My Motorola Xoom™

James Floyd Kelly

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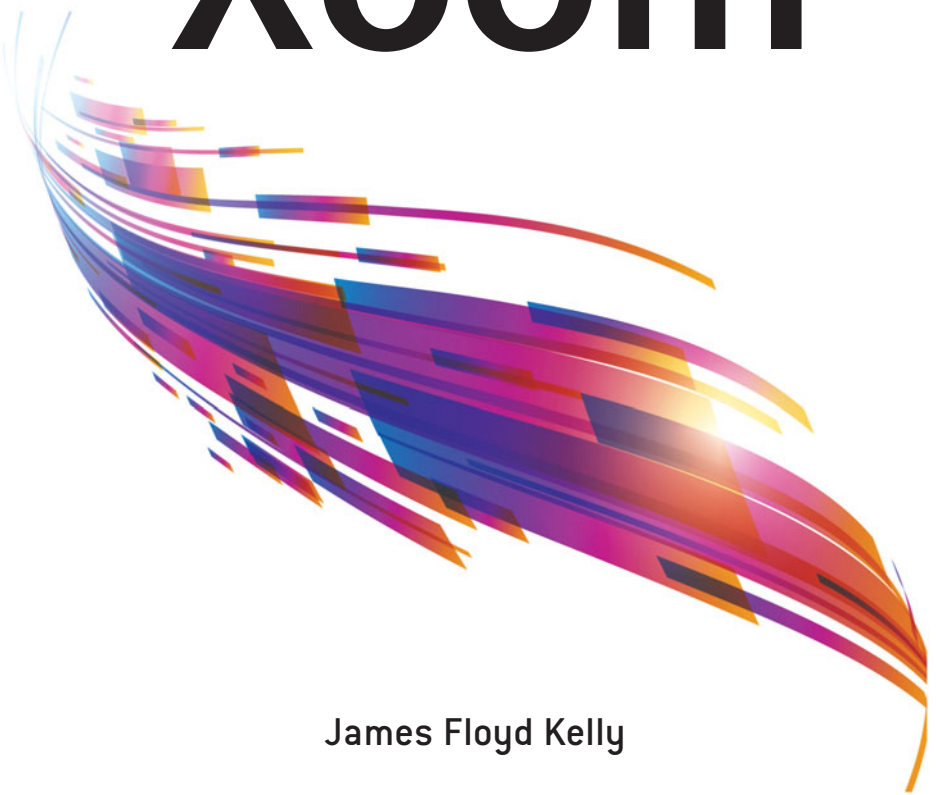

James Floyd Kelly

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ISBN-13: 978-0-7897-4826-3
ISBN-10: 0-7897-4826-6

The Library of Congress cataloging-in-publication data is on file.

Printed in the United States of America

First Printing: July 2011

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About the Author

James Floyd Kelly is the author of *Sams Teach Yourself Galaxy Tab in 10 Minutes,* and a writer and blogger from Atlanta, Georgia. He has a B.A. in English (University of West Florida) and B.S. in Industrial Engineering (Florida State University). He has worked in technology for more than 15 years, including work as a technical trainer, network systems administrator, and technology outsourcing consultant.

Jim has written books and articles on numerous other subjects, including building a CNC machine, programming and building robots, using open source software, video editing with Movie Maker Live, and building an Ubuntu Linux PC.

Jim is the editor-in-chief of the most popular LEGO MINDSTORMS NXT robotics blog, The NXT Step (www.thenxtstep.com), and he provides robot building and programming training and coaching to local teachers and students.

Dedication

For Decker: Yes, you can play Angry Birds on it.

Acknowledgments

I really enjoy writing for Pearson, and I have to thank Laura Norman for all of her help and answers regarding the *My* book series. Laura and the rest of the team at Pearson publish great books, and I appreciate every chance I can to contribute.

A special thanks also goes to my good friend, David Levy, who offered to serve as technical editor and purchased his own Xoom so he could follow along and verify all the steps.

