



Innovation

Turn your smartphone into a PC

How to use your Android phone from your PC or Mac, and access smartphone apps on your desktop. **PETER WILLIAMS**

HOW MANY TIMES have you wished an app you frequently use on your smartphone was available on your PC or Mac? A public transport app, for instance, or even Instagram? Or how often have you wished you could just plug a big screen, keyboard and mouse into your phone?

A product called Android Mirror makes all this possible, for Android phones at least. It lets you attach your smartphone to a PC or Mac and use the computer's monitor, keyboard and mouse with the phone instead. In effect, it turns your Android smartphone into a tiny PC, taking advantage of the desktop keyboard to type long emails or documents, the big screen to play games or view image galleries, and the mouse for any drawing apps.

Made by Taiwanese accessories company J5 create, Android Mirror is only available for Android phones because Apple doesn't give developers the deep access to the OS that Google does with Android; however, you can mirror your Android phone to an Apple Mac or MacBook. Android Mirror comes on a USB adapter that connects to your desktop's USB 2.0 port and plugs into your Android phone's microUSB port. You install the software from the USB adapter.

Android Mirror is compelling for several reasons. You can view smartphone-only

Above: The Android Mirror allows you to use your phone with your PC's mouse and keyboard, and view it all on your big-screen monitor.

apps on your PC monitor. I regularly plug my Galaxy Nexus phone into my PC or MacBook, and a window that mirrors the phone screen opens up on the desktop. Everything on the phone is then directly accessible via the desktop's keyboard and mouse. Instagram, which doesn't have a PC or Mac app, is an app I frequently access this way. Local transport apps with train and bus timetables are another. Another compelling feature is that I can now get Google's Android-based magazines or books from Play on my PC.

The only caveat is that while Android Mirror works with Android devices from version 2.3 up, it still needs a driver for each phone. It has the major smartphones from Samsung, HTC, LG, Sony and other vendors covered, but it's best to check if your Android phone is compatible with it at j5create.com/juc600_samsung.htm.

Get it from the local retailers listed at j5create.com/where-to-buy.html. Local price to be announced.



Right: Here you can see the entire screen of my Android phone.



Must-have app

Police speed trap spotters arrive

Want to avoid a speed or red light camera fine? A new line of speed trap apps can help with that.

It was inevitable, given the GPS location awareness of smartphones, that apps warning you of speed radars would become popular. These might seem controversial, but they just repeat what police radar warning signs already tell you: that there's a speed trap nearby.

They might also prevent you from losing your driver's licence (as this writer has) when you're caught doing 70km/h in a 60km zone a couple of times and on a double demerits weekend.

The three main apps in this category are Speedtrap Detector, i SpeedCam and Trapster. They all work in much the same way: they show you a map overlaid with the spots where speeding will get you a fine, together with current travelling speed and alerts as you approach one.

Since there are no official databases available from the authorities, the apps get their data in different (and not always transparent) ways. With Trapster, the source is other Trapster users, who add locations as they spot them. With the former two it's a combination of user input and some existing databases. In heavily trafficked areas, the results from these apps are quite reliable, but in back roads the likelihood of any app knowing about a temporary mobile radar is low. So you still need to assume there's a cop around every corner. **T**