

# iPhone Setup to Vitalize your Attention: VIP Alerts and Home Screen Hygiene

for the Mid-Atlantic Permanente Medical Group

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# Introduction: Control Your Focus

The iPhone can be a powerful tool for managing important information, communications and actions. It can also be a constant source of distraction and a drain on your productivity and attention.

In this document, I will share two tips I use to manage my attention with my iPhone.

## Part 1: VIP Alerts

VIP Alerts are a great way of eliminating distracting email alerts without missing messages from your most important people.

## Part 2: Home Screen Hygiene

The default iPhone home screen is full of colorful distractions and shiny icons all calling for your attention. Seeing these all day long isn't helpful to your focus, which is your most precious asset. You can improve your focus by changing what you see on your iPhone home screen.

## Contents

Part 1: VIP Alerts .....	1
What are VIP alerts and why do I want them? .....	1
Step 1: Add VIP contacts .....	2
Step 2: Set VIP alerts .....	3
Step 3: Disable all other email alerts (highly recommended).....	5
How to remove contacts from your VIP list.....	7
Part 2: Home Screen Hygiene .....	8
What is home screen hygiene? .....	8
How can you arrange your screen like this? .....	9
Conclusion .....	10
About me .....	10

## Part 1: VIP Alerts

*These steps are compatible with iOS 8, 9, 10, and 11*

### What are VIP alerts and why do I want them?

Do you need your phone to alert you every single time you get an email?

Don't want to turn off email alerts because you're afraid of missing something important?

There's good news: you can shut off email alerts for all but your most important contacts.

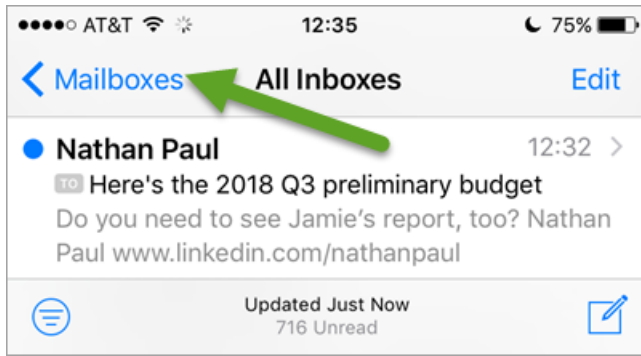
VIP alerts allow you to assign a special alert to selected email contacts: for example, your manager, team lead, coworker, or spouse.

When you set up VIP alerts, you'll get a special, customized alert whenever you get an email from one of your VIP contacts.

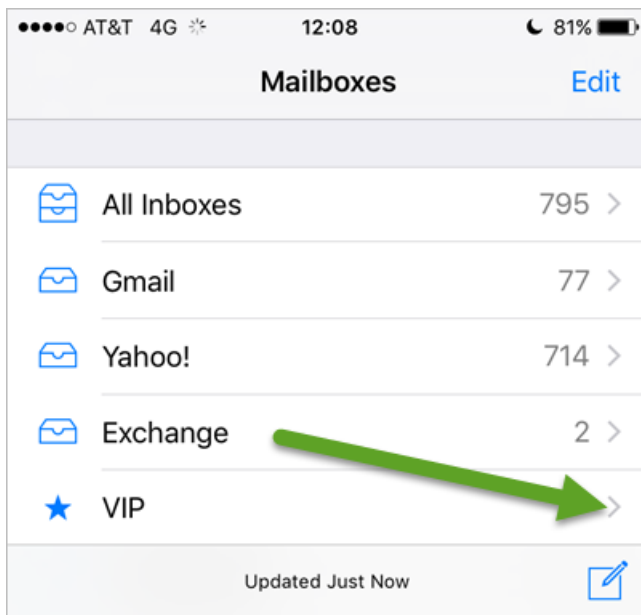
*Please note: at this time, Apple has not yet made VIP alerts available for text messages, phone calls, or any other kind of messaging besides email. Currently, VIP alerts work with **email only**.*

## Step 1: Add VIP contacts

- A. Open your iPhone Mail app
- B. In the upper left-hand corner, select "Mailboxes" (if viewing all mailboxes) or the name of the email account you're currently viewing



- C. Locate the "VIP" mailbox (it is marked with a star)
- D. Tap the ">" arrow to the right of "VIP"



- E. Select "Add VIP"
- F. Select a contact
  - a. *Note: you will be able to select only contacts for whom you have an email address*