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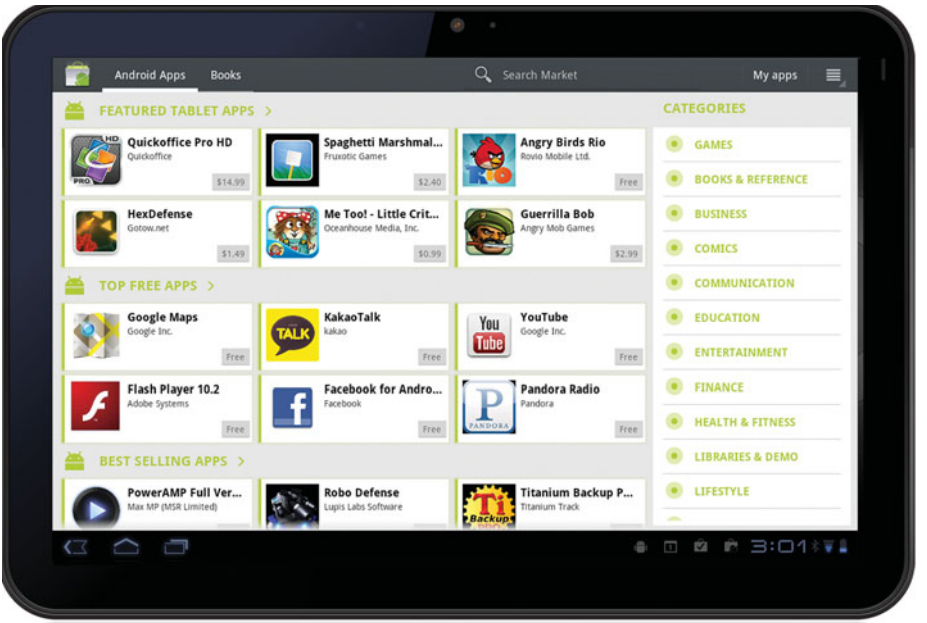

Search the Android Market for the best apps—games, education, business, books, and more.

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In this chapter, you learn how to use the Android Market, an online marketplace for downloading free apps. You learn how to purchase fee-based apps and how to uninstall apps and perform updates.

- Exploring the Android Market
- Examining an App's Information Page
- Downloading a Free App
- Downloading a Fee-Based App
- Updating an App
- Uninstalling an App
- Checking App Storage Use
- Resetting an App
- Downloading Non-Android Market Apps

The Android Market

Your Xoom comes standard with a dozen or more apps, such as Gallery, Camera, and Email. There are many apps that you'll find yourself using daily and others that you might never use. There might be a task or function that you'd like to perform with your Xoom that the preloaded apps simply do not offer.

Fortunately, the Xoom does not limit you to just those preloaded apps. Thousands of apps are available for the Xoom, some free and some not-so-free, and all you have to do to get them is pay a visit to the Android Market, a "one-stop shop" for Android apps to run on your Xoom.

Exploring the Android Market

Knowing what type of app you want to install is helpful, but not necessary. The Android Market provides categories that can help you narrow your search and just browse what others are finding useful or fun.

1. Tap to open the Apps folder.
2. Tap the Market app to open it.
3. Apps of interest scroll across the top of the screen; tap one to jump to that app's information screen.
4. Tap Featured Tablet Apps to view a list of the Top 48 apps that other Android users find useful, fun, and interesting. (Keep in mind that some apps might appear small in size when opened—this likely means the app was designed for a mobile phone and not the Xoom.)
5. Tap Top Free Apps to view the thousands of free apps that are rated highly (more than four stars out of five), or have a high number of downloads (typically in the range of 50,000 or more).
6. Tap a category to view apps of interest. Each category is also broken into sections, such as Featured, Top Free, and Best Selling.
7. Tap the Search Market text field. This is useful if you know the name of an app or a keyword that might be associated with it.

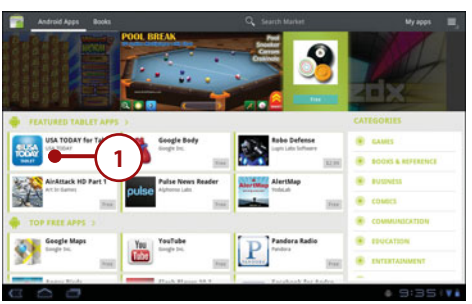
Don't Use Category Names as Keywords

Rather than typing in "racing games" for a keyword search, use the Games category instead. Using a category provides more refined results, whereas using a keyword simply provides you with results that contain either of the two words; you might find business or reference apps that have the word "racing" in their descriptions but are not games.

Examining an App's Information Page

Before you download and install any app to your Xoom, read the app's information page. Reading an app's description can help you determine whether the app meets your needs, inform you about any fees associated with it (there are one-time fees and recurring fees), and provide you with screenshots and customer reviews.

1. From the Android Market, tap an app in either the Featured Tablet Apps category or the Top Free Apps category. (In this example, I tapped on the USA Today for Tablets app.)
2. You can see the price of an app (or if it's free).
3. You can find the version number and app size.
4. You can read a description of the app.
5. Tap the More button to read additional description content.
6. Scroll down the page to view more information.



7. Read the What's New section to see what has been changed or fixed since the last version of the app was released.
8. View screenshots. Swipe your finger left or right to view additional screenshots that might be off the screen.
9. Read reviews from other customers and see reviewers' ratings (out of five stars).
10. You might need to scroll down the page to view additional information.
11. Tap the More button to read more customer reviews.
12. View related apps. These are suggested apps provided by the Android Market based on other customer purchases and reviews.
13. Tap the More button to view additional apps that Android Market recommends.

