



Basic Gestures for Android Devices with TalkBack

Presented by Chia Hong Sen

Hi, my name is Hong Sen, I am an IT trainer at Guide Dogs Singapore. Today I'll be showing you how you can use different finger gestures to operate your Android phone or tablet with Talkback.

Using your fingers, these gestures allow you to navigate through items on the screen, scroll, and activate items on the screen.

We will be taking a look at three different gestures today. Mainly, one finger swipes left or right, two fingers scroll, and double tap.

Activating and Using Talkback

Over here, we have a Google Pixel 6 which we will be demonstrating today. Before we start on our finger gestures, let's enable TalkBack. The universal way to enable TalkBack would be to hold down the volume up and down buttons for about two to five seconds. And you should hear a notification tone along with haptic feedback.

[TalkBack reading: TalkBack on, Home, Monday, November 28]

So now we have TalkBack enabled. On some devices, you might have to repeat that gestures a second time for TalkBack to be enabled. However, if these gestures do not work, you might need to get sighted assistance to enable TalkBack. Go to your phone Settings, Accessibility, and you should see an option called “TalkBack”. Tap on that, and tap on the switch to have TalkBack enabled.

Now that we have TalkBack enabled, let’s get started on our finger gestures.

Explore-by-Touch

Now before we start talking about finger gestures, TalkBack has a feature called “Explore-by-Touch”. What it does is it reads out what is underneath your finger as you explore the screen with one finger.

[TalkBack reading as his finger moves on]

If we move our finger up to the top left of the phone where the notification bar is, we will hear TalkBack reading our time. *[TalkBack reading: 5:37pm... window...]*

Moving right of the notification bar we will hear our battery level, *[TalkBack reading: Battery 64%]* and this is our phone's current battery level.

Swipe Gestures

Let us now move on to our first gesture – swiping left or right with one finger to navigate through items on the screen. To perform a swipe right, simply use one finger to quickly flick right on the screen. Let's give that a try.

[DEMO: One finger swipe to the right. TalkBack reads out "Messages"]

Let's try that again.

We will now perform a swipe right by quickly flicking our finger right on the screen with one finger.

[DEMO: One finger swipe to the right. TalkBack reads out "Chrome"]

And now we have moved on to the next app on the screen. We have now learned how to move to the next item. But how do you move back? To do so, quickly flick your finger left with one finger on the screen. Let's give that a try.

[DEMO: One finger swipe to the left. TalkBack reads out "Messages"]

Now we have moved back to the previous item on the screen. Let's try that again.

[DEMO: One finger swipe to the left. TalkBack reads out "Phone"]

And we are back on the first app that we started on previously.

Scroll Gestures

Let's now move on to our next gesture, the scroll gesture. You may want to perform a scroll gesture to move to a different page on the screen or to reveal more information. To do so, use two fingers to swipe left, right, up, or down on the screen.

For instance, if I would like to move to the next page on my home screen, I will now perform a two fingers swipe from right to left on the screen.

[DEMO: TalkBack reads "Home", two fingers swipe left to right, TalkBack reads "home screen 2 of 2"]

Now, to move back to our previous page, I will perform a reverse gesture, swiping with two fingers from left to right on the screen.

[DEMO: Two finger swipe from left to right, TalkBack reads "home screen 1 of 2"]

You can also perform scroll up or down in certain scenarios to reveal more information. For instance, if I were to do two fingers scroll up now, by sliding two fingers from the bottom edge of the phone up, we will see a list of apps.

[DEMO: Scroll up with two fingers from the bottom edge of the phone, TalkBack reads “apps suggestion, search your phone and more...”]

To scroll up or down through this list, we can perform the same gesture of swiping up with two fingers,

[DEMO: Swiping up with two fingers, TalkBack reads out “Home”]

to move down this list of apps. To move back up through this list of apps, we’ll perform the reverse gesture of using two fingers to swipe down.

[DEMO: Swiping down with two fingers, TalkBack reads out “apps suggestion”]

And now we are at the top of this list of apps.

Double Tap Gestures

The last gesture that we’ll be looking at today is the “Double tap” gesture. The “Double tap” gesture allows you to activate the current item in focus with TalkBack. To perform this gesture, use one finger to quickly tap twice on the screen. Let’s give this a try.

We will first find an icon of an app that we would like to open.

[DEMO: Touching the Phone app, Talkback reads “Phone, window home, double tap to activate”]

Now let’s give that gesture a try. Quickly tap twice on the screen with one finger.

[DEMO: One finger double-tap on the screen, TalkBack reads “Phone, folder...”]

We now have our Phone app open. Let’s give that gesture a try again. We shall now look at the keypad option to open the keypad to dial a number.

[DEMO: Touch the keypad icon on the screen (bottom right of the phone interface), TalkBack reads “keypad, button, dialling list...double tap to activate”. Double tap. TalkBack reads “selected”]

And we have successfully opened our dial pad.

These are the three main gestures we have covered today - one finger swipe left and right, two fingers scroll, and activating items with a double tap.

Once again, My name is Hong Sen and we will meet again next time.

Contact Our IT Trainers

If you would like to learn more about operating your phone, you can contact our IT trainers at Guide Dogs Singapore by calling us at 6339 7900 or emailing us at IT@guidedogs.org.sg.