way is Back Tap on iPhone - a built-in accessibility feature that takes a screenshot the moment you double-tap the back glass. Once you get used to it, going back to the button method feels unnecessarily clunky.

What Do You Need Before Back Tap Will Work?

Two things: iOS 14 or later, and an iPhone 8 or newer. Apple only supports Back Tap on that range of devices. If you're on an older model, the option simply won't appear in Settings.

One thing worth clarifying while we're here - if you're on an older iPhone with a Home button that doesn't support Back Tap, the correct screenshot method is Side button + Home button, not Side button + Volume Up. That volume-up combo is for Face ID models only. Apple's own screenshot instructions for iPhone spell this out clearly.

How Does the Traditional Screenshot Method Work?

On Face ID iPhones, press the side button and volume-up button together, then release quickly. On Home button iPhones, press the side button and Home button at the same time. You'll hear the shutter sound if volume is on, and a thumbnail slides into the lower corner.

It works fine. It's just not the smoothest move when you're using the phone one-handed or trying to catch something on screen before it disappears.

Why Is Back Tap Worth Using?

Back Tap turns the rear of your iPhone into a programmable button. You can assign a double tap or triple tap to Screenshot, Control Center, Magnifier, Reachability, Siri, or even a custom Shortcut. Apple tucked it under Accessibility, but most people who use it have nothing to do with accessibility needs - they just like getting things done faster.

The official Back Tap user guide covers the basics, but the real appeal is how naturally it fits into daily use. You can also connect it to a Shortcut from Back Tap if you want to trigger automations. A quick double-tap on the back glass fires whatever action you've assigned - screenshot, flashlight, Siri shortcut, or even opening a specific app.

It's one of those features people ignore for years, then immediately wonder how they lived without.

How to Set Up Double-Tap Screenshot on iPhone (Step-by-Step)

Step 1

Open Settings.

Step 2

Scroll down to Accessibility and tap it.

Step 3

Choose Touch under the Physical and Motor section.

Step 4

Scroll to the bottom and tap Back Tap.

Step 5

Tap Double Tap.

Step 6

Select Screenshot from the action list. Once you see the check mark, you're done.

Close Settings and test it right away. Double-tap the back of the phone - you should see the screenshot thumbnail appear in the corner just like it would with the button combo.

Does Back Tap Work When the iPhone Is Locked?

Usually yes. If the screen is awake and showing the Lock Screen, Back Tap can still trigger a screenshot. That makes it handy for saving a notification, wallpaper layout, or lock-screen widget setup without fumbling for buttons.

Keep in mind that Back Tap is gesture-based, so results can vary slightly depending on your case, how you hold the phone, and whether the screen is already active.

What Should You Do If Back Tap Is Missing from Settings?

If you don't see Back Tap, one of three things is going on: the iPhone model is too old, iOS is out of date, or you're looking in the wrong place. The correct path is Settings > Accessibility > Touch > Back Tap.

If your iPhone supports Back Tap but the option still isn't there, update iOS first. Apple's iPhone support hub is the best place to check your software version or update safely.

What If Back Tap Is On but Screenshots Aren't Triggering?

This is the part most guides skip. Back Tap responds best to a deliberate, brisk tap - not a soft brush, not a press-and-hold. Two quick, firm taps. If it's still not working, try these fixes:

- Remove a thick or rugged case and test again. Heavy-duty cases can dull the gesture enough to make it unreliable.
- Tap higher on the back. Many people get better results around the Apple logo or upper-middle section of the phone.
- Restart the iPhone. Simple fix, but it clears a surprising number of small input glitches.

- Reassign the action temporarily. Set Double Tap to Control Center, test it, then switch back to Screenshot. This confirms the feature is working.

- Update iOS. If gesture recognition feels inconsistent, running the latest build usually helps.

If you'd rather skip the rear tap entirely, Apple also lets you set up on-screen controls through AssistiveTouch custom actions. It's a solid fallback when hardware buttons are worn out or hard to press.

How Should You Use Double Tap and Triple Tap Together?

You don't have to use the entire feature just for screenshots. Assigning Double Tap and Triple Tap to different actions gives you two quick shortcuts instead of one. A few combinations that actually make sense in daily use:

- Double Tap: Screenshot - Triple Tap: Control Center
- Double Tap: Screenshot - Triple Tap: Flashlight
- Double Tap: Screenshot - Triple Tap: Shortcut for Low Power Mode, Notes, or Voice Memo

Put your most-used action on Double Tap, and reserve Triple Tap for something helpful but less time-sensitive. It's a small thing, but it makes the feature feel twice as useful.

A Few Practical Tips Before You Rely on It Daily

- Tap firmly and quickly - think light knock, not press.
- Test with your case both on and off if detection feels inconsistent.
- Give it a few tries before judging it. It usually takes a moment to find the sweet spot on your specific phone.
- If you accidentally trigger it too often while adjusting your grip, move Screenshot to Triple Tap instead. It slows things down just enough.

Is Back Tap Actually Better Than the Button Combo?

For quick one-handed screenshots, yes. Not because the old method is broken - it's not - but because Back Tap removes friction. You don't have to reposition your hand. You don't have to time two buttons perfectly. You just tap and move on.

Once it becomes muscle memory, you'll start reaching for the back of the phone first. And the next time you need to grab a screenshot on your Mac later, you'll probably wish that worked the same way too.

Frequently Asked Questions

How do I take a screenshot on iPhone without pressing buttons?

Use Back Tap. Go to Settings > Accessibility > Touch > Back Tap > Double Tap and select Screenshot. After that, a quick double-tap on the back of your iPhone captures the screen - no buttons required. It works on iPhone 8 and later running iOS 14 or above.

Which iPhones support Back Tap?

Back Tap works on iPhone 8, iPhone 8 Plus, iPhone X, and every model released after that. It requires iOS 14 or later. If you're on an older device or haven't updated iOS, the Back Tap option won't appear in Settings.

Why isn't Back Tap working on my iPhone?

The most common reasons are a thick case absorbing the tap, tapping too softly, or tapping in the wrong spot. Try removing your case, tapping more firmly around the Apple logo area, and restarting your iPhone. If the issue persists, check that your iOS is up to date.

Can I use Back Tap for things other than screenshots?

Yes - Back Tap supports a wide range of actions including Control Center, Flashlight, Magnifier, Reachability, Siri, and custom Shortcuts. You can set Double Tap and Triple Tap to different actions, giving you two separate quick shortcuts from the back of your phone.

Does Back Tap work with a phone case on?

It works with most standard cases, but very thick or rugged cases can interfere with gesture detection. If Back Tap isn't triggering reliably, remove the case and test it. If it works without the case, the case is likely dampening the taps too much.

What's the regular way to take a screenshot on iPhone?

On Face ID iPhones, press the side button and volume-up button at the same time, then release. On iPhones with a Home button, press the side button and Home button together instead. Both methods show a thumbnail preview in the bottom-left corner of the screen.

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