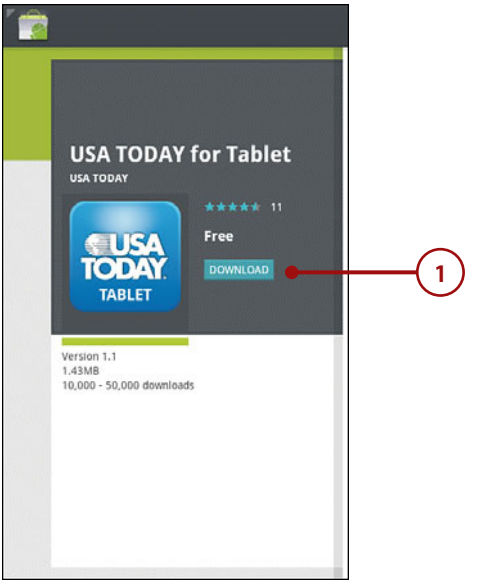
Ratings Can Be Confusing

Because the Android Market averages the star ratings, it can be difficult to determine an app's true value. If there are 20 reviews, 10 one-star and 10 five-star, the average three-star review doesn't really help. This is where reading the customer reviews on the app really makes a difference. Reading a five-star review that says, "Great app," and a one-star review that says, "Here are ten things that aren't working in this app," really helps you make a decision on whether it's worth it to download the app.

Downloading a Free App

If you find an app that you like and it's free, you can immediately download it to your Xoom and begin using it.

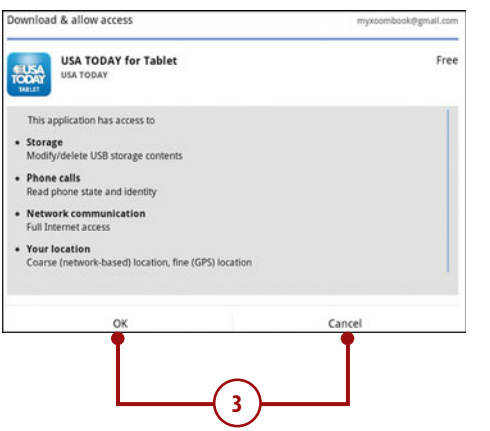
1. From the app's information page, tap the Download button.
2. For both free and fee-based apps, you see a pop-up window letting you know what services the app requires to work.



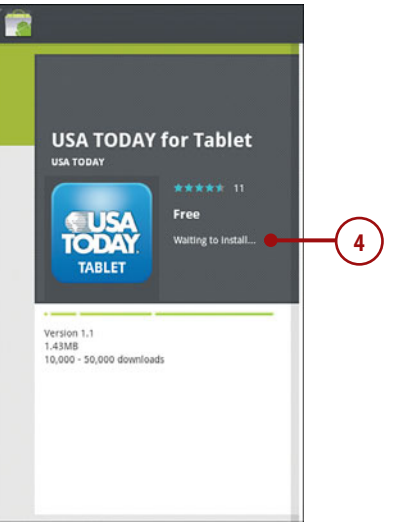
Read the Service Requirements Carefully

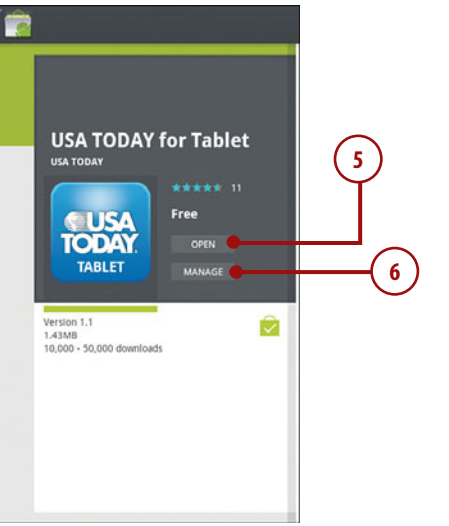
Some apps only require an Internet connection (called Network Communication) and memory storage space. Other apps require things such as your GPS location, your Contacts database, and more. Always ask yourself, "Why does this game require access to my contacts or need to know where I am right now?" Sometimes the answer is that the company is collecting email addresses and wants to know your location for marketing purposes. It can bundle this information and sell it to marketers. But this isn't always the case—some apps (such as GPS-related apps) simply need access to your location to function properly. It can be a bit difficult to determine the reasons an app needs access to certain information, but in general you need to be more suspicious with the free apps than with with fee-based apps. Ultimately, it's your call whether to accept the requirements or not.

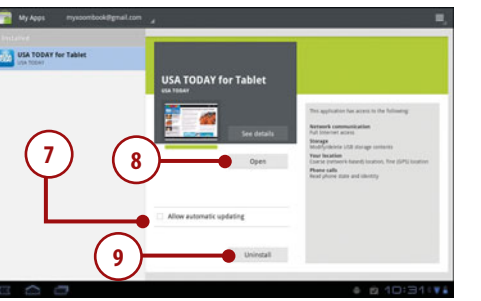
3. Tap the OK button to proceed with the download, or tap Cancel to opt out of the download.



