



C U R A T E D S T R E A M 7

AI for Mobile

Using AI tools on your phone in 2026

What we'll cover

Your phone is now the most common place people use AI. Here's a tour of what's possible in 2026 and how to try it yourself.

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The 2026 mobile-AI landscape

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Apple Intelligence & Gemini on iOS

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Smarter listening with Spotify AI

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Creating images on your phone

Heads up: tools and pricing shift fast. Names of apps and pricing tiers in this stream were accurate in July 2026 — always check the latest in your app store before paying.

AI lives on your phone now

Most adults in New Zealand now use AI more often on their phone than on a laptop. That changes what AI on mobile means — it's not just a chatbot in a browser.

On-device intelligence

Simple tasks run on the phone itself. Faster, private, works offline. Complex queries hop to a secure cloud.

Agentic, not just answering

Modern phone assistants do tasks across apps — book a table, fill a form, summarise a screen, draft a reply.

Multimodal by default

Point your camera, drop in a photo, paste a screen — the model sees text, images, audio together.



AI assistants are now built into every major phone.

Two big shifts in 2026

Apple + Google partner on Gemini-powered Siri (Jan 2026). Google launches Gemini Intelligence for Android 17 (July 2026).

SECTION 1

Apple & Google's mobile AI

What's built into iOS and Android in 2026

Apple Intelligence — now Gemini-powered

In January 2026 Apple and Google announced a multi-year partnership. Apple's next-gen foundation models now incorporate Google's Gemini — and Siri has been rebuilt around it.



A smarter Siri

- Searches the web for live answers
- Generates images on request
- Reads and analyses uploaded files



On-device first

- Simple tasks run privately on your iPhone
- Faster, works offline
- Battery-friendly for everyday use



Private Cloud Compute

- Complex queries hop to Apple's secure cloud
- Encrypted end-to-end
- Apple cannot see your prompts

Try this on iPhone: hold the side button or say "Hey Siri" then ask a long, multi-step question like "Plan a 3-day Nelson holiday for two and add it to my calendar."

Gemini Intelligence on Android

Announced 12 July 2026 at The Android Show. Gemini Intelligence is Google's agentic-AI layer for Android 17 — your phone does tasks, not just answers questions.

Magic Pointer

Tap-and-hold anywhere on screen — Gemini explains, summarises or translates the thing under your finger.

Create Your Widget

Describe a widget in plain language — "a glance at my next workout" — and Gemini builds one.

Glowbar

Live, contextual overlays — a recipe step-by-step, a translated menu, a route on the lock screen.

Proactive automation

Gemini moves across your apps to complete multi-step jobs — message a friend, book a ride, reschedule a meeting.

Same shift on iPhone and Android: phones are moving from "ask a question, get an answer" to "hand off a task, it gets done".

SECTION 2

Asking questions with Perplexity

Compile a search into a single, sourced answer

Perplexity AI — search that answers

Perplexity is a free AI search app for iPhone and Android. Instead of returning a list of links, it reads several sources and compiles them into one easy-to-read answer — with citations you can click.

1

Download & open

Available on the Apple App Store and Google Play. Free version works without a subscription.

