

Apple iPhone with VoiceOver

Lesson 9 - Reading 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. This is the screen that appears when you read an email message or when you compose a message. The layout and options are slightly different, depending on whether you are reading or composing an email message. So we will cover composing email in the next lesson. At the end of this lesson you should know:

- About the mail message header and its different parts.
- How to expand and collapse the list of mail recipients.
- How to open and review attachments.
- How to view a Contact Card from an email address in an email message.

2. Terms You Should Know

2.1 The To field

this field contains the list of intended recipients.

2.2 The Cc field

The Courtesy Copy, or Carbon copy field, contains the list of addressees that are being copied for informational purposes.

2.3 The From Field

This field contains the name and email address of the sender of the message. It is fairly easy to spoof this field. If you receive a message that seems out of character for the sender, it is likely that this field has been spoofed. Check with the sender to confirm he or she actually sent the message before opening or previewing it.

2.4 The Message Header

The message header is the area at the top of an email message which contains the From, To, Cc and Subject Fields. The header area also contains the date the message was sent.

2.5 The Message Body

This field contains the main text of the email message. In addition to text, this section can contain pictures, links, Headings and many other things.

2.6 Attachments

Attachments are files that can be added to email messages. They can be pictures, videos, word processed documents, spreadsheets or just about anything. Be VERY CAREFUL of unexpected attachments. They can contain viruses or other undesirable code.

3. The Message Content Screen in Reading Mode

When you activate a message in the Mailbox screen, it is opened in "Reading Mode".

If the Mail app is not opened, open it now. Use an Activate gesture on one of the messages in your Inbox to open it and enter the reading mode of the Message Content Screen.

3.1 The Action Row

The Reading mode of the Message Content Screen is divided into three parts. The first is The Action Row, which has several Buttons. This is divided into two parts, with some items being at the top of the screen and others at the bottom of the screen. The second part of the screen is the Message Header, which is immediately below the Action Row. The third is the Message Body. The items on the Action Row are described as follows:

The Back Button

This button is situated at the upper left corner of the screen. It contains the name of the folder from which you opened the message. It also includes the number of messages which are unread in that folder. When activated, it returns you to the Mailbox Screen. The message just closed will be the Current Item in the Message list.

The Next Message Button

This button is used to display the contents of the next message from the Message list without having to return to the Mailbox Screen. The next message is the message that was directly below the message currently being viewed. If the message currently displayed is the last message in the folder, then this button will be dimmed. When VoiceOver announces that an item is dimmed, it means that it is temporarily disabled. When the new message is displayed, this button will remain the Current Item.

The Previous Message Button

This button is used to display the contents of the previous message from the Message list without having to return to the Mailbox Screen. The previous message is the message that was directly above the message currently being viewed. If the message currently displayed is the first message in the folder, then this button will be dimmed.

The Summarise Button

This button is used to provide you with a summary of the message, produced using Artificial Intelligence. The summary is displayed directly above the main body of the email message. Usually, the summary is only three to four lines in length.

The Delete Button

This button is situated at the bottom left corner of the screen, just below the message body. The name and function of this button depends on how options have been defined in the "Mail" section of the Settings Application. See Lesson 6 - Email Setup, Section 6. When this button is activated, the open message will be moved to the Trash or Deleted Items folder and the next message from the Inbox folder will be displayed.

The Move button

This button is to the right of the Delete button. It allows you to move the current message to a different mailbox. If you are managing multiple accounts with your iPhone, you will only see the mailboxes for one account listed at a time. You can only move the message to a folder in the same account whilst in an open message. When the message has been moved, the next email message will be displayed in Reading Mode.

The More Actions Button

This button, when activated, displays a popup window which allows you to, amongst other things, Reply, Reply to all, Forward or print the message. When you reply to a message or forward it, the original text of the message is included at the bottom of your comments.

The Compose Button

This button is situated at the bottom right corner of the screen. Activate this button to open the Mail Message Screen in Compose mode in a new blank message.

NOTE 1: You will have the "Drafts" button as well, if you minimized another message whilst composing it. This will be situated at the very bottom of the screen.

4. The Message Header

The message header is displayed directly below the Summarise button. It begins with the "From address" button, which contains the name of the sender. Just below this, you will find the "To" and "CC" (Carbon Copy) address information, and to the right of these, the date/time the message was sent! Below these items, situated at the right side of the screen, you may find a graphic of a Paper Clip, which VoiceOver announces as "has attachment". This indicates that files have been attached to the message. If no files have been attached, the Paper Clip isn't present. Finally, you will find the Subject label.

If you can't find the Message Header fields with the Explore gesture, and VoiceOver doesn't announce the Subject, From or To information, then it's likely that the header information has scrolled off the screen. In this case, try one of the following:

- Make the message body the current item and repeatedly use the Previous Screen gesture until you hear the "Thunk" sound. Then, use the Next Item gesture until you have found the item you are looking for, such as the Subject label.
- Keep using the Previous Item gesture until VoiceOver announces the item you are looking for, such as the Subject label.
- Use the Jump to Top gesture, then Explore near the top of the screen.