4. If you click OK, you see a message indicating that the installation has started.
5. After the installation is complete, click the Open button to open the app and use it.
6. Tap the Manage button.
7. Place a checkmark in the check-box if you want to allow an app to perform automatic updates (optional). (See the "Automatic Updating" note for details on why you might not want certain apps to automatically update.)
8. Tap the Open button to open the app and use it.
9. Tap the Uninstall button to remove the app from your Xoom.







Uninstall Doesn't Mean You Must Repurchase

If you choose to uninstall an app that you've purchased, the record of that purchase transaction is saved by Google. This means should you ever want to reinstall that app, you won't have to buy it again. There is one exception: Should you purchase an app, install it, and then request a refund (within the 15-minute time limit), you have to buy the app again if you want to reinstall.

Automatic Updating

Allowing an app to automatically download and install updates sounds like a nice feature, but be careful. By enabling this feature, you are basically allowing the web developer to make changes to the app, including giving it access to information, such as contacts and GPS location, without informing you. Your Xoom automatically notifies you when an app has an update, and updating manually is such an easy thing to do (I show you how to do it shortly) that I recommend against the automatic update feature.

It's Not All Good

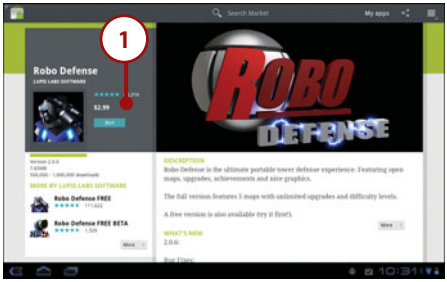
FREE DOESN'T ALWAYS MEAN FREE

Just because an app doesn't cost anything to download, it doesn't mean that the app is truly free to use. Many apps (especially games) can be downloaded for free, but then have either a recurring monthly cost associated with them or offer what are called *in-app purchases* and *unlocks*. Examples of monthly costs include digital magazine subscriptions (where the app is simply a container to hold issues) or subscriptions to play games such as MMOGs (Massive Multiplayer Online Games), where hundreds or thousands of players are online and playing with or against you. Examples of in-app purchases and unlocks include special weapons in games that only those who pay have access to (and typically give that player an advantage) and features that are visible to the user, but are disabled until a fee is paid to unlock that ability. Read an app's information page carefully to determine whether there are any actual fees required to use a "free" app.

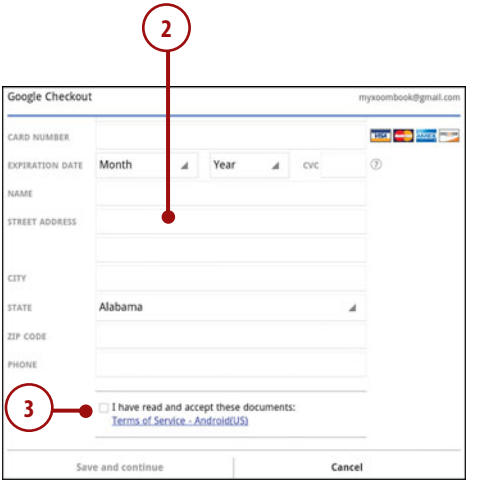
Downloading a Fee-Based App

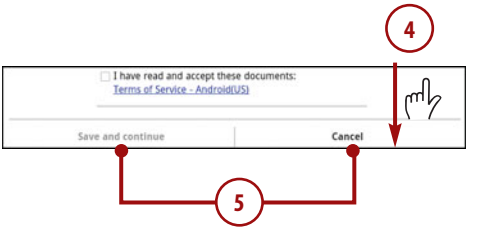
Not all apps are free—some have a one-time cost and others have recurring fees. But if you find an app that you really like and must own, buying it is super simple.

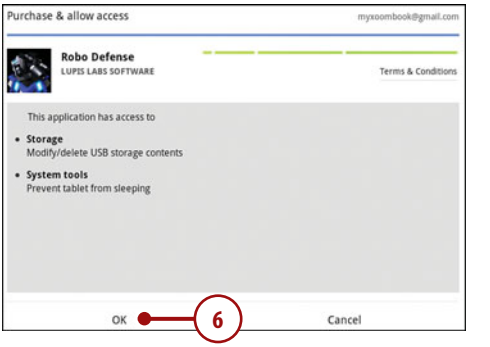
1. On the app's information page, tap the Buy button, which automatically launches the Google Checkout screen (it's the official method for purchasing apps from the Android Market).



