



Google on the Go

Using an
Android-Powered
Mobile Phone



Google on the Go: Using an Android-Powered Mobile Phone

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Introduction

Who Is This Book For?

I'd love to say that this book is for you, no matter who you are. But no one book could cover the wide range of cell phone users when it comes to discussing a new system.

So, how do you know if this book is for you?

Maybe all you've ever used a standard mobile phone for is making phone calls. Maybe you occasionally send a text message or use your cell phone camera to share pictures with friends. Maybe you'd like to jump ahead to the latest phone software, but you feel a little nervous about that.

If that sounds like you, I'm writing for you.

However, if you're constantly buying new technologies and skipping the user's manual, preferring to play with what you've purchased and figure it out for yourself, you can still use this book as a handy quick reference to a feature that you forgot how to configure.

If you're already planning what software you can write for Android, this probably isn't the right book. We give you pointers to some resources to help you write software, but this topic is not discussed in depth.

What Is the Open Handset Alliance?

The Open Handset Alliance (OHA) is a group of companies that looked at the current generation of mobile phones and decided that only by coming together could they best drive innovation and give customers a better experience when it comes to their mobile phones.

These companies range from hardware manufacturers such as HTC, LG Electronics, Motorola, and Samsung, to mobile operators such as T-Mobile and Sprint Nextel, to software companies such as Google and eBay.

What Is Android?

Mobile phones, like your computer, have an operating system. It can be something simple, with few to no graphics and no color, that just allows you to make phone calls. Or it could be extremely powerful, letting you do almost everything you can do with your desktop computer.

Android is an operating system for your mobile phone and definitely falls into the second category. Not only does Android offer you a powerful Internet experience, but tools are also provided via the Internet to let people write their own applications for the phone.

In addition to Internet connectivity and programmability, Android has been released under the Apache v2 open-source license.

What Does Open Source Mean?

Open source has a number of different definitions, and admittedly, this particular section could sound a little techy. So let's try a basic explanation:

Open source means that the words behind the software are available for anyone to read and improve.

If you want to understand more, keep reading. Otherwise, skip to the next section.

Software, such as Windows and Halo, is written with simple words. Those words are run through something called a compiler that takes those words that you and I can read (to varying degrees of understanding) and makes them something that computers can read and use.

What this means all depends on what license is used. Just as a driver's license lets you drive, and a hunting license lets you hunt, different open-source licenses let people do different things. Some require you to take changes you might make to the software and share them by putting the changes back into the software that other people will download.

The Apache v2 license allows the people making the phones and the mobile phone service providers to make changes to the software without having to provide those changes to the other manufacturers.

G1 Features

When this book was written, only one mobile phone was available that was running the Android operating system. The G1 is manufactured by HTC and is available from T-Mobile.

Although your phone might look different, the G1 appears in figures throughout this book, so I thought a quick look at the phone would be a good idea.

This particular phone has a touch screen, a camera, and a slide-out keyboard. The front of the phone is shown in Figure I.1.

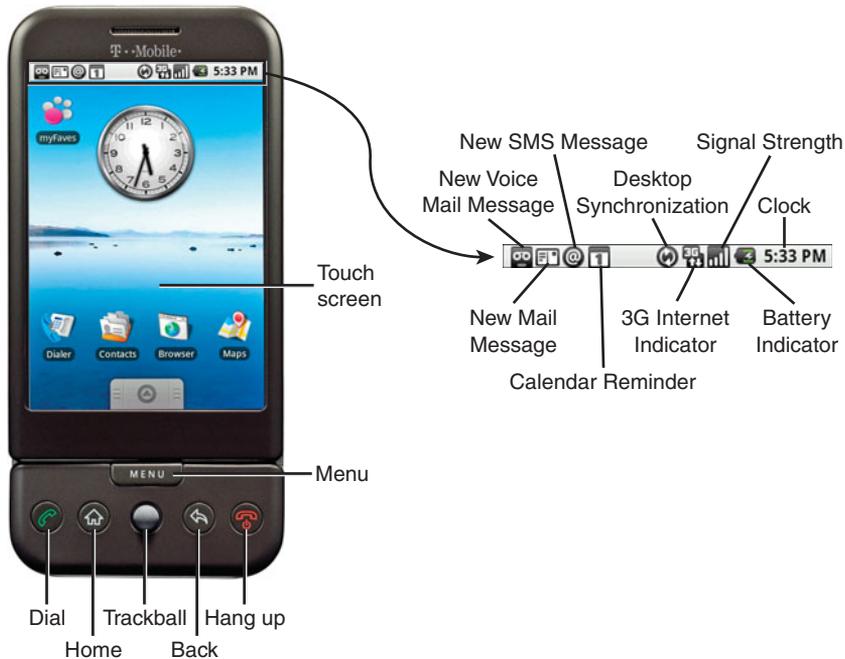


Figure I.1

The T-Mobile G1.

The Hang-up button disconnects any active calls and locks the device. It is also the button you use to power the device off and on.

In fact, before we go into the phone itself, if you haven't turned on the device yet, why don't you do that now? Just hold down the Hang-up button to turn on the device.

About This Book

We start by covering the basic functions that you'll use with just about any mobile phone. If you're unfamiliar with basic phone features, Chapter 1 is a must-read.

After that we'll follow with some of the features that make an Android-powered phone so interesting. You can access your Google Calendar, read your email, and use the phone as a personal media player (an MP3 player). Browsing the Web is easy, and you can even add applications to your phone. One of our favorites allows you to use the phone's camera to scan a barcode and quickly find out who has the best price on the item, both locally and on the Web.

If you fancy yourself a programmer (either amateur or professional), you can even write programs for your phone.

Getting the 411

Throughout this book, we've included tips, tricks, notes, and warnings. When you see the following sidebars, here's what you'll find.

411

Would you like to know more about a specific feature? Do you have an Android-powered phone that's not a G1 from T-Mobile? Look for The 411 sidebars to find information on other models of phones, or tips that you can use to save time. Occasionally, you'll also find some advanced tricks in these sections.

911

Watch out! The 911 sidebars contain warnings and cautions. The information here will help keep you out of trouble, both with your phone and with your friends. We recommend paying close attention to these sidebars. They'll save you frustration and sometimes even a few dollars as well.

IN THIS CHAPTER

- Overview of Gmail
- Customizing Gmail Settings
- Connecting to Other Email Accounts



4

Working with Email

Overview of Gmail

One of the key reasons to pick up one of the Android-powered phones is how closely hooked into your Google accounts they are—the calendar, the contacts, the maps. But right now we'll talk about Google's second-biggest killer application—Gmail.

On the surface, it's just another Web-based email client. But something about it draws people in. Perhaps it's the large amount of storage that Gmail makes available to users for free. Or perhaps it was the invitation-only scheme they used for years that gave it an air of exclusivity. Whatever the reason, Gmail remains one of the most popular Web-based mail clients.

It uses a relatively unique method of displaying messages, grouping them by threads, so that as you exchange emails, they take up only one line in your inbox.

Reading Email

Reading email is quick and easy. Whenever you receive a new email, you get a nice little notification on the status bar to let you know, as shown in Figure 4.1.

**Figure 4.1**

The Status bar shows your email notification.

Now, just like every other time you get a status bar notification in the upper left, you can tap the status bar and drag it down the screen to see your notifications. Note that, as shown in Figure 4.2, you can just tap Clear notifications to get rid of all the notifications, or you can tap the notification in question to pull up—well, whatever the notification is for. In the case of email, you just tap New email. Because, as we said, Gmail stores emails as conversations, you see some number of unread conversations. If it's only one, tapping the New email notification loads that one unread email. If you have multiple unread conversations, you instead end up in your Inbox.

“Wait a minute,” I hear you saying. “What about reading all the mail in my Inbox that isn't new? How do I get there?” That's easy enough. Just open the Application tab and tap Gmail (see Figure 4.3).

You can use the trackball or your finger to scroll through the list. If a conversation has an unread message, it's bold in the list, with a white background.

Tap an email to open it. If it's a completely read conversation, you see the most recent message, along with a link to tap to see all the messages. If the conversation contains unread messages, they are all open for you to read.



