How to Extend the Battery Life with iOS 7

Whenever a major new operating system is released, there are always problems.   This is true whether the release is from Microsoft (Windows), Apple (Mac OS and iOS), or Google (Android). Apple recently released iOS 7 for the iPhone and iPad. When asked, I always recommend not immediately moving to a major new operating system release, but waiting to give it some time to stabilize. In this case, I have noticed that many of my customers have gone ahead and upgraded, and are now experiencing a variety of problems. The biggest seems to be rapid draining of the battery. So, in this month's newsletter, I'm providing a variety of settings that can be changed to extend your battery life. The sections are roughly ordered in terms of biggest to smallest impact on extending your battery life.

Brightness

Your iOS device has an ambient light sensor that determines how bright the screen's backlight needs to be. However, you can still determine the base level of the brightness. The lower you set the base level, the longer the battery lasts.

There are two ways to set the brightness base level. You can go to Settings, Wallpapers & Brightness and either adjust the slider or turn off auto-brightness entirely, or you can enter the Control Center menu by swiping up from the bottom of the screen and adjusting the slider there.

App Refresh

There is a new feature in iOS 7 called Background App Refresh. When enabled (which is the default), applications such as those that deliver stock quotes, weather reports, and news will update automatically in the background. By turning this setting off, the updates will only occur when you launch the app. This will cause a slight delay when you launch the app, so you will need to weigh whether the delay is worth reducing the battery drain.

To turn Background App Refresh off, go to Settings, General, Background App Refresh, and then turn off the switch.

App Updates

Another new feature is iOS 7's ability to automatically update apps in the background to their latest versions. By turning it off, apps will only be updated when you check the iTunes App Store on your device to see if there are any new updates and manually download and install them yourself. In other words, with the setting off, updates will work just as they did on iOS 6.

To turn automatic app updates off, go to Settings, iTunes & App Store, and then switch off Updates under the Automatic Downloads section. You may also wish to switch off all of the other automatic downloads for music, apps and books, to make sure they aren't working in the background either.

Email, Calendar, and Contact Updates

When it comes to updating your email, calendar, and contact information, one can choose "push" or "fetch". Push means that the moment there is new data, it is pushed to your device. Fetch operates based on an interval, and therefore has less impact on your battery life. iOS 7 provides you with a lot of control over what you want pushed and what you want fetched. If you have a lot of mailboxes (like I do), this can impact your battery life quite a bit.

To adjust your push vs fetch settings, go to Settings, "Mail, Contacts and Calendar", Fetch.

Bluetooth

Bluetooth is typically used for communicating with your car or an external speaker. It does consume quite a bit of battery, so if you aren't using these features, you should turn Bluetooth off.

To turn off Bluetooth, either go to Settings, Bluetooth, and then switch it off or go to the Control Center menu by swiping up from the bottom of the screen and switch it off there.

Wallpaper

There are two new features in iOS 7 that are nice to look at but are bigger battery drains. They are the new parallax 3D view for the homescreen and new animated wallpaper.

The parallax view is a simulated 3D effect that adds depth between the device's wallpaper and the icons on the screen, thereby making the icons appear as if they are floating on the screen. It looks nice, but it takes up battery power.

To turn this off, go to Settings, General, Accessibility, and then switch on Reduce Motion. Note this setting is not available on iPhone 4 devices.

iOS 7 also supports animated wallpaper. Again, it's pretty but a drain on the battery. By default, it's off. If you have it on, go to Settings, Wallpapers & Brightness, Choose Wallpaper, and then pick a still for your wallpaper instead of a dynamic one.

Notification Center

Notification Center provides settings for all the notifications your iOS 7 device provides you. You can select which notifications are enabled and how they appear.

Go to Settings, Notification Center and start turning off notifications on the lock screen and for other apps that you don't need to be notified about.

WiFi searching

If your WiFi antennae is on, then your device is searching for WiFi networks even when you are not near one. You can quickly turn WiFi on and off in the Control Center menu by swiping up from the bottom of the screen and tapping WiFi.

Location Services

iOS 7 provides the ability to determine which applications are allowed to use the device's GPS services. The more apps that use location services, the greater the battery drain.

Go to Settings, Privacy, Location Services to turn the whole feature off or to select the apps you don't want to use the GPS receiver.

AirDrop

AirDrop is a new feature in iOS devices used to easily transfer data from one iOS device to another nearby device. (Note it is not available on iPhone 4 and 4s devices). It is a drain to the battery because it is constantly looking for other iOS devices. You can turn it off (and on) by entering the Control Center by swiping up from the bottom of the screen and tapping AirDrop.

Spotlight

Spotlight provides the ability to search for things on your iOS device. In order to do that efficiently, it is constantly looking for things to index. If this isn't important to you, then you should turn off this feature entirely or perhaps just turn off indexing of certain items.

To adjust Spotlight settings, go to Settings, General, Spotlight Search, and uncheck the items you don't absolutely need indexed.

As always, I hope you have found this information useful. If you do not wish to receive these emails in the future, let me know.

This newsletter, as well as all past newsletters, can be found on my web site (http://steve.gimnicher.com).