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Use Your iPhone as a Mac Webcam / Scanner

Borrow your iPhone's great camera — a crisp webcam for calls and a scanner for paperwork

Plain-English Mac help from:
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Tech Made Simple. Service Made Personal.

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SUMMARY

The 60-Second Version

Continuity Camera lets your Mac borrow your iPhone's much better camera — free and built in. For video calls, prop the iPhone near the top of your screen with the rear camera facing you, then pick it in your call app's camera settings; nice extras like Center Stage and Studio Light live in the Video menu.

To scan paperwork, open Notes, Mail, or Finder and choose “Import from iPhone Scan Documents,” and the tidy, cropped scan lands on your Mac. The keys are that both devices use the same Apple Account with Wi-Fi and Bluetooth on. It works wirelessly, or plug in a cable for long calls.

1 The Short Version

Your iPhone has a far better camera than the one built into most Macs — and Apple lets you borrow it. With a feature called Continuity Camera, your iPhone can act as a crisp webcam for video calls, and as a scanner that sends documents and photos straight onto your Mac. It's free, it's built in, and once set up it often works without even reaching for a cable.

This guide shows you how to use both tricks in plain English — the webcam for calls with the grandkids or the doctor, and the scanner for paperwork — plus the simple requirements and the handful of things that trip people up.

- Your iPhone can be a high-quality webcam and a document scanner for your Mac.
- It's built in and free — the feature is called Continuity Camera.
- Both devices need to be signed into the same Apple Account with Wi-Fi and Bluetooth on.
- It can work wirelessly, or with a cable if you prefer a steady connection.

GOOD TO KNOW

The single biggest key to making this work is that your iPhone and your Mac are signed into the same Apple Account. If it's not appearing, that's the first thing to check.

2 What Continuity Camera Does

Continuity Camera is Apple's name for letting your Mac use your iPhone's camera. It does two genuinely useful things, and you can use whichever suits the moment.

- As a webcam: in any video-call app, your Mac can use the iPhone's sharp rear camera instead of its own — far better picture, especially in dim rooms.
- As a scanner: from many Mac apps, you can snap a document or photo with your iPhone and have it drop straight onto the Mac, neatly cropped.

GOOD TO KNOW

Because it uses the iPhone's excellent rear camera, the webcam picture is noticeably clearer than most built-in Mac cameras — and it includes clever touches like keeping you centered as you move.

3 What You Need

The requirements are modest, and most people already meet them. Here's the checklist so you know it'll work before you start.

- A reasonably recent iPhone — an iPhone from the last several years (iPhone XR or newer).
- A Mac and iPhone both kept fairly up to date with their software.
- Both signed into the SAME Apple Account.
- Wi-Fi and Bluetooth turned on for both — that's how they find each other.
- For scanning, an app that supports it — Notes, Mail, Finder, and many others do.

WATCH OUT

If you're not sure whether your iPhone is new enough or signed into the same account, don't worry — it either appears as an option or it doesn't, and nothing can go wrong by trying. If it doesn't appear, the troubleshooting chapter sorts it out.

4 Use Your iPhone as a Webcam

This is the headline trick: a beautiful picture for video calls. Once set up, it's almost automatic — your Mac simply offers the iPhone as a camera choice.

1. Make sure both devices are on, nearby, with Wi-Fi and Bluetooth on and the same Apple Account.
2. Position the iPhone steady, upright or sideways, with the rear camera facing you (a small stand or mount helps).
3. Open your video-call app on the Mac (FaceTime, Zoom, and so on).
4. In the app's video or camera settings, choose your iPhone from the list of cameras.
5. Your iPhone shows it's being used as a camera — and your Mac now shows its lovely picture.

GOOD TO KNOW

You usually don't even have to unlock the iPhone — just having it nearby, steady, and with its screen facing you is enough. When the call ends, the iPhone goes back to normal on its own.

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5 Position and Mount Tips

The one practical catch with using the iPhone as a webcam is holding it steady at the right height. A little setup makes a big difference to how you look on camera.