Figure 4.2
Clearing all your notifications at once.

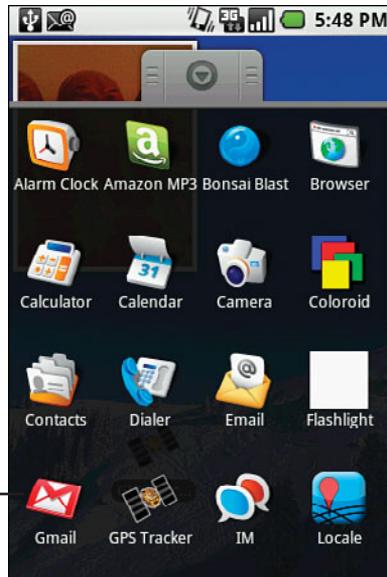


Figure 4.3
The Gmail icon in all its resplendent glory.

If you receive a message with an attachment, you can preview most Microsoft Office file types and images by tapping the Preview button. You can also save some attachment types, such as pictures and graphics, by tapping the Download button, as shown in Figure 4.4.

**Figure 4.4**

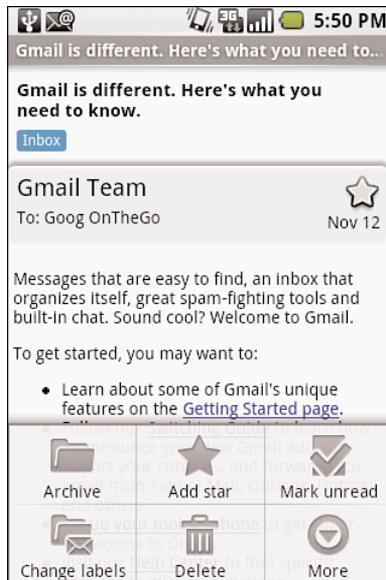
You can preview or download attachments.

Whenever you read email, you can press the Back button to get back to your Inbox. Or you can press the Menu button and then tap More and Back to Inbox.

The menu has a few other options besides the More button, as shown in Figure 4.5:

- **Archive:** Archiving an email removes it from your Inbox without actually deleting it. We'll talk about the difference later.
- **Add star:** Stars are just one way to organize your mailbox by adding an icon to emails that you want to flag for some reason.
- **Mark unread:** Marks the email, or the conversation, as unread.
- **Change labels:** This allows you to set one or more labels on a message. Labels will appear at the top of the message/conversation.
- **Delete:** Delete actually deletes a message or conversation.
- **More:** Gives you access to Back to Inbox, which we just mentioned, and Report spam, which is used to let Google know that a spam message sneaked through the Google spam filters. This option removes the spam from your Inbox and helps improve Google's spam filters.

If you press the Menu button again and scroll to the bottom of the message, you'll find six more buttons. The first three are visible for every message in a conversation, and the last three are at the bottom of the conversation.

**Figure 4.5**

The Menu button is always useful.

- **Reply:** This starts a new message in the conversation to the person who sent the message you're currently reading.
- **Reply to all:** This starts a new message in the conversation to all the people on the To or Cc line of the message you're currently reading.
- **Forward:** This starts a new message and requires you to provide the address of whomever you want to forward an existing message to.
- **Archive:** Archiving a conversation removes it from your Inbox. The conversation is stored in the All Mail folder.
- **Labels:** You can add and remove labels for the conversation. A label is an easy way to categorize a message or conversation.
- **Delete:** This is just another way to delete the conversation.

As you can see, the buttons on the email and conversation are pretty self-explanatory, so we'll go back to the Inbox and take a look at the other options you have there.

Now that you're in the Inbox, press the Menu button to examine the following options:

- **Refresh:** Although your phone should regularly update your list of messages for you on-the-fly, if it hasn't, you can tap this option to refresh the list.
- **Compose:** When you want to create a new message, this is what you tap. We'll cover this more a little later in this chapter.
- **View labels:** You tap this option when you want to view the labels you have given to messages.

- **Search:** This is what Google is known for—searching for stuff or, in this case, your email. Tap this option, type in what you want to search for, and off you go.
- **Settings:** Tap this option to view your email settings. We'll cover this option in the section "Customizing Gmail Settings."

Sending a New Message

Even though reading email is fun and exciting, at some point you'll want to send email as well. To send a new message, follow these steps:

1. From your Inbox, press the **Menu** button.
2. Tap **Compose** to bring up the form shown in Figure 4.6.

Figure 4.6

The new message form.

3. Type an address in the **To** box. If the recipient is in your Contacts, the phone automatically fills in the email address as you type. This process is known as autocomplete.
4. Tap in the **Subject** box, and type a subject.
5. Scroll down to the large, unmarked field and tap to start typing the body of your email.
6. Tap **Send** when you're done to send your message.

While you're composing a new message, you can access several options by pressing the Menu button:

- **Send:** This is just another way to send your message.
- **Add Cc/Bcc:** This adds the Cc and Bcc fields so that you can add recipients to those fields.
- **Attach:** If you have a picture stored on the phone, you can attach it to the message and send it.

- **Edit subject:** This option is helpful if you are replying to an existing message or forwarding an existing message. Tap this to change the subject.
- **Discard:** This sends the message to the trash immediately. Be careful with this option, because you receive no warning message.

Replying to or Forwarding a Message

These tasks are so easy, they don't even need steps. Simply open the message you want to reply to or forward. Tap a button at the bottom of the message to either Reply, Reply to all, or Forward the message. These actions do the following:

- **Reply:** This creates a new message to the person who sent you the original message.
- **Reply to all:** This creates a new message to the person who sent you the original message and anyone else who received the message because their name was on the To or Cc line.
- **Forward:** This sends the existing message to another person. You can also add a comment to the message before you send it.

Archiving an Email

We mentioned both archiving and deleting. Both actions remove an email from your Inbox. However, that's where the similarities end. Unlike most other email clients, Gmail doesn't have folders, so to speak. Figure 4.7 shows a typical Gmail account.

Folder Structure

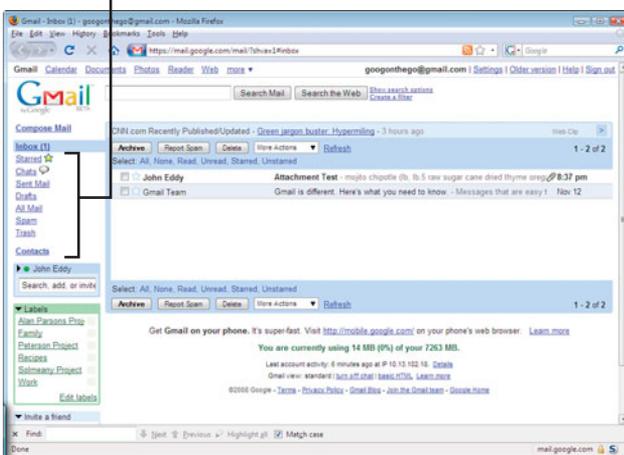


Figure 4.7

A typical Gmail account.

The Inbox is where all received mail goes automatically, unless it has been marked as spam. The Inbox stores all mail that hasn't been trashed, marked as spam, or archived.

The All Mail folder is all email messages that haven't been marked as spam or trashed. So it includes any mail that has been archived. It also includes all messages you've sent, as well as all messages that are currently in draft form.

The Trash folder stores all mail that you've deleted. When you delete (or trash) a message, it is stored in the Trash folder for 30 days. On the 31st day, it's deleted forever. If there's any chance that you might need a message later, do not send it to the trash. This is a bit like storing your tax returns or your driver's license in the garbage.

So what is the Archive? Archiving an email simply removes it from the Inbox. If you like the peace of mind of looking at a clean, organized Inbox with just a few items, you'll probably archive items often. However, because Gmail offers you such a great amount of storage, there is no real reason to archive other than organization. Archived items can still be found in the All Mail folder.

All About Labels

Because Google stores all the unarchived mail in one giant Inbox, as soon as you get more than a handful of messages, you'll probably sometimes need to search your Inbox for specific messages. Although this works quite well most of the time, sometimes it's more convenient to set aside certain messages for easy retrieval.