## Step 2: Set VIP alerts

A. Navigate to the home screen

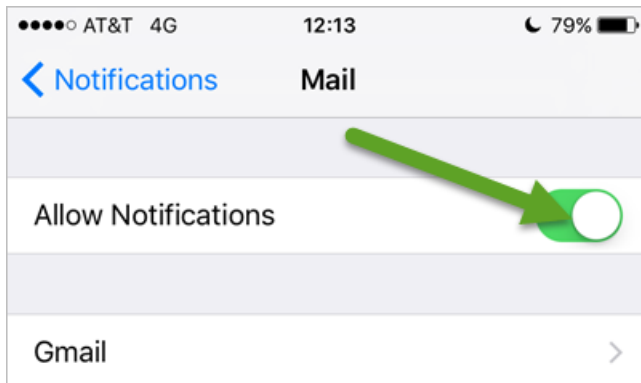
B. Open the Settings app



C. Select Notifications

D. Select Mail

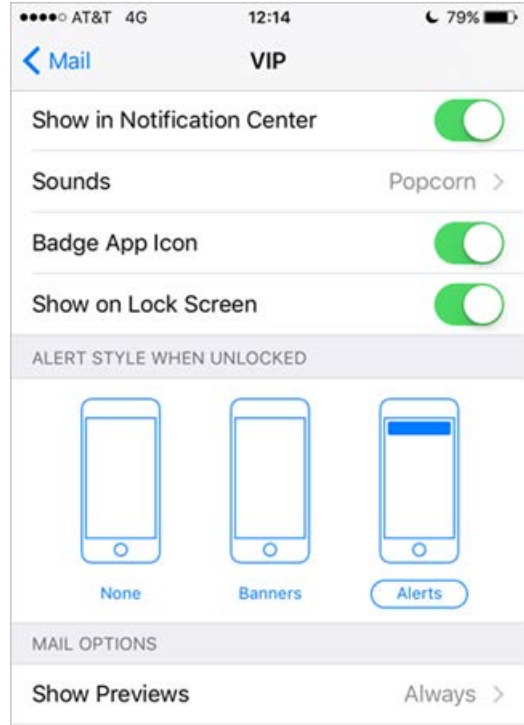
E. Ensure "Allow Notifications" (at the top) is turned on



F. Select "VIP" (at the bottom of the screen)

G. Select your desired notification settings for your VIP contacts

- a. We recommend the following settings:
- b. Turn on "Show in Notification Center"
- c. Select "Sounds"
  - i. Select an alert tone that you will use **only for VIP contacts**
  - ii. Select "Vibration"
    1. Select a vibration pattern that you will use **only for VIP contacts**
- d. Turn on "Badge App Icon"
- e. Turn on "Show on Lock Screen"
- f. Under "ALERT STYLE WHEN UNLOCKED," select "Alerts"
- g. Select "Show Previews"
  - i. Select "Always"



### Step 3: Disable all other email alerts (highly recommended)

The idea here is that email is a tool for you to check at your convenience. Ideally, there should be only a small, select group of people (your VIP contacts) whose emails you allow to instantly interrupt you.

We're all highly conditioned to check our emails regularly, so you probably don't need to worry about missing something if you turn off general email alerts.

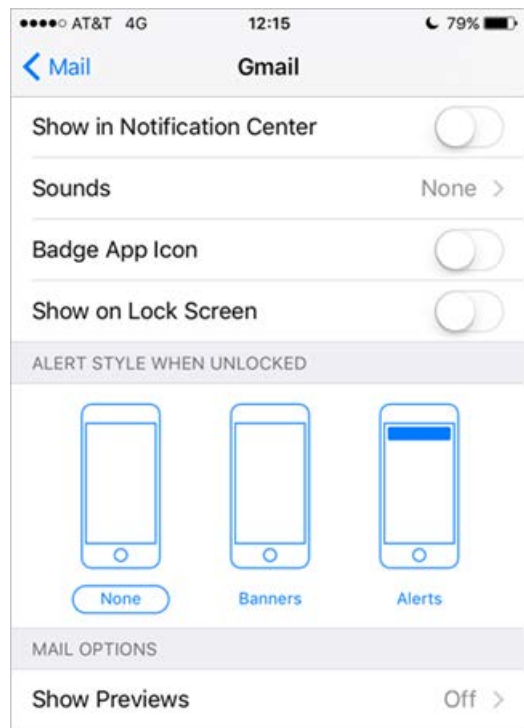
- A. Navigate to the home screen
- B. Open the Settings app
- C. Select Notifications
- D. Select Mail
- E. Select an email account other than "VIP" (for example, "Gmail" or "Exchange")
- F. Turn off "Show in Notification Center"
- G. Select "Sounds"

- a. Under "ALERT TONES," select "None"
- b. Select "Vibration"
  - i. At the bottom of the "Vibration" screen, select "None"
- c. Select "< Sounds" in the upper left-hand corner to go back



- d. Go back one more time

- H. Turn off "Badge App Icon"
- I. Turn off "Show on Lock Screen"
- J. Under "ALERT STYLE WHEN UNLOCKED," select "None"



