

Resolution #1: Get your security situation in order

Well, gang, the start of a new year is upon us, and we all know what that means: Time to make wildly ambitious resolutions you *know* you'll never keep.

But hey, do that on your time, won't ya? We've got important business to attend to here — namely making some beneficial yet realistic goals for the Android side of our lives.

If you have one or more Android devices, step off the scale for a few seconds and commit yourself to some of these immensely achievable 2018 tasks:

Android security is a loaded subject, but the long and short of it is that there's [really not much to worry about](#) — provided you (a) use common sense and (b) take advantage of the tools Google gives you.

And guess what? All it takes is a few minutes a year to make sure your setup is sound. So stop dilly-dallying, why don't ya, and resolve to perform a personal [Android security audit](#) before the end of January. Heck, you could even go get it out of the way right now.

It won't take long — and it *will* go a long way toward keeping your devices secure and your worries at bay.

Resolution #2: Start earning free Play Store credit

Here's a dirty little secret: I almost never actually pay for anything from the Google Play Store. Don't get me wrong: I buy plenty of stuff. It's just rare for much of the cost to come out of my own pretty pocket.

The reason is simple: I've got oodles of built-up Play Store credit. Some of it is from random device purchases that came with free bonuses, but much of it is from a neat little app called [Google Opinion Rewards](#).

If you haven't installed the app yet, you're missing out. Once you've got it set up on your phone, Rewards gives you occasional prompts to complete quick surveys (usually about your thoughts on some random service or a business you've visited — nothing too personal). Most of them take a mere matter of seconds to complete, and each one gives you a Play Store credit in exchange for your input.

Now, before you get *too* excited, these surveys aren't gonna give you millions of dollars in virtual currency (or, um, even *tens* of dollars — not in a single swoop, anyway). Most of 'em add anywhere from 10 cents to a dollar onto your Play account. But knock those suckers out any chance you get, and you can maintain a nice little running balance that'll take care of the occasional movie rental or app purchase with next to no effort on your part.

Speaking of which...

Resolution #3: Buy some apps

It's easy to develop a mentality of "everything on my phone should be free," but you know what? People work pretty darn hard to design and develop all those apps we use every day.

On Android, in particular, lots of developers are actually small, independent operations — often with a single sleep-deprived person doing everything from programming to support and even marketing. And the only way such folks can keep creating and maintaining their efforts is if they're able to make a living doing it.

It's just the two of us here, amigo, so let's be honest: For most people, the price to support our platform's developers is pretty effin' affordable. A paid or pro version of a quality Android app typically costs a few bucks, give or take — less than you spend on your Venti Soy Fizzatino (extra fizzy, please) every morning. And when you stop and think about it, that kind of cash for a *lifetime* software license — including years of ongoing upgrades and support! — is an absurdly good deal.

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(Don't forget, too, that you can get the goods and support the devs without even paying from your own pocket. Scroll back up to the previous tip, you silly forgetful goose.)

So the next time you're on the fence about snagging that polished \$4 podcasting program or the \$5 pro upgrade to an app you adore and use for hours every day, go ahead and tap the blasted button. You'll get expanded functionality, the developer will get paid, and we'll all feel warm and fuzzy inside.

Resolution #4: Get rid of the apps you no longer need

Buying useful new apps is great, but modern software comes with an undeniable caveat: What's pertinent to your productivity needs today may not be so relevant two or three years down the road. And yet, most of us rarely get rid of the dusty old junk taking up space and creating clutter on our phones.

Last New Year's, I [went on an Android app diet](#): I looked through my app drawer and carefully considered every single item inside. As I wrote at the time:

With each app, I asked myself two questions: One, was this something I had actually used within the last six months? If not, it was just creating clutter and serving no meaningful purpose. ("Maybe I'll need it one day (even though I haven't touched it in half in a year now)" doesn't count.) And two, was this something I actively and deliberately used in a way that enriched my life —

or something I passively and mindlessly opened in a way that took away from my life?

You know what happened as a result of those questions? I ended up uninstalling more than half the apps on my phone — including every news and social media app I had in place. Doing so helped me refocus my life and my phone on what mattered to me and then eliminate all the other distractions. That in turn made it easier to organize my phone so I could find the apps I needed more efficiently — and also made me less prone to engaging in the ever-popular time-wasting act of mindless phone-meandering.

