

# Merry iChristmas

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Christmas, there's an app for that. To be exact, there are 8,234 apps in the iTunes store that deal just with Christmas. I think that's more apps than we've had snowflakes so far this winter.

Tomorrow morning, many of you will find electronic devices waiting for you under the Christmas tree: iPads, iPhones, iPods or tablets and smartphones based on the Android platform. If you're a kid, this will be no problem because chances are you've "put in an order" and you know how these gadgets operate. You'll be downloading before the wrapping paper hits the floor. If you're an adult, getting one of these for the first time it can be overwhelming. So, from here on, let me speak to the adults in the audience. Take a deep breath. Go slow. You can do this thing.

I'm just going to talk about the iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch universe because those are the big players in the marketplace right now. If you get an Android device, most of what I'll be talking about also applies to you, but in a slightly different format.

Assuming your device is set up and ready to go, you'll want to access some content. Your device will come preloaded with some apps so sample those to get a feel for what they do. Then you're ready to download some things that might be of specific interest to you.

In the iTunes store are thousands of apps. An app is nothing more than a program that displays a specific piece of content. For example, The Weather Channel app gives you the weather.

Some apps are free, while some have a price tag. Some have both versions, a free and a paid. Almost all the apps I use are free ones.

Another category of app-like content comes in the form of mobile web pages. These are websites designed specifically for viewing on mobile devices (regardless of Apple or Android). For example, The Cadillac News has a full website at [cadillacnews.com](http://cadillacnews.com) for viewing on your computer and <http://mobile.cadillacnews.com> for viewing on your phone or tablet. All you do is visit the mobile site using your Safari browser and use the "add to home screen" function to put an icon on your device's screen, just like an app. Best of all, mobile websites are always free.

So, what to choose? Let's talk apps first. When adults ask me what I have on my iPhone or iPad these are some I always recommend.

I like the news, so I have apps for USA Today, the Detroit Free Press, the Detroit News, 9&10 News and the Daily Beast (Newsweek). All of these deliver stories and video.

Like most adults, I like to know what's going on with the weather. The Weather Channel app is my favorite, but Intellicast is good too. My favorite, though, is My Radar which delivers that single thing — great real time radar.



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If you're a sports fan like me, the essential app is ESPN ScoreCenter, which you can customize for your favorite sports and teams. NHL GameCenter not only gives hockey fans the scores but shows graphic representations of games in real time and even video of some games.

Also in the sports realm, if you want to keep tabs on your own workouts, the RunKeeper app

uses GPS to record how far you walk, run, bike, or cross country ski and even sends you an email with the stats at the conclusion of your workout. Downhill skiers will like the SkiTracks app which even shows all the runs you made.

I like listening to radio and my favorite app for that is TuneIn Radio. There are thousands of radio stations streaming on the Internet and TuneIn gives you access to most of them. For example, ESPN wants \$3 for the ESPN Radio app, but on TuneIn you get ESPN for free. I listen to all the classic detective shows on Audio Noir (Dragnet, Sam Spade, Richard Diamond, Boston Blackie). And for my heavy metal fix, there's nothing like Hair Voltage.

I'm not much for games. Although I must admit Angry Birds and Cut the Rope are addictive. However, the one game I always recommend is Jumpline. It gives

you a collection of letters and challenges you to make as many words as possible from those letters.

Finally, handy apps like iTriage for medical information, Fooducate for data on the foods you eat, and CardStar where you can put all the bar codes from store discount cards in one place, are very handy.

Now, apps aside, finding mobile websites for your favorite full websites is a snap. Some websites automatically sense when you're trying to access them on a mobile device and route you to the mobile site. Caberfae Peaks is like this at [caberfaepeaks.com](http://caberfaepeaks.com). Others will list the mobile address on the full website so you can click and save the mobile address on your device. The Lake Mitchell Improvement Board is like this; the full site is [lakemitchell.org](http://lakemitchell.org) and the mobile site is [lakemitchell.org/mobile](http://lakemitchell.org/mobile).

The mobile websites I access the most include: ESPN.com, FactCheck.org, Mlive.com, CadillacNews.com, and the Weather Underground at the University of Michigan at [wunderground.com](http://wunderground.com).

The key thing for adults to remember is that what you want on your mobile device will probably be different from what your kids think you need (talking cats, gas-passing noises and hip-hop downloads). Tailor your device for your interests and needs. If you do that it will be a very merry iChristmas indeed.

JIM NEFF is a local columnist. Read Neff Zone columns online at [www.neffzone.com/cadillacnews](http://www.neffzone.com/cadillacnews).