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We love Android, but rooting your phone can give you the ability to do much more than your phone can do out of the box, whether it's wireless binding, speeding it up with a crackdown, or tweaking the look of your phone with themes. Here's what you need to know about the rooting process, and where to find a guide to your phone. Update: It used to be our always up-to-date rooting guide, which proved too big an enterprise for us to keep up. It was a good try, but seeing as we only have a few Android phones to test, we couldn't reliably keep it up to date. So we've removed links to individual rooting instructions and kept this as a shared resource for those of you who want to get rooted (although many of the old comments still remain). Check out the glossary below to get to know the important terms of rooting, and then check the frequently asked questions for more information about your burning questions. When you're ready, check out the latest resource section on your particular device. We can't give you the instructions ourselves, but hopefully we can give you a boost in the right direction and make the process easier for you. What is rooting, exactly? Root, for those of you who don't know, means giving yourself root permission on your phone. These are similar programs like administrators in Windows, or running a team with sudo in Linux. With a root phone, you can run apps that require access to certain system settings, as well as flash settings on your phone that add all sorts of extra features. If you are on the fence about rooting, check out our 10 reasons to root out your Android phone for some motivation. Android is one of the most open, versatile and customizable mobile operating systems out there.... More There's a ton of different Android phones out there, and while some rooting techniques may work for multiple phones, there's no one-size-fits-all guide to rooting every phone out there. But, there are many things you need to know about rooting before you start, and this guide should help you. Glossary Root TermImage by Andrew Mason (Flickr). As you learn more about the rooting process, you will probably run into a bunch of terms that can be misleading. Here are some of the most important ones and what they mean. If there are any other terms that you think we should add, let us know and we'll put them in! Root: Root means you have root access to the device, meaning it can run a sudo command, and has extended privileges allowing it to run apps such as Wireless Tether or SetCPU. You can eradicate either by installing the Superuser app or blinking A ROM that includes root access. ROM: ROM is a modified version of Android. It may contain additional features, a different kind, a speed boost, or even an Android version that hasn't been released for your phone yet. We won't. ROMs are in depth here, but if you want to use once you're rooted, you can read more about what to do here. Stocks: Stock refers to several different things, depending on the context. When we talk about Stock Android, we mean the Google version that you'll find on Nexus devices, with no extra UI chances like HTC Sense or Samsung TouchWiz. Many ROMs are based on stock Android with some add-ons like CyanogenMod, while others are based on the version that came with your phone. In other cases, Stock can also mean the Android version that came with the phone, for example, if you want to get rid of your ROM and return the phone to the factory setting, you can say that you are back in stock. Core: The core is a component of your operating system that controls the connection between software and hardware. There are many custom cores out there for most phones, many of which can speed up your phone and increase battery life, among other things. Be careful with the cores though, how bad it can cause serious problems with your phone and maybe even brick it. Radio: The radios are part of your phone's firmware. The radio controls cellular data, GPS, Wi-Fi and other things. Sometimes you can find custom radios for your phone that you can flash yourself, but be careful how sometimes it can cause problems. Flash: Blinking essentially means installing something on your device, whether it's a ROM, a core, or a recovery (see below) that comes in the form of an SIP file. Sometimes the rooting process requires a ZIP flashing, sometimes not. Brick: Brick your phone to break it while flashing or other acts. There is always a small risk with a flashing light, and if your phone becomes unable to function, that is, it basically becomes a brick-you-brick phone. The risk is very small, however, and more often than not people say brick when they really mean it is turned on but not loaded properly, which is a very repairable problem. For more information, see the frequently asked questions below. Bootloader: Your loader is the lowest level of software on your phone, running all the code that is needed to run the operating system. Most downloaders are locked, which means you can't flash custom recovery or ROMs. Unlocking the loader is not the root of the phone directly, but it allows you to root out and/or flash custom ROMs if you so desire. Recovery: Your recovery is software on your phone that allows you to back up, flash platforms, and perform other system-level tasks. The default recovery on your phone Do a lot, but you can flash custom recovery like ClockworkMod or TWRP-after you've unlocked the loader, which will give you a lot more control over your device. This is often an integral part of the rooting process. Nandroid: Of most third-party recovery modules, you can do your phone is called nandroid backups. It's essentially a system image of your phone: It's just the way it is right now. So, if you flash something that breaks your phone, you can just blink back to your latest nandroid backup to get everything back to normal. This is different from using an app like Titanium Backup that only backs up apps and/or custom-nandroid to back up the entire system as a single image. Titanium backups are best when switching between ROMs or phones. ADB: ADB means Android Debug Bridge, and it's a command-line tool for your computer that can communicate with an Android device connected to it. This is part of the Android Software Developers Kit (SDK). Many of the root tools you find use ADB, whether you print commands yourself or not. If the instructions require installing SDK and working ADB commands, you won't need to mess with it, you just need to know that this is what most of the tools used for the root of the phone are. S-OFF: HTC phones use a feature called Signature Check in HBOOT, their downloader. By default, your phone has an S-ON, which means it blocks you from flashing radio image code that controls your data, Wi-Fi and GPS connections. Switching your phone to S-OFF allows you to flash new radio stations. Rooting doesn't require S-OFF, but many rooting tools will give you S-OFF in addition to root access, which is nice. RUU, SBF and OPS: ROM Upgrade Utilities (for HTC phones), System Boot Files (for Motorola phones), as well as OPS and PIT files (for Samsung phones) are files directly from the manufacturer that change the software on your phone. RUU and SBF files as manufacturers deliver over-the-air updates, and modders often post leaked RUU and SBF flashing files when updates haven't been released yet. They are also useful when lowering your phone's rating if the rooting method is not yet available for the latest version of the software. You can flash RUUs directly from your HTC phone, but Motorola users will need a Windows program called RSD Lite to flash SBF files, and Samsung users will need a tool called Odin for OPS and PIT flash files (note that each device has a specific version of Odin). You may have heard of how flashing a new ROM can improve your Android experience, but blinking More Often request rooting questionsPeople have a lot of questions about rooting and we hear them all the time. Here are some of the most frequently asked out so you don't have to ask someone else. What is the difference between rooting, unlocking and flashing ROM? It could misleadingly, as three practices are often performed simultaneously. We detail some of these above, but briefly: Unlocking the boot is usually the first step in the process and allows you to flash custom recovery. From there, you can give yourself a root root or a flash rom. Root access is not required for the ROM flash, but almost all custom DISKS will come with built-in root access. Note that when we talk unlock in this guide, we mean unlocking the download rather than unlocking the phone to use another carrier, which is a completely different thing and does not always require hacking (since you can often purchase carrier unlocked phones directly from Google or elsewhere). Can I unwind myself my phone? Yes. If you decide that you don't like to be rooted, you can often find instructions on the ruin of your phone as well. Usually it involves flashing RUU, SBF, or something like that to bring back the phone's truly customized stock. Is rooting illegal? No. Technically, it was once, but exceptions to the DCMA made it legal for most phones (but not necessarily tablets). Either way, it's hard to imagine who's actually enforcing this rule (just like copying DVDs for your personal use). Will the root will revoke my warranty? Yes. Unlocking the loader will void the warranty on your phone, even if your manufacturer provides a way for you to do so. However, if you need a warranty service for hardware issues, sometimes you can take off your phone and take it to service with none wiser. However, some phones have a digital switch that flips over when you unlock a phone that is very difficult or impossible to return, so your research is before unlocking if you want to keep the warranty. Maybe rooting bricks is my phone? It's possible, but unlikely. As long as you follow the instructions well, you probably won't brick anything (but we are not responsible yadda yadda yadda yadda). Flashing custom cores and radio stations is a little more risky than just rooting or flashing RUM, but then again, if you follow the directions you should be fine. Keep in mind that brickwork means that your phone means that it won't turn on or function at all, if you get stuck in a download cycle or download straight to recovery, your phone is not