It's now become an official annual task for me, and I'd highly recommend putting it on your own 2018 to-do list, too.

Resolution #5: Try something new

This ain't iOS, folks. Android is full of cool tricks, tweaks, and customizations that can make your devices do more. For the new year, dedicate yourself to trying something different on your phone or tablet.

Maybe it's experimenting with one of [Android's clever UI-adjusting tools](#) (numbers 1 and 5 in that list are particularly neat). Maybe it's taking the time to [optimize your home screen](#) — perhaps with the help of a feature-packed third-party launcher like [Action](#) or [Nova](#). Maybe it's learning some of [Android's hidden time-saving shortcuts](#). Or maybe it's something as simple as implementing an easy hack to make your phone's email notifications [less distracting and more useful](#).

Whatever it is, step out of your comfort zone in 2018 and try something that's new to you. Even if every experience isn't a winner, you never know what you might find when you open yourself up to the platform's many possibilities.

Resolution #6: Streamline your cloud storage

Cloud storage is quickly becoming the filing cabinet of our modern lives — so gee willikers, isn't it about time you cleaned up your clutter? (Isn't it also about time you stopped saying "gee willikers"? Pshaw!)

Set aside some time this year to organize your stuff in a way that makes sense for you — and, just like with your apps, to get rid of old crap that's eating up valuable space and making it harder to find the things you actually need. An annual cleanup of Google Drive (or whatever storage service you prefer) can free up precious space and make it meaningfully easier for you to navigate around your virtual belongings.

If you split your data across multiple cloud storage services — and it's never a bad idea, especially if you have a lot of data — a third-party file manager like [Solid Explorer](#) can simplify your life in an immensely satisfying way. It and other similar apps give you a single centralized spot to view and manage all of your files from services like Drive, Dropbox, and OneDrive. They even make it easy to move files from one service to another, as if they were all connected.

If you want to store some data locally on your device, meanwhile, think about an auto-syncing app like [FolderSync](#). It can keep local folders mirrored to cloud-based equivalents, effectively making your phone or tablet part of your cloud storage portfolio.

Whatever your need, now's the time to get your house in order. Think of it as New Year's cleaning for your digital closet — you sloppy, sloppy boar.

Resolution #7: Re-evaluate your mobile plan

It's 2018, people. Unless you live in an area with extremely limited options for coverage, there's really no reason to still be paying an arm and a leg for smartphone service (let alone to be signing oppressive and cost-ineffective contracts). If you haven't taken a close look at your plan possibilities in a while, there's a decent chance you're shelling out more than you need to for your mobile data and minutes.

So resolve it with me now: *I will not let myself fall into the trap of complacency.* Set aside an hour this month and research your options. From some of the newer contract-free postpaid plans to the variety of prepaid configurations and Google's own pay-only-for-what-you-use [Project Fi](#) service, there are plenty of choices that can give you what you need for a surprisingly low amount of shekels.

Maybe a more traditional plan still makes the most sense for you. That's certainly okay. But you owe it to yourself — and your wallet — to do your homework and make sure that's actually the case.

Resolution #8: Give Chrome OS a chance

Look, I'm not here to tell you what platforms or devices make sense for your own computing preferences — but if you're interested in Android and haven't used a Chromebook in a couple of years, you really oughta at the very least check out a current system and see how dramatically things have evolved.

I've said it a million times now: Chrome OS and Android are [coming together in some really interesting ways](#). The alignment of the two platforms has been picking up serious steam over the past several months, and the effort shows no sign of slowing anytime soon. With native [Android app support](#) and the slew of touch-enabled convertible devices now on the market, Chromebooks are already [effectively the new Android tablets](#) — and there's almost certainly much more to come.

Plain and simple, Chrome OS is part of Android's future. The platforms are connected and complementary, and anyone who says a Chromebook is just a "browser in a box" is hanging onto a [dated myth](#) and woefully misguided.

Get yourself down to your local Best Buy (or whatever physical store exists around you) and spend 10 minutes playing around with a [Pixelbook](#). You'll see a side of Google's mobile tech ecosystem you probably didn't realize existed, and you might just be surprised at how genuinely compelling it's become — yes, [even for those of us in the professional world](#).

And with that, my friends, our 2018 resolutions are complete. All that's left is to stop reading and start acting.

Happy New Year!

NEXT: [The best Android apps for organizing your life](#)



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