

Apple iPhone with VoiceOver

Lesson 10 - Composing Mail



This lesson has been designed for users of iPhone models which don't have a Home Button, in conjunction with the VoiceOver screen reader and iOS 26. For reference, models of iPhone without a Home Button that are compatible with iOS 26 are: 11, 11 Pro, 11 Pro Max, 12, 12 mini, 12 Pro, 12 Pro Max, 13, 13 Mini, 13 Pro, 13 Pro Max, 14, 14 Plus, 14 Pro, 14 Pro Max, 15, 15 Plus, 15 Pro, 15 Pro Max, 16, 16 Plus, 16 Pro, 16 Pro Max, 16E, 17, 17 Pro, 17 Pro Max, 17 Air and 17E.

iOS26 has brought some amazing new features, including improvements to Apple Intelligence. It has also brought some cosmetic changes to the Operating System, including "Liquid Glass", a new way of displaying text and graphics". Depending on how your iPhone has been configured, you may find some minor differences when working through the information provided in this lesson. However, it isn't anticipated that they will cause you much of a problem!

1. Introduction

In this lesson you will learn about the Message Content Screen of the Mail application in Compose mode. The layout and options are slightly different than Reading mode, which was discussed in the previous lesson. By the end of this lesson you should be able to:

- Compose and send a new Email message.
- Reply to an email message to the sender only, or to all recipients.
- Forward an email message.
- use another application to create a new email message with attachments.

2. Terms You Should Know

Some of these terms were covered in the previous lesson, but now we will examine them from a different perspective.

2.1 The To field

This is where the list of intended recipients can be found. In a business environment you usually place the addresses of people in this field that you would expect to take some kind of action based on the message.

2.2 The Cc field

The Courtesy Copy, or Carbon copy field, contains the list of addressees who are being copied for informational purposes only. They need to be aware of the message content, but don't necessarily have to do anything about it.

2.3 The Bcc Field

This is the Blind Carbon Copy field. Addressees in this field will get a copy of the message, but no one else will know they got it. When you are sending a message to a group of your friends who don't know each other, it is recommended to put the list of addressees in the Bcc field. That way you are not giving out email addresses that the owners might not want distributed to people they don't know.

2.4 The From Field

This field contains your name and email address. If you are managing multiple email accounts with your iPhone, be sure the right "From" address has been entered in the message.

2.5 The Message Body

This field contains the main text of the message. When you forward or reply to a message, your introductory comments are placed at the beginning of the message thread. Remember that you must use an Activate gesture on the field before you can begin typing.

2.6 The Message Header

The message header is the area at the top of the message which contains the From, To, Cc, Bcc and Subject Fields.

2.7 Attachments

Attachments are files that can be added to email messages. They can be pictures, videos, word processed documents, spreadsheets, or just about anything. The easiest way to add an attachment to a message is to launch the app that the attachment was created in, and use the "Share" function. More about this later! Also, remember that some email providers will automatically filter out attachments that might be considered dangerous. Common file types that get filtered, include .exe, .com, .bat, .scr and .zip. You can check with your service provider for other attachment types that might get filtered.

3. The Message Content Screen in Compose Mode

The Compose layout of the Message Content Screen is slightly different from the reading layout. Compose mode is entered in one of three ways:

- When the "Compose" button, situated at the bottom right corner of the Mailbox screen is activated.
- The Compose, Reply, Reply All, or Forward button is activated whilst reading another message.
- When a message is selected as the Current Item in the Mailbox Screen, and the rotor function is set to "Actions", you use the Set Mode gesture to select the "More" option and choose the Reply, Reply All, or Forward option.

If the Mail app is not opened, open it now. Then, activate the "Compose" button, situated at the bottom right corner of the Mailbox screen, to open an new message for editing.

The Compose mode of the Message Content Screen is divided into four parts; The Action Row, The Message Header, The Message Body and the Virtual keyboard, which is at the bottom of the screen.

