(Approx. 661 words)

Keep up with your iPhone / iPad apps

By Jim Cerny, Director, Sarasota Technology Users Group

www.thestug.org

director3 (at) thestug.org

Technology “apps” (short for “applications” or “software”) are doing so much to help us in many ways. You probably have noticed that your apps need updating and if you do not have “auto-update” turned on in your settings, then you should be updating your apps whenever there is an update available. Updates improve the app, hopefully, resolve problems, and add new features too. You may have noticed that your favorite apps DO change – different colors, menu choices, options, and images. Are you aware of the latest changes to the apps you love and use most?

It’s hardly any trouble to update an app but rarely do people take the time to find out what is actually in the update. There could be some hidden treasures there waiting for you! The iPhone, for example, has some big updates (almost annually) which can make the “look and feel” of your iPhone (or iPad) quite a bit different. But many updates to most apps do not make big changes to what you see on your screen, but change some things “behind the curtain”.

Are the apps on your iPhone or iPad being updated automatically? To find out, touch “Settings” on your iPhone (the logo looks like a gear wheel), and then scroll down a bit to touch “iTunes and App Store”. Here you will see a list of several options – look under “Automatic Downloads” for “App Updates” – the sliding button to the right will be GREEN if it is ON and gray if it is not. I would recommend that you turn this ON. Note that even if this is turned “on”, the latest updates may not be installed immediately, it may take some days.

Why not make a shortlist of those apps you use most often? On my list, for example, would be my weather (WeatherBug), calendar, photos, messages, and Google maps to name a few. To find out the updates that have been “released” or made available for any app -- on your device start by touching the “App Store” icon and then, in the search bar, enter the name of your app (such as “WeatherBug”). You will see an oval box that will say “open” or “update” if that app needs updating. Now touch that app and it will open the App Store description about that app. Touch on the text “Version History” to see a list of the latest updates AND what each update did.

Many updates just fix internal bugs or problems and do not change anything you see on your screen. But is it always wise to take a few minutes and ask Google “What new features are on the ‘WeatherBug’ app?” and you will be given a list of articles that describe the new or latest included features. Scan over this list to see which of these changes affect you and how you use that app. (I am just using “WeatherBug” as an example). Some of the things I learned was that I could customize my starting screen that appears when I open this app, I can put what most interests me first on the screen. I also learned how to add and delete any city’s weather on my list so I can easily see the weather in other places on earth. Then I noticed many options I had no idea were included in that app! To be honest, most of them did not interest me, but several did. This is true of ANY app. Many of us (myself included) go along and keep using our favorite apps and never become aware of the new options included in recent updates. So why not “take an app a day” and ask Google about it? – You are certain to learn

some new things that will make you even better at using and enjoying the apps you love.