

Android with TalkBack

An Introduction to Voice and Video Calling



This tutorial has been designed to introduce you to making Voice and Video calls in WhatsApp, in conjunction with TalkBack on your Android Smartphone.

The purpose of this tutorial is to make you comfortable at using those common voice and video calling features in WhatsApp, which all of your friends and family are likely to be using!

Throughout this tutorial, the layout of new and important screens have been described in detail. This is in an attempt to give you the best chance of understanding the options available.

Assumptions

Certain assumptions have been made in the creation of this tutorial. They are as follows:

- The latest version of WhatsApp has been downloaded and installed onto your Android Smartphone. At the time of writing (16 September 2025), the latest version is 2.25.22.80.
- Your Smartphone is running Android 15 or later.
- Your Smartphone is running TalkBack 15 or later.
- Your Smartphone is connected to the internet.
- You are familiar with the common navigation gestures used with Talkback.
- You are familiar at entering text using the Virtual keyboard.
- The Google keyboard (GBoard), is the default keyboard.

Note 1: The instructions given in this tutorial have been created using a Samsung Galaxy S21 Smartphone, running Android version 15. If you are using a non-Samsung device and/or a later version of Android, you may find some minor differences. However, it isn't anticipated that you will!

TalkBack Terms and Gestures You Should Know

A number of TalkBack terms and gestures are mentioned in this tutorial. They are as follows:

Current Item. This is not a gesture! It is the name given to the item which contains the TalkBack cursor. This is the item which TalkBack last announced.

Explore Gesture, One Finger Drag or Slide. This gesture allows you to find out what is on the screen. As you drag or slide your finger around, TalkBack reads the item which is under your finger. This will become the Current Item.

Next Item Gesture, One Finger Swipe Right. This gesture moves the TalkBack cursor to the next item on the screen and makes it the Current Item. TalkBack then reads the associated information with this item.

Previous Item Gesture, One Finger Swipe Left. This gesture moves the TalkBack cursor to the previous item on the screen and makes it the Current Item. TalkBack then reads the associated information with this item.

Activate Gesture, One Finger Double Tap. This gesture activates the Current Item.

Mute Speech Gesture, Two Finger Triple Tap and Hold. Useful for listening to audio without TalkBack talking over it. To unmute the speech, perform the Three Finger Triple tap and Hold gesture again.

Reading Controls gesture, Three Finger Swipe Right or Three Finger Swipe Left. This is used to cycle through the available reading and navigation controls. This is similar to the VoiceOver Rotor on iOS devices.

Set Mode Gesture, One Finger Swipe Up or Down. This gesture is used to cycle through the various options associated with the current Reading Control setting.

Launching WhatsApp

To launch WhatsApp, first locate its icon on the Home Screen of your device and make it the Current Item. Then, perform the Activate gesture, a One Finger Double Tap. Upon doing this, the WhatsApp application will open a second or two later. Alternatively, if you have Gemini or the Google Assistant enabled, you can simply ask it to "open WhatsApp".

Description of the WhatsApp Application Layout

WhatsApp uses tabs, to divide the application into several screens that are equal in hierarchy, in much the same way that tabs divide a notebook into sections. A tab is a button-like control, which when activated, changes the screen to display the options applicable to the tab name.

In WhatsApp, the tabs are situated at the bottom of the application. From left to right, the tabs are: "Chats", "Updates", "Communities" and "Calls". By default, the Chats tab will be selected. Strangely, the heading at the top of the screen is "WhatsApp", when the Chats tab is displayed, rather than "Chats".

Making Voice Calls

WhatsApp voice calling is free, even when making international calls. However, the calls do use your Wi-Fi connection or mobile data plan, so there are potentially some costs involved. But compared to voice calls made through your mobile network or phone provider, these data charges are generally more favourable.

WhatsApp calls are made via the internet. That means a call will use your data plan, not your network's voice calling ability. However, you can't make calls to numbers that aren't connected to WhatsApp, which makes it slightly different from a true VoIP (Voice Over Internet Protocol) service.

