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Developing Android on Android

Automate Your Device with Scripts and Tasks

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Developing Android on Android

Automate Your Device
with Scripts and Tasks



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*This book is dedicated to my three favorite
M's: Marinette, Marielle, and Mitchell.*

2.4 Home Screen Customization

Part of the fun of having the level of customization that Android allows is to re-create familiar computing metaphors. We're going to do just that with a quick walk-through of applying themes, widgets, and floaters to emulate the look and feel of an alternative mobile OS platform. The other will be the re-creation of a prevalent desktop operating system. Let's begin by emulating Microsoft Windows Phone.

Emulating the Windows Phone Look

Our first emulated home screen will be that of a Microsoft Windows Phone. Like many themes available for free download from Google Play, the GO Launcher EX Windows Phone 7 pays homage to the clean interface that the Windows Phone user interface offers.¹⁸ While this theme doesn't completely redefine your Android's phone behavior to emulate a Windows Phone, it does provide a way to dress up the background and icons to give the appearance of a Windows Phone-inspired home screen.

If you're using the GO Launcher EX as your launcher of choice, installing this theme is a breeze. Simply download it from Google Play and select it from the list of themes in the Go Launcher preferences screen. On the other hand, if, like me, you've opted to use TeslaCoil's Nova Launcher Prime as your preferred Android launcher replacement, there are a few more steps you need to take to incorporate the graphical elements contained in this Windows Phone theme.

Configuring Nova Launcher Prime

After the theme has been downloaded, open Nova Launcher Prime's settings. Before you replace anything or alter your existing launcher settings, make a backup of your existing Nova Launcher Prime configuration by selecting the Backup and Import option. This will display the Backup and Import screen, as shown in [Figure 10, Nova Launcher Prime's Backup and Import screen, on page 6](#).

Select the Backup label and name your backup or accept the default name of a date stamp for your backup file. Now if something unexpected should happen during the import of a new theme or you don't like the way the new theme looks, you can easily restore your current launcher layout and behavior.

With a backup made, select the Import label from the Backup and Import screen. Nova Launcher Prime will remind you that your existing launcher

18. <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.gau.go.launcherex.theme.wpsevenstyle>

settings will be replaced by the theme being imported. You know, the one you were supposed to make a backup of, right? Since you *do* have a backup of your current configuration, return to the Nova Settings screen and select the Look and Feel option. From there, choose the Icon Theme option. The list of the various themes installed on your Android device will be displayed, as shown in [Figure 11, A selection of installed icon themes](#).

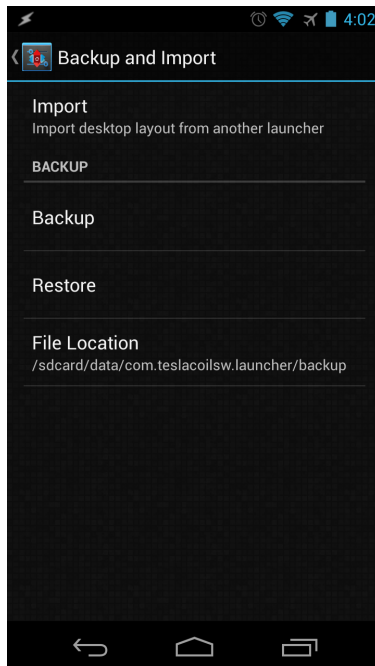


Figure 10—Nova Launcher Prime’s Backup and Import screen

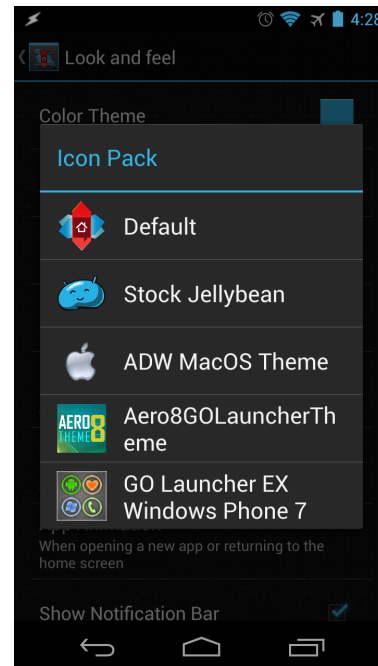


Figure 11—A selection of installed icon themes

Now we’re going to use Nova Launcher Prime’s ability to import icons from other launcher application themes. In this case, we will borrow some Windows Phone–like icons from a Windows 7 GO Launcher theme. Choose the GO Launcher EX Windows Phone 7 theme from the list. This will replace icons for standard Android programs such as Browser, Email, and Settings with a Windows Phone icon lookalike. Arrange your choice of applications on your home screen accordingly. Press and hold on the home-screen background to either change it to a solid color or incorporate a matching Android wallpaper. I prefer the live wallpaper that is installed with the Moon Phase Pro program. Tinker with the layout until you achieve the look and feel you’re comfortable

with. When you're done, it may look similar to the one shown in [Figure 12, A Windows Phone theme](#).

In the next example, we will use a free theme originally designed for ADW.Launcher and pull in its icon assets to reflect a popular desktop OS.

Emulating the OS X Desktop

For this next theme, you can either use the launcher it was initially designed for (ADW.Launcher) or use the icon import capability of Nova Launcher Prime, as we did in the previous example. And as before, it's always a good idea to make a backup of your existing settings in case something goes wrong or you want to return to your original launcher settings.