That's one of the primary functions of labels. They help you organize your mail within your Inbox or within the All Mail folder. While you're viewing a message, press the Menu button, and then tap View Labels to display the screen shown in Figure 4.8. Just tap the label you want to apply. You can apply multiple labels to a single message.

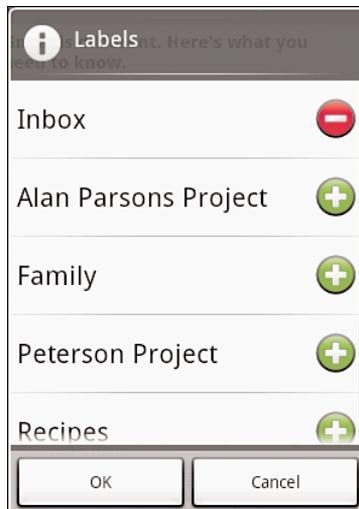


Figure 4.8

You can tap any of the labels you have defined.

4.11

You can also add labels by tapping and holding a single message and choosing **Change labels** from the pop-up menu.

Although applying labels is quite easy, there is no way to create new labels on your phone. To do that, you need to open www.gmail.com on your computer and sign in with the same account you're using on your phone. From there, you can edit labels or create new ones.

Applying Labels to Received Mail Automatically

Although it's useful to be able to apply labels to mail you have received, it isn't very efficient. The following steps show you how you can automatically apply labels to new messages as you receive them:

1. On your computer, open Gmail and click the **Edit labels** option on the left side of the screen.
2. Click the word **Filters** at the top of the screen.
3. Click **Create a new filter**.

4.11

Although we're showing you only a small feature of filters, perhaps we should mention what filters are. Essentially, filters are what you would call rules in most other mail programs, a way to do things to messages automatically. In this case, we're going to be automatically applying a label to messages as they come in so that you can more easily find them on your phone.

4. Specify the criteria you want, such as **From:** john@doe.com or **Has the words:** "Family Reunion."
5. Click **Test Search** to verify that the filter captures the messages you intend. If not, continue editing the criteria.
6. Click **Next Step** and choose the action you want to happen when you receive a filtered message. You can take a variety of actions, including applying a label.
7. Choose the label you'd like to apply, and then click **Create Filter**.

Within Gmail, you can see only email that has this label, giving your Inbox the appearance of folders without actually having them. You might think that sounds rather silly, and that folders are far more convenient, but consider this: Unless you make a copy, thus doubling the size of the message, it can't exist in two folders. But you can put as many labels as you want on a message. So, that work-related email about the Peterson Project? You can use the "Work" label, the "Peterson Project" label, and the "From Dave" label, thus making this message easy to find in all three filtered views.

How's that for efficiency?

Customizing Gmail Settings

Let's go back to the Inbox on the phone. Press the Menu button and tap Settings. You can configure two types of options: General settings and Notification settings.

General Settings

In the General settings section, you have the following options:

- **Signature:** A signature is a blurb of text that appears at the bottom of your email messages. You can use only text. Images are not supported. The signature you specify here is specific to your phone, so you can set up something to show that you're typing on a tiny keyboard and might make some typographic errors. Or you can brag about your new phone. For example, I set up the following signature on my phone: I'm mailing you from my spiffy new G1 Google Phone, but the keyboard is rather small, so please excuse any errors.
- **Labels:** As we just showed you, labels are a powerful little feature. Perhaps you want to receive only certain emails on your phone, and you've set up a filter to automatically apply a certain label to emails. Here you can select synchronization settings for any label, as shown in Figure 4.9. This will affect what messages get downloaded to your phone, which can be very useful if you happen to have a data plan that limits the amount of data you are able to download. Currently, for your Inbox, you have two options: Sync recent or Sync all, while all other labels have a third option of blank. Honestly, between you, me and the untold others reading this book, this feature as it is while I'm writing isn't very useful. If you were able to set the Inbox not to synchronize, but synchronize only starred items or certain labels, then it would be far more useful. But, as it stands, you can't not sync the Inbox, so to only sync certain items, you'd need to set up a filter that archives everything that you don't want to get on your phone. Which would then make the web-based interface mostly useless. The key reason to use this feature is to sync all items for a particular label, so you'll always be able to see them.

To change the settings for each label, just tap the label. You can choose from the following options:

- **Sync all:** This option simply means that all items with this label will be synchronized with your phone.
- **Sync recent:** This option synchronizes all unread items.
- **Blank:** If the synchronization has no option listed, none of the items will be synchronized.

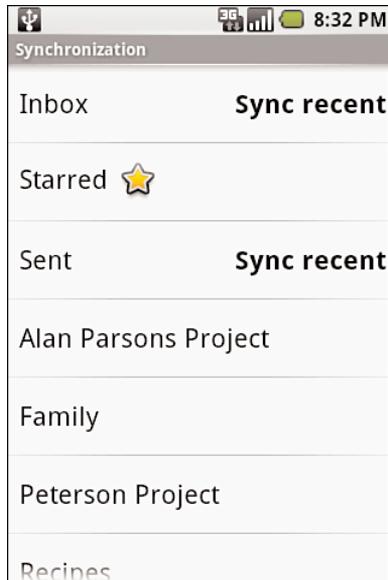


Figure 4.9
Configuring synchronization settings for your phone.

Notification Settings

You can configure several different notification options, as shown in Figure 4.10.



Figure 4.10
Configuring notification options for your phone.

- **Email notifications:** By default, your phone notifies you with an icon in the status bar every time you get a new message. Tap this option to deselect it if you don't want this to happen.
- **Select ringtone:** Tap this option to choose a ringtone to play whenever you get a new message.
- **Vibrate:** If this option is checked, your phone vibrates whenever you get a new message.

Connecting to Other Email Accounts

Gmail is a great application, but lots of people have other email accounts. You'll be glad to know that you can hook up to any POP3/IMAP4 mail server. Although some Web-based mail providers have POP3/IMAP4 access options, not all of them do. Others have the option but require you to pay extra for it or use only approved email clients. Be sure to check with your mail provider if you aren't sure or if the steps provided don't seem to work for you. The setup is quick and easy, and you can add several other email accounts with ease, as shown in the following steps.

4.11

You might be wondering what the difference is between POP3 and IMAP4. There are a number of differences, but the one you will probably care about the most is that POP3 is designed to retrieve email from your Inbox. IMAP4 is designed to interact with your Inbox and other folders. So, if you mark a message as read in an IMAP folder, both the server and the client see that the message is read. Two-way communication occurs between the client (the phone) and the server. If you have a POP3 account, your phone can retrieve messages from the server, but it cannot change the message's read or unread state.

1. Tap the **Application** tab, and then tap **Email**.
2. If this is your first non-Google email account, tap **Next** and skip to step 5. Otherwise, press the **Menu** button, and then tap **Accounts**.
3. Enter the email address and password for your account. Tap **Next**.
4. Your phone attempts to retrieve the settings for your email account. If this fails (it often does, because not all servers support downloading these settings automatically), continue with the next step. Otherwise, skip to step 8.
5. Tap the button for the account type you want to add.
6. Enter your incoming mail server settings. You need to obtain these from your email provider.
7. Tap **Next**. Your phone validates your incoming email settings.
8. Enter your outgoing server settings, as shown in Figure 4.11, and tap **Next**.

**Figure 4.11**

Entering the outgoing server settings for your account.

9. When your account is validated, you're asked for some basic information, such as how often you'd like your phone to check for email and whether you want to be notified when you receive new messages. Tap **Next** when you're done.
10. Enter a name for your account if you'd like. You don't need to enter a name, but it can be helpful if you have multiple accounts.
11. Enter your name. This is the name that is displayed whenever someone else reads your email. Tap **Save**, and you're done.

