

# Clever uses for QR CODES

QR codes have been around since 1994, but have recently gained a new lease of life. **Robert Irvine** reveals eight ways to make the most of the code-scanning technology



## Share web pages between devices

Rather than copying and pasting the URL of a web page you want to share with someone, or to browse on your mobile device, you can generate a QR code for the link. Chrome and Edge now have this option built in, although currently as an 'experiment'. To activate it, go to `chrome:flags` or `edge:flags`, search for 'Enable sharing page via QR Code' and select Enabled from the drop-down menu. Relaunch your browser and you'll be able to share web pages by right-clicking them and choosing 'Create QR code for this page'. The generated code - complete with Chrome's offline dinosaur in the centre - can either be scanned with a phone camera to open on that device

*Chrome and Edge now let you share web pages by creating QR codes in your web browser*



or downloaded as a PNG file.

To get this feature in Firefox, you'll need to install an add-on such as Offline QR Code Generator ([bit.ly/offlineqr509](http://bit.ly/offlineqr509)).

## Access restaurant menus and order food

To combat fears about the coronavirus spreading through contaminated surfaces and objects, many restaurants, cafés and pubs have replaced their physical menus with QR codes. Just scan the code on the table to access a PDF version of the menu on your phone. In some cases, the QR code will take you to the eatery's website or mobile app, so you can order and pay for your food and drink, too. QR-code menus also let owners save on paper-printing costs, include extra photos and nutritional information, and easily remove and replace dishes as required.

Additionally, many restaurants and pubs are using the technology for track-and-trace purposes, asking you to scan a QR code and enter your contact details on arrival, so they can contact



*Scan QR codes on restaurant tables to bring up the menu and order your food*

you if a fellow customer tests positive for COVID-19. The government's new contact-tracing app also incorporates this feature, and businesses can create a code via Gov.uk ([bit.ly/create509](http://bit.ly/create509)).

## Share your Wi-Fi network with guests

If a visitor asks for access to your Wi-Fi, rather than jotting the password down on a piece of paper or reading it off the router, let them scan a QR code.

On devices running Android 10, go to Settings, 'Network & Internet', Wi-Fi and select your Wi-Fi network's name. Tap the cog to the right of your network and, on the 'Network details' screen, tap the Share button and verify your identity to create the QR code. On older versions of Android, install the free app QR Code Generator ([bit.ly/qrcode509](http://bit.ly/qrcode509)), tap the Text button and choose WiFi from the mode menu.

On an iPhone or iPad, you can load the Share Wi-Fi shortcut ([bit.ly/wifi509](http://bit.ly/wifi509)) in your device's Shortcuts app, but first you'll need to tweak iOS's security settings. Run any shortcut (it doesn't matter which), then go to Settings, Shortcuts and switch on Allow Untrusted Shortcuts. Add your Wi-Fi



*Android 10 lets you share your Wi-Fi by creating a QR code*

password to the shortcut, then generate the QR code.

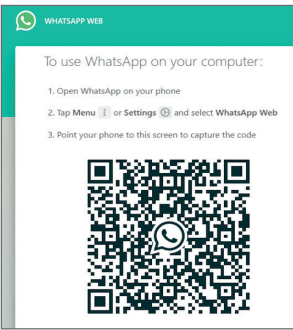
Another option is to use the online tool QiFi ([qifi.org](http://qifi.org)). Enter your network's SSID, encryption type and key, and click Generate to get your code. No data is uploaded, so your details are safe.

## Chat with WhatsApp on your computer

The web-based version of WhatsApp lets you use a proper keyboard to chat to friends, family and

colleagues from your computer, but you'll need to use a QR code to access the service. First, open the WhatsApp app on your phone, tap the three-dot menu button (in Android) or Settings (in iOS) and choose WhatsApp Web. Next, go to [web.whatsapp.com](http://web.whatsapp.com) in your desktop browser and scan the QR code using your phone. The devices will then be synced, so you can carry on chatting on the big screen.

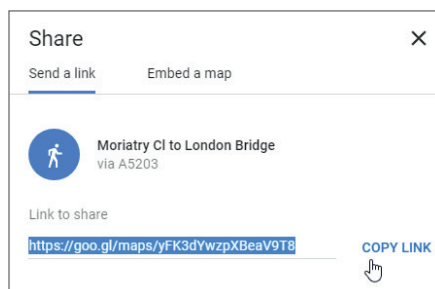
Scan a QR code with your phone to use the web-based version of WhatsApp



WhatsApp's mobile app assigns you a personal QR code that people can scan to get your details (and vice versa). To access it, just open Settings and tap the QR-code icon in the top-right corner.