4.1 The Subject label

This is a one line label that contains text that summarizes what the message is about.

NOTE 2: You should be careful of messages with no subject or with subjects that are very general, such as "Hi there" or "Check this out!". These types of subjects are often used by hackers who want you to open a message that contains malicious content. It is best to delete them or at least verify with the sender that they actually intended to send the message.

4.2 The Address display

When the Message Content Screen is in reading mode, the addresses in the message header can appear in either expanded or abbreviated format. Each format is described as follows:

abbreviated Format

In abbreviated format, there will be one label which contains the word "To", and then the name of the first addressee, followed by the total number of addressees.

Expanded Format

In expanded format, each email address becomes a button. To display the list of buttons, make the To: button the Current Item and perform an Activate gesture.

Be aware that when the addresses are in expanded format, navigation of the screen can become a little cumbersome. It might take you some time to find the body of the message!

4.3 The Addressee Options Screen

If you activate one of the addressee buttons, a screen is displayed which includes a number of actions you can take. The options available are as follows:

Copy Address

This option copies the email address of the contact to the clipboard.

Search for (Contact Name)

Opens a screen, which shows the search results for email messages in the current mail account, containing the name of the contact.

View Contact Card

Opens the contact card for the contact in View mode.

Dismiss Context Menu

Activating this button returns you to the Message Content Screen without taking any action.

5. The Message Body

The Message Body begins just below the message header. This is where the bulk of the message text is displayed. The body can contain pictures, links, headings and many other items. To read the text in the body area, use a combination of the Next Item and Previous Item gestures, or the Read All from Cursor gesture, a Two Finger Swipe Down. If a link is present, use an Activate gesture to open it.

NOTE 3: You can get an idea of how long the message is by using the Where Am I gesture, when the message body is the Current Item. VoiceOver will announce, "Page 1 of x", where x is the number of screens in the message body.

As you scroll down through the message, the Message Header will scroll up off the top of the screen. The Action Buttons remain stationary.

6. Attachments

Your iPhone places all attachments to an email message at the end of the message body. A message can have more than one attachment. When an attachment is the Current Item, VoiceOver will read the title of the file and then say an additional word like "Docx", or "image".

To quickly locate an attachment, use the Last Item gesture to move to the bottom of the screen. Then perform the Previous Item gesture until the Delete button is the Current Item. Now, perform the Previous Item gesture once more. VoiceOver will say the name of the attached file and its file type.

IMPORTANT! Attachments can contain malicious content. Be careful to open attachments only from trusted sources. Even if the email appears to be from a friend or colleague, you still need to be careful. It is very easy to spoof an email address. So if the attachment seems out of character for that person, confirm with them first that they are the ones who actually sent it.

Once you have determined that the attachment is safe, you can open it with an Activate gesture. Your iPhone has the ability to read certain common file types, such as .docx, .pdf, .jpg and many others. In some cases, such as PDF documents, the ability is very rudimentary. If you want complete access to all the attachment's features, you may need to download a specific viewer from the App store. For example, you can read PDF documents with the built in reader, but you don't have access to bookmarks and the table of contents without Adobe's PDF reader application, which is available free from the App Store.

There are other things you may want to do with an attachment besides simply Activating it for viewing. For example, you may want to save it to your iPhone or send it on to someone else. To do this, you must first make the attachment the Current Item and then use a new gesture.

6.1 The Context Menu Gesture

The Context Menu gesture activates an item or activates a menu of options which changes depending on what was the Current Item prior to performing the gesture, and on what was happening at the time. You perform the gesture by performing a One Finger Double Tap and Hold. This means tapping with your finger, then raising your finger and putting it down again in approximately the same spot. This must be done quickly, because if you delay, VoiceOver will interpret it as two Explore gestures. Hold your finger on the screen in that position until your iPhone makes a "chirp" sound, then lift your finger. Upon doing this, a popup menu will appear. Be aware that its position on the screen can vary.

NOTE 4: Some people find performing the One Finger Double Tap and Hold gesture difficult to make. Fortunately, there is an alternative gesture you can make to display the Context Menu. This is the One Finger Triple Tap gesture! The taps need to be performed quickly, as otherwise, VoiceOver will interpret them as Explore gestures!

6.2 The Attachment Options Screen

When you perform the Context Menu gesture on an attachment, the Attachment Options Screen appears. The options available from this screen may include some or all of the following:

- **Quick Look:** Shows an attachment in the default app for your iPhone. This is the same thing as using the Activate gesture on the attachment rather than the Context Menu gesture.
- **Share:** Allows you to share the attached file with another app or with another person. Options include Air Drop, Messages, Mail, Notes, Journal, or one of the third party apps installed on your iPhone, such as WhatsApp.
- **Save to Files:** Saves the attachment to the Files app on your iPhone.
- **Open with:** If you have another app on your iPhone which can handle the attachment besides the default viewer, this button will appear.
- **Copy:** Makes a copy of the attachment in memory for later pasting.
- **Print:** Prints the attachment on an available printer.