911

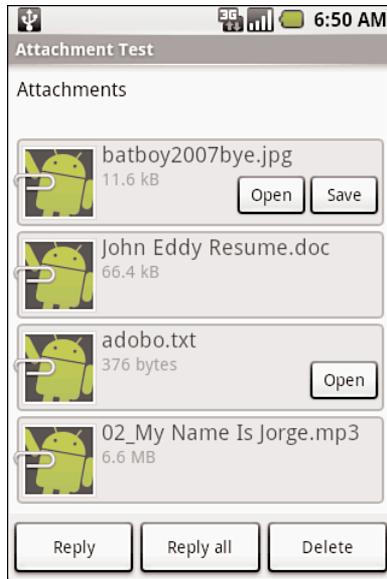
When setting up a POP3 account, you need to set one option carefully. POP3 clients normally remove messages from the server after they are downloaded. The phone, however, does not. If you want, you can configure the phone to delete messages from the server when you delete them from your Inbox or after seven days.

You can now send and receive email messages on your phone. You can create multiple accounts from different providers.

Reading Email

We don't need to say much about reading email. From the Home screen, tap the Application tab, and then tap Email. Tap the email account you want (if you have more than one), and then tap Inbox. Tap any of the existing messages to open and read them.

If your email came with an attachment, scroll to the bottom of the message to see it. Figure 4.12 shows a message with several attachments.

**Figure 4.12**

Each message can have multiple attachments.

Your phone can't download or view every attachment type, but if the attachment is one you can work with, you see an Open or Save button, or both. Tap the button to perform the action.

Sending a New Message

Sending a new email is almost as easy as reading one. From the email account, press the Menu button, and tap Compose. From there, just follow the same instructions that you used for Gmail.

Press the Menu button to display the following options:

- **Add Cc/Bcc:** As before, this option lets you add Cc and Bcc fields to the message.
 - **Send:** This sends the message.
 - **Save as draft:** This saves the message locally on the phone in case you want to finish it later.
 - **Discard:** Be careful with this option. If you tap it, the message is deleted immediately.
 - **Add attachment:** Tap this option to attach a picture to the email.
- For more information about adding pictures to an email message, **see** "Sharing by Email," **p. 74**.

Replying to or Forwarding a Message

Replying to a message is easy. Either open the message and tap the Reply/Reply all/Forward button at the bottom of the message, or tap and hold the message and tap Reply, Reply all, or Forward, depending on what you want to do.

Deleting a Message

If you're reading the message, just scroll to the bottom and tap the Delete button to delete it. If you're looking at your message list, tap and hold the email you'd like to delete, and then tap Delete.

Switching Between Multiple Accounts

Assuming that you have multiple POP3/IMAP accounts defined, simply follow these steps to switch between them:

1. Tap the **Application** tab, and then tap **Email**.
2. Press the **Menu** button.
3. Tap **Accounts**.
4. Tap the account you want to use.

Removing an Account

If you are ready to get rid of one of your POP3/IMAP4 accounts, doing so is quite easy:

1. Tap the **Application** tab, and then tap **Email**.
2. Press the **Menu** button.
3. Tap **Accounts**.
4. In your list of accounts, tap and hold the account you'd like to take off your phone.
5. Tap **Remove account**. If you're sure, tap **OK**.

Index

A

- Agenda view (Calendar), viewing, 48-49
 - AIM (AOL Instant Messenger), adding
 - accounts to phone, 129
 - Airplane mode (Wi-Fi), 170
 - alarms
 - deleting, 21
 - setting, 18
 - repeat feature*, 20
 - ringtones*, 19
 - vibration*, 20
 - snooze button, 20
 - Albums category (music), 86
 - alerts
 - Calendar, setting in, 49-51
 - text messages, setting for, 22
 - All Mail folder (Gmail), 62
 - AMR audio files, 86
 - Android phones as open-source platforms
 - creating applications for, 177-179
 - IDE installations, 180
 - plug-in installations, 180
 - programming resources, 182
 - SDK installations, 179-182
 - answering phone calls, 10
 - antennas, troubleshooting signal strength, 183-184
 - Application tab, 7-9
 - applications
 - creating for phones, 177-178
 - IDE installation*, 180
 - plug-in installation*, 180
 - programming resources*, 182
 - SDK installation*, 179-180, 182
 - desktop, moving to, 159
 - featured applications (Market screen), accessing, 150
 - finding, 150
 - installing, 150-152
 - games*, 157
 - home screen*, 160
 - launching, 153, 157
 - removing, 159-162, 186
 - reviewing information on, 152
 - Shazam
 - launching*, 157
 - YouTube and*, 158
 - ShopSavvy
 - installing*, 152
 - launching*, 153
 - operating*, 153, 156
- appointments (Calendar)
 - creating, 46-48
 - displaying from multiple calendars, 46
 - saving, 48
 - archiving email in Gmail, 58-62
 - Artists category (music), 86
 - attachments (email)
 - downloading in Gmail, 57-58
 - pictures as, 74
 - previewing in Gmail, 57-58
 - sending via
 - Gmail*, 60
 - IMAP4 mail servers*, 68
 - POP3 mail servers*, 68
 - audible touch tones (dialing), 24
 - auto-fit pages feature (web pages), 118
 - autocorrect settings (text), 25
 - automatic sign-ins, IM, 127

B

background, opening web pages in, 119

batteries

- “dead” phones, troubleshooting, 187
- Wi-Fi and, 166

Bcc field

- Gmail, 60
- IMAP4 mail servers, 68
- POP3 mail servers, 68

blocking contacts from friends lists (Google Talk), 126-127

blogs, Google Reader, 145

Bluetooth, enabling, 170

bookmarks (web pages), 113

brightness, setting, 25

Browser icon, 7

browsers (Web)

- accessing, 107
- customizing
 - page content settings*, 118-119
 - privacy settings*, 119
 - security settings*, 120

form data

- clearing*, 119
- remembering*, 119

Gears, 120

image searches via Google Search, 114-115

resetting, 121

web pages

- auto-fit pages feature*, 118
- bookmarking*, 113
- changing home pages*, 110, 119
- clearing caches*, 119
- opening in background*, 119
- sharing*, 111
- zooming in/out*, 112-113

websites

- accepting cookies from*, 119

- blocking pop-up windows*, 118
- checking for updates*, 110
- clearing cookie data from*, 119
- clearing histories*, 116, 119
- clearing passwords*, 120
- disabling image loading*, 118
- downloading files from*, 116
- enabling JavaScript in*, 119
- Local search feature (Google Search)*, 115
- managing histories*, 116
- moving through histories*, 110
- News search feature (Google Search)*, 115
- opening by typing URL*, 108-109
- phone configurations*, 108
- remembering passwords*, 120
- searching via Google Search*, 113
- show security warnings feature*, 120
- sizing text in*, 118
- viewing multiple sites at a time*, 109

buying music, 94

C

caches (web pages), clearing, 119

Calculator icon, 9

Calendar

- accessing, 43-44
- Agenda view, viewing, 48-49
- alerts, setting, 49-51

appointments

- creating*, 46-48
- displaying from multiple calendars in Calendar*, 46
- saving*, 48

computer-only functionality

- creating multiple calendars*, 52-53
- invitations to meetings*, 54
- public calendars*, 53
- sharing calendars*, 53

Daily view, creating appointments in, 46

Day view, 44

days of the week, scrolling through, 44

events

- creating*, 46-48
- saving*, 48

importing other calendars to, 45

invitations to meetings, 54

Monthly view, 44-46

multiple calendars, creating, 52-53

navigating, 44

notifications, setting, 49-51

public calendars, 53

reminders, setting, 49-51

sharing calendars, 53

Today view, 45

viewing, 43-44

Week view, 44

Weekly view, creating appointments in, 46

calling contacts, 36

calls

- answering, 10
- call waiting, 11-12, 15
- Caller ID feature, 15
- conference calls, 11
- fixed dialing feature, 13
- forwarding, 14-15
- operator selection feature, 16