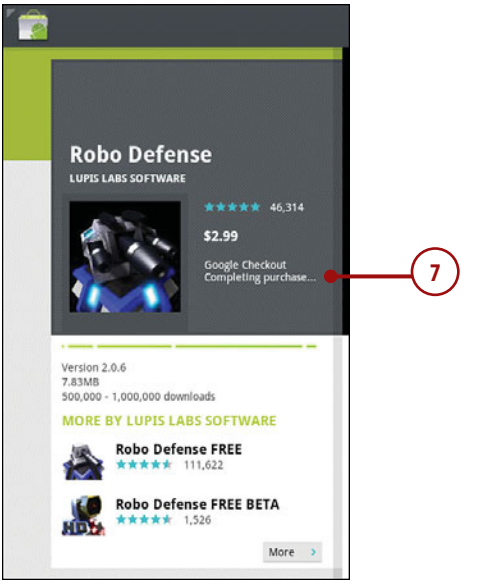
2. On the Google Checkout screen, provide all the requested information.
3. Place a checkmark in the checkbox to acknowledge that you have read and understand Google's Terms & Conditions.
4. Scroll to the bottom of the page.
5. Tap the Save and Continue button to make your purchase, or click the Cancel button to stop the purchase.
6. Click the OK button to accept the service requirements for the app.

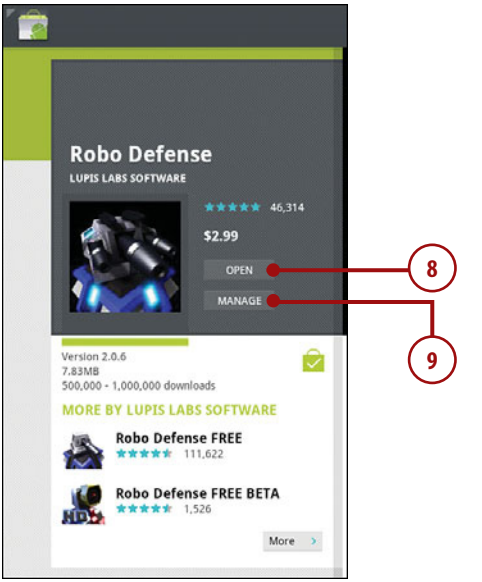






7. The app installs as Google Checkout completes the transaction.
8. Click the Open button to open the app.
9. Click the Manage button to uninstall or configure automatic updates.





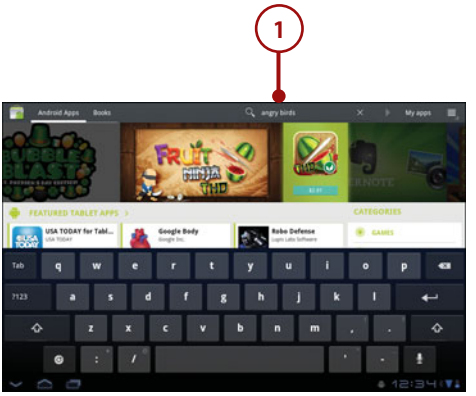
The 15-Minute Refund

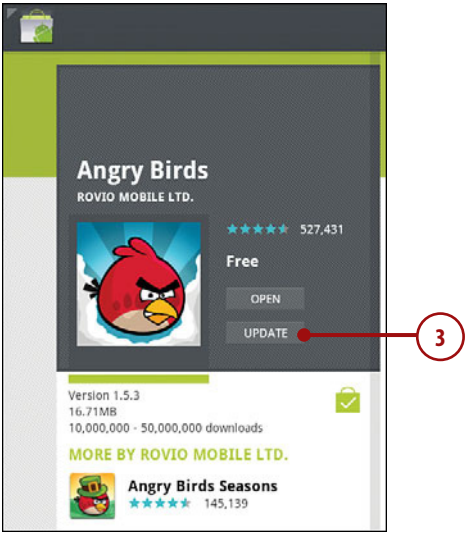
After you make an app purchase with Google Checkout, you have a 15-minute window of opportunity to open the app, try it out, and decide if you want to keep it. Before those 15 minutes expire, if you decide you don't like the app, you can get a refund by visiting the app's information page (open Android Market and search for the app name) and tapping the Manage button. If time hasn't expired, tap the Uninstall & Refund button to get your money back.

Updating an App

Many app developers are constantly working to improve their apps by fixing bugs and adding new features. When an app developer releases an update to an app you have, an alert notification appears onscreen (unless you configure your apps to automatically update). You can click the alert to immediately begin the update, but if you don't have time, there's another method for updating at your convenience.

1. While in the Android Market, search for the name of the app you want to update.
2. Open the app's information page.
3. Tap the Update button.