Install the ADW Theme MacOS Theme from Google Play.¹⁹ Then, just as we did for the Windows Phone theme, go into Nova Launcher Prime's settings screen. Select the "Look and feel" option followed by the Icon Theme option. This will display a list of compatible themes that Nova Launcher Prime can use. Select the ADW MacOS theme from the list. Doing so will replace some of the standard Android program icons with facsimiles of popular Mac OS X icons.

Next, replace the home screen's background wallpaper with a Mac desktop wallpaper. Launch the default Android or Google Chrome browser, search Google Images for "Mac desktop wallpaper,"²⁰ and select any of the ones that appeal to you. Set the image to your wallpaper by long-pressing the image of choice. A pop-up menu will appear, as shown in [Figure 13, Setting background wallpaper using an image from the Web, on page 8](#).

Select the "Set as wallpaper" option. This will download the selected image, save it locally to your Android file storage, and set the image as the default home-screen background.

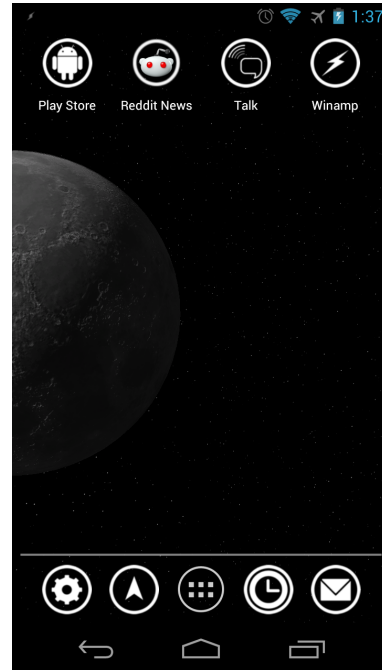


Figure 12—A Windows Phone theme

19. <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=akglo.themes.macos>

20. <https://images.google.com>

With the background wallpaper set, create shortcuts to popular Android programs such as Browser, Email, and Settings on the home screen. Complete the effect by running a floater application like Stick it! to give the home screen the look and feel of a mini OS X desktop computer, as shown in [Figure 14, *Re-creation of the OS X desktop*, on page 9.](#)

Making Your Own Home Screen

Now that you have an idea how to apply existing themes to re-create familiar desktop platforms, try making your own themes using a similar approach. Go retro and re-create a Commodore Amiga or Atari ST desktop on your Android. How about blending several desktop metaphors into your own unique creation? Depending on how artistic you are, you can even create your own background and icon images based on a favorite interest or hobby. Android allows you to explore and apply your ideas at your leisure.

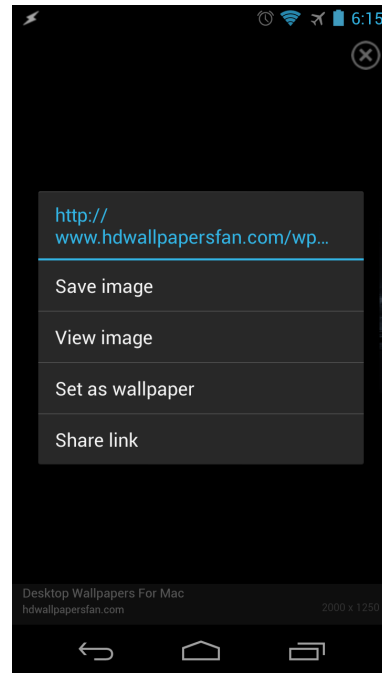


Figure 13—Setting background wallpaper using an image from the Web

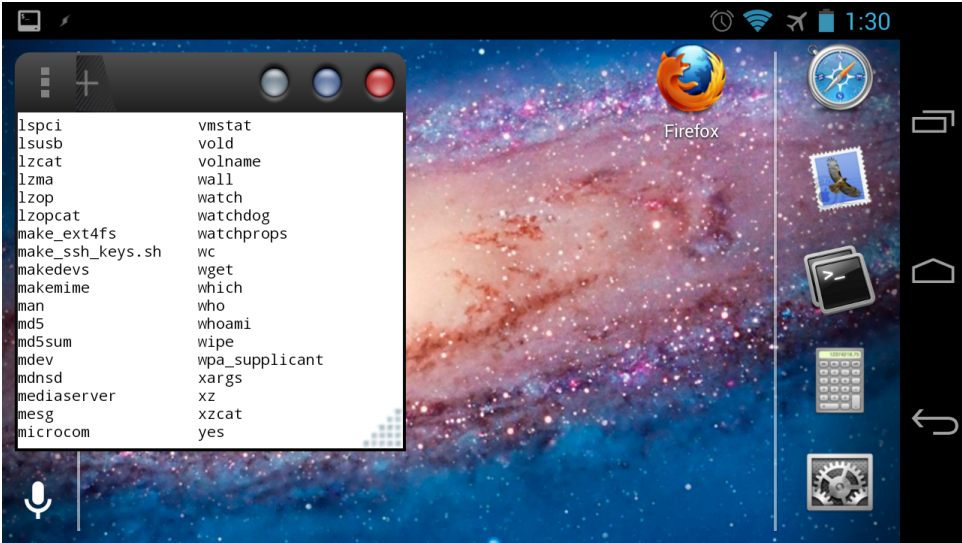


Figure 14—Re-creation of the OS X desktop