## Share maps and directions in Google Maps

Although typing a postcode into Google Maps is hardly taxing, QR codes provide a much easier and more accurate means of sharing and looking up a location. Just search for a place on the Google Maps website, then click the three-dot menu in the top-left corner and choose 'Share or embed map'. Copy the link provided into a free online QR-code generator such as QRCode Monkey ([www.qrcode-monkey.com](http://www.qrcode-monkey.com)) and download, print or email the result, so it can be scanned with a phone. It's

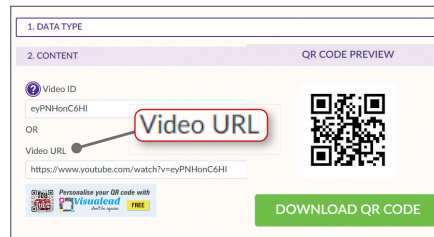


Copy a link to directions in Google Maps and turn it into a shareable QR code

particularly useful for including addresses on invitations, and also works for Google Maps directions (say, from the train station to a venue) and Street View images (so people can see what the place looks like).

## Send a video message in a card

If you prefer sending physical greeting cards to e-cards, but you like the personal touch of a video message, why not combine the two for a multimedia missive? Record your video, upload it to YouTube (ensuring you choose the Unlisted privacy option so you don't attract unwanted viewers), then copy the link to a QR-code generator. QRStuff.com ([www.qrstuff.com](http://www.qrstuff.com)) offers a handy YouTube option for this purpose. Download, print and cut out the code, then stick it inside the card to deliver your video greeting.



Create a QR code of a YouTube video to include a multimedia message in a card

## Provide your contact information

QR codes are a great way to share your contact details in a concise and relatively private manner, whether on a business card or affixed to your valuables (or pets' collars) in case you lose them. The aforementioned QRStuff.com provides an option for creating online 'vCards' containing your personal



Put a QR code on your business card containing your contact information

information. Just enter the data you want to include and generate a code that people can scan to access your vCard.

## Pay for your groceries

Tesco's Pay+ app ([bit.ly/tesco509](http://bit.ly/tesco509)) speeds up your supermarket shopping by letting you pay using a QR code. Just scan the code at the checkout (or let the cashier do it) to take the payment from your account and earn Clubcard points, too, which effectively means you can leave your wallet at home.

With Sainsbury's SmartShop Scan ([smartshop.sainsburys.co.uk](http://smartshop.sainsburys.co.uk)), you scan the barcodes of items you put in your basket as you walk around the store, pay for them in the app (while collecting Nectar points) and then scan a QR code before you leave, to confirm your purchase, without needing to queue. It currently works in over 100 stores around the UK. ■

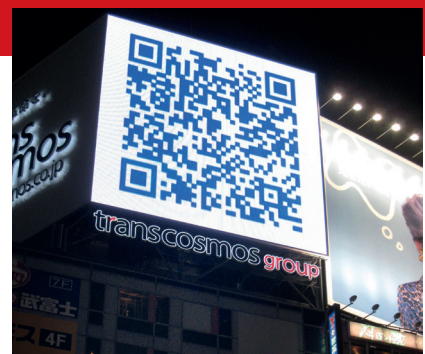


Tesco Pay+ lets you scan a QR code to pay for your shopping

## HOW QR CODES WORK

Originally used by the Japanese company Denso Wave to track car parts during the manufacturing process, QR (quick response) codes are an extension of product barcodes. Each unique code consists of a matrix of black squares and dots that contain information about the item they're attached to or accompany. When you scan this code with your phone's camera, the data is translated into something understandable, often taking you to a website or app.

The cameras on most modern smartphones are able to scan and interpret QR codes, or you can install



an app for this purpose. In our Best Free Apps section – in which we provide QR codes for apps – we recently recommended Free QR Scanner ([bit.ly/freeqr507](http://bit.ly/freeqr507)) for Android. For iOS devices, try QR Code Reader ([bit.ly/qrreader509](http://bit.ly/qrreader509)).

Credit: Nicolas1981