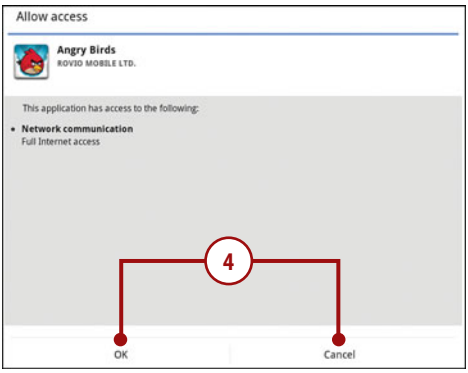


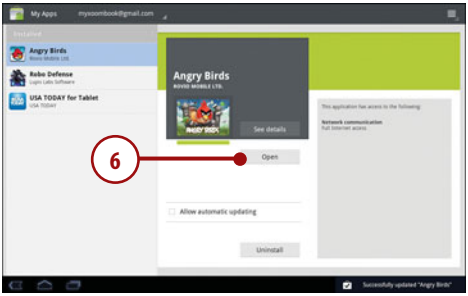


Some Updates Are for Paid Versions Only

Many apps are available as a free, try-it-before-you-buy-it version. Although the free versions can be a great way to try out an app, many app developers only release updates for the fee-based versions.

4. Tap the OK button if you agree to the services required by the app, or tap Cancel to stop the update.
5. The update is installed.
6. Tap the Open button to run the updated app.



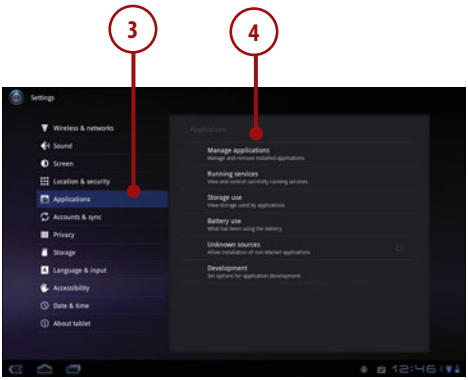


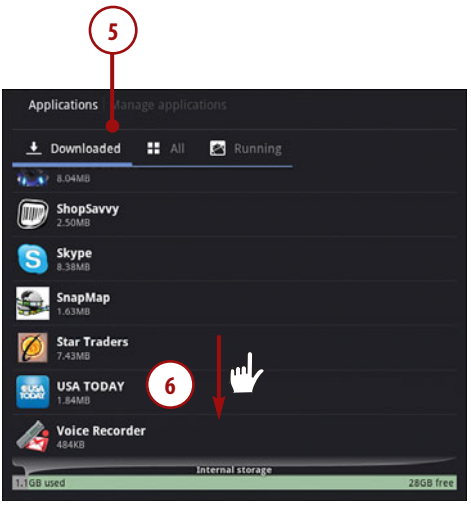
Uninstalling an App

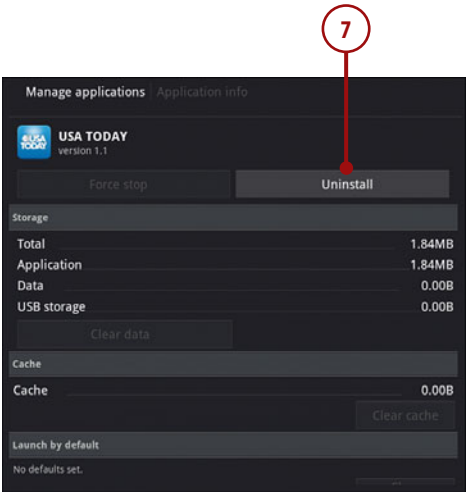
There are two methods for uninstalling an app. You saw that the first way to uninstall an app is to tap the Manage button on an installed app's information page and select Uninstall. The second method is done using the Settings screen.

1. Open the Apps folder.
2. Tap Settings.

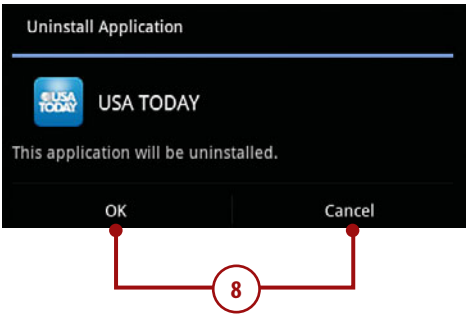
3. Select Applications.
4. Tap Manage Applications.
5. Tap the Downloaded option to view apps that did not come pre-installed on your Xoom.
6. Scroll down the list and tap on an app to uninstall it.
7. Tap the Uninstall button.

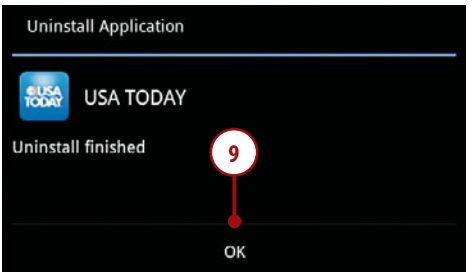






8. Tap the OK button to confirm the uninstall operation, or tap the Cancel button to stop the uninstall of the app.
9. Tap the OK button to close the notification window.
10. The app is uninstalled and removed from the Apps folder. Any data associated with an uninstalled app (such as a game file that stores high scores) is also deleted from the Xoom.

