

Apple Is Changing A Core iPhone Rule — Here's Why That's Important

Summary

Apple's upcoming iOS 26.3 update will introduce a "Transfer to Android" feature, allowing users to switch from iOS to Android without third-party apps. This feature, available on iPhones 11 and later, will transfer photos, messages, notes, apps, and phone numbers, but not Health data, Bluetooth devices, or locked notes. Google is also working on a similar feature for transferring data from Android to iOS, starting with Pixel devices.

David Phelan Dec 29, 2025 at 08:04am EST

Updated Dec. 29 with more analysis of what the new iPhone feature will mean for users.

When Apple releases the next major iPhone update, iOS 26.3, it will have a change that's rare, if not unprecedented — and it could have far-reaching consequences. More on that below. Apple is about to make it smooth and simple to switch from iOS to Android. This was uncovered with the first iOS 26.3 beta, and it's already attracted a lot of attention for what it really means. Here's the latest.



Apple iPhone 17 Pro
dpa/picture alliance via Getty Images

Until now, it's been easy to opt in to iOS, but harder to leave. Not everything transfers in the new system, but it's a significant change for Apple. It will work on all iPhones capable of running iOS 26.3, that is from the iPhone 11 onwards.

[Forbes Google Rushes Out Urgent Update For Over A Million Pixel Phones](#)
[By David Phelan](#)

Transfer to Android, as it's called, is the biggest change coming to the iPhone in the update expected in late January, and

it means that the capability to switch platforms can be done without third-party apps. Apple is building the simplest way to exit iOS yet.

Google, to be clear, has done something similar in the latest Android beta, so that travel in the other direction, from Android to iOS, is equally seamless. More on that below.

“To use this feature, both phones must be updated, and Wi-Fi and Bluetooth should be turned on. The connection is made using a QR code or a session code, depending on the Android phone. The tool works with different Android brands, not just one system,” [MSN](#) reported.

There are detailed instructions in the Settings app in iPhones with the new beta. “Place your Android device next to this iPhone to get connected and begin the transfer process,” it says. With the new transfer tool activated, the iPhone will wirelessly transfer photos, messages, notes, apps, and more to their new Android device as well as the user’s phone number.

But, and here’s why this matters, while this represents an opening up of the ecosystem, it’s still not as simple as transferring data from one iPhone to another.

That’s because, as Apple points out, there are categories of data which are not transferred in this process.

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Apple says that Health data, Bluetooth devices and locked notes are not transferred, at least for now, though both Apple and Google have said that more data types will be added in due course.

Since the change works in both directions, it’s clear that Google is working to achieve similar results at the same time. “The latest Android Canary build is available today,” [9to5Google](#) reported on Dec. 8. “It features work by Apple and Google to make switching between Android and iPhone devices easier. A joint collaboration between the two companies aims to make transferring data between Android and iOS easier. Google and Apple tell us that this will be available during the device setup process.”

While it’s not yet been announced whether this feature will go live on each platform, the iOS update is expected to land at the end of January 2026, or early February.

It’s also not yet clear whether it will become available for all Android phones straight away or, more likely, support will come on a device-by-device basis. Google Pixel phones will be the first Android devices to gain the feature., it seems: “This work is beginning to go live today with Android Canary 2512 (ZP11.251121.010) on all Pixel devices, while this is coming with a future iOS 26 developer beta,” [9to5Google](#) went on.

Apple and Google are responding to a changing world for smartphone platforms, where initiatives like the Digital Markets Act in the EU have led to greater interoperability. Even so, this change will come to iPhones and Android phones globally, not just in Europe.

[*Forbes iPhone 18 Release Date: Is It Really Just Weeks Away, As New Report Claims? By David Phelan*](#)