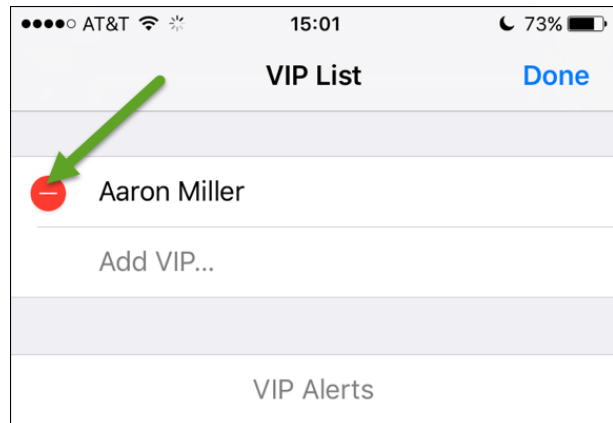
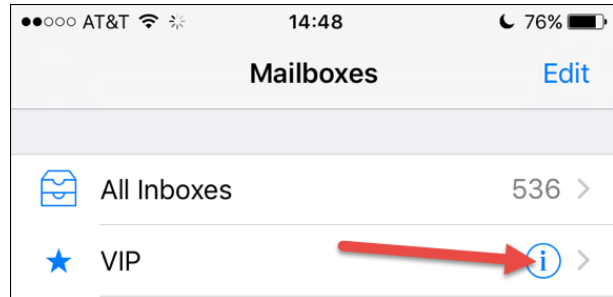
- K. Select "Show Previews"
  - a. Select "Off"
  - b. Go back
- L. Select "< Mail" in the upper left-hand corner
- M. Select your next mail account (other than VIP) and repeat substeps F - M to deactivate alerts for all email accounts *except* "VIP"



## How to remove contacts from your VIP list

*Note: this **does not** delete contacts from your phone, only from your VIP list.*

- A. Open the Mail app
- B. In the upper left-hand corner, select "< Mailboxes"
- C. Locate the "VIP" mailbox
- D. Tap the information icon to the right of "VIP"
- E. In the upper right-hand corner, select "Edit"
- F. Select the red circle next to the contact you want to remove from your VIP list
- G. Select "Delete"



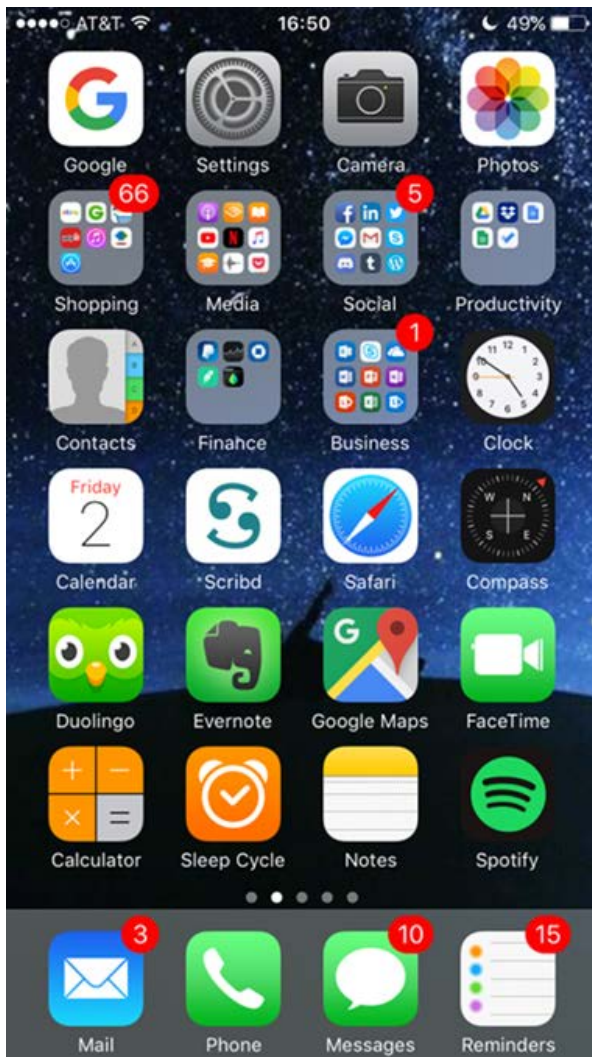
## Part 2: Home Screen Hygiene

### What is home screen hygiene?

This is my term for keeping your home screen clear and free of distractions so you see only the apps you truly want to pay attention to (such as email, phone, texts, or reminders).

Value-creating work requires focus, but it's hard to stay focused when your phone is constantly alerting you to everything demanding your attention. This section will show you how to optimize your home screen for focus and clarity.

Instead of having a home screen like this...



...I prefer to keep my home screen like this.