- placing, 10
 - Speakerphone feature, 10
 - voicemail, 14-16
 - Camera
 - customizing settings, 81-83
 - pictures
 - adding to contacts, 72-73*
 - changing flip orientation, 79*
 - cropping, 80*
 - deleting, 79, 82*
 - deleting from, 76*
 - prompt after capture option, 76*
 - repeating slideshows, 83*
 - resizing in, 81*
 - rotating, 79*
 - saving, 72*
 - setting as wallpaper, 73*
 - setting slideshow intervals, 82*
 - setting slideshow transitions, 82*
 - sharing, 74-75, 79*
 - shuffling slides in slideshows, 83*
 - sorting in, 82*
 - storing location with, 76*
 - taking, 71-72*
 - viewing, 76-78*
 - viewing details in, 80*
 - cancelling MMS messages, 76
 - capitalizing text automatically, 25
 - CAPTCHAs, Google accounts, 6
 - CC field
 - Gmail, 60
 - IMAP4 mail servers, 68
 - POP3 mail servers, 68
 - class modules, application creation, 179
 - clearing
 - cookie data (websites), 119
 - form data from browsers (Web), 119
 - playlists (music), 93
 - web page caches, 119
 - website histories, 116, 119
 - clearing website passwords, 120
 - Clock widget, 29
 - cold, exposure to (troubleshooting), 188
 - commenting on YouTube videos, 104
 - conference calls, 11
 - configuring
 - Gears, 120
 - IM settings, 127-128
 - phone
 - creating Google accounts, 6*
 - signing into existing Google accounts, 5*
 - contacts
 - accessing, 31-32
 - adding
 - as favorites, 39*
 - icons to, 35*
 - information to, 34-35*
 - pictures to, 72-73*
 - calling, 36
 - Contacts tab (Dialer), 32
 - adding contacts as favorites, 39*
 - calling contacts from, 36*
 - deleting contacts, 40*
 - importing contacts from other phones, 39*
 - mapping contact addresses, 38*
 - text messaging contacts, 37-38*
 - creating, 33
 - deleting, 35, 40
 - editing, 34-35
 - email addresses, adding, 33
 - grouping, 33
 - importing from
 - computers, 40*
 - other phones, 39*
 - mapping addresses of, 38
 - ringtones, setting, 34
 - saving, 34
 - text messaging, 37-38
 - viewing, 31-32
 - voicemail, sending calls directly to, 34
 - Contacts icon, 7
 - cookies (websites)
 - accepting, 119
 - clearing data from, 119
 - copying music to phones, 98
 - crashes, troubleshooting, 187
 - cropping pictures, 29, 80
 - Current Playlist option, 90
 - customizing
 - browsers (Web)
 - page content settings, 118-119*
 - privacy settings, 119*
 - security settings, 120*
 - Camera settings, 81-83
 - Gmail settings, 60, 64
 - home screen, wallpaper, 26
 - phone
 - display settings, 25*
 - sound settings, 23-24*
 - wallpaper, 26
- ## D
- Daily view (Calendar), creating appointments in, 46
 - data storage, SD (secure digital) storage cards, 86
 - date/time
 - alarms
 - deleting, 21*
 - setting, 18-20*
 - snooze button, 20*
 - setting, 17-18
 - Day view (Calendar), 44
 - "dead" phones, troubleshooting, 187
 - deleting
 - alarms, 21
 - applications, 159-162, 186
 - contacts, 35, 40

- email
 - accounts from
 - POP3/IMAP mail servers, 69
 - from Gmail, 58-61
 - from IMAP4 mail servers, 68-69
 - from POP3 mail servers, 68-69
 - friends from friends lists (Google Talk), 127
 - IM accounts, 131
 - pictures from, 79
 - Camera, 82
 - phone, 76
 - playlists, 94
 - songs from music library, 94
 - widgets, 29
 - desktop, moving applications to, 159
 - Details screen, YouTube video, 104
 - Dialer, 7
 - Contacts tab, 32
 - adding contacts as favorites, 39
 - calling contacts from, 36
 - deleting contacts, 40
 - importing contacts from other phones, 39
 - mapping contact addresses, 38
 - text messaging contacts, 37-38
 - Favorites tab, 39
 - dialing
 - audible touch tones, 24
 - fixed dialing feature, 13
 - directions, finding. **See** Google Maps
 - display settings, customizing, 25
 - documents, creating. **See** Google Docs
 - downloading
 - email attachments in Gmail, 57-58
 - website files, 116
 - YouTube videos, 104
- ## E
- Eclipse IDE (Integrated Development Environment), installing, 180
 - editing
 - bookmarks (web pages), 113
 - contact information, 34-35
 - email in Gmail, 61
 - email
 - addresses, adding to contact information, 33
 - attachments, pictures as, 74
 - Gmail
 - All Mail folder, 62
 - archiving in, 58-62
 - Bcc field, 60
 - CC field, 60
 - composing in, 59-60
 - connecting to other email accounts, 66-67
 - customizing settings in, 60, 64
 - deleting from, 58-61
 - downloading attachments in, 57-58
 - editing in, 61
 - folder structure of, 61-62
 - forwarding in, 59-61
 - IMAP4 mail server connections, 66-67
 - Inbox, 62
 - labeling in, 58-59, 62-64
 - marking email as unread in, 58
 - notification settings in, 65-66
 - organizing in, 58-59, 62-64
 - pictures as attachments, 74
 - POP3 mail server connections, 66-67
 - previewing attachments in, 57-58
 - reading in, 55-56
 - refreshing, 59
 - replying to email in, 59-61
 - searches in, 60
 - sending attachments via, 60
 - sending in, 60
 - signatures in, 64
 - Trash folder, 62
 - viewing notifications in, 55-56
 - IMAP4 mail servers
 - Bcc field, 68
 - CC field, 68
 - deleting from, 68-69
 - forwarding from, 69
 - Gmail connections to, 66-67
 - reading in, 67
 - removing accounts from, 69
 - replying to email in, 69
 - saving in, 68
 - sending attachments via, 68
 - sending from, 68
 - switching between accounts, 69
 - notifications
 - customizing in Gmail, 65-66
 - reading in Gmail, 55-56
 - ringtones, 66
 - vibration, 66
 - pictures as attachments, 74
 - POP3 mail servers
 - Bcc field, 68
 - CC field, 68
 - deleting from, 68-69
 - forwarding from, 69
 - Gmail connections to, 66-67
 - reading in, 67
 - removing accounts from, 69

replying to email in, 69
saving in, 68
sending attachments via, 68
sending from, 68
switching between accounts, 69

sharing web pages via, 111
 signatures in Gmail, 64
 web pages, sharing bookmarks, 113

emojicons, adding to Google Talk chats, 126

events (Calendar)
 creating, 46-48
 saving, 48

extreme temperatures, troubleshooting, 188

F

Factory data reset feature, 176
 favorites

adding contacts as, 39
 adding YouTube videos as, 105

Favorites tab (Dialer), 39

featured applications (Market screen), accessing, 150

finding

applications
Market screen, 150
Search function, 160

directions. **See** Google

Maps

downloaded files from websites, 116

images via Google Search, 114-115

locations via Google Maps, 141

websites via Google Search, 113-115

YouTube videos, 102-103

fixed dialing feature, 13

flip orientation (pictures), changing in Camera, 79

form data

clearing from browsers (Web), 119
 remembering in browsers (Web), 119

forwarding

calls, 14-15

email

from IMAP4 mail servers, 69
from POP3 mail servers, 69
in Gmail, 59-61

friends list (Google Talk)