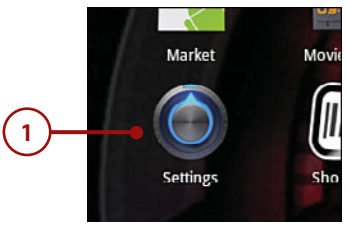




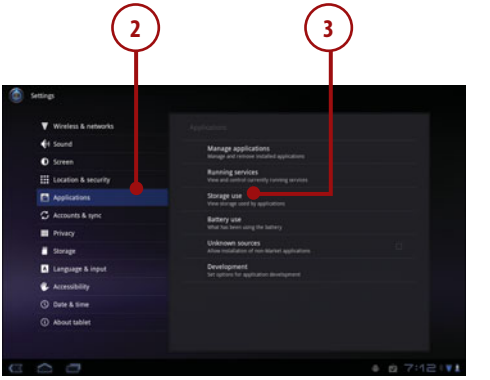
Checking App Storage Use

Your Xoom comes with a lot of memory (32GB), and an SD card enables you to add even more memory. But over time, as you install apps, movies, books, and music, you're going to want to keep an eye on your available storage. Apps are not typically large in size, but there's an easy way to look at all of your apps' storage requirements and see how much memory is left. If you find memory getting tight, consider uninstalling some of the larger apps that you don't use very often.

1. Open the Apps folder and tap Settings.



2. Tap Applications.
3. Select the Storage Use option.
4. Tap the Downloaded category to view all apps not preinstalled on your Xoom.
5. Scroll down the list.
6. Each app's size (in megabytes) is displayed below the app's name.
7. Total storage space is displayed.
8. Storage space used is displayed.



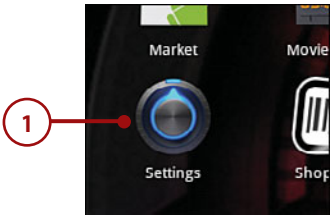
Be Careful When Uninstalling Apps

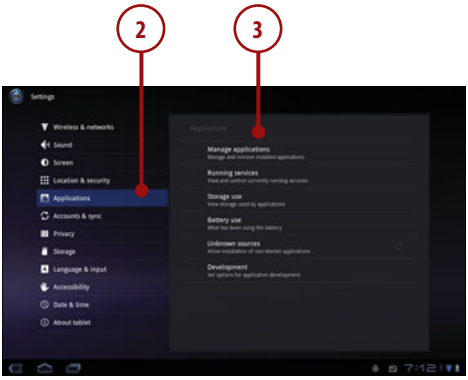
You can always uninstall apps that you downloaded and installed, but you can also uninstall many of the preloaded apps that came with your Xoom. But, be careful—by selecting the All category while viewing the list of app sizes, you'll see a lot of apps with names that might not be familiar to you. Many of these apps are system apps required by the Android operating system, and uninstalling them might cause your Xoom to stop working properly. When in doubt, remember that if the app can be found in the Android Market, it can most likely be safely removed.

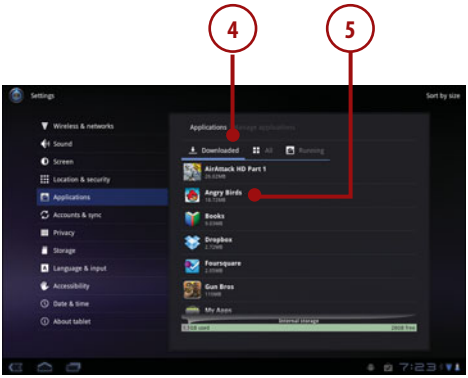
Resetting an App

Many apps save user data over time. The most obvious example is a game where high scores or the current level you are playing is saved until you play the game again. Other apps can save data, such as credit card info, addresses, and phone numbers. You can easily reset an app, making it "forget" whatever configuration and data are saved.

