



Community Experience Distilled

Android 6 Essentials

Design, build, and create your own applications using the full range of features available in Android 6

Yossi Elkrief

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Android 6 Essentials

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Last but not least, I challenge you to try out the Chubby Bunny challenge at <http://icebreakerideas.com/chubby-bunny-challenge/>.

About the Reviewer

Pavel Pavlasek has been an Android developer for over 5 years, apart from being a long-time Java developer. He develops web information systems and Android applications, and he is passionate about new technologies.

I would like to thank to my family for their support and inspiration—my wife, Daniela, and my children, Michaela, Jakub, and Juraj. I would also like to thank my colleagues and other Android developers I've met.

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Preface

Android 6 will primarily focus on improving the overall user experience, and it will bring in a few features, such as a redesigned permission model in which applications are no longer automatically granted all of their specified permissions at the time of installation, the Doze power scheme for extended battery life when a device is not manipulated by the user, and native support for fingerprint recognition.

If you're already an Android developer, you're only a few steps away from being able to use your existing development experience to reach your users wherever or whenever they want or need your app.

As a professional Android developer, you have to create production-ready apps for your users. This book will give you what it takes to ship polished apps as part of a development team at a company, an independent app developer, or just as a programmer using Android development best practices.

By the end of the book, you'll be able to identify critical areas for improvement in an app and implement the necessary changes and refinements to ensure it meets Android's Core App Guidelines prior to shipping.

What this book covers

[Chapter 1](#), *Android Marshmallow Permissions*, discusses how the Android permission system and model are vast and have made a few changes that can help app developers and applications gain more traction, installations, and give users the ability to decide when your applications will be able to use each permission-dependent feature. Keep in mind, though, that this is just a starting point and Android Marshmallow still needs to gain market share and get adopted by OEMs, enabling users with the freedom of choice. You as an app developer must prepare in advance and make sure your application development is forward-facing, allowing new users to enjoy the latest updates as soon as possible while maintaining a high level of performance for your applications.

[Chapter 2](#), *App Links*, talks about how app linking has become powerful in Android Marshmallow. This allows you, the app developers, help the system better decide how to act. Handling web URLs will give you wider exposure, a bigger funnel into your apps, and better experience, which you can provide to your users (sums up to better ratings and more downloads and vice versa).

App linking is simple to implement, easy to understand, and is a must-have feature in the mobile/web world today. While app linking enables better action handling for users using your applications, users can have multiple devices, expecting the same behavior on each device, and would be more engaged if their data and action handling is all around.

[Chapter 3](#), *Apps' Auto Backup*, informs you that Android Marshmallow brings with it a great backup feature for apps, reducing friction for users migrating to new devices.

In a world full of such diverse apps, maximizing the benefits from automatic backups leads to excellent user experience. The goal of this feature is to unload the burden and shorten the time required to set up a new device with the user's favorite apps. Allowing the users to enter your app with just a password prompt, if required, after a new installation can be a great experience. Try it yourself!

[Chapter 4](#), *Changes Unfold*, goes over a few of the changes in Android Marshmallow. All of these changes are important to follow and will help you in your app development cycles. A few more changes are discussed in future chapters with a more detailed approach.

[Chapter 5](#), *Audio, Video, and Camera Features*, covers quite a few changes and additions to Android APIs. Android Marshmallow is more about helping us, the developers, achieve better media support and showcase our ideas when using audio, video, or camera APIs.

[Chapter 6](#), *Android for Work*, covers how Android Marshmallow has brought in quite a few changes to the world of Android for Work. As developers, we need to always maintain a viable connection with the needs of an organization. Making sure that we go over and understand the Android for Work world with the changes in Marshmallow helps us build and target enterprise workflows with the added benefit of a simpler API.

[Chapter 7](#), *Chrome Custom Tabs*, talks about the newly added feature, Chrome custom

tabs, that allows us developers to embed web content into our application, modify the UI, and adjust it to our app's theme and colors and the look and feel. This helps us keep the user in our application and still provide a nice UI and overall feel.

[Chapter 8, Authentication](#), discuss how Android Marshmallow gives us a new API to authenticate users with the fingerprint API. We can use the sensor and authenticate the user even within our application and save it for later usage if we want to save the need of user login using the Credentials grace period abilities Android Marshmallow has introduced. We also covered a way to make our application more secure using HTTPS only. The StrictMode policy, enforced with the help of the `usesCleartextTraffic` flag, allows us to make sure that all the nodes we connect to the outer world are examined to check if there's a need for a secure connection or not.

What you need for this book

For this book, you will require previous knowledge of the Android platform, APIs, and the application development process. You will also need to set up your work environment to have at least the following:

- Android Studio, which can be downloaded from <https://developer.android.com/sdk/index.html>
- The latest Android SDK tools and platforms. Make sure that you upgrade to the latest versions and add the Android 6.0 (Marshmallow) platform if it's missing
- An Android device is helpful, but you may use an emulator if you prefer, or you may use the great solution of Genymotion as an emulator, at <https://www.genymotion.com/>

Who this book is for

This book is for Android developers who are looking to move their applications into the next Android version with ease. In the chapters of this book, the author has referred to Android 6 as Android Marshmallow. You should have a good understanding of Java and previous Android APIs, and you should be able to write applications with APIs prior to Marshmallow.