adding friends as contacts, 127

adding friends to, 126

blocking contacts from, 126-127

hiding friends, 127

inviting friends to, 126

options for, 126

pinning/unpinning friends, 127

removing friends from, 127

starting chats from, 126

viewing, 124, 126

viewing contact websites from, 127

viewing friend info, 126

full screen, viewing photos in, 78

G

games, installing, 157

Gears, 120

Gmail

All Mail folder, 62

CC field, 60

connecting to other email accounts, 66-67

customizing settings in, 60, 64

email

archiving, 58-62
composing, 59-60
deleting, 58-61

downloading attachments, 57-58

editing in, 61

forwarding, 59-61

labeling, 58-59, 62-64

marking as unread, 58

notification settings, 65-66

organizing, 58-59, 62-64

pictures as attachments, 74

previewing attachments, 57-58

reading, 55-56

replying to, 59-61

sending, 60

sending attachments, 60

signatures in, 64

viewing notifications, 55-56

folder structure of, 61-62

IMAP4 mail server connections, 66-67

Inbox, 62

pictures as attachments, 74

POP3 mail server connections, 66-67

refreshing, 59

searches in, 60

Trash folder, 62

Google accounts

CAPTCHAs in, 6

creating, 6

passwords, 6-7

security, 6-7

signing into existing accounts, 5

Google Docs, 147-148

Google Maps

getting directions via, 142-144

GPS and, 132, 142

searching for locations via, 141

viewing maps in

Map view, 133-135

Satellite view, 136

- Street view, 137-140*
- Traffic view, 135-136*
- Google Reader, 145
- Google Search
 - image searches, 114-115
 - Local search feature, 115
 - News search feature, 115
 - website searches, 113
- Google Talk
 - accessing, 123
 - adding friends to, 125
 - adding text to, 124
 - changing pictures in, 124
 - changing status in, 124
 - chats, 125-126
 - friends list
 - adding friends as con-*
tacts, 127
 - adding friends to, 126*
 - blocking contacts from,*
126-127
 - hiding friends, 127*
 - inviting friends to, 126*
 - options for, 126*
 - pinning/unpinning*
friends, 127
 - removing friends from,*
127
 - starting chats from, 126*
 - viewing, 124-126*
 - viewing contact websites*
from, 127
 - viewing friend info, 126*
 - user designations in, 124
- GPS, Google Maps and, 132, 142
- grouping
 - contacts, 33
 - music, 86

H - I

- heat, exposure to (trou-
bleshooting), 188
- help, web resources, 189
- hiding friends on friends list
(Google Talk), 127
- histories (websites)
 - clearing, 116, 119
 - managing, 116
 - moving through, 110
- home pages, changing, 110, 119
- home screen
 - browsers (Web), accessing, 107
 - customizing wallpaper, 26
 - installing applications on, 160
- icons, adding to contacts, 35
- IDE (Integrated Development Environment), installing, 180
- IM (Instant Messaging)
 - AIM, adding accounts to phone, 129
 - automatic sign-ins, 127
 - configuring settings for, 127-128
 - frequent chatting, 130
 - Google Talk
 - accessing, 123*
 - adding friends as con-*
tacts from friends list,
127
 - adding friends to, 125*
 - adding friends to chats,*
126
 - adding friends to friends*
list, 126
 - adding Smileys (emoti-*
cons) to chats, 126
 - adding text to, 124*
 - blocking contacts from*
friends list, 126-127
 - changing pictures in, 124*
 - changing status in, 124*
 - chatting with friends, 125*
 - closing chats, 126*
 - friends list options, 126*
 - hiding friends on friends*
list, 127
 - inviting friends to friends*
list, 126
- pinning/unpinning*
friends on friends list,
127
- removing friends from*
friends list, 127
- starting chats from*
friends list, 126
- switching chats, 126*
- user designations in, 124*
- viewing contact websites*
from friends list, 127
- viewing friend info on*
friends list, 126
- viewing friends list,*
124-126
- mobile indicator feature, 128
- notification feature, 128
- removing accounts from phone, 131
- ringtones in, 128
- vibration feature, setting, 128
- images
 - cropping, 29
 - Google Talk, changing in, 124
 - searches via Google Search, 114-115
 - websites, disabling loading from, 118
- IMAP4 mail servers
 - BCC field, 68
 - CC field, 68
 - email
 - deleting, 68-69*
 - forwarding, 69*
 - reading, 67*
 - replying to, 69*
 - saving, 68*
 - sending, 68*
 - sending attachments, 68*
- Gmail connections to, 66-67
- removing accounts from, 69
- switching between accounts, 69

- importing
 - calendars to Calendar, 45
 - contacts from
 - computers, 40
 - other phones, 39
- Inbox (Gmail), 62
- installing
 - applications
 - from Market screen, 150-152
 - games, 157
 - home screen, 160
 - ShopSavvy, 152
 - uninstalling applications, 161-162, 186
 - Eclipse IDE, 180
 - games, 157
 - IDE, 180
 - plug-ins, 180
 - SDK, 179-182
- Instant Messaging. **See** IM (Instant Messaging)
- Internet
 - blogs, Google Reader, 145
 - browsers (Web)
 - accepting website cookies, 119
 - accessing, 107
 - auto-fit pages feature, 118
 - blocking pop-up windows from websites, 118
 - bookmarking web pages, 113
 - changing home pages, 110, 119
 - checking websites for updates, 110
 - clearing form data, 119
 - clearing web page caches, 119
 - clearing website cookie data, 119
 - clearing website histories, 116, 119
 - clearing website passwords, 120
 - configuring Gears, 120
 - customizing, 118-120
 - disabling image loading from websites, 118
 - downloading files from websites, 116
 - enabling Gears, 120
 - enabling JavaScript in websites, 119
 - image searches via Google Search, 114-115
 - Local search feature (Google Search), 115
 - managing website histories, 116
 - moving through website histories, 110
 - News search feature (Google Search), 115
 - opening web pages in background, 119
 - opening websites by typing URL, 108-109
 - phone configurations, 108
 - remembering form data, 119
 - remembering website passwords, 120
 - resetting, 121
 - searching websites via Google Search, 113
 - sharing web pages, 111
 - show security warnings feature, 120
 - sizing text in websites, 118
 - viewing multiple websites at a time, 109
 - zooming in/out of web pages, 112-113
 - browsing via Wi-Fi in foreign countries, 171
 - image searches via Google Search, 114-115
 - unlimited data plans, 165
- web pages
 - auto-fit pages feature, 118
 - bookmarking, 113
 - changing home pages, 110, 119
 - clearing caches, 119
 - opening in background, 119
 - sharing, 111
 - zooming in/out, 112-113
- websites
 - accepting cookies from, 119
 - blocking pop-up windows, 118
 - checking for updates, 110
 - clearing cookie data from, 119
 - clearing histories, 116, 119
 - clearing passwords, 120
 - disabling image loading, 118
 - downloading files from, 116
 - JavaScript, 119
 - Local search feature (Google Search), 115
 - managing histories, 116
 - moving through histories, 110
 - News search feature (Google Search), 115
 - opening by typing URL, 108-109
 - phone configurations, 108
 - remembering passwords, 120
 - searching via Google Search, 113
 - show security warnings feature, 120
 - sizing text in, 118
 - viewing multiple sites at a time, 109

inviting

- friends to friend lists (Google Talk), 126
- people to meetings via Calendar, 54

IP addresses, network creation, 169

J - K - L

JavaScript, enabling, 119

labeling email in Gmail, 58-59, 62-64

launching applications, 153, 157

library (music), removing songs from, 94

Local Search feature (Google Search), 115

locking

- Screen Lock feature, 174
- SIM card, 173-174

M

M4A audio files, 86

managing website histories, 116

Maps (Google)

- getting directions via, 142-144
- GPS and, 132, 142
- searching for locations via, 141
- viewing maps in
 - Map view*, 133-135
 - Satellite view*, 136
 - Street view*, 137-140
 - Traffic view*, 135-136

Maps icon, 7

Market screen

- accessing, 149
- featured applications, accessing, 150
- finding applications in, 150
- Games category, 157
- installing applications from, 150-152

reviewing application

- information in, 152
- meetings, inviting people to via Calendar, 54
- memory, troubleshooting, 185-186
- Menu button, 7
- messages

instant messages. **See also**

- Google Talk
 - adding AIM accounts to phone*, 129
 - automatic sign-ins*, 127
 - configuring settings for*, 127-128
 - frequent chatting*, 130
 - mobile indicator feature*, 128
 - notification feature*, 128
 - removing accounts from phone*, 131
 - ringtones in*, 128
 - vibration feature*, 128

