

5 Awesome Google apps you may not be using (yet)

Written by Palesa Sibeko
Friday, 02 March 2012 10:50



In the Android Market, Google is designated the 'Top Developers' stamp that some of us use to determine which apps aren't complete crap.

Although probably awarded by them to themselves, they truly do have some of the better apps on Android Market. They have a bunch of wildly popular and often built-in, highly polished apps that enhance the Android experience greatly such as Google Maps (can barely live without this), Voice Search, etc.

This week I've chosen to highlight some of the apps I don't usually see installed on other people's phones, but find valuable.

Google Translate

Whether you're a world-traveller or someone who frequently deals with more than one language,

[Google's Translate](#)

app comes in very handy. On the web it's easy enough to pop in a URL for a page in an unfamiliar language on translate.google.com to have its contents in a language you recognize. In a mobile scenario, you may want to have a live conversation or immediate results to decipher a sign at a tourist centre. Conversation Mode within the app is genius in this regard. It facilitates one-to-one communication between people speaking different languages. It's one step short of true real-time voice translation that admittedly would be tricky for languages that don't share the same sentence construction. The next step I'd love to see for this app would be to translate printed words to which a camera is pointed, pretty much the same way the magical iOS app Word Lens functions.

YouTube Remote

As a huge fan of the YouTube service, just like millions of others around the world, I jumped at the chance to use

[YouTube](#)

[Remote](#)

, which as the name implies, is a remote control for the service. It works with

[YouTube Leanback](#)

service (currently in Labs) to create playlists, control playback and it even supports some of the usual social functions. The idea is that you would be playing back on a larger screen but it works just as well with the Android device as a playback device. I think the YouTube app is better in that case, however. Another cool feature is the Topic button that gives all sorts of metadata on the video being watched. It's the way TV should be in this highly connected age. A comparable service would be the even more feature-rich YouTube for Google TV (not currently

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available in SA).

Chrome to Phone For those times when I really want to read an article but have to power down my computer, [Chrome to Phone](#) has been quite helpful, it lets me continue reading on-the-go. This app works along with a Chrome desktop browser extension and a Google account. When both are set up, it's as easy as clicking the little icon on the browser and boom, it's all done. The Android app keeps a history list of times that have been sent to it should you need to revisit those links. It's simple and fantastic.

Google Listen I use an iPod and love how Apple has managed to simplify podcast subscriptions as well as the amount of quality content that is available. On my Android devices though, I've found [Google Listen](#) to be a decent and free alternative. It's not very pretty and could be more organised but it's workable. There are thousands of audio feeds from which to choose. I find it's best to enter a feed url and subscribe in that way since my taste is not always catered for in the available selection. Subscriptions can be managed through Google Reader on the desktop but I've found it simple enough to manage on the actual device.

Gesture Search This Google Labs app allows you to search contacts, apps, bookmarks, etc. by simply writing letters or numbers on the screen. What I like most about [Gesture Search](#) is that it can recognise my scratchy handwriting and best of all, even partial searches where the letters can be anywhere within a word but the correct sequence is shown in results. You may not think it's a big deal but it's helped me in the past when all I can remember is that this person's name had an "ef" somewhere.



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Also worth checking out presently is Google's [Android MWC](#) app which covers their activities at the prestigious annual event in detail. If I was in attendance, I'd definitely be using this app to help with collecting those sought-after [Android Pins](#)

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