There are a few ways of calling people in WhatsApp. For completeness, each method is described as follows:

Using the Chat History Screen to Make a Call

To call a person using the Chat History screen, follow these steps:

Note 2: the following instructions assume you are calling an individual, and not a member of a group.

1. Locate the "Chats" tab, situated at the bottom left corner of the screen, and make it the Current Item. Then, perform the Activate gesture.
2. Locate the Chat from the person you wish to call and make it the Current Item. Then, perform the Activate gesture. Upon doing this, the Chat history screen will be displayed.
3. Locate the "Voice call" button, situated towards the top right corner of the screen, and make it the Current Item. Then, perform the Activate gesture. Upon doing this, a popup window will be displayed, headed "Start voice call".

4. Locate the "Call" button and make it the Current Item. Then, perform the Activate gesture. Upon doing this, the call will be placed and the Voice Call screen will be displayed. The Voice Call screen will be described in detail later in this tutorial.

Note 3: You may receive a message which states "Allow WhatsApp to make and manage voice calls". If this is the case, locate the "Allow" button and make it the Current Item. Then, perform the Activate gesture.

Using the Calls Screen to Make a Call

Another way of making a Voice call, is to switch to the "Calls" screen.

To do this, locate the Calls tab, situated at the bottom right corner of the screen, and make it the Current Item. Then, perform the Activate gesture. Upon doing this, the "Calls" screen will be displayed.

Description of the Call Screen

The Calls screen provides options for calling people you have communicated with before using WhatsApp. You can also add people to a list of Favourites.

At the top left corner of the Calls screen, you will find the "Calls" heading, which denotes the name of the active tab. To the right of the heading, situated at the top right corner, you will find two buttons labelled "Search" and "More options". When the Search button is activated, a search edit box is displayed and the Virtual keyboard becomes available at the bottom of the screen. Using the keyboard, you can type the first few characters of the person you wish to call and a list of suggested names will be displayed, just beneath the Text Field.

When the More options button is activated, a popup window is displayed consisting of two options. These are "Clear call log" and "Settings". When the Clear call log button is activated, an Alert message is displayed asking if you are sure you want to clear your entire call

log. There are two options, "OK" and "Cancel". When the Settings button is activated, the WhatsApp Settings screen is displayed. Here, you will find all of the available settings for WhatsApp. Searching for people will be discussed soon. The use of the Call Log and More options buttons are beyond the scope of this tutorial and won't be discussed further.

Note 4: If you activate the More options button and decide you don't want any of the available options, you will need to activate the "Android Back" button, typically situated to the left or right of the Android "Home" button, to close this screen, as there is no way of closing it otherwise.

A little further down the screen, you will find the "Favourites" heading and beneath this, a button labelled "Add Favourite". The use of Favourites is beyond the scope of this tutorial and won't be discussed further.

Beneath the Favourites heading, you will find the "Recent" heading and beneath this, a list of those people you have called, or have called you recently. The list consists of multiple rows, with three buttons per row.

The first button in the row contains the name or number of the person you last called, or who called you, whether the call was outgoing or incoming and the date of the call. The second button in the row, is the "View Profile" button, which contains the name of the person who called you, or who you called. When this button is activated, a screen is displayed which contains the photograph of the contact (if one has been added), as well as the mobile number of the contact. You will also find a button for messaging the contact and an Info button, which opens the contact card for that person. This screen doesn't have a "Back" button, so you will have to use the Android "Back" button, to close this screen. The third button in the row is labelled "Start audio call". This button also contains the name of the person who called you, or who you called. When this button is activated, an audio call is made to that person.

At the end of the list of Recent calls, you will find a text label which reads "Your personal messages are end to end encrypted", and beneath this label, an associated link, which when activated, opens a screen which displays information about encryption and how it works with WhatsApp.

This concludes the description of the Calls screen.