MMS messages

- cancelling*, 76
- sending pictures as*, 75

text messages

- contacts*, 37-38
- sending*, 21
- setting alerts*, 22
- viewing received messages*, 22

voicemail, 14-16

MIDI audio files, 86

MMS messages

- cancelling*, 76
- sending pictures as*, 75

mobile indicator feature (IM), 128

Monthly view (Calendar), 44-46

moving

- applications to desktop, 159
- through website histories, 110

music

Albums category, 86

Artists category, 86

copying to phones, 98

grouping, 86

library

navigating, 86-88

removing songs from, 94

organizing, 86

pausing, 88

playing, 86

playlists, 86

accessing saved playlists, 93

adding music to, 90-91

clearing, 93

creating, 90-91

Current Playlist option, 90

deleting, 94

modifying saved playlists, 93

naming, 90

saving, 93

shuffling music in, 92-94

purchasing, 94

ringtones, 96

SD (secure digital) storage cards, storage capacity of, 86

Songs category, 86

supported audio files, 86

viewing information about, 87

volume, setting, 88

N

naming playlists (music), 90

navigating

music library, 86, 88

phone

adding shortcuts to screens, 7-8, 27-28

Application tab, 7-9

Browser icon, 7

Calculator icon, 9

Contacts icon, 7

Dialer icon, 7

Maps icon, 7

- Menu button*, 7
- Notification bar*, 7-8
- scrolling through screens*, 8
- Search screen*, 8
- networks
 - custom IP address configurations, 169
 - manual connections to via Wi-Fi, 168
 - open networks, Wi-Fi and, 166-169
 - secured networks
 - passwords*, 167
 - Wi-Fi and*, 166-169
- News Search feature (Google Search), 115
- Notification bar, 7-8
- notifications
 - Calendar, setting in, 49-51
 - email notifications in
 - Gmail, 55-56
 - customizing*, 65-66
 - ringtones*, 66
 - vibration*, 66
 - ringtones, setting, 24
- notifications feature (IM), 128

O - P

- OGG Vorbis audio files, 86
- open networks, Wi-Fi and, 166-169
- open-source platforms,
 - Android phones as
 - applications, creating, 177-178
 - IDE installation*, 180
 - plug-in installation*, 180
 - SDK installation*, 179-182
 - programming resources, 182
- operator selection feature, 16
- organizing
 - email in Gmail, 58-59, 62-64
 - music, 86
- page content settings (browsers), customizing, 118-119
- party calling, 11
- Party shuffle feature (music), 94
- passwords
 - Google accounts, 6-7
 - secured networks, 167
 - websites
 - clearing from*, 120
 - remembering in*, 120
- padding
 - music, 88
 - video, 101
- performance, troubleshooting, 185-186
- phone
 - alarms
 - deleting*, 21
 - setting*, 18-20
 - snooze button*, 20
 - brightness, setting, 25
 - Caller ID feature, 15
 - calls
 - answering*, 10
 - call waiting*, 11-12, 15
 - conference calls*, 11
 - forwarding*, 14-15
 - placing*, 10
 - Speakerphone feature*, 10
 - configuring
 - creating Google accounts*, 6
 - signing into existing Google accounts*, 5
 - copying music to, 98
 - customizing
 - display settings*, 25
 - sound settings*, 23-24
 - date/time
 - deleting alarms*, 21
 - setting*, 17-18
 - setting alarms*, 18-20
 - dialing, audible touch tones, 24
 - display settings, customizing, 25
 - fixed dialing feature, 13
 - navigating
 - adding shortcuts to screens*, 7-8, 27-28
 - Application tab*, 7-9
 - Browser icon*, 7
 - Calculator icon*, 9
 - Contacts icon*, 7
 - Dialer icon*, 7
 - Maps icon*, 7
 - Menu button*, 7
 - Notification bar*, 7-8
 - scrolling through screens*, 8
 - Search screen*, 8
 - operator selection feature, 16
 - ringer volume, setting, 24
 - ringtones, setting, 24
 - screens, setting timeouts, 25
 - Silent mode, 23
 - sound settings, customizing, 23-24
 - Speakerphone feature, 10
 - vibration feature, setting, 24
 - voicemail, 14-16
 - volume, setting, 24
- Picture frame widget, 29
- pictures
 - Camera
 - changing flip orientation*, 79
 - cropping in*, 80
 - deleting from*, 76, 79, 82
 - prompt after capture option*, 76
 - repeating slideshows*, 83
 - resizing in*, 81
 - rotating in*, 79
 - saving via*, 72
 - setting slideshow intervals*, 82
 - setting slideshow transitions*, 82
 - sharing via*, 74-75, 79

- shuffling slides in slideshows*, 83
 - sorting in*, 82
 - storing photo location*, 76
 - taking via*, 71-72
 - viewing details in*, 80
 - viewing in*, 76-78
 - changing flip orientation, 79
 - contacts, adding to, 72-73
 - cropping, 80
 - deleting, 76, 79, 82
 - emailing as attachments, 74
 - Google Talk, changing in, 124
 - prompt after capture option (Camera), 76
 - resizing, 81
 - rotating, 79
 - sending as MMS messages, 75
 - setting as wallpaper, 73
 - sharing, 79
 - slideshows
 - repeating*, 83
 - setting intervals in*, 82
 - setting transitions in*, 82
 - shuffling slides in*, 83
 - sorting in Camera, 82
 - storing location with, 76
 - viewing, 76-80
 - pinning/unpinning friends on friends list (Google Talk), 127
 - playlists (music), 86
 - accessing saved playlists, 93
 - adding music to, 90-91
 - clearing, 93
 - creating, 90-91
 - Current Playlist option, 90
 - deleting, 94
 - modifying saved playlists, 93
 - naming, 90
 - saving, 93
 - shuffling music in, 92-94
 - plug-ins, installing, 180
 - pop-up windows (websites), blocking, 118
 - POP3 mail servers
 - BCC field, 68
 - CC field, 68
 - email
 - deleting*, 68-69
 - forwarding*, 69
 - reading*, 67
 - replying to*, 69
 - saving*, 68
 - sending*, 68
 - sending attachments*, 68
 - Gmail connections to, 66-67
 - removing accounts from, 69
 - switching between accounts, 69
 - postal addresses, mapping contact addresses, 38
 - previewing email attachments in Gmail, 57-58
 - privacy settings (browsers), customizing, 119
 - prompt after capture option (Camera), 76
 - public calendars, 53
 - punctuation (text), 25
 - purchasing music, 94
- ## Q - R
- rating YouTube videos, 104
 - rebooting phones, 176, 185, 188
 - refreshing Gmail, 59
 - remembering website passwords, 120
 - reminders, setting in Calendar, 49-51
 - removing
 - applications, 159-162, 186
 - friends from friends lists (Google Talk), 127
 - IM accounts, 131
 - songs from music library, 94
 - widgets, 29
 - repeat feature (alarms), 20
 - repeating slideshows in Camera, 83
 - replacing text automatically, 25
 - replying to email in
 - Gmail, 59-61
 - IMAP4 mail servers, 69
 - POP3 mail servers, 69
 - resetting
 - browsers (Web), 121
 - phones, 176, 185, 188
 - resizing pictures in Camera, 81
 - ringer volume, setting, 24
 - ringtones
 - alarms, setting, 19
 - Calendar reminders, setting for, 50
 - contacts, setting for, 34
 - email notifications, 66
 - IM, selecting for, 128
 - music as, 96
 - notification ringtones, setting, 24
 - setting, 24
 - roaming mode, shutting off data during, 171
 - rotating pictures, 79
- ## S
- Satellite view (Google Maps), 136
 - saving
 - appointments (Calendar), 48
 - contacts, 34
 - email in
 - IMAP4 mail servers*, 68
 - POP3 mail servers*, 68
 - events (Calendar), 48
 - pictures to phones, 72
 - playlists (music), 93
 - Screen Lock feature, 174