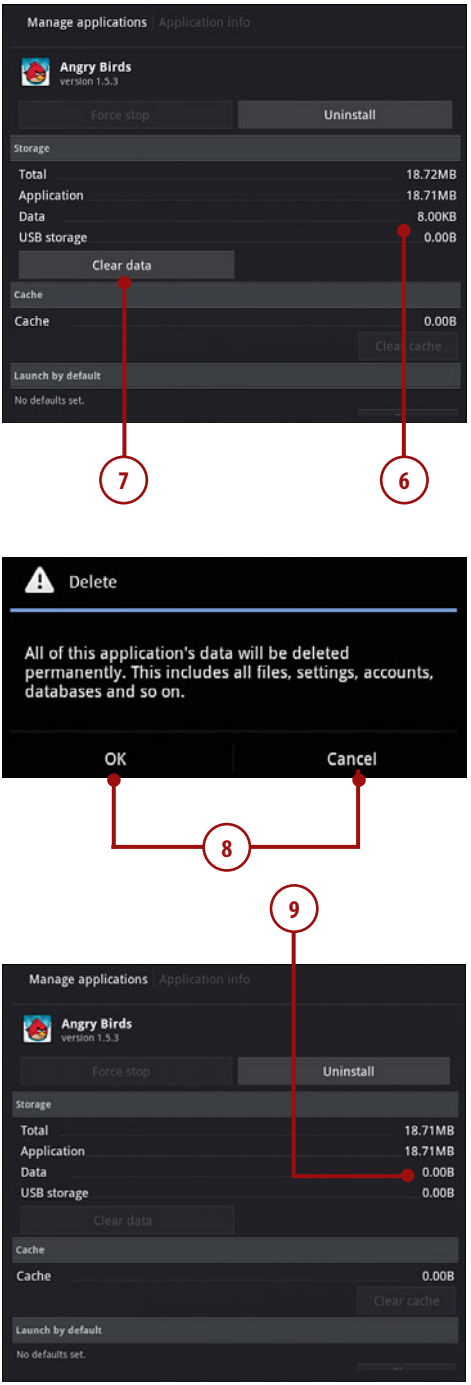
1. Open the Apps folder and tap Settings.
2. Tap Applications.
3. Select the Manage Applications option.
4. Select the Downloaded category.
5. Tap an app. (In this example, I select Angry Birds.)







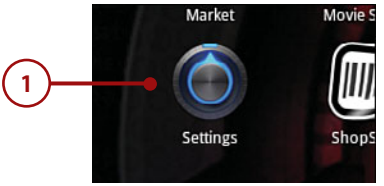
6. See how much data the app is storing.
7. Tap the Clear Data button. (If the button is grayed out, there is no data to delete or the app does not allow it.)
8. Click the OK button to confirm the data deletion, or click the Cancel button to cancel the data deletion.
9. The amount of data stored is cleared.

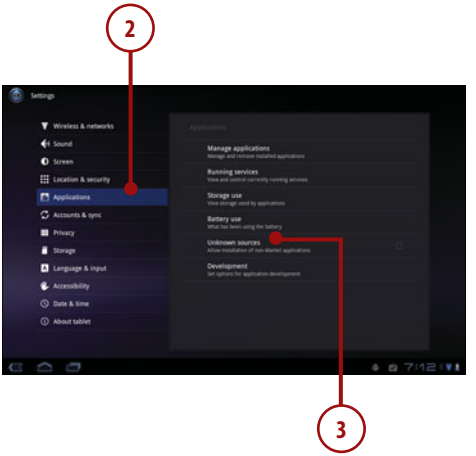


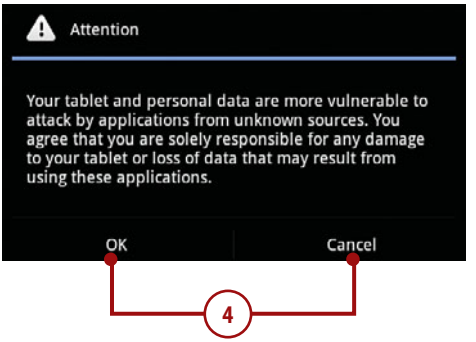
Downloading Non-Android Market Apps

Apps are appearing everywhere, not just in the Android Market. Although the Android Market is considered the official place for obtaining apps for your Xoom, it's not the only place. App developers do not have to make their apps available for download via the Android Market, so if you ever find a site that offers Android apps (such as Amazon.com), you need to configure your Xoom to allow it to download apps from these third-party app providers.

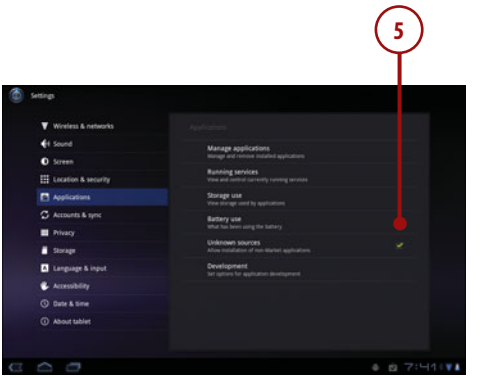
1. Open the Apps folder and click Settings.
2. Tap Applications.
3. Select the Unknown Sources option.
4. Tap OK to acknowledge that you understand the risks to your Xoom from third-party apps, or tap Cancel to prevent your Xoom from downloading apps from sources outside of the Android Market.







5. A checkmark is placed in the checkbox to remind you that third-party non-Android Market apps can be installed.



Android Market App Testing

Supposedly, all apps that are made available for download via the Android Market have been tested and evaluated to help identify any apps that could damage (intentionally or not) your Xoom. This damage could come from simply poor development standards, or it could be intentional from a developer who doesn't have your Xoom's best interest in mind. As more Android app markets become available, you'll have to do your research and determine the risks; sites such as Amazon.com, for example, are likely to have their own form of testing and evaluation and can probably be considered safe. Do your homework and download all apps with caution.

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