To call a person using the Calls screen, follow these steps:

1. In the Calls screen, locate the "Recent" heading. A quick method of doing this is to perform the **Reading Controls** gesture, a Three Finger Swipe Right or Left, until TalkBack says "Headings", then perform the Set Mode gesture, a One Finger Swipe Down to move to the "Recent" heading.
2. Now, perform the Next Item gesture, until you have located the "Start audio call" button associated with the person you want to call, and make it the Current Item.
3. Finally, perform the Activate gesture. Upon doing this, the call will be placed and the Voice call screen will be displayed. This screen will be described soon.

Calling a Person Who Isn't in the Recent List

If the person you wish to call isn't available in the list of recent calls, you will have to make a new voice call. To do this, follow these steps:

1. Locate the "Calls" tab, situated at the bottom right corner of the screen, and make it the Current Item. Then, perform the Activate gesture. Upon doing this, the Calls screen will be displayed.
2. In the Calls screen, locate the "New call" button and make it the Current Item. For reference, this button is situated at the bottom right corner of the screen, just above the Calls tab item.

3. Perform the Activate gesture. Upon doing this, the New Call screen (described next), will be displayed.

Description of the New Call screen

At the top left corner of the New call screen, you will find the "Back" button. Activating this button results in the new call being cancelled and you being returned to the Calls screen.

To the right of the back button, you will find the "Search name or number" edit box, which you can use to narrow down the list of people you want to add to the call. To the right of the edit field, situated at the top right corner of the screen, you will find the "Show dial pad keyboard" button. This button is used to switch between the Virtual keyboard and the traditional telephone keypad. When this button is activated, its name changes to become "Show full keyboard".

Beneath the Search name or number edit box, you will find a text label which reads "Add up to 31 people". As the text label implies, it is possible to call up to 31 people at a time. Calling multiple people is beyond the scope of this tutorial and won't be discussed further.

A little further down the screen, you will find a series of five buttons. The first of these is the "New call link" button. When this button is activated, a screen is displayed in which you can choose to share a link to the call with someone else who is using WhatsApp. Sharing links to calls is beyond the scope of this tutorial and won't be discussed further.

Beneath the New call link button, you will find the "Call a number" button. When this button is activated, a screen is displayed which contains a traditional telephone keypad. You can use this to directly call someone. Beneath the "Call a number" button, you will find the "New contact" button. When this button is activated, a screen is displayed, which allows you to create and save the details for a

new contact. Making calls using the telephone keypad and adding contacts is beyond the scope of this tutorial and won't be discussed further.

Beneath the New contact button, you will find the "Add new contact via QR code" button. When this button is activated, a screen is displayed in which you have a number of options for scanning a QR code. Using QR codes is beyond the scope of this tutorial and won't be discussed further.

The final button is the "Schedule call" button. When this button is activated, a screen is displayed in which you can create a calendar entry for your call. This can include the type of call you wish to make (audio or video). Scheduling calls is beyond the scope of this tutorial and won't be discussed further.

Beneath the series of buttons, is the "Frequently Contacted" heading and beneath this, you will find a list of those people you have contacted, or who have contacted you, during the past few days.

At the end of the list of names under the Frequently Contacted heading, you will find a the "Invite to WhatsApp" heading and beneath this, a list of those contacts you have on your device who aren't currently using WhatsApp. Associated with each name, you will find a button labelled "Invite ".

This concludes the description of the New call screen.

4. Locate the "Search name or number" edit box and make it the Current Item. Then, perform the Activate gesture. Upon doing this, the Virtual keyboard will be displayed at the bottom of the screen.
5. Now type the first two or three characters of the person you want to call. Upon doing this, a list of names, containing the characters you typed, will be displayed just beneath the edit box.

Note 5: The names will be displayed under a heading which reads "Search results".

6. Locate the person you wish to call and make their name the Current Item. Then, perform the Activate gesture. Upon doing this, their name will appear directly beneath the edit box. The name will be selected, which indicates it is one of the people to be added to the call. This isn't relevant if you are only calling one person, but can be handy to know if you are calling multiple people. To deselect a name, thus removing it from the call, locate the name and make it the Current Item, then perform the Activate gesture.

Note 6: When a name has been selected to call, two additional buttons appear on the screen, just beneath the Search name or number edit box. These buttons are labelled "Start video call" and "Start voice call".

7. Locate the "Start voice call" button and make it the Current Item. Then, perform the Activate gesture. Upon doing this, the call will be placed and the Voice call screen will be displayed.

The Voice Call Screen

The Voice calls screen is the screen which is displayed when you place a voice call. It is similar to the screen which is displayed when you make a regular telephone call, using the Phone app. However, there are some major differences.

Description of the Voice Call screen

At the top left corner of the Voice call screen, you will find the "Minimise call" button. When this button is activated, the Call screen is reduced to a toolbar at the top of the screen. To the right of the Minimise button, situated at the centre of the screen, you will find a label which displays the name of the person you are calling and how long you have been on the call.

At the top right corner of the screen, you will find the "Add person to voice call" button. This button allows you to add another person to the call. Adding other people to voice calls is beyond the scope of this tutorial and won't be discussed further.

In the centre of the screen, is a large circle, which displays the photo of the person you are calling, if one has been added to their profile. This is known as the "Avatar".

At the bottom of the Voice call screen, you will find five buttons. From left to right these are "More", "Camera", "Speaker phone", "Microphone" and "Leave call".

If any of the Camera, Speaker phone or Microphone buttons are turned off, TalkBack announces "Turn X on", where X is the name of the button, when the button is the Current Item. Conversely, if any of the buttons are turned on, TalkBack announces "Turn X off", where X is the name of the button, when the button is the Current Item. To toggle between On and Off, perform the Activate gesture.

The Camera button, when toggled on, turns the front-facing camera on your device on. This allows the other person on the call to see you. The Speaker button is used to switch between discreet, whereby you hold the phone next to your ear in order to hear the other person, and loud speaker, whereby you can hear the other person out of the loud speaker on your device. The Mute button is used to temporarily turn the microphone off. This will allow you to talk to someone in the same room as you, without the other person on the call hearing you.

This concludes the description of the Voice call screen.

Switching to a Video Call

Whilst on an audio call, you can switch to a video call by locating the "Camera" button and making it the current Item. Then, you can perform the Activate gesture. Upon doing this, the camera will be activated. At

this stage, the person on the other end of the call won't be able to see you straight-away if they are using an iPhone. However, they will have exactly the same options available on their screen. All they would need to do is to activate the Camera button and the call will change to be a video call! If the other person is using an Android device, their camera will automatically be turned on and you will be able to see them and they will be able to see you.

Making Video Calls

Video calls are made in the same way as Audio calls, with the only difference being the camera will be automatically enabled when the call is placed. When the person at the other end answers the call, their camera will also automatically be enabled, if they are using an Android device. If they are using an iPhone, they will need to enable the Camera button in order to see you.

Answering an Incoming Voice or Video Call

When a WhatsApp call comes in, a popup window, displayed as a banner, is displayed at the top of the screen.

TalkBack will announce "Incoming call", followed by the name of the person/number calling you. You have two options available, "Answer call" and "Decline".

Locate the banner at the top of the screen, then perform a combination of the Next Item and Previous Item gestures until you have located the "Answer call" button. Then, perform the Activate gesture to answer the call. Alternatively, locate and activate the "decline" button to decline the call.

Ending an Audio or Video Call

Ending WhatsApp audio and video calls is done in the same way. To end a call, locate the "Leave" button, situated towards the bottom right

corner of the screen and make it the current Item. Then perform the Activate gesture.

This is the end of the introduction to voice and video calling in WhatsApp, in conjunction with TalkBack. If necessary, go through this tutorial again, to help reinforce your learning.

If you require further information on the subject of using WhatsApp in conjunction with TalkBack, contact the author, Gary Eady, using the following email address.

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