You will find a new button above the Action Row. This is the "Minimize Draft" button. When you Activate this button, the message you are

composing is minimized and you are returned to the mailbox Screen with the "Drafts" button now showing at the bottom. You can use this button to return to editing the message again.

3.1 The Action Row

This row is at the top of the Mail Message Content Screen, just below the Status Bar. It has a button at either side and a heading that reads "New Message" at its centre. At the upper left corner of the screen, at the left side of the action Row, is the "Cancel" Button. This button works somewhat like a "back" button. Activating this button cancels any changes to the new message you have made and returns you to the Mailbox Screen. You will be prompted to save your new message in drafts for later editing. The default answer to this prompt deletes the draft.

The Send Button is situated at the upper right corner of the screen, at the right side of the Action Row. Activating this button sends the message to the intended recipient/s. If the message cannot be sent at that time, it is placed in the "Outbox" folder and sent when a connection to your Email provider can be made. Once the message is sent, a copy is stored in the "Sent Items" folder. So it is not necessary to include yourself as an addressee. You can always look at your Sent Items folder for messages you have sent.

3.2 The Message Header

The header contains Text Fields for the To, Cc, Bcc and From fields. These fields are known collectively as the address fields. As you activate each field, a "Add Contact" button appears at the end of the field. You need to use the Explore gesture to locate it! The "To" field is the first field in the message header, and is the Current Item when a new message is first started. VoiceOver announces "To, is editing" to indicate this.

Below the "To" field, you will find the "CC" field. When this field is the Current Item, VoiceOver says "Cc/BCC, From:". Activating the CC field results in the "BCC" and "From" fields being displayed, just below the CC field. The CC field will be the Current Item and available for editing.

Entering Addresses from the Keyboard

As soon as you begin typing an Email Address, your iPhone begins searching your contact list for matches, as well as email addresses you have recently used. It displays a list of those addresses below the address field you are editing. The more characters you type, the narrower the list becomes.

For example, suppose you still have the Contact Card for Jim Nazium, our friend from section 5 of the lesson on Creating and Managing Contacts. If you type the letter, "N", the list includes everyone with a letter "N" in their email address. This is not too helpful, so let's type the letter, "A", and see what happens. Now let's Explore above the keyboard until you find the list of names. If you still have too many people with the letters N and A in their email addresses, go back to the keyboard and type the letter, "S", and the list will shorten again. In fact, Jim will probably be the only one in it.

Now that you have found Jim's entry in the list, use an Activate gesture. His email address will be added to the address field, and you are ready to add another address.

NOTE 1: Email addresses are not case sensitive. This means that it does not make a difference to the mail application whether you type the address in upper case, lower case, or mixed case. However, capitalizing certain letters in the email address can make it more understandable when you use VoiceOver or another screen reader. For example, Let's say you have a friend Sue Elsworth who has an address on the Optimum On Line network, and that her email address is just her first and last name run together. Her email address written with no capitalization sounds like, sueelsworth@optonline.net, but with a capital "S" for Sue, and a capital "E" for Elsworth, it sounds like SueElsworth@OptOnLine.net.

The Add Contact Button

Activating this button brings up the contacts list. Use an Activate gesture to add a recipient. If the chosen contact has more than one email address, or has an email address plus a mobile phone number, you will be asked to select which address to use. The reason why a mobile phone number is listed, is that many smart phones can receive email messages as text messages. Once you have made the selection, you will be returned to the "To" field in the Mail Message Content Screen. You can add another address or move on to the next field.

If you activate the To, CC or BCC fields for editing and then activate the Add Contact button, the name of the contact you choose will be entered into the field which was being edited. So be careful to activate the appropriate field before adding addresses using the Add Contact button.

Let's try composing a short message to yourself. We will begin by filling in the Message Header.

