

WhatsApp with VoiceOver

An Introduction to Voice and Video Calling



This tutorial has been designed to introduce you to Voice and Video calling in WhatsApp, in conjunction with VoiceOver on your Apple iPhone.

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 installed onto your Apple iPhone and you have linked your mobile number to WhatsApp. At the time of writing (26 September 2025), the latest version of WhatsApp is 2.25.22.83.
- Your iPhone is running iOS 18.5 or later.
- Your iPhone is connected to the internet.
- You are familiar with the common navigation gestures used with VoiceOver.
- VoiceOver hints are turned on.
- You are familiar at entering text using the Virtual keyboard.

Note 1: The instructions given in this tutorial have been created using an iPhone 15 Pro, running iOS version 18.5. If you are using an earlier version of iOS, you may find some minor differences. However, it isn't anticipated that you will!

VoiceOver Terms and Gestures You Should Know

A number of VoiceOver 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 VoiceOver cursor. This is the item which VoiceOver 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, VoiceOver reads the item which is under your finger and it becomes the Current Item.

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

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

Activate Gesture, One Finger Double Tap. This gesture activates the Current Item. This is the equivalent of a sighted person tapping an item.

Mute Speech gesture, Three Finger Double Tap. Temporarily turns off VoiceOver speech. Useful for listening to audio without VoiceOver talking over it. To Unmute speech, perform a Three Finger Double Tap again.

Dial Rotor Gesture, Two Finger Twist. This gesture cycles through the various settings in the Rotor. To make this gesture successfully, place your thumb and your first finger on the screen, slightly apart, and then make a twist motion, a little like unscrewing the lid on a bottle of lemonade!

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

Start/Stop Action gesture, Two Finger Double Tap. This gesture is used in specific situations to: answer and hang up a telephone call, start and stop playback of music or videos, Start and stop the stopwatch, start and stop video recording, start and stop voice memo recordings and start and stop dictation mode. Apple refers to the Start/Stop Action gesture as the Magic Tap.

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 Siri 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: "Updates", "Calls", "Communities", "Chats" and "Settings". By default, the Chats Tab will be selected and the heading at the top of the screen will be "Chats".

Making Voice Calls

WhatsApp voice calling is free, even when making international calls, providing you are using a Wi-Fi connection. However, if you are using your mobile data plan, there could potentially be 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 suggested 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 near the bottom right corner of the screen, and make it the Current Item. Then, perform the Activate gesture.
2. In the Chats screen, 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 at the top right corner of the screen, 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 later in this tutorial.

Using the Calls Tab to Make a Call

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

To do this, from the Chats screen, locate the "Calls" Tab, situated near the bottom left 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 Calls 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 "Clear" button. When this button is activated, an Alert message is displayed. This contains two buttons - "Clear call history" and "Cancel". If you activate the "Clear call history" button, all of the calls you have made and received will be cleared.

To the right of the "Clear" button, situated at the centre of the screen, you will find a heading which reads "Calls", which denotes the name of the active tab. At the top right corner of the Calls screen, you will find the "New call" button. This button will be discussed shortly.

Just beneath the "Calls" heading, you will find a "Search" Text Field. Activating the Text Field results in a Virtual keyboard being displayed 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.

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 two buttons per row. At the left of the row is a button, which 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. At the right of the row, you will find the "More info" button. When this button is activated, the "Contact info" screen is displayed. This contains the photograph of the contact (if one has been added), as well as the mobile number of the contact. You will also find buttons for messaging, voice calling or video calling the contact. There is a lot more information in this screen, which won't be discussed further. To close the Contact Info screen, locate the "Calls, Back" button, situated at the top left corner of the screen and make it the Current Item. Then, perform the Activate gesture.

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.

Finally, running down the right-hand side of the screen, you will find a Vertical Scroll Bar. When you make this the Current Item, VoiceOver says "X pages, Y percent", where X is the number of pages of information in the screen and Y is the percentage you are through those pages. You can perform a One Finger Swipe Down to move through the items on the screen 10% at a time, or a One Finger Swipe Up to move through the items in the opposite direction, again 10% at a time. However, as you move through the pages, VoiceOver doesn't announce anything other than the percentage, so you will have to use the Explore gesture, to find out where you are.