Conventions

In this book, you will find a number of text styles that distinguish between different kinds of information. Here are some examples of these styles and an explanation of their meaning.

Code words in text, database table names, folder names, filenames, file extensions, pathnames, dummy URLs, user input, and Twitter handles are shown as follows: “The `setTorchMode()` method has been added to control the flash torch mode.”

A block of code is set as follows:

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="utf-8"?>
<full-backup-content>
  <exclude domain="database" path="sensitive_database_name.db"/>
  <exclude domain="sharedpref" path="androidapp_shared_prefs_name"/>
  <exclude domain="file" path="some_file.file_Extension"/>
  <exclude domain="file" path="some_file.file_Extension"/>
</full-backup-content>
```

Any command-line input or output is written as follows:

```
$ adb shell sm set-force-adoptable true
```

New terms and **important words** are shown in bold. Words that you see on the screen, for example, in menus or dialog boxes, appear in the text like this: “When heading to **Settings** | **More** | **VPN**, you can now view the VPN apps.”

Note

Warnings or important notes appear in a box like this.

Tip

Tips and tricks appear like this.

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Chapter 1. Android Marshmallow

Permissions

Android permissions have been there for as long as we can remember—since Android 1.0, to be exact. Through the years and with the evolution of platforms, the Android permissions model has been modified by adding new permissions and trying to allow more granular control over the part of the device hardware/data the application has.

In this chapter, we will review a bit of the Android permissions model that was prior to **Android Marshmallow**, and we'll focus on the changes it brings to the table. We will also explain the changes that you as a developer must do in order to handle all the other changes and make sure your applications work as intended on Android Marshmallow.

In this chapter, we will cover the following:

- An overview of Android permissions
- Understanding Android Marshmallow permissions
- Handling code permissions with best practices

An overview of Android permissions

In Android, each application runs with distinct system IDs known as **Linux user ID** and **Group ID**. The system parts are also separated into distinct IDs, forming isolated zones for applications—from each other and from the system. As part of this isolated life cycle scheme, accessing services or other applications' data requires that you declare this desire in advance by requesting a permission.

This is done by adding the `uses-permission` element to your `AndroidManifest.xml` file. Your manifest may have zero or more `uses-permission` elements, and all of them must be the direct children of the root `<manifest>` element.

Trying to access data or features without proper permission would give out a security exception (using a `SecurityException` class), informing us about the missing permission in most cases.

The `sendBroadcast(Intent)` method is exceptional as it checks permissions after the method call has returned, so we will not receive an exception if there are permission failures. A **permission failure** should be printed to the system log. Note that in Android versions prior to Marshmallow, missing permissions were due to missing declarations in the manifest. Hence, it is important that you keep permissions in mind when you come up with the feature list for your app.

Permissions

When using Android platform as an app, you have restrictions preventing access to some hardware, system APIs, private user data, and application data.

Permission is needed in order to allow access to a specific API, data, or hardware; it was asked upon the installation of your app up until Android Marshmallow. Most permissions are used to restrict access. When a permission is granted, you then have access to that specific restricted area. A feature can be protected by one permission at most.

The `uses-permission` element takes a name attribute, `android:name`, which is the name of the permission your application requires:

```
<uses-permission android:name="string" android:maxSdkVersion="integer" />
```

Did you know that the `android:maxSdkVersion` attribute, added in API level 19, is used to notify the version of the API from which this permission *should not* be granted? This is useful if a permission is no longer needed on higher versions of the API. For example, take a look at the following:

```
<uses-permission
  android:name="android.permission.READ_EXTERNAL_STORAGE"
  android:maxSdkVersion="18" />
```

In API 19, your app doesn't need to ask for this permission—it's granted to you.

Your application can also protect its own components, such as activities, services, broadcast receivers, and content providers with permissions.

It can employ any of the permissions defined by Android and declared by other applications, or it can define its own.

For more information on permissions, you can read

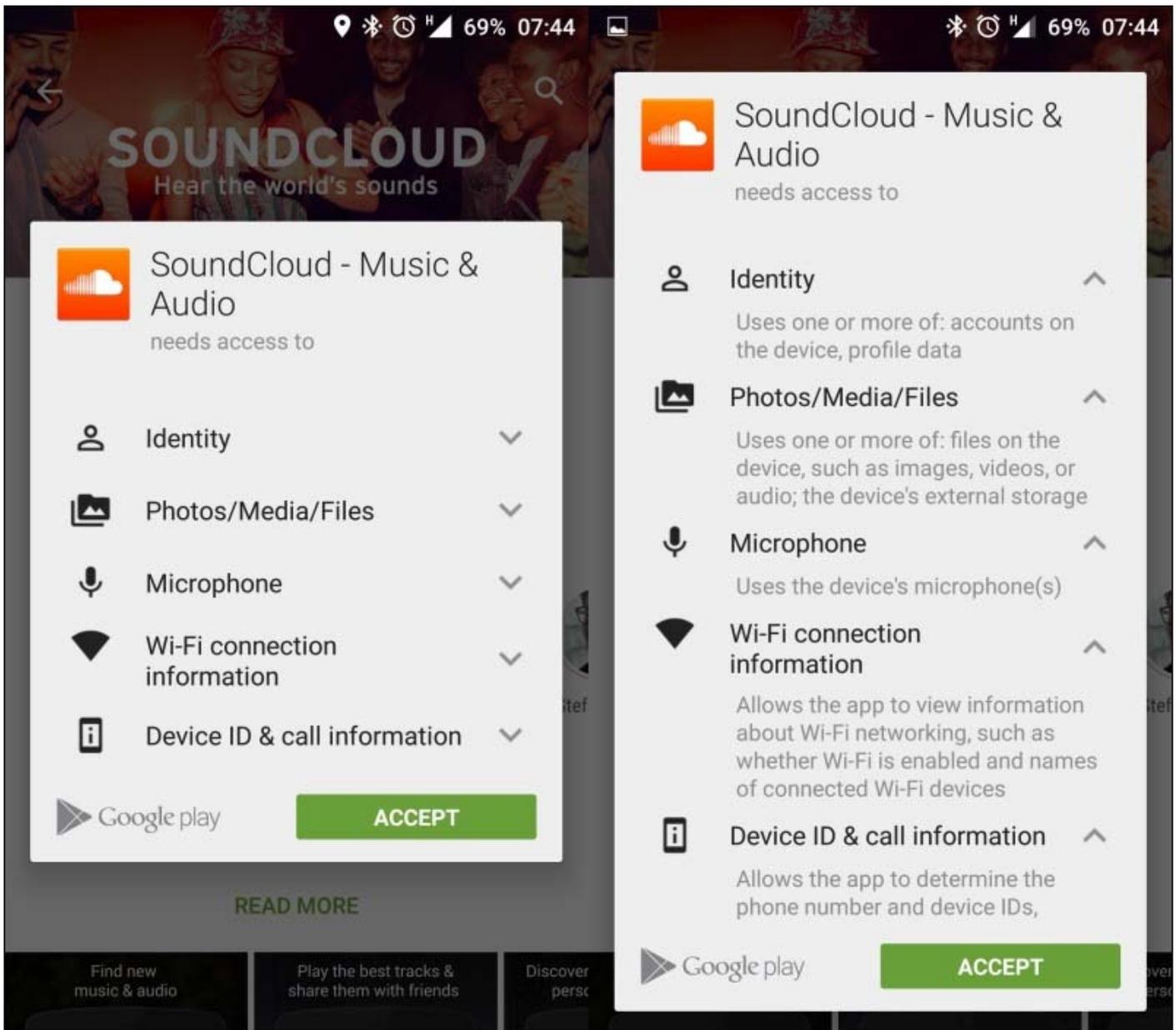
<http://developer.android.com/reference/android/Manifest.permission.html>.

Permission group definitions

Permissions are divided into groups. According to Google, we can say that a **permission group** puts together related permissions in a single name/tag. You can group permissions together using the permissionGroup attribute inside the <permission> element.

Permissions grouped in the same permission group are shown as one group when approving permissions or when checking an app for its permissions.

The permission group is what you see when installing an application from the Play Store; for example, take a look at the following screenshot:



Let's take a look at the structure of the permission-group tag:

```
<permission-group android:description="string resource"
  android:icon="drawable resource"
  android:label="string resource"
  android:name="string" />
```

The elements of the preceding structure can be explained as follows:

- `android:description`: This refers to simple text used to describe the group.
- `android:icon`: This refers to an icon from a drawable resource that represents the permission.
- `android:label`: This refers to a simple text name for the group.
- `android:name`: This is the name of the group. It is used to assign permissions to a specific group.

The following table shows you the various categories of permissions that are there in a permissions group:

Permissions group	
In-app purchases	Device and app history
Contacts	Calendar
Phone	Photos, media, and files
Wi-Fi connection information	Bluetooth connection information
Identity	Cellular data settings
SMS	Location
Microphone	Camera
Device ID and call information	Wearable sensors/activity data
Other	

Note

Any permissions that are not part of a permissions group will be shown as **Other**. When an app is updated, there may be changes to the permissions group for that app.

Permissions that imply feature requirements

Some permissions are implied by feature requirements; we will cover this next.

When declaring a feature in the manifest, we must also request the permissions that we need.

Let's say, for example, that we want to have a feature that sets pictures for our contacts. If we want to take a picture via the Camera API, then we must request a Camera permission.

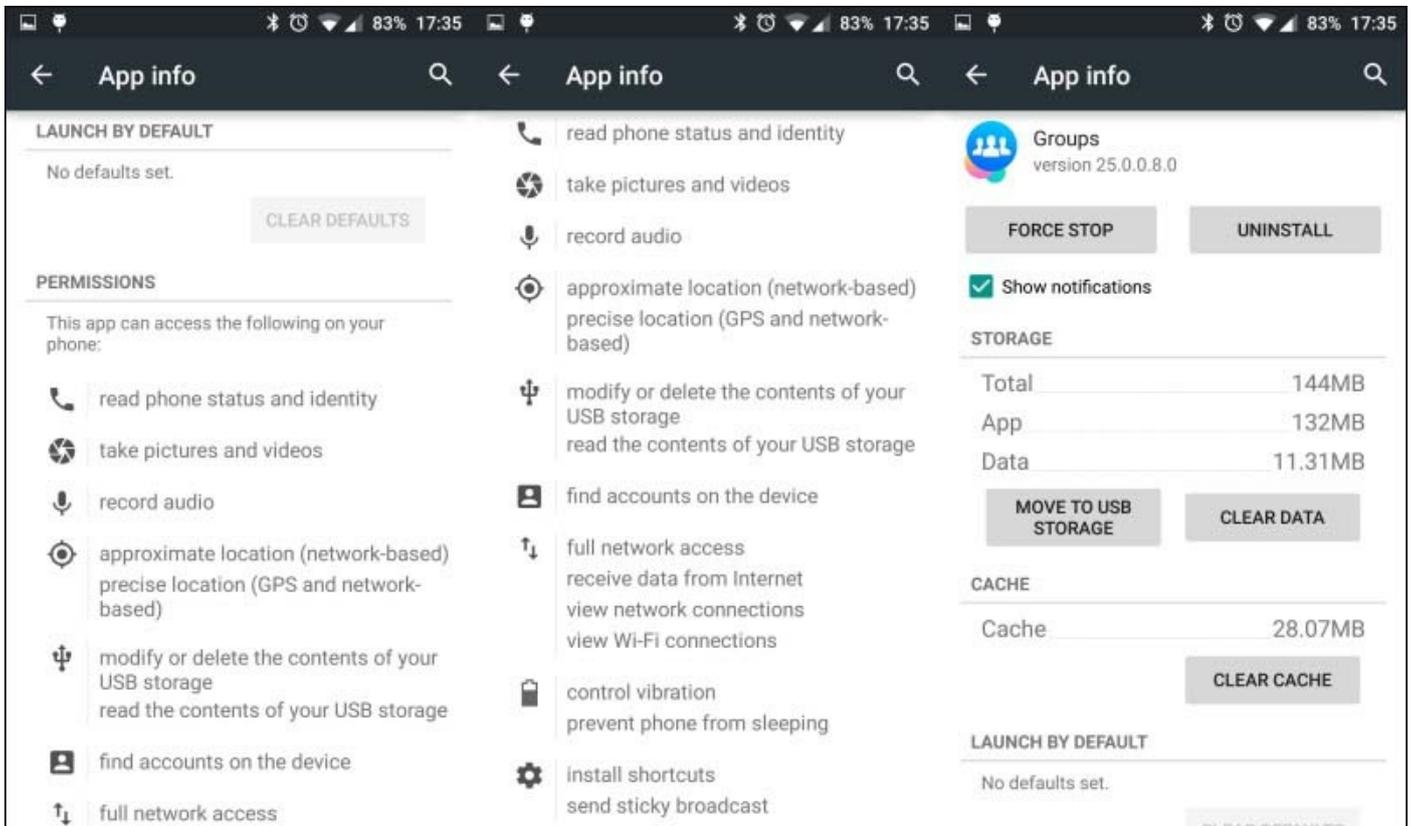
The `<uses-feature>` tag makes sure we declare that we need devices that support the required feature for our application to work and use that feature. If this feature is not a required feature and our app can work without it but with fewer features, we can use `android:required="false"`, keeping it in mind that this feature is optional.

The `<uses-feature>` declarations always take precedence over features implied by permissions. The complete list of permission categories that imply feature requirements can be found at <http://developer.android.com/guide/topics/manifest/uses-feature-element.html#permissions>.

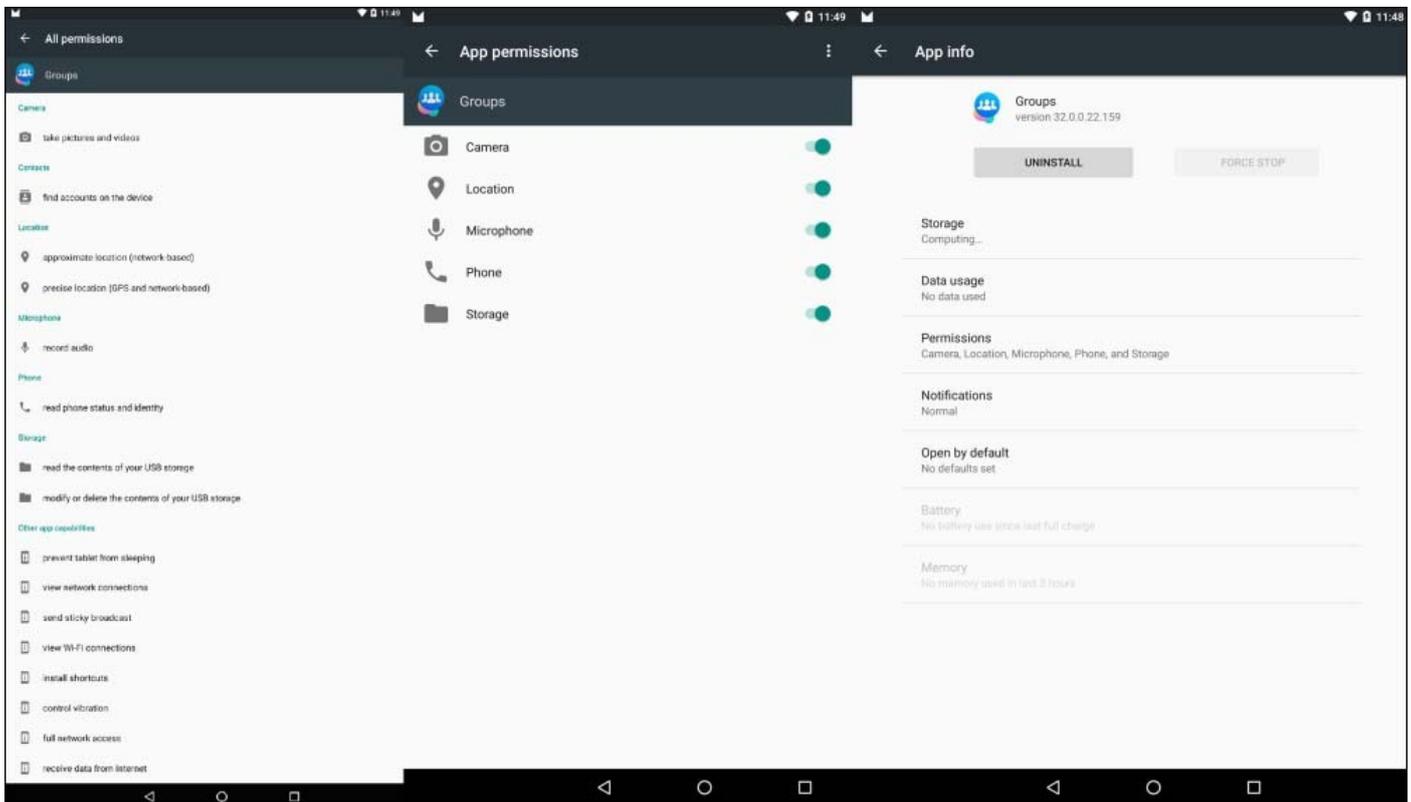
Viewing the permissions for each app

You can look at the permissions for each app using the settings app or the adb shell command.

To use the settings app, go to **Settings | Apps**. Pick an app and scroll down to see the permissions that the app uses. You can see the Lollipop version in the following screenshot:



In Android Marshmallow, the UI is different.



The second option is to use the adb shell commands with the aapt command:

1. List all the applications along with their installation paths. As an example, let's try to find out Facebook groups' app permissions using the following command:

```
adb shell pm list packages -f
```

We can use the -3 flag to just show the third-party apps instead of the entire list.

2. Once we get the package location (apk), we need to pull it from the device via the adb pull:

```
adb pull /data/app/com.facebook.groups-1/base.apk
```

3. Our final step to show permissions is to use aapt found in the build-tools folder of your specific build tools version:

```
aapt d permissions base.apk
```

This gives us the following screenshot as a result:

```
Desktop - bash - bash - Homebrew - ttys000 - 116x45 - 363
bash
mini:Desktop MaTriXy$ adb shell pm list packages -f | grep groups
package:/data/app/com.facebook.groups-1/base.apk=com.facebook.groups
mini:Desktop MaTriXy$ adb pull /data/app/com.facebook.groups-1/base.apk
5359 KB/s (32901841 bytes in 5.994s)
mini:Desktop MaTriXy$ /Android/sdk/build-tools/23.0.1/aapt d permissions base.apk
package: com.facebook.groups
uses-permission: name='android.permission.GET_ACCOUNTS'
uses-permission: name='com.facebook.katana.provider.ACCESS'
uses-permission: name='com.facebook.wakizashi.provider.ACCESS'
uses-permission: name='android.permission.RECORD_AUDIO'
optional-permission: name='android.permission.RECORD_AUDIO'
permission: com.facebook.permission.prod.FB_APP_COMMUNICATION
uses-permission: name='com.facebook.permission.prod.FB_APP_COMMUNICATION'
uses-permission: name='android.permission.READ_EXTERNAL_STORAGE'
uses-permission: name='android.permission.WAKE_LOCK'
uses-permission: name='android.permission.ACCESS_NETWORK_STATE'
permission: com.facebook.groups.permission.CROSS_PROCESS_BROADCAST_MANAGER
uses-permission: name='com.facebook.groups.permission.CROSS_PROCESS_BROADCAST_MANAGER'
uses-permission: name='android.permission.BATTERY_STATS'
uses-permission: name='android.permission.CAMERA'
uses-permission: name='android.permission.WRITE_EXTERNAL_STORAGE'
uses-permission: name='android.permission.BROADCAST_STICKY'
uses-permission: name='android.permission.ACCESS_WIFI_STATE'
uses-permission: name='com.android.launcher.permission.INSTALL_SHORTCUT'
permission: com.facebook.receiver.permission.ACCESS
uses-permission: name='com.facebook.receiver.permission.ACCESS'
uses-permission: name='android.permission.VIBRATE'
uses-permission: name='android.permission.INTERNET'
uses-permission: name='com.sec.android.provider.badge.permission.READ'
uses-permission: name='com.sec.android.provider.badge.permission.WRITE'
uses-permission: name='com.htc.launcher.permission.READ_SETTINGS'
uses-permission: name='com.htc.launcher.permission.UPDATE_SHORTCUT'
uses-permission: name='com.sonyericsson.home.permission.BROADCAST_BADGE'
uses-permission: name='com.facebook.home.permission.WRITE_BADGES'
uses-permission: name='android.permission.ACCESS_COARSE_LOCATION'
uses-permission: name='android.permission.ACCESS_FINE_LOCATION'
uses-permission: name='android.permission.READ_PHONE_STATE'
permission: com.facebook.groups.permission.C2D_MESSAGE
permission: com.facebook.groups.permission.RECEIVE_ADM_MESSAGE
uses-permission: name='com.google.android.c2dm.permission.RECEIVE'
uses-permission: name='com.facebook.groups.permission.C2D_MESSAGE'
uses-permission: name='com.nokia.pushnotifications.permission.RECEIVE'
uses-permission: name='com.facebook.groups.permission.RECEIVE_ADM_MESSAGE'
uses-permission: name='com.amazon.device.messaging.permission.RECEIVE'
mini:Desktop MaTriXy$
```

To view the permissions for the entire device, take a look at the following screenshot:

```
Yossis-MacBook-Pro:~ MaTriXy$ adb shell pm list permissions
All Permissions:

permission:android.permission.ACCESS_INPUT_FLINGER
permission:com.udemy.android.permission.PUSHIO_MESSAGE
permission:android.permission.BIND_TEXT_SERVICE
permission:com.gettribeapp.permission.C2D_MESSAGE
permission:com.facebook.orca.permission.C2D_MESSAGE
permission:com.android.gallery3d.filtershow.permission.WRITE
permission:com.android.vending.TOS_ACKED
permission:android.permission.MANAGE_MEDIA_PROJECTION
permission:com.google.glass.companion.GLASS_INFO
permission:android.permission.BIND_DREAM_SERVICE
permission:com.yallo.android.permission.C2D_MESSAGE
permission:com.google.android.apps.enterprise.dmagent.permission.C2D_MESSAGE
permission:org.gdg.frisbee.android.permission.C2D_MESSAGE
permission:android.permission.ACCESS_BLUETOOTH_SHARE
permission:com.dropbox.android.provider.ACCOUNT_INFO_READ
permission:android.permission.SEND_DOWNLOAD_COMPLETED_INTENTS
permission:android.permission.MODIFY_AUDIO_ROUTING
permission:com.google.android.youtube.permission.C2D_MESSAGE
permission:com.google.android.apps.now.OPT_IN_WIZARD
permission:android.permission.ACCESS_KEYGUARD_SECURE_STORAGE
permission:com.google.android.gms.permission.AD_ID_NOTIFICATION
permission:android.permission.FILTER_EVENTS
permission:com.google.android.gms.permission.C2D_MESSAGE
permission:com.google.android.apps.plus.permission.C2D_MESSAGE
permission:android.permission.CAPTURE_TV_INPUT
permission:android.permission.MODIFY_NETWORK_ACCOUNTING
permission:android.permission.SET_POINTER_SPEED
permission:android.permission.TV_INPUT_HARDWARE
permission:android.permission.CALL_PRIVILEGED
permission:android.permission.BRICK
permission:com.google.android.apps.maps.permission.PREFETCH
permission:com.facebook.katana.permission.CROSS_PROCESS_BROADCAST_MANAGER
permission:android.permission.BIND_DEVICE_ADMIN
permission:com.google.android.apps.cloudprint.permission.C2D_MESSAGE
permission:com.waze.permission.C2D_MESSAGE
permission:android.permission.PERFORM_CDMA_PROVISIONING
```

Using an adb command, you can print all known permissions on the device. The package manager (pm) command inside the adb command looks something like the following:

```
$ adb shell pm list permissions [options] <GROUP>
```

List permissions get the [options] and <GROUP> arguments (both optional).

Here, options can be as follows:

- -g: This refers to a list of permissions organized by a group
- -f: This prints all the information
- -s: This prints a short summary, and this is what the user sees on screen when checking permissions or approving them
- -d: This looks up and prints only permissions that are considered dangerous
- -u: This lists permissions visible to the user only

Understanding Android Marshmallow permissions

Android Marshmallow introduces a new application permissions model, allowing a simpler process for users when installing and/or upgrading applications. Applications running on Marshmallow should work according to a new permissions model, where the user can grant or revoke permissions after the installation—permissions are not given until there is user acceptance.

Supporting the new permissions model is backward-compatible, which means your apps can still be installed and run on devices running older versions of Android using the old permissions model on those devices.

An overview

With the Android Marshmallow version, a new application permissions model has been introduced.

Let's review it a bit more thoroughly:

- **Declaring permissions:** All permissions an app needs are declared in the manifest, which is done to preserve backward compatibility in a manner similar to earlier Android platform versions.
- **Permission groups:** As discussed previously, permissions are divided into permission groups based on their functionalities:
 - **PROTECTION_NORMAL permissions:** Some of the permissions are granted when users install the app. Upon installation, the system checks your app's manifest and automatically grants permissions that match the PROTECTION_NORMAL group.
 - **INTERNET permission:** One important permission is the INTERNET permission, which will be granted upon installation, and the user can't revoke it.
- **App signature permissions granted:** The user is not prompted to grant any permissions at the time of installation.
- **Permissions granted by users at runtime:** You as an app developer need to request a permission in your app; a system dialog is shown to the user, and the user response is passed back to your app, notifying whether the permission is granted.
- **Permissions can be revoked:** Users can revoke permissions that were granted previously. We must learn how to handle these cases, as we'll learn later on.

Note

If an app targets an Android Marshmallow version, it must use the new permissions model.

Permission groups

When working with permissions, we divide them into groups. This division is done for fast user interaction when reviewing and approving permissions. Granting is done only once per permission group. If you add a new permission or request a new permission from the same permission group and the user has already approved that group, the system will grant you the added permission without bothering the user about the approval.

For more information on this, visit

<https://developer.android.com/reference/android/content/pm/PermissionInfo.html#constant>

When the user installs an app, the app is granted only those permissions that are listed in the manifest that belongs to the `PROTECTION_NORMAL` group.

Requesting permissions from the `PROTECTION_SIGNATURE` group will be granted only if the application is signed with the same certificate as the app with the declared permission.

Note

Apps cannot request signature permissions at runtime.

System components automatically receive all the permissions listed in their manifests.

Runtime permissions

Android Marshmallow showcased a new permissions model where users were able to directly manage app permissions at application runtime. Google has altered the old permissions model, mostly to enable easier and frictionless installations and auto-updates for users as well as for app developers. This allows users to install the app without the need to preapprove each permission the application needs. The user can install the app without going through the phase of checking each permission and declining the installation due to a single permission.

Users can grant or revoke permissions for installed apps, leaving the tweaking and the freedom of choice in the users' hands.

Most of the applications will need to address these issues when updating the target API to 23.

Taking coding permissions into account

Well, after all the explanations, we've reached the coding part, and this is where we will get our coding hands dirty. The following are key methods used for handling permissions:

- `Context.checkSelfPermission()`: This checks whether your app has been granted a permission
- `Activity.requestPermission()`: This requests a permission at runtime

Even if your app is not yet targeting Android Marshmallow, you should test your app and prepare to support it.

Testing permissions

In the Android Marshmallow permissions model, your app must ask the user for individual permissions at runtime. There is limited compatibility support for legacy apps, and you should test your app and also test a version to make sure it's supported.

You can use the following test guide and conduct app testing with the new behavior:

- Map your app's permissions
- Test flows with permissions granted and revoked

The adb command shell can be quite helpful to check for permissions:

- Listing application permissions and status by group can be done using the following adb command:

```
adb shell pm list permissions -g
```

- You can grant or revoke permissions using the following adb syntax:

```
adb shell pm [grant|revoke] <permission.name>
```

- You can grant permissions and install apk using the following adb command:

```
adb install -g <path_to_apk>
```

Coding for runtime permissions

When we want to adjust our application to the new model, we need to make sure that we organize our steps and leave no permission stranded:

- **Check what platform the app is running on:** When running a piece of code that is sensitive at the API level, we start by checking the version/API level that we are running on.

By now, you should be familiar with `Build.VERSION.SDK_INT`.

- **Check whether the app has the required permission:** Here, we get ourselves a brand new API call:

```
Context.checkSelfPermission(String permission_name).
```

With this, we silently check whether permissions are granted or not.

This method returns immediately, so any permission-related controls/flows should be dealt with by checking this first.

- **Prompting for permissions:** We have a new API call, `Activity.requestPermissions (String[] permissions, int requestCode)`. This call triggers the system to show the dialog requesting a permission. This method functions asynchronously.

You can request more than one permission at once. The second argument is a simple request code returned in the callback so that you can recognize the calls. This is just like how we've been dealing with `startActivityForResult()` and `onActivityResult()` for years.

Another new API is `Activity.shouldShowRequestPermissionRationale(String permission)`.

This method returns `true` when you have requested a permission and the user denied the request. It's considered a good practice after verifying that you explain to the user why you need that exact permission. The user can decide to turn down the permission request and select the *Don't ask again* option; then, this method will return `false`.

The following sample code checks whether the app has permission to read the user's contacts. It requests the permission if required, and the result callback returns to `onRequestPermissionsResult`:

```
if (checkSelfPermission(Manifest.permission.READ_CONTACTS) !=
PackageManager.PERMISSION_GRANTED) {
    requestPermissions(new String[]{Manifest.permission.READ_CONTACTS},
SAMPLE_MATRIXY_READ_CONTACTS);
}
//Now this is our callback
@Override
public void onRequestPermissionsResult(int requestCode, String
permissions[], int[] grantResults) {
    switch (requestCode) {
```

```
case SAMPLE_MATRIXY_READ_CONTACTS:
    if (grantResults[0] == PackageManager.PERMISSION_GRANTED) {
        // permission granted - we can continue the feature flow.
    } else {
        // permission denied! - we should disable the functionality that
        depends on this permission.
    }
}
}
```

Just to make sure we all know the constants used, here's the explanation:

- `public static final int PERMISSION_DENIED=-1:`
Since it's API level 1, permission has not been granted to the given package
- `public static final int PERMISSION_GRANTED=0:`
Since it's API level 1, permission has been granted to the given package.

If the user denies your permission request, your app should take the appropriate action, such as notifying the user why this permission is required or explaining that the feature can't work without it.

Note

Your app cannot assume user interaction has taken place because the user can choose to reject granting a permission along with the *do not show again* option; your permission request is automatically rejected and `onRequestPermissionsResult` gets the result back.

Best practices and usage notes

The new permissions model has brought to life a smoother experience for users and a bit more code-handling for developers. It makes it easier to install and update apps and feel comfortable with what the apps are doing.

Minimalism is a great option

Don't be a permission hog! In our application life cycle, we should try to minimize our permission requests. Asking for a lot of permissions and maintaining them can seem hazardous for some, and we should try and make the feature smooth and ask for the smallest number of permissions as far as possible in order to allow relaxed, undisturbed usage. Consider using intents whenever possible—rely on other applications doing some of the work for us (fewer permissions means less friction, turning a good app into a great one).

Asking for too many permissions at once

Users can get distracted by too many dialogs popping up, asking them for more and more permissions. Instead, you should ask for permissions as and when you need them.

However, we have some exceptions to every rule. Your app may require a few permissions to begin with, such as a camera application showing the camera permissions right at the beginning. However, setting the photo to your contact can be done and requested only when the user triggers that specific action. Try to map your flow and make it easier for users to understand what is going on. Users will understand that you've requested permissions for contacts if they have asked to set information to a contact via your app.

One more suggestion: apps with a tutorial can integrate the essential permissions' request in the tutorial, allowing the users to better understand the flow and why each permission is used.

Honesty can be a great policy

When asking for a permission, the system shows a dialog stating which permission your app wants, but it doesn't say why. Consider users who hate being left in the dark thinking why this permission is needed now or users who deny the permissions due to speculation. Things can be even worse: sometimes, a user's cursor may be 2 cm away from the 1-star rating or the uninstall button.

This is why it's a good idea to explain why your app wants the permissions before calling `requestPermissions()`.

Keep in mind that most developers will choose a tutorial but a lot of users may choose to skip tutorials whenever possible, so you must make sure that you can provide information about permissions, apart from the ones in the tutorial.

Need support handling runtime permissions?

Managing permissions is easier with the latest revision of the **v4** or **v13** support libraries (23, which is the same as the Android Marshmallow API version, so it's easy to remember)

The support libraries now provide several new methods to manage permissions and work properly on any device that can use these libraries. This, for instance, saves you the time required to check for a sufficient API level regardless of whether the device runs Android Marshmallow or not. If an app is installed on a device running Android Marshmallow, proper behavior is achieved—as if you're running the same framework calls. Even when running on lower versions, you get the expected behavior from the support library methods.

The v4 support library has the following methods:

- `ActivityCompat.checkSelfPermission` (Context context, String permission):
This checks whether your app has a permission. `PERMISSION_GRANTED` is returned if the app has the permission; otherwise, `PERMISSION_DENIED` is returned.
- `ActivityCompat.requestPermissions` (Activity activity, String[] permissions, int requestCode):
This requests permissions, if required. If the device is not running Android 6.0, you will get a callback.
- `ActivityCompat.OnRequestPermissionsResultCallback` (int requestCode, String[] permissions, int[] grantResults):
This passes `PERMISSION_GRANTED` if the app already has the specified permission and `PERMISSION_DENIED` if it does not.
- `ActivityCompat.shouldShowRequestPermissionRationale` (Activity activity, String permission):
This returns `true` if the user has denied a permission request at least once and has not yet selected the *Don't ask again* option.

According to the design patterns, we should now give our users more information about the feature and why these permissions are so important to the app.

Note

If the device is not running Android Marshmallow, `shouldShowRequestPermissionRationale` will always return `false`.

The `PermissionChecker` class is also included in v4.

This class provides several methods for apps that use IPC to check whether a particular

package has a specified permission when IPC calls are made.

Android has a compatibility mode, allowing users to revoke access to permission-protected methods for legacy apps. When a user revokes access in the compatibility mode, the app's permissions remain the same but access to the APIs is restricted.

The `PermissionChecker` method verifies app permissions in normal as well as legacy modes.

Note

If your app acts as a middleman on behalf of other apps and needs to call platform methods that require runtime permissions, you should use the appropriate `PermissionChecker` method in order to ensure that the other app is allowed to perform the operation.

The v13 support library provides the following permission methods:

- `FragmentManager.requestPermissions()`:
This requests permissions, if required. If the device is not running Android 6.0, you will get a callback.
- `FragmentManager.OnRequestPermissionsResultCallback`:
This passes `PERMISSION_GRANTED` if the app already has the specified permission and `PERMISSION_DENIED` if it does not.
- `FragmentManager.shouldShowRequestPermissionRationale()`:
This returns `true` if the user has denied a permission request at least once and has not yet selected the *Don't ask again* option.

According to the design patterns, we should now give our users more information about the feature and why this permission is so important to the app.

Note

If the device is not running Android Marshmallow, it will always return `false`.

You can check out the sample project for the three ways to handle permissions:

<https://github.com/MaTriXy/PermissionMigrationGuide>

For more information on permission design patterns, read *Patterns – Permissions* by Google at <https://www.google.com/design/spec/patterns/permissions.html>.

Some permissions are normal and safer to use

The Android system flags permissions according to their protection levels. The levels are describes at

<http://developer.android.com/reference/android/content/pm/PermissionInfo.html>.

The level that is relevant to our discussion is PROTECTION_NORMAL, in which permissions are considered to have little or no risk when applications have them.

Let's say you want to build a flashlight app; allowing your app to turn on the flash is not considered a huge risk to privacy or security, and this is why flashlight permission is flagged PROTECTION_NORMAL.

When you declare normal permissions in the manifest, the system grants these permissions automatically at the time of installation. There is no prompt to grant permissions for a normal permissions group, and these permissions can't be revoked by users.

This means that you can be sure that normal permissions are granted at the time of installation.

Currently, the permissions classified as PROTECTION_NORMAL are as follows:

- android.permission.ACCESS_LOCATION_EXTRA_COMMANDS
- android.permission.ACCESS_NETWORK_STATE
- android.permission.ACCESS_WIFI_STATE
- android.permission.ACCESS_WIMAX_STATE
- android.permission.BLUETOOTH
- android.permission.BLUETOOTH_ADMIN
- android.permission.BROADCAST_STICKY
- android.permission.CHANