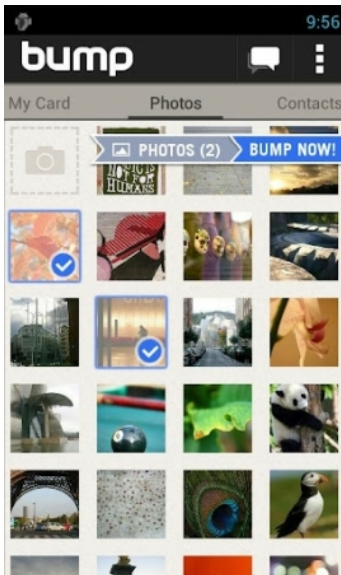# The five handiest smartphone apps ever

Mostly free, and available for both Android and iOS, these apps are truly transformative, making life easier and just plain better.

by Rick Broida
June 1, 2012 2:15 PM PDT

The newly updated Bump makes it awesomely easy to transfer photos to your PC.

(Credit: Bump Technologies)

Technology advances so rapidly these days, it's easy to become jaded, to take for granted the minor miracles we can now accomplish using our phones.

For example, yesterday I met my wife for lunch in an unfamiliar area of town. We were both in the mood for Thai, so I pulled out myiPhone, fired up a certain app, and in seconds found several nearby Thai joints. Ah, but which ones were good and not so good? An abundance of user ratings answered that question.

How amazing is that? And it's just one example of how select apps can make life not just easier, but also better. Below I've rounded up five that I consider both essential and indispensable. Check my picks, then add your own to the list (in the comments, of course).

1. Bump (Android | iOS)
Because I'm not a mover and shaker in the business world (or even the outside world), I rarely had the need to use Bump's cool contact information-swapping capabilities.

But last month, the app got an upgrade that makes it crazy-handy: you can now use Bump to quickly and easily transfer photos to your PC.
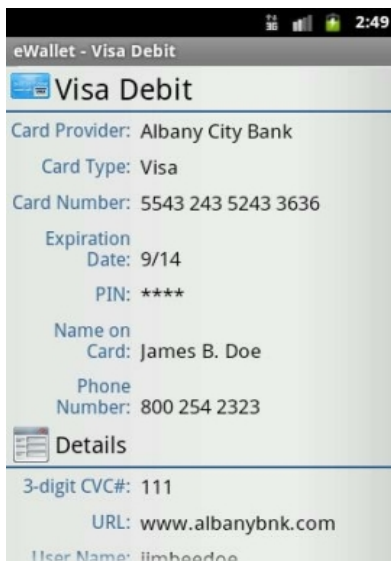
How easily? Nothing-to-install-on-your-PC easily. You just fire up the app, choose the photos you want to transfer, open up the Bu.mp Web site in your browser, and then "bump" your phone on the space bar. Presto: done! What an insanely cool and useful time-saver.

2. Cozi (Android | iOS)
About a year ago I named Cozi one of the best apps you've never tried, and today I consider it one of the best apps, period. Honestly, I don't know how my family ever got along without it.

The app provides a shared calendar that's color-coded for each member of your family. Thus, you can quickly see who's going where, and when. (This is especially helpful for parents who need to know, say, what time soccer practice is being held and who's supposed to pick up the kids.)

There's also a shared shopping list, to-do list, and journal. Put them all together and you've got the ultimate family organizer -- one that works across iDevices, Android devices, and PCs. It even supports outside calendars. Amazingly, Cozi is still free.

eWallet. (Credit: Ilium Software)

3. eWallet ([Android](#) | [iOS](#))
It's no longer possible to go through life without a password manager. There's so much private data to manage: bank accounts, e-mail passwords, frequent-flyer numbers, shopping site info, serial numbers -- the list goes on and on.

The wrong thing to do is stick all this data in a note or memo, where it's difficult to organize and easy for an phone thief to find. The right thing: install a password manager, one that syncs with your PC so you can access your passwords just as easily there as you can on the go.

eWallet may not be the absolute best password manager, but I've used it for years (dating back to when it was a PalmPilot app!), and it has served me well. It's a bit pricey at $9.99 (not including $19.99 for the Windows desktop companion), but the latest version includes built-in iCloud support, meaning it can automatically back up your password database and share it with any other iDevices you own.
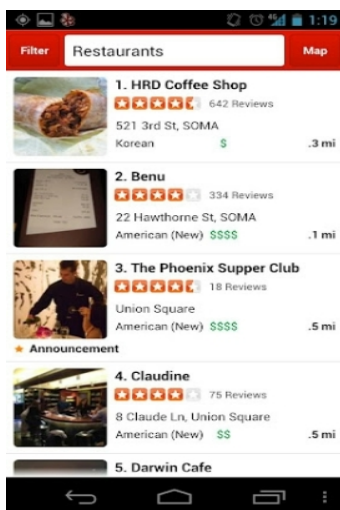
Even if you don't choose eWallet, start using a password manager immediately. You'll be at amazed at how handy it is.

4. Pocket ([Android](#) | [iOS](#))
[Formerly known as Read It Later](#), Pocket clips Web content so you can, well, read it later. Though it's useful in any number of scenarios, I find it best for compiling my own mobile magazine.

For example, I enjoy reading Entertainment Weekly's "Mad Men" recaps -- but not while I'm sitting at my PC trying to work. As soon as I see that the latest recap has been posted, I simply click the Pocket bookmarklet in my browser. Now I can access it anytime, anywhere via the Pocket app, where it's beautifully formatted for mobile viewing.

Pocket is even smart enough to handle articles that continue across multiple pages, meaning you get the entire story, not just the first section.

Yelp finds restaurants (and other businesses) near you and tells you at-a-glance if they're any good. (Credit: Yelp)

5. Yelp ([Android](#) | [iOS](#))
To quote Douglas Adams: "The History of every major Galactic Civilization tends to pass through three distinct and recognizable phases, those of Survival, Inquiry and Sophistication, otherwise known as the How, Why, and Where phases. For instance, the first phase is characterized by the question 'How can we eat?' the second by the question 'Why do we eat?' and the third by the question 'Where shall we have lunch?'"

Oh, how Adams would have loved Yelp. The app answers not only the question "Where shall we have lunch?", but also "Is that restaurant any good?" and "How can I express my displeasure with the waitstaff?"

Yelp finds all manner of nearby businesses, provides user reviews of those businesses, and lets you check in, Foursquare-style, so friends can keep tabs on your dining, shopping, and the like. But mostly it just helps you separate the wheat from the chaff, and for that it's utterly indispensable.

OK, those are my picks. Now let's hear yours. What apps have proven so incredibly handy, they're now an integral part of your daily life? Talk up your faves in the comments.