1. Launch the mail app from the Home Screen, and then activate the Compose button. VoiceOver will say, "To field, is editing".
2. Start typing your Email address. Notice that the "At" sign appears to the right of the spacebar, and the full stop to the right of the "At" sign. This makes entering email addresses easier!
3. After you have typed three or four characters, Explore under the "To" field and see if the full email address is listed there.
4. If it is, use an Activate gesture to add it to the "To" field. If not, keep typing or look it up with the "Add Contact" button.
5. Whilst the "To" field is active, take a spin through the Rotor functions. Normally there are three Navigation functions; Characters, Words and Lines. However, since the address fields are one line fields, the "Line" function is omitted.
6. Use the Next Item gesture to skip the other address fields.

3.3 The Subject Field

This field is a one line field that can contain some words that give the recipient/s a general idea of what the message is about. It pays to put some thought into this field.

Messages without subjects or with subjects such as "Hi There, or "Check this out, are usually treated as junk mail by the recipients email provider. Even if they get through, they should set off warning bells to your recipient/s.

7. Activate the Subject Text Field.

IMPORTANT! Remember to Activate the field before typing. Otherwise, what you type next will go into the last field you were editing.

8. Now type, "Message to Myself", and notice that the At Sign and full stop are no longer to the right of the spacebar. This is because you are no longer typing in an address field.
9. Activate the ENTER Key. VoiceOver will say, "Message Body, Is Editing". This is because when you activate the ENTER key in a single line field, the cursor jumps to the next item.

Now that the Message Header is complete, Let's type something in the body of the message.

3.4 The Message Body

The Message Body Text Field begins just below the Subject. This field behaves just like the Notes Text Field in the Notes App with respect to text formatting. The message body can also contain links to web sites and so on.

1. Use the Start/End of field gesture to move the Insertion Point to the beginning of the message body. The Insertion Point should start there by default, but this is a good habit to get into as a double check. The Strife you save will be your own!

NOTE 2: when a new message is started, whatever text is in the signature Block setting, will be automatically inserted in the message body. See Lesson 7 - Mail Setup, Section 2.3 and Section 5.21 for details. If the Insertion Point is not moved to the start position before typing, then the typed text will be added AFTER the signature block.

2. Type, "Hello, I am running a little late. I should be home by 6pm".
3. Check the message for accuracy and correct any spelling mistakes, using the techniques you learnt in Lesson 3 - Editing Text.
4. Activate the "Send" Button, situated at the upper right corner of the screen, to send the message to yourself.

3.5 The Virtual Keyboard

The Virtual keyboard is located just below the message body. It functions exactly the way it did in the notes app.

Now you have sent a message to yourself, try sending a message to one of your contacts. Remember to include a meaningful subject. Also, remember to move the insertion point to the beginning of the Message Body Text Field before typing your message.

4. Forwarding and Replying to messages

In order to forward or reply to an email message, you must activate the "More Actions" button, situated at the bottom of the screen, when the Mail Message Content Screen is in Reading Mode. This displays a popup window, consisting of several options. You can forward the message and any attachments to one or more users. You can reply to the message sender with any comments you may have, or if the message went to multiple recipients, you can "Reply to All".

The difference between forwarding a message and replying to it, has to do with how attachments to the original message are treated. When you forward a message, you will be prompted as to whether or not you wish to include the attachments. When you reply to a message, the attachments are not included with your reply.

NOTE 3: Be careful when replying to all. If only the sender needs to see your reply, then don't reply to everyone. Just like you, the other people included in the original message don't want to receive SPAM.

Let's try forwarding a message now.

1. If the mail app is not open, open it now.
2. Open the message you want to forward. If you have a message with an attachment, use that one.
3. Activate the "More Actions" button, situated at the bottom of the screen, just to the left of the Compose button. This will result in a popup window being displayed, consisting of several options.
4. Locate and activate the "Forward" button.
5. If you are asked whether or not to include the attachments, allow them to be included.
6. Use one of the techniques discussed earlier to add addressees to the "To" field of the message.

7. When you have finished adding addressees, activate the Message Body Text Field and add any introductory comments you wish.

NOTE 4: Remember to use the Start of Field gesture to ensure that the insertion point is at the beginning of the message body before you start typing. Otherwise your comments could appear in the middle of the original message or your signature block.

