

9 Apps With the 50-Plus in Mind

These applications for phones and tablets can make life a little easier

by: Penny Musco | from: [AARP Bulletin](#) | May 25, 2011

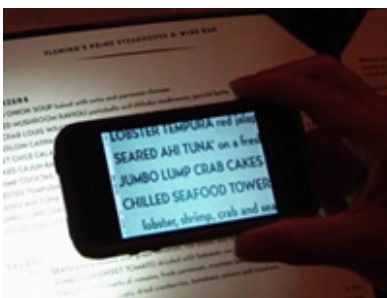
Getting older? There's an app for that! Well, not really, but there are applications for smartphones and similar devices that may help smooth the road to aging.

See also: [The smartphone is the new universal remote control.](#)

With assistance from Amy Webb, CEO of [Webbmedia Group](#) and an expert on emerging [technology](#), we scouted the world of apps in order to spotlight some recent ones with the 50-plus in mind.

1. HeyTell (for iPhone, iPod touch, [iPad](#), Android; free). Stiff fingers? Not a problem. "This is one of the most important applications available now," Webb says of this voice-based tool that lets you send, receive and record texts and calls with the touch of a single button. It not only instantly connects you to friends and family vocally, but also shows everyone's location, in case you need to find each other (different privacy levels can block the information if you prefer). And messages also can be saved and exported to [Facebook](#) and email.

2. Silver Surf (iPad; free). Does it appear that those buttons on your phone or keypad are getting smaller? This app offers high contrast, text zoom (up to 200 percent) and larger navigation icons, for when holding your gadget at arm's length just doesn't cut it anymore.



The Eye Reader helps make small print bigger. — Courtesy of EyeReader

3. Eye Reader (iPhone; \$1.99). Stop squinting at restaurant menus or trying to read your theater program in the dark. The Eye Reader lets you use your iPhone 4's LED light to magnify and illumine small print. The creator says an Android version is in the works, and promises more helpful tools to come in his Silver Apps series for the 45-and-over crowd.

4. SplashID Safe (for iPhone, iPod touch, iPad and Android \$9.99, BlackBerry \$9.95). Get some help keeping up with all your user names and [passwords](#). You can store them here — along with credit card numbers, PINs and other account numbers — and free up some brain space. "This is probably the most secure system out there if you're going to store your information," says Webb, because it has a couple of levels of encryption. "You have to pay for it, but it's very difficult to crack." And, she adds, it's a cinch to back up. "You have to connect your phone to your computer in order to sync, but that's actually better because you don't want to transmit [those records] wirelessly."

5. BuddyGuard (iPhone, iPod touch, iPad, BlackBerry; free). Formerly called Plerts, this personal protection device has monitoring, detection and warning capabilities. "A really, really smart

Related

- [Will a tablet be your new best friend? Read](#)
- [Smartphones tap into your conversations with spyware. Read](#)
- [Shop smart for tech products. Read](#)
- [Boomers love their smartphones. Read](#)

application," Webb says. The accelerometer senses increased G-forces generated during a car accident and will automatically call for help. You can even enter a distress PIN to send an emergency alert. And every three seconds, the app records audio, snaps photos and notes your GPS coordinates, all of which make it handy to have along if you're traveling or in an unfamiliar area.

Next: [How fast is your heart beating? Find out with this app.>>](#)

6. Foodspotting (iPhone, iPod touch, iPad, Android; free). What differentiates this restaurant reference guide from others — such as Urbanspoon — is that it's picture-based. Diners photograph their order, then upload the shots, along with a review. "So if you're in the middle of Baltimore and you're trying to find the best crab cake, rather than just looking around online for people's recommendations, you can actually see what the food looks like," explains Webb. You can also access guides from experts, such as the Travel Channel's Anthony Bourdain.

7. SitOrSquat (iPhone, iPod touch, iPad, Android, BlackBerry; free). The user-generated content of this restroom finder is the ultimate resource for when you gotta go when you're on the go. "Depending on where you live in the country, this is incredibly useful. I'm in New York City a lot, and I use this all the time," Webb says. An independent group began compiling the data several years ago, but the app was recently acquired by Charmin, which accounts for the prominent toilet paper branding. Contributors often include information on operating hours and sometimes post photos of the facilities.

8. Instant Heart Rate (iPhone, iPod touch, iPad, Android; free). Place your finger over the LED camera, and in 10 seconds you'll know how fast your heart is beating — no external hardware needed. "Because your skin is translucent, it's able to watch your blood pulsing," explains Webb. The upgraded version (99 cents for Apple, \$2.99 for Android) allows you to customize an exercise routine and track your progress, and includes a target heart-rate zone calculator.

9. Siri (iPhone/iPod touch/iPad; free). "A digital concierge" is how Webb describes this task-oriented, vocal-based app. It goes through the information on your phone — your networks, your contacts — and makes recommendations based on what it thinks you'll like. "You could open up Siri and say, 'Dinner reservation tonight, Chinese food,' and it will find you, based on where you're at and what your preferences are, the best restaurants in your area," Webb says. "Then you can click to make a phone call or allow the application to make a reservation for you." Same thing with arranging taxi service and flights, accessing weather forecasts, scouting out parking garages and even locating movie locations — by genre. "It's a really neat resource — as long as you know what to ask for," Webb says.

Penny Musco is a writer in Montclair, N.J.