- Prop or clip the iPhone near the top of your Mac's screen so you appear to look ahead.
- Use the rear (main) camera — the better one — facing you, with the screen toward you.
- An inexpensive clip-on mount made for this holds the iPhone on your laptop lid.
- Keep the iPhone plugged in for long calls so it doesn't run its battery down.

TIP

Even leaning the iPhone against a stack of books at the right height works in a pinch. The picture quality is worth the small fuss of propping it up.

6 Desk View, Center Stage, and Studio Light

While the iPhone is acting as your webcam, you get a few clever extras you can turn on from the Mac's control menu during a call. They're optional, but genuinely nice.

- Center Stage: keeps you centered in the picture as you shift around — great if you move while you talk.
- Portrait: gently blurs the background so the focus is on you.
- Studio Light: brightens your face and softens the background, flattering in a dim room.
- Desk View: shows a neat overhead view of your desk alongside your face — handy for showing someone a document or a craft.

GOOD TO KNOW

You turn these on from the “Video” controls in the menu bar at the top of the screen during a call. Try them once so you know they're there — Center Stage and Studio Light are the two most people love.

7 Scan a Document Straight Into Your Mac

The second trick is wonderful for paperwork: scan a letter, a form, or a receipt with your iPhone and have it appear instantly on your Mac, already cropped and tidy — no scanner needed.

1. On the Mac, open a spot where you want the scan — a new note in Notes, an email in Mail, or a folder in Finder.
2. Use the app's Insert or File menu, or right-click, and look for “Import from iPhone” or “Scan Documents.”
3. Your iPhone's camera opens automatically — point it at the document.
4. It captures and auto-crops the page; tap “Keep Scan,” then “Save.”
5. The finished scan appears right there on your Mac, ready to save or send.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> This turns your iPhone into a proper document scanner for free. It's perfect for emailing a signed form to the doctor's office or keeping a tidy copy of a receipt — far better than a blurry photo.

8 Take a Photo Straight Into a Document

Closely related: you can also drop a regular photo taken with your iPhone right into a Mac document or email, without the detour of transferring it later.

1. In a Mac app that supports it, open the Insert menu or right-click where you want the photo.
2. Choose “Take Photo” (under the iPhone's name).
3. Your iPhone opens its camera; snap the picture and tap “Use Photo.”
4. The photo lands directly in your document or message on the Mac.

GOOD TO KNOW

This is handy for things like photographing a product to email about, or adding a quick picture to a note — it saves the usual juggling of sending a photo to yourself.

9 Wired vs. Wireless

Continuity Camera usually works wirelessly, which is lovely — nothing to plug in. But you can also connect the iPhone with a cable, and there are moments when that's the better choice.

- Wireless: convenient, nothing to plug in; fine for most calls and scans.
- Wired (iPhone's charging cable into the Mac): rock-steady connection and keeps the iPhone charged during long calls.
- If the wireless picture ever stutters, a cable makes it perfectly smooth.

TIP

For a short call, go wireless. For a long video meeting — say a telehealth appointment or a family gathering — plug the iPhone in with its cable so it stays charged and steady the whole time.

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10 If Your iPhone Doesn't Show Up

The most common frustration is the iPhone simply not appearing as a camera or scanner option. Nearly always it's one of a short list of easy things.

1. Confirm both devices are signed into the SAME Apple Account (check your name at the top of Settings on each).
2. Turn Wi-Fi AND Bluetooth on for both — both are needed, even for a wired connection.
3. Keep the iPhone close to the Mac and unlocked, screen facing you.
4. Restart both the Mac and the iPhone — this clears most hiccups.
5. Make sure both have their latest software installed.

> **WATCH OUT**
> If you've done all this and it still won't appear, it may be that your iPhone is a little too old for the feature, or an account isn't set up quite right. That's worth a quick check together rather than a long struggle.

11 Using It With Zoom, FaceTime, and Others

Continuity Camera isn't limited to Apple's own apps — it works as a camera choice in most video programs people use. The idea is the same everywhere: pick the iPhone from the camera list.