bricked and it can be fixed. Dear Lifehacker, rooting my Android phone went well, but I tried flashing custom ROM and now I read moreAre any phones unrootable? That's a tough question. In the past, many manufacturers have tried to make unrootable phones with tighter protection (such as the Droid X), but they tend to still be rootable in some way, shape or form. A more likely scenario is that if you get a new phone or phone that has had a recent update that the root exploit has not yet In this case, you may have to wait a few months before you can eradicate it. This is one of the reasons why we recommend buying a Nexus.If you are an Android geek, you are probably sick of hearing about the fragmentation problem of Android. Read moreWill I still get over-the-air (OTA) updates? Will their download break my root? If you eradicate your phone without flashing a custom ROM, then you'll probably still get an OTA OTA from your carrier, and they will break your root. We strongly recommend not to download these updates, as you may not be able to re-eradicate your phone for a while after the update. Alternatively, you can use an app like OTA Rootkeeper that will help you keep your root access (although it doesn't work with every version of Android). If you flash custom ROM, you won't get an OTA update from your carrier. You can, likeaeaver, receive notifications to update your particular drive. They are safe to download. Will my phone speed up the rooting? Not by itself - all rooting does is give you root access. However, this opens up the possibility for other settings that can speed up the old phone. If you resist the temptation to switch to new, faster equipment, or worth a year... Read moreAre custom ROMs really needed on a stock phone like the Nexus? Are you sure! ROMs are useful for more than just getting Android stock-they add a lot of useful features, get updates even though Google left your phone, and a lot more. Finish the check this article for more. Dear Lifehacker, I have the roots of my Galaxy Nexus in your guide, but now everyone is telling me that I should... More, can you tell me how to stamp out my insert phone model here? No. Please don't email us asking for this. We only have a few phones and therefore probably don't know how to root yours. Check out the section below to find out where to find information on how to root out your phone. What to do after my roots are rooted? Glad you asked! Check out our 10 reasons to eradicate your Android phone for some inspiration as well as all our messages regarding Android Rooting.Where to find rooting techniques and tools so now we get the good stuff: actually rooting your phone. Unfortunately, every phone is different, and rooting methods change every time the phone's software is updated. With so many Android phones out there, it has become impossible for us to actually list rooting instructions here, especially because we only have a few different phones ourselves. Fortunately, now that you know something about rooting, you are in a much better position to understand some of the other instructions out there. So, here are a few places where you'll find guides, ROM and other information about rooting your particular phone. XDA Developers forums are the number one place for looking for information on your phone. This is where all the best hackers and tweakers gather to discuss phones, share links and guides, create rooting tools, and more. Go to forums, find a device and poke in different sub-forums for the phone. You have to find a number of threads that directly affect information on how to root out your phone, what ROMs and cores are available, and more. And, if in doubt, ask other users! Phandroid forums (aka Android forums) are not as popular as XDA, but they have always done a very good job of the job rooting information. It's a good place to start. Go to the forum for your device and look for the All Things Root sub-forum. RootzWiki may not be as popular as it was paradise, but there is still good information to be had on these forums, especially regarding new ROMs, cores, and other things on the development side. CyanogenMod Wiki: CyanogenMod, one of the most popular ROM out there, has a fantastic wiki with a ton of information on various devices. Even if you don't plan on flashing CyanogenMod (or any ROM, for that matter), you can often find information on how to root out the phone as part of their devices specific instructions for installing CyanogenMod, so it's worth checking out. Try any or all of the above sources and see what you can find. Once you have found a forum for your phone, search around rooting a guide or rooting tool. Make sure this applies to the current version of the software and try it out. If you have any questions you can ask on the forums, but be sure to read as much as you can before you do so, since your question has probably already been answered elsewhere. Armed with knowledge in this glossary and frequently asked questions, along with the right rooting method on these forums, you should be well on your way to a better phone. Good luck! Image caption Remixes by VLADGRIN (Shutterstock). (Shutterstock).

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