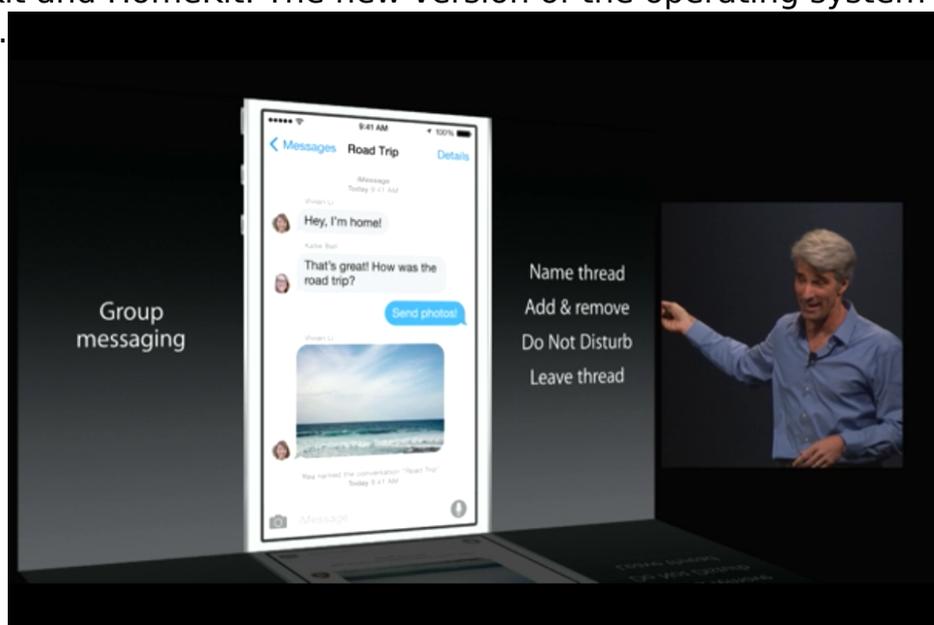


Apple's iOS 8 Shows Up with UI Tweaks, HealthKit, HomeKit

Ben Munson

Apple today unveiled iOS 8, with UI changes like interactive notifications and added features including HealthKit and HomeKit. The new version of the operating system will be available in the fall.



The company added Safari tab view to iPad and put recent contacts into the double-tap multi-task screen.

New features for Messages include naming threads, adding and removing participants from existing threads; and a details menu with location information, photo gallery, and a "Do not disturb" button. The app now allows audio and video messages that will self-destruct automatically in order to save space.

A new keyboard feature called QuickType supports predictive typing and uses message context to predict responses.

To rival services like Dropbox, Apple rolled out iCloud Drive that will sync files across iOS, OS X and Windows.

iOS 8 also houses tweaks to Mail and Spotlight, which will now search the web and the App Store. Family sharing allows access to all the purchases of up to six family members. Photo now saves new pictures and edits to the cloud for access across all devices. Siri now launches hands-free in the car and features song recognition via Shazam.

"It's really two stories, not one," CEO Tim Cook said, speaking of both end-user and developer features.

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Cook praised developers for helping to drive 75 billion downloads from the App Store before promising that developers will now have the ability to bundle apps together for purchase and add video previews. Additionally, Apple announced a beta-test service called TestFlight that allows developers to invite beta-users to try out their applications.

HealthKit enables different health-monitoring apps to be collected together and the results to be monitored real-time by health care providers through a partnership with software company Epic Systems. The corresponding app for consumers is called Health.

Opening up the possibilities for the iPhone 5S's key feature, Apple revealed the Touch ID API, allowing third-party apps to build in finger-print scanning functions.

HomeKit, similar to HealthKit, collects all connected home controls and information under a common network protocol and inside one application. Siri integration allows for voice-activation of home-automation features.

In line with the iOS 8 and OS X Yosemite announcements, Apple promised better teamwork between devices running those operating systems, calling it "continuity." The company announced AirDrop now works between iOS and the Mac. It also introduced Handoff that makes your Apple devices aware of what you're doing on other devices and allows you to select a prompt to continue that work. That same proximity allows a Mac to find nearby connected device and use it as hotspot.

Mac now recognizes SMS messages, can accept incoming calls to iPhone and can place a call via the iPhone.

True to the rumors, the day was totally dedicated to software and no new hardware was announced.

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