The Android Market

The Android Market is the primary place for downloading apps for your Android phone. Some phones also ship with access to device-specific app stores as well, but all of the phones so far can use the Android Market. Some devices, like the Android-based Nook, are not intended for use with the Android Market.

Right now, there are several versions of Android shipping on phones you can buy new. So how do you know if your Android 1.5 device will run the latest Twitter app? The general rule is that, if you can see it, you can run it. Developers can exclude incompatible devices from seeing their apps in the Android Market.

In this chapter I’ll go into more detail about how you download and find apps, how you leave feedback, and how you can try before you buy. You’ll also learn about eleven must-have apps to download right now.

QR Codes

Before we go further, let me introduce you to QR (quick response) codes (Figure 14–1). You may have seen these square bar codes on objects or web sites. The QR Code was patented by the Japanese company Denso Wave. Rather than restrict use with licensing fees, Denso Wave chose to allow anyone to generate or use QR codes without having to pay a fee, and their use has been growing as smartphone use grows.

![QR Code Example](image-url)
QR codes can contain all sorts of information, like map locations, URLs, notes, names, phone numbers, and product identification. You don’t have to worry about scanning them right-side up; upside down and sideways will work, too. They’re easily read by phone cameras, so they make an ideal way to offer information to phone users without requiring a lot of typing. In fact, you may want to print a QR code on the back of your next business card, so smartphone users can scan in your contact information immediately. You can generate your own codes from http://zxing.appspot.com/generator.

Your phone may not have shipped with a bar code reader. There are countless apps in the Android Market that allow you to scan QR codes, including Google Goggles and ZXing’s Barcode Scanner.

In this chapter and beyond, I’ll use QR codes whenever possible. If you’re reading this book with an Android phone in hand (and not reading this book on your Android phone), just use the QR code to get to your app faster.

**Browsing the Android Market**

You can visit the Android Market Showcase on the Web at www.android.com/market, although this site will only show you a fraction of the available apps. You’ll need to use your phone to see the apps available for your specific phone model and version of Android. Launch the Android Market app from your phone’s application tray or desktop. The initial page will look similar to Figure 14–2, with buttons for apps, games, and downloads; a splash banner; and a list of featured apps.

**NOTE:** You can also browse available apps on the Web at www.androlib.com and www.androidzoom.com. These are both ad-sponsored sites that pull data from the Android Market, but as third-party sites, they don’t always have the most complete listings.