- FaceTime: choose the iPhone from the Video menu at the top.
- Zoom: in the video settings (the little arrow by the camera button), select your iPhone.
- Other apps: look in their camera or video settings for your iPhone's name.
- The scanner trick works in Notes, Mail, Finder, Messages, and many document apps.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
> Once you've picked the iPhone as the camera in an app, it usually remembers your choice for next time — so you set it once and forget it.

12 Privacy and the Little Light

It's natural to wonder about privacy when a camera is involved. The reassuring facts: the camera only runs when you're actually in a call or scanning, and both devices show you clearly when it's active.

- Your iPhone displays a clear message on screen when it's being used as a camera, with a “Pause” button.
- A green dot appears when any camera is in use, on both Mac and iPhone.
- The camera is not watching when you're not in a call — it switches off automatically.
- You can stop it anytime by pausing on the iPhone or ending the call.

WATCH OUT

Those indicators — the on-screen message and the green dot — are there precisely so you're always in control and never in doubt about when the camera is on. If you ever see the green dot and don't expect it, that's your cue to check what app is using the camera.

13 A Quick Setup Checklist

Here's the whole thing boiled down, to pin up or glance at before a call.

- iPhone and Mac on the same Apple Account — the number-one requirement.
- Wi-Fi and Bluetooth on for both.
- iPhone propped steady near the top of the screen, rear camera facing you.
- Pick the iPhone in your call app's camera settings, or use “Import from iPhone” to scan.
- Plug the iPhone in for long calls.

> **TIP**
> Do a one-minute test call to yourself (or a trial scan into Notes) before an important appointment, so you know it works and you're comfortable. A dry run takes the nerves out of the real thing.

14 When to Call Bill

Using your iPhone as a Mac webcam and scanner is one of the nicest free tricks Apple offers, and most people get it going with the steps here. But if your devices won't find each other, if you're setting up for an important video appointment and want it certain to work, or if you'd simply like to be shown once in person, I'm glad to help.

- Your iPhone won't appear as a camera or scanner no matter what you try.
- You want it set up and tested before an important telehealth or family call.
- You'd like a proper little mount set up so it's easy every time.
- You'd simply like to be shown how, hands-on, once.

I come to you, get your iPhone working beautifully as your Mac's camera and scanner, set up a tidy way to prop it, and make sure you're comfortable doing it yourself whenever you like.

CHEAT SHEET

Everyday Cheat Sheet

Keep this by the Mac. Same Apple Account + Wi-Fi + Bluetooth is the key.

I want to...	Do this...
Use it as a webcam	Open your call app camera settings choose your iPhone
Scan a document	Notes/Mail/Finder Import from iPhone Scan Documents
Look my best	Turn on Center Stage / Studio Light in the Video menu
Keep it steady	Prop or clip the iPhone near the top of the screen, rear camera to you
It won't appear	Same Apple Account; Wi-Fi + Bluetooth on both; restart both
Long call	Plug the iPhone in with its cable to stay charged and steady
Get help	Call Bill: (330) 200-8042

BEFORE YOU GO

A Note From Bill

A quick note from Bill. I write these guides to make home tech a little less frustrating, and I do my best to keep every step accurate and up to date. Still, every home, device, and setup is a bit different, so I can't promise a guide will match yours exactly or fix your particular problem. These guides are for general information only — they're not professional, legal, or financial advice, and they don't replace your device's own manual or the manufacturer's instructions. Please go slow, use your own good judgment, and use everything here at your own risk. If a step involves electrical wiring, a gas appliance, a water heater, plumbing, or climbing a ladder — or if anything just doesn't feel safe — please stop and call a licensed professional (or give me a call at 330-200-8042). Bill's Home Tech and Bill Davis can't be responsible for any damage, data loss, or injury that results.

HOW I CAN HELP

Your Visit — and My Promise

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GOOD TO KNOW

My promise — If you're not 100% satisfied with your visit, I'll come back at no charge, or refund the full $99. No questions, no awkwardness. That's how I'd want to be treated.

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