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 Dial Rotor gesture until VoiceOver says "Headings", then perform a One Finger Swipe Down to move to the "Recent" heading.
2. Now, perform the Next Item gesture, until you have located the button which contains the name of 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 suggested steps:

1. Locate and activate the "Calls" Tab, situated towards the bottom left corner of the screen. Upon doing this, the Calls screen will be displayed.
2. In the Calls screen, locate the "New call" button, situated at the top right corner of the screen, and make it the Current Item.
3. Perform the Activate gesture. Upon doing this, the "New call" screen will be displayed.

Description of the New Call screen

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

To the right of the Cancel button, you will find the "New call" heading. When this is the Current Item, VoiceOver announces "zero selected out of maximum of 31". As the announcement 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.

Beneath the New call heading, you will find the "Search" Text Field, which you can use to narrow down the list of people you want to add to the call.

A little further down the screen, you will find a series of four unlabelled 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.

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 unlabelled buttons, you will find the "Frequently Contacted" heading and beneath this, you will find a list of those people you have contacted, or have contacted you most often.

Further down the screen, you will find a list of all contacts you have on your iPhone, who are using WhatsApp. The names are organised by heading, starting with "A", "B", "C" and so on. Beneath each heading, you will find those names starting with that letter of the alphabet.

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

Finally, running down the right edge of the screen, you will find a Section Index bar. When this is the Current Item, you can perform a One Finger Swipe Down anywhere on the Screen to move through the contacts list one heading at a time. A One Finger Swipe Down will take you from contacts starting with "A" to those that start with "B", from "B" to "C" and so on. Performing a One Finger Swipe Up will move you backwards one letter at a time. The swipes don't have to be directly on the Section Index bar, they can be performed anywhere on the screen, once it is the Current Item!

This concludes the description of the New call screen.

4. Locate the "Search" Text Field 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 possible names will be displayed just beneath the edit box.

Note 3: The names will be broken down into two groups, with each group having a heading. The first group of names are listed under a heading which reads "Contacts on WhatsApp". The second group of names are listed under a heading which reads "Invite to WhatsApp".

6. Locate the person you wish to call and make their name the Current Item. Then, perform the Activate gesture. Upon doing this, VoiceOver will say "One selected out of a maximum of 31" and the 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 4: 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 call 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 shows 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 People" 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, you will find a large circle, which displays the photo of the person you are calling, if one has been added to their profile.

At the bottom of the Voice call screen, you will find a row of five buttons. From left to right these are "More", "Camera", "Speaker", "Mute" and "Leave call". The Camera, Speaker and Mute buttons have the current setting also displayed on their buttons. By default, the camera will be turned off, the speaker will be turned on and the mute button will be toggled to the off position.

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, thus changing your voice call into a video call. Essentially

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 iPhone.

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.

Answering an Incoming Voice or Video Call

When a WhatsApp call comes in, a screen will be displayed, which contains the name of the caller at the top centre and an "Answer call" button, situated towards the bottom right corner of the screen. To answer the call, locate the "Answer call" button and make it the Current Item. Then, perform the Activate gesture. Alternatively, you can perform the Start/Stop Action gesture, a Two Finger Double Tap, to answer the call instead.

Tip! When on a voice or video call, it might be an idea to mute VoiceOver's speech, as sometimes, it can interfere with the call. To mute VoiceOver's speech, perform a Three Finger Double Tap. Perform the same gesture again to turn the speech back on!

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. Alternatively, you can perform the Start/Stop Action gesture, a Two Finger Double Tap, to end the call instead.

This is the end of the introduction to Voice and Video calling in WhatsApp, in conjunction with VoiceOver. 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 VoiceOver, contact the author, Gary Eady, using the following email address.

technology@sightforsurrey.org.uk