2

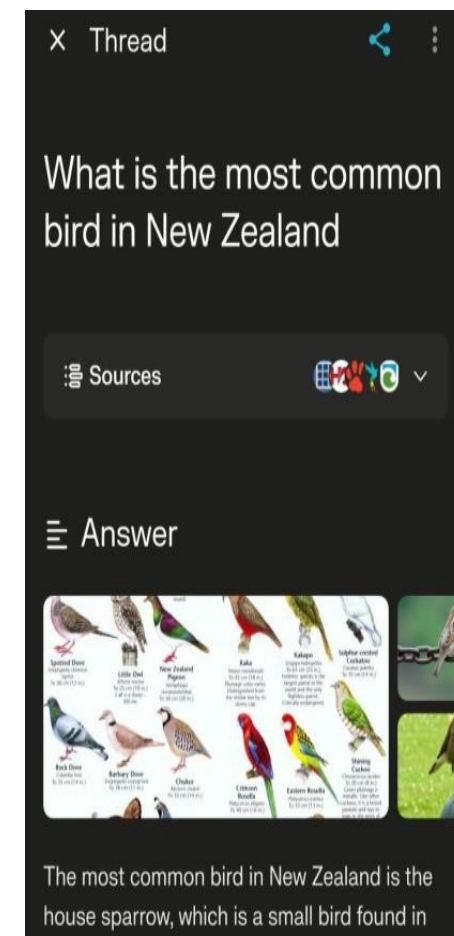
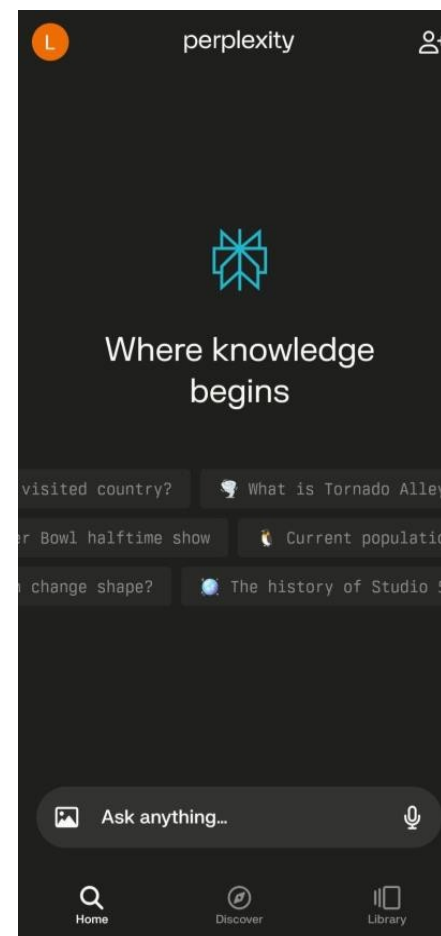
Skip the upsell

After login Perplexity offers a paid plan. Tap the × on the top left — you can always upgrade later.

3

Ask anything

Tap the prompt bar at the bottom and type or speak your question — full sentences work best.

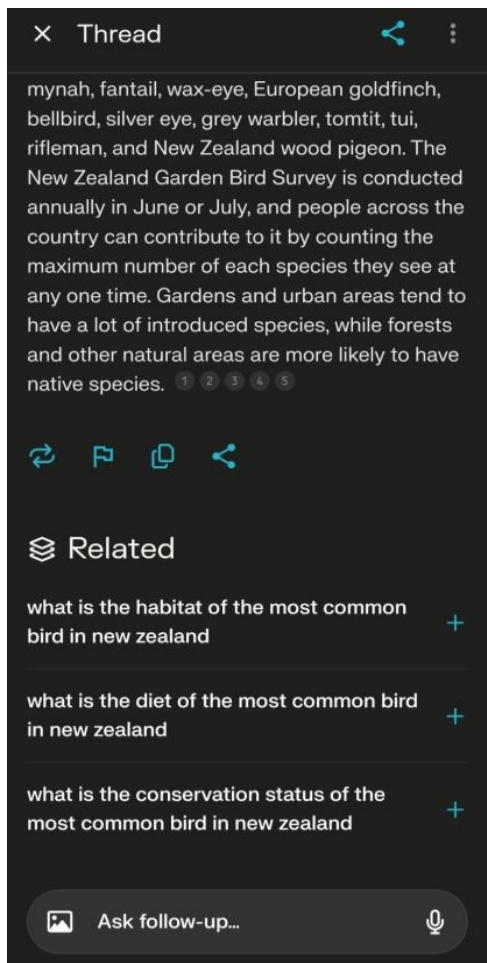


Home screen → asking a question

Try first "What is the most common bird in New Zealand?"

Find the sources, ask follow-ups

AI can get facts wrong. Perplexity shows its working — and lets you keep refining without retyping the whole question.



Sources & Related panel

Sources tab

Tap to see the websites Perplexity pulled the answer from. Always worth a click before trusting a fact.

Rewrite with another model

Free users get a second model (Sonar Pro). Different models phrase things differently — useful for a second opinion.

Related questions

Below the answer, Perplexity suggests follow-ups. Tap one or write your own — it keeps the context of your previous question.

Voice & camera input

Tap the mic for spoken questions, the camera icon to ask about something in front of you.

Practice prompt: "What are the reviews on the iPhone 17?" — then follow up: "What's the battery life like?"

SECTION 3

Smarter listening with Spotify

AI that picks the music for your mood, day and decade

Spotify's AI features

Open Spotify, tap Search, and choose Made For You. The AI features have grown a lot since 2023 — there are now four tools worth knowing.

The AI DJ

An AI radio host who picks three or four songs at a time and talks between them. Tap the blue DJ icon to skip to the next set.

