

Jailbreaking an iPhone

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What is jailbreaking?

Jailbreaking involves modifying the operating system of an iPhone to remove manufacturer restrictions. The United States Copyright Office ruled on July 26, 2010, that jailbreaking does not violate copyright, so long as it is done to install legally obtained (e.g., not pirated) software. See this *New York Times* article for more information nytimes.com/2010/07/27/technology/27iphone.html.

Why would I want to jailbreak?

Apple has been criticized for its opaque and overly restrictive software approval system. By jailbreaking, users gain access to a wide range of software unapproved by Apple.

What kinds of software will become available to me?

Some users install a program called **Winterboard** (free), to change the look of their iPhone interface. Once Winterboard is installed, users can select from dozens of themes to personalize their iPhone.

People also jailbreak to enable a process called tethering, in which an iPhone shares its mobile Internet connection with another device (like an iPad or a

notebook computer). One popular tethering program is called **MyWi** (\$20). Using tethering programs may violate your agreement with AT&T, which recently began to offer tethering as an add-on service.



Themes like this one called **Blueprint** give a striking new look to the iPhone's interface.

Another useful application popular on jailbroken iPhones is **LockInfo** (\$5), a product which replaces the basic iPhone unlock screen with one that shows emails, weather forecasts and much more.

Another popular software package is called **SBInfo** (free), which allows you to quickly toggle on and off services like WiFi, Bluetooth and telephone. Turning off Bluetooth to save battery life, for example, is dramatically faster than going through the iPhone Settings.

Many other types of applications are available for jailbroken iPhones – both commercial and free.

Where do I find these applications?

The main method of locating and installing applications is to use a special program called **Cydia** (free), which serves as the unofficial iTunes store of the jailbreaking community. Most jailbreaking methods will install Cydia for you. See cydia.saurik.com for details.

An up-and-coming alternative to Cydia is called **Rock Your Phone** (free from rockyourphone.com). It has fewer applications available, but the user interface is more refined. There's certainly no harm in using both applications, as they will happily coexist.

How do I go about jailbreaking an iPhone?

There are a number of websites which provide information on how to get started. The techniques and software required vary, depending on which iPhone you have. A good place to learn about the process is jailbreakmatrix.com. Another good source of information is iclarified.com/jailbreak/. The process ranges in difficulty from simple to moderately challenging. On the off-chance that something goes wrong, it's wise to avoid jailbreaking unless you're pretty good with computers. Finally, once you jailbreak your iPhone, make sure to **change your root password** to shore up your iPhone's security. For more information see cydia.saurik.com/password.html.



LockInfo replaces the bare-bones Apple variant with a customizable, information-rich unlock screen.

Are there any risks?

The process is purported to be safe and reversible, but there is a small chance that you might “brick” your iPhone (i.e., corrupt its software so that it becomes inert—like a brick). Jailbreaking, though legal, will likely violate your warranty, so proceed with caution.

I’ve got a lot of applications and music on my iPhone. Will I lose them if I jailbreak?

Jailbreaking *should* leave all of your current applications, settings and music in place, so you won’t have to start from scratch. Your iPhone will continue to function as before, though any applications installed using Cydia will not synchronize with iTunes.

Before you begin, you should always perform a normal sync with iTunes so that you have a complete backup of your iPhone’s contents. If something goes wrong when you jailbreak, this should allow you to restore your iPhone to its pre-jailbroken state.

One important note: once you’ve jailbroken, you should avoid installing any official iPhone or iTunes software updates. Apple regularly adds code to its software updates to foil jailbroken phones.

Does jailbreaking let you use phone companies besides AT&T?

The iPhone, like most mobile phones sold in the United States is designed to only work with its original mobile network (AT&T). Phones restricted in this way are said to be *locked*. Merely jailbreaking an iPhone *does not* unlock it, but easily installed software will do so. **UltraSn0w** (free) is a popular unlocking application.

If I unlock my jailbroken iPhone, will it work on any network?

It’s not that simple, unfortunately. The iPhone only works on GSM (Global System for Mobile Communications) phone networks. In the United States, T-Mobile is the largest GSM carrier apart from AT&T.

How do I switch to another carrier?

Go to the retail store for a compatible GSM carrier and ask for a SIM (subscriber identity module) card, explaining that it’s for a jailbroken iPhone. They will assist you in picking out a SIM card and selecting a plan. Incidentally, unlocking will also let you use your iPhone in other countries by installing a SIM card purchased when you land. This is often cheaper than arranging for an International rate plan with AT&T before your trip.

How do I swap SIM cards?

Simply eject the SIM card with a paper clip (it's held in the device by a small cradle). The new one will drop in the cradle. Take care to avoid losing your original SIM in case you need to change back.



The new iPhone 4 models use a Micro SIM card, which is significantly smaller than a typical SIM. This makes it tricky to install a new SIM card, as it won't fit. Some people have successfully cut down regular-sized SIM cards so that they fit into iPhone 4 models. If you're brave enough to try this, simply go to google.com and search for **modify a SIM to Micro SIM**.

Replacing your iPhone's AT&T SIM is simple if you have a paperclip handy.

Are there downsides to changing carriers ?

Yes. There are some things you'll sacrifice when switching carriers. First, Apple's *visual voicemail* feature will probably no longer work. Also, getting a "data plan" (a mobile Internet connection) to work is a little tricky. If you are successful in finding a compatible data plan, it probably won't be a speedy **3G** connection, but rather the comparatively slower **Edge** Internet connection.

Conclusion

Jailbreaking can bring iPhone users new functionality, a fresh interface and the ability to unlock and change mobile phone carriers. For many, these benefits outweigh the risks, especially if their two-year contract with AT&T is over.

If you have questions, comments or suggestions, you can visit me at the Reference Desk, contact me via email (moetting@hinsdalelibrary.info), or call me at 630-986-1976 ext. 225.

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