8. Activate the "Send" button, situated at the upper right corner of the screen, to send the message.

You can Reply to a message in the same way you forward it. Simply choose the "Reply" or "Reply to all" button from the More Actions popup window. If the original message had an attachment, notice that it is NOT included with your reply.

5. Creating Messages with Attachments

There are several ways to create a message with an attachment. The most common methods are:

- "forward" a message that already has an attachment.
- Go to the application that created the item you want to attach and use the "Share" function of the application.

Let's use the second technique to attach a contact from your contacts list to a new message and send it to someone else, so they can save it in their own contacts list.

1. Launch the Contacts App.
2. Make one of the contacts in the list the Current Item and perform an Activate gesture to display the Contact Card.
3. Scroll down to the bottom of the card and you will find the "Share" button, situated directly above the "Add to Favourites" button.
4. Activate the Share button and then choose the "Mail" button from the list of options. Upon doing this, you will be taken to a brand new message in Compose mode.

5. Add the name/s of the addressees to the To field and then edit the Subject and Message Body fields. Then activate the "Send" button, situated at the upper right corner of the screen, to send the message, along with the Contact Card.

IMPORTANT: When sending attachments, avoid generic subjects such as "Check this out" or "Here's something to see". Also it is a good idea to type something in the message body so that the recipient can tell you really intended to send it. Generic subjects, blank subjects, empty message bodies and vague message body text can be an indicator of an attachment containing malicious software. Many people will not open messages with these characteristics.

There are literally thousands of apps which can attach an item to an email message. Unfortunately, we cannot go into all of them here, but most will have a "Share" button somewhere, and that is what you must activate in order to find the "Mail" option. Be aware that you might have to explore the screen or perform the Next Item gesture a number of times until you have located the Mail option.

6. General Tips when Sending Email Messages

- Don't send messages with blank subjects or subjects such as "Check this out", "Hi There" or other generic subjects. Many service providers will interpret them as SPAM and the user will never see them.
- When you only need to reply to the sender of a message, be careful to use "Reply" and not "Reply All".
- Remember that the recipient of your email message cannot hear your voice or see your body language. When you say things like, "You are gonna get it!", they may not be able to tell you are joking.
- Avoid typing in all capital letters, as this is often interpreted as shouting.
- You can indicate some emotion in your message by certain character combinations. For example, a colon followed by a dash and then a closing parenthesis looks like a smiley face turned on its side. People often use this to indicate they are kidding around. Change the closing parenthesis to an opening parenthesis and now you have a frowning face. As you would expect, this means you are unhappy. There are other character combinations. These are often called emoticons.
- Remember, once you send an email, you cannot take it back. Emails take on a life of their own. You send a comment or photo to a friend, then they pass it along, and so on, and so on. If you wouldn't want your mother to see it or read it, don't send it!

7. Exercises

1. You are planning a weekend getaway with some friends. You need Bob to bring the camping equipment, Carol to bring her guitar, Ted to be aware that you won't be around this weekend and Alice to pick up burgers, hot dogs and beer. Whose email addresses might you put in the "To" field? Whose might go in the "Cc" field?
2. If you are sending a message to many addressees who don't know each other, which address field should you consider putting all the recipients' addresses in?
3. You have just filled in the subject field of your message. You use the Explore gesture to find the Message Body field. Now you begin typing the body of your message. Where will the text actually be typed?
4. What are the four parts of the Message Screen when it is in Compose mode?
5. If you activate the Send button after creating a message, but the message cannot be sent straight away, where is the message stored?
6. How do you access your Contacts list to add a contact's email address or mobile phone number to the list of addressees as you are composing a new message?
7. If you want to forward or reply to a message, where must you look for these functions?
8. If a message has attachments, what is the difference between forwarding it and replying to it?
9. You have activated the Message Body field and are ready to type. What gesture is good to perform first to ensure your typing starts at the beginning of the message?
10. Suppose you previously used the Notes app to create a short note that you wanted to share with others via email. How would you attach it to an email message?

11. What are some signs that an email message may contain malicious information or attachments?
12. If you type text in all capital letters, how might the reader interpret it?

The answers to these questions can be found on page 13.

Congratulations! This concludes the lessons on using email on your iPhone. Hopefully, you found the lessons enjoyable and informative. When you are ready, why not work through the lesson on the subject of Dictating Text. You may find that it greatly simplifies composing email messages.

Answers to Section 7 Exercises

1. You are planning a weekend getaway with some friends. You need Bob to bring the camping equipment, Carol to bring her guitar, Ted to be aware that you won't be around this weekend, and Alice to pick up burgers, hot dogs and beer. Whose email addresses might you put in the "To" field? Whose might go in the "Cc" field?

You could put Bob, Carol and Alice in the "To" field because you need them to do something. Ted would go in the "Cc" field, because you only wanted him to be aware of what is going on. Poor Ted!

2. If you are sending a message to many addressees who don't know each other, which address field should you consider putting all the recipients' addresses in?

Remember, just because you know everybody, it does not mean that they all know each other, and they might not want their addresses provided to people they don't know. Place their addresses in the BCC (Blind Carbon Copy) field. You can place the email address you want people to reply to in the "To" field. If there are no "To" or "Cc" addressees, some providers will not deliver the message.

3. You have just filled in the subject field of your message. You use the Explore gesture to find the Message Body field. Now you begin typing the body of your message. Where will the text actually be typed?

Oops! You didn't activate the Message Body field before you began typing. So all your text was placed in the subject field instead of the Message Body. This is a common mistake. Be careful to Activate any text field before you begin typing. VoiceOver will say the field name followed by "is editing" to indicate you are in the correct field.

4. What are the four parts of the Message Screen when it is in Compose mode?

From top to bottom they are the Action Buttons, The Message Header, the Message Body and the Virtual keyboard.

5. If you activate the Send button after creating a message, but the message cannot be sent right away, where is the message stored?

This usually happens because your iPhone does not have a Wi-Fi or cellular signal available. The message is stored in the Outbox. The next time a signal is available, the message will be automatically sent. There are other instances where this may happen. If you think you sent a message, but the recipient says they never got it, you can check your Outbox to see if it is stuck there. Also, have the recipient check their junk folder and ensure that your email address is in their list of safe senders.

6. How do you access your Contacts list to add a contact's email address or mobile phone number to the list of addressees as you are composing a new message?

Use the "Add Contact" button, situated at the end of the address field you are editing.

7. If you want to forward or reply to a message, where must you look for these functions?

Both of these functions are found by activating the "More Actions" button, situated at the bottom of the screen when the message screen is in Reading Mode.

8. If a message has attachments, what is the difference between forwarding it and replying to it?

When you forward a message, you will be asked if you want to include the attachments. If you reply to a message, the attachments from the original message will not be included with your reply. It is assumed that the recipients already have the original message that contained them.

9. You have activated the Message Body field and are ready to type. What gesture is good to perform first to ensure your typing starts at the beginning of the message?

Use the Start/End of Field gesture, a Single Finger Double Tap, until VoiceOver says "Start of Field" to ensure you are at the beginning of the message.

10. Suppose you previously used the Notes app to create a short note that you wanted to share with others via email. How would you attach it to an email message?

You would have to open the Notes app and then open the note you want to share. At the top of the note, you will find the "Share" button. Activate this button. Then, locate and activate the "Mail" button. This will attach the note to a new mail message in Compose mode.

11. What are some signs that an email message may contain malicious information or attachments?

Generic subjects, blank subjects, empty message bodies and vague message body text can be an indicator of an attachment containing malicious software. Bad English, poor sentence structure and misspellings are also other indicators.

12. If you type text in all capital letters, how might the reader interpret it?

THEY MIGHT THINK YOU ARE SHOUTING! Don't do this as a general rule.