Daylist

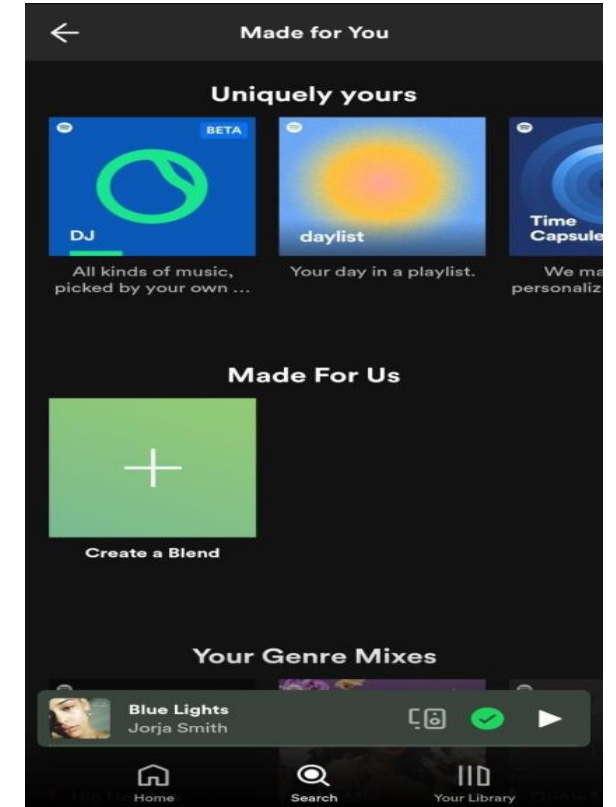
Your day in a playlist — Spotify updates it several times a day based on what you usually listen to at that hour.

AI Playlist (prompt-based)

Type a vibe — "songs for a Sunday drive through the Coromandel" — and Spotify builds a fresh playlist.

Daily Mixes & Artist Mixes

Long-running personalised mixes — by mood, genre, decade, and the artists you already love.



The Made For You hub in Spotify

Heads up: Spotify needs listening history to learn your taste. Give it a week or two of regular use before judging the recommendations.

SECTION 4

Creating images on your phone

Text-to-image generation is now built into the apps you already use

Where to generate images on mobile

In 2026 you don't need a dedicated image-generation app. The mainstream chatbots and creative apps all do it — and the results are noticeably better than the dedicated apps of two years ago.

ChatGPT	Gemini	Claude	Canva AI	Adobe Firefly
Includes GPT Image 2 — clean text in images, strong realism.	Best-in-class character consistency, scene control.	Strong on illustration, charts and design briefs.	Generate, edit and drop straight into a design or post.	Photo-style images, generative fill on your phone.
Free + Plus	Free + Pro	Free + Pro	Free + Pro	Free + Subscription

PRACTICE PROMPTS

- "A sunny shore with people lying on the beach, small waves on the sand, mountains in the background — photo-realistic."
- "A surfer riding a big wave, lush jungle in the background — anime style."
- "A poster advertising a Nelson farmers' market this Saturday — minimal flat-design illustration."



Hands-on: try it in 20 minutes

Pick one app from each of the three tools we covered. Spend roughly 6–7 minutes on each — long enough to see what's good and what's clunky.

1

Search with Perplexity

Ask one fact-finding question. Tap into the sources panel. Then ask a follow-up that builds on the answer — without retyping the question.

2

Listen with Spotify AI

Open Made For You. Start the AI DJ for one set. Then try AI Playlist — describe the vibe in one sentence, see what it returns.

3

Make an image

Open ChatGPT, Gemini, or Canva on your phone. Describe a scene with style, mood and detail. Regenerate twice with small tweaks — notice how each tweak changes the result.

Reflect: which task felt faster than your usual way of doing it? Which felt slower or wrong? Both answers are useful.

SECTION 5

What to take with you

Mobile AI is changing fast — these four ideas will outlast the apps

Four things to take away

1

Your phone's assistant is a real AI now

Siri (Gemini-powered) and Gemini Intelligence are no longer toy assistants. Ask them long, multi-step questions and let them work across apps.

2

Use AI search for compiled answers

When you'd open five browser tabs, open Perplexity instead. Check the sources panel before trusting a fact.

3

Personalisation gets better with use

Spotify AI, recommendation feeds and assistants all improve as they learn what you like. Give them a few weeks before judging.

4

Image generation is everywhere

You don't need a dedicated app — ChatGPT, Gemini, Claude, Canva and Adobe Firefly all generate images on mobile.

The best way to learn mobile AI is to use it for an hour, then again next week.



Pick up your phone. Have a go.

The AI is already in your pocket.

Nelson AI Sandbox · aisandbox.org.nz