The Attachment Screen options will vary depending on the type of file attached and on which applications are installed on your iPhone.

If you have a message with an attachment in your mailbox, open the message and make the attachment the Current Item. Now try the Context Menu gesture. In the resulting popup menu, explore the available options.

6.3 Viewing the Contents of an Attachment

Your iPhone has the ability to display most common file attachment types using the "Quick View" option from the Attachment Options Screen. However, you may not get all the available features of the attachment. For example, Quick Viewing a PDF file allows you to read the text in the file, but does not allow access to the table of contents or to bookmarks. If you need more complete access to an attachment type, you may have to download a specific viewer from the App Store.

When you use the Quick View option to open an attachment, the screen is divided into two areas, an Action Row, and the area where the attachment's content is displayed. The Action Row starts just below the Status Bar and in some cases, can be split, with some items above the attachment viewing area, and others below.

The most common items on the Action Row are described as follows:

- At the top of the screen, at the centre of the Action Row, you will find a heading which contains the name of the attachment.

- To the right of the heading, situated at the upper right corner of the screen, you will find a "Done" button, which when activated, closes the attachment and returns you to the open email message.
- The "Share" button: This is usually situated at the bottom left corner of the screen. It provides a way to open the Attachment Options Screen whilst viewing the attachment. Many of the options in this screen involve sharing the attachment with others.
- The Markup button: This is usually situated towards the bottom right corner of the screen. When this button is the Current Item, VoiceOver will announce "Markup, on". If you activate this button, a toolbar of drawing and writing tools is made available. These can be used to annotate the attached file. The majority of these features are largely inaccessible using VoiceOver, so won't be discussed further in this lesson.
- The Search button. This button is situated at the bottom right corner of the screen. Activating this button results in a Search Text Field being made available. You can use the Text Field to search for strings of text in the attachment.

NOTE 5: Sometimes, even though VoiceOver has alerted you to the fact an email message has attachments, you won't be able to locate and then open the file/s. This is an ongoing bug with iOS, which, as yet, hasn't been fixed. Some people say it's to do with a slow internet connection and others say it's to do with specific file types not being supported by iOS. Whatever the reason, just be aware of this. There's nothing you can do!

7. Review

Context Menu

One Finger Tap and Hold, or One Finger Triple Tap. In Text Fields and some item lists, this gesture Invokes a context sensitive menu of options for whatever is the Current Item. It can be used when editing text, or when an Attachment is the Current Item.

8. Exercises

1. What is the area above the message body called where the "to", "Cc" and "Subject" items are located?

2. What is an attachment and why should you be careful about opening one?
3. When an email message is opened for reading, where can you find the "Back" button, and the "Next Message" and "Previous Message" buttons?
4. What are the two formats the addresses can appear in? Try opening a message with multiple addressees and try switching between the two formats.
5. If you want to view the contact card of one of the addressees in a message, how do you do it?
6. How do you activate the menu of options for attachments?

The answers to these questions can be found on page 12.

Congratulations! This completes the lesson on reading email messages. In the next lesson, you will compose and send some email messages.

Answers to Section 8 Exercises

1. What is the area above the message body called where the "to", "Cc" and "Subject" items are located?

This is called the Message Header. When reviewing long messages, this area will scroll off the top of the screen.

2. What is an attachment and why should you be careful about opening one?

An attachment is a file that is sent with the email message. They can be pictures, sounds, video clips, documents, or just about anything else. Attachments can hide malicious code. If you weren't expecting it, it is a good idea to check with the sender to see if they really sent it before you open it. Especially if it seems out of character for that person.

3. When an email message is opened for reading, where can you find the "Back" button, and the "Next Message" and "Previous Message" buttons?

These buttons are located at the top of the screen, just above the Message Header and just below the Status Bar.

4. What are the two formats the addresses can appear in? Try opening a message with multiple addressees and try switching between the two formats.

Addresses can appear in Abbreviated or Expanded format. When the addresses are in Abbreviated format, the "To:" button has an associated label showing the name of the first addressee, followed by "X more addresses". The "To:" button, when activated, switches to Expanded format. Abbreviated format allows more of the message body to be displayed. Expanded format displays each address as a button. You can activate the buttons for a number of options for each addressee.

5. If you want to view the Contact Card for an addressee in a message, how do you do it?

First, open a message in the Message Screen. Second, be sure the addresses are in Expanded format by activating the "To" button if necessary. Third, Activate the appropriate address button and select the "View Contact Card" button. Finally, activate the "Close" button at the upper left corner of the Contact Screen to return to the open message.

6. How do you activate the menu of options for attachments?

First, make the attachment the Current Item. Then perform the Context Menu gesture, a One Finger Double Tap and Hold or a One Finger Triple Tap. This will display a popup menu. Use a combination of the Next Item and Previous Item gestures to explore the available options.