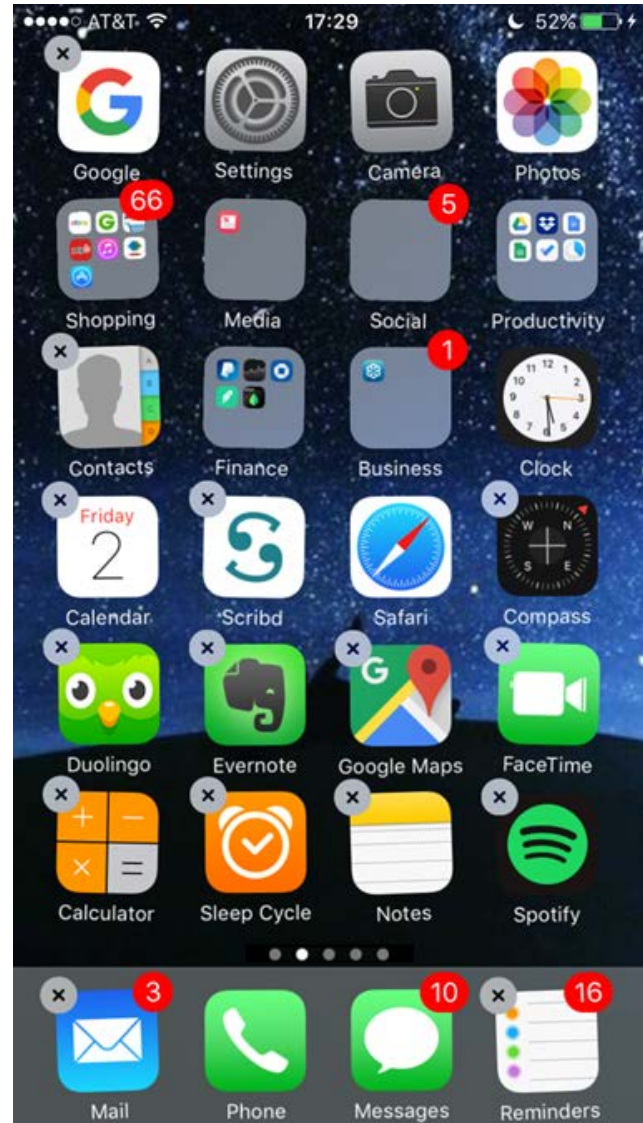
## iPhone Setup to Vitalize Your Attention: VIP Alerts and Home Screen Hygiene Part 2: Home Screen Hygiene

This simplicity helps minimize distractions and keeps my attention on my most important apps. Mike Williams, one of my former colleagues from the David Allen Company, follows a similar practice, saying, “The act of intentionally finding an app helps me become conscious to what I am doing and why.”

### How can you arrange your screen like this?

The process is simple and surprisingly quick: just move all of your apps one screen to the right.

1. Tap and hold any app until your apps start to shake (as shown)
2. Hold and drag your most important apps into the gray area at the bottom of the screen
3. Hold and drag any not-most-important apps out of the gray area
4. Hold and drag all of your other apps, one by one, to the right, until your home screen is completely clear (except for the bottom “home” area)



This kind of intentional focus changes your thinking by changing what’s in front of you, bringing greater peace of mind about your work.

## Conclusion

The thought process behind the approaches outlined in this document goes far beyond iPhone usage. VIP alerts and home screen hygiene are just two applications of my fundamental approach: you can create greater value by **thinking differently** about what you **know**, how you **work**, and the **tools** you use. I've used this approach to help many organizations achieve more with less effort, energy, time, and stress.

This information is an excerpt of what I teach in my workshop, which includes techniques, training, tips and tricks for Office 365, email effectiveness, and meeting effectiveness.

I created this document to share with people who attended the MAPMG Leadership Development Program. I hope it helps you in your work. Feel free to share it with others at Kaiser Permanente.

For more resources, see [www.eproductivity.com/MAPMG](http://www.eproductivity.com/MAPMG)

## Upcoming Guide

I'm working on a guide to help people at MAPMG use Office 365 more effectively. To be notified when this guide is available (or participate in testing this material), email me at [Eric.Mack@ICA.com](mailto:Eric.Mack@ICA.com).

## About me

I've been a consultant and entrepreneur for over 30 years, working with over 200 corporate and government clients in the fields of leadership, information management, technology, and productivity and collaboration tools, always with two questions in mind: how will people get their work done, and will these tools make it easier?



I hold a Bachelor's in Organizational Management and a Master's in Information and Knowledge Management. My research and experience have led me to create my value framework, V=KMT, an approach I use in my consulting and workshops to help my clients understand the relationship between what they know, how they work, and the tools they use.

My vision for Kaiser Permanente is to help improve healthcare by improving the knowledge, skills, and tools of those who deliver it. I've used this approach time and time again to set people up for success.