- screens (phone)
 - navigating
 - adding shortcuts to screens, 7-8, 27-28
 - Application tab, 7-9
 - Browser icon, 7
 - Calculator icon, 9
 - Contacts icon, 7
 - Dialer icon, 7
 - Maps icon, 7
 - Menu button, 7
 - Notification bar, 7-8
 - scrolling through screens, 8
 - Search screen, 8
 - scrolling through, 8
 - Search screen, 8
 - shortcuts, adding, 7-8, 27-28
 - timeouts, setting, 25
 - touch screens, placing calls via, 10
 - scrolling through screens, 8
 - SD (secure digital) storage cards, storage capacity of, 86
 - SDK (Software Development Kit), installing, 179-182
 - Search box widget, 29
 - Search function, finding applications via, 160
 - Search screen, 8
 - searches
 - directions. **See** Google Maps
 - downloading files from websites, 116
 - Gmail, 60
 - image searches via Google Search, 114-115
 - location searches via Google Maps, 141
 - websites via Google Search, 113-115
 - YouTube videos, 102-103
 - secured networks
 - passwords, 167
 - Wi-Fi and, 166-169
 - security
 - browsers (Web), 119-120
 - Google accounts, 6-7
 - pop-up windows, blocking, 118
 - resetting phones, 176, 185, 188
 - Screen Lock feature, 174
 - secured networks, 167
 - selling phones, 176
 - SIM cards, 173-174
 - websites, show security warnings feature, 120
 - Wi-Fi, 167
 - selling phones, 176
 - sending email from
 - IMAP4 mail servers, 68
 - POP3 mail servers, 68
 - setting up phones
 - creating Google accounts, 6
 - signing into existing Google accounts, 5
 - sharing
 - bookmarks (web pages), 113
 - calendars, 53
 - pictures, 79
 - web pages, 111
 - YouTube videos, 105
 - Shazam application
 - launching, 157
 - YouTube and, 158
 - ShopSavvy application
 - installing, 152
 - launching, 153
 - operating, 153, 156
 - shortcuts, adding to screens, 7-8, 27-28
 - show security warnings feature (websites), 120
 - shuffling
 - music in playlists, 92-94
 - slides in slideshows, 83
 - signal strength (antennas), troubleshooting, 183-184
 - signatures (email), 64
 - signing into existing Google accounts, 5
 - Silent mode (phone), 23
 - SIM cards, locking, 173-174
 - sizing text in websites, 118
 - slideshows
 - repeating, 83
 - setting intervals in, 82
 - setting transitions in, 82
 - shuffling slides in, 83
 - viewing pictures as, 78
 - Smileys (emoticons), adding to Google Talk chats, 126
 - snooze button (alarms), 20
 - songs. **See** music
 - Songs category (music), 86
 - sorting pictures in Camera, 82
 - sound settings, customizing, 23-24
 - Speakerphone feature, 10
 - spreadsheets, creating. **See** Google Docs
 - starting applications, 153, 157
 - starting over (resetting), 176, 185, 188
 - storing data in SD (secure digital) storage cards, 86
 - Street view (Google Maps), 137-140
 - switching chats from Google Talk, 126
- ## T
- text
 - adding to Google Talk, 124
 - autocorrect settings, 25
 - sizing in websites, 118
 - text messages
 - alerts, 22
 - contacts, 37-38
 - sending, 21
 - viewing received messages, 22

time/date

alarms

deleting, 21

setting, 18-20

snooze button, 20

setting, 17-18

timeouts (screens), setting, 25

Today view (Calendar), 45

touch screens, placing calls via, 10

Traffic view (Google Maps), 135-136

transferring

calendars to Calendar, 45

contacts from

computers, 40

other phones, 39

transitions (slideshows), setting, 82

Trash folder (Gmail), 62

troubleshooting

antennas, signal strength, 183-184

cold, exposure to, 188

crashes, 187

"dead" phones, 187

extreme temperatures, 188

heat, exposure to, 188

memory, 185-186

performance, 185-186

resetting phones, 185, 188

service issues, 183-184

signal strength (antennas), 183-184

water damage, 187-188

web resources, 189

U - V

uninstalling applications, 161-162, 186

unlimited data plans, 165

unread, marking email as (Gmail), 58

updates of websites, checking for, 110

uploading

calendars to Calendar, 45

contacts from

computers, 40

other phones, 39

URL (Uniform Resource

Locators), opening websites

via, 108-109

vibration

alarms, 20

Calendar reminders, setting for, 50

email notifications, 66

IM, setting for, 128

setting, 24

video in YouTube, 99

accessing settings, 106

accessing video details, 103

adding videos as favorites, 105

categories of, 102

commenting on videos, 104

Details screen, 104

downloading videos, 104

finding videos, 102-103

pausing video, 101

playing video, 100-101

rating videos, 104

replaying video, 101

sharing videos, 105

Shazam application, 158

viewing

Agenda view (Calendar), 48-49

Calendar, 43-44

contacts, 31-32

maps in Google Maps

Map view, 133-135

Satellite view, 136

Street view, 137-140

Traffic view, 135-136

music information, 87

pictures, 76

details in Camera, 80

full screen, 78

slideshows, 78

text messages, 22

websites, multiple websites at a time, 109

voicemail, 14-16, 34

volume, setting, 24, 88

W

wallpaper

customizing, 26

setting pictures as, 73

water damage, troubleshooting, 187-188

WAV audio files, 86

Web browsers

accessing, 107

customizing

page content settings, 118-119

privacy settings, 119

security settings, 120

form data

clearing, 119

remembering, 119

Gears, 120

image searches via Google Search, 114-115

resetting, 121

web pages

auto-fit pages feature, 118

bookmarking, 113

changing home pages, 110, 119

clearing caches, 119

opening in background, 119

sharing, 111

zooming in/out, 112-113

websites

accepting cookies from, 119

blocking pop-up windows, 118

- checking for updates*, 110
 - clearing cookie data*
 - from*, 119
 - clearing histories*, 116, 119
 - clearing passwords*, 120
 - disabling image loading*, 118
 - downloading files from*, 116
 - enabling JavaScript in*, 119
 - Local search feature* (Google Search), 115
 - managing histories*, 116
 - moving through histories*, 110
 - News search feature* (Google Search), 115
 - opening by typing URL*, 108-109
 - phone configurations*, 108
 - remembering passwords*, 120
 - searching via Google Search*, 113
 - show security warnings feature*, 120
 - sizing text in*, 118
 - viewing multiple sites at a time*, 109
- web pages
- auto-fit pages feature, 118
 - bookmarking, 113
 - clearing caches, 119
 - home pages, changing, 110, 119
 - opening in background, 119
 - sharing, 111
 - zooming in/out, 112-113
- web resources, open-source platforms, 182
- websites
- blocking pop-up windows, 118
 - contact websites, viewing
 - from friends list (Google Talk), 127
 - cookies
 - accepting*, 119
 - clearing data from*, 119
 - downloading files from, 116
 - histories
 - clearing*, 116, 119
 - managing*, 116
 - moving through*, 110
 - images, disabling loading of, 118
 - JavaScript, 119
 - Local search feature (Google Search), 115
 - News search feature (Google Search), 115
 - opening by typing URL, 108-109
 - passwords, 120
 - phone configurations, 108
 - searching via Google Search, 113
 - show security warnings feature, 120
 - text, sizing, 118
 - updates, checking for, 110
 - viewing, multiple sites at a time, 109
- Week view (Calendar), 44
- Weekly view (Calendar), creating appointments in, 46
- Wi-Fi
- Airplane mode, 170
 - battery life, 166
 - Bluetooth, 170
 - enabling, 166
 - Internet browsing in foreign countries, 171
 - network connections, manually creating, 168
 - open networks, 166-169
 - roaming mode, shutting off data during, 171
 - secured networks, 166
 - connecting to*, 168-169
 - passwords*, 167
 - security, 167
 - stealing, 167
 - unlimited data plans, 165
- widgets, 29
- WMA version 8 audio files, 86
- ## X - Y - Z
- YouTube, 99
- accessing settings, 106
 - accessing video details, 103
 - adding videos as favorites, 105
 - categories of, 102
 - commenting on videos, 104
 - Details screen, 104
 - downloading videos, 104
 - finding videos, 102-103
 - pausing video, 101
 - playing video, 100-101
 - rating videos, 104
 - replaying video, 101
 - sharing videos, 105
 - Shazam application, 158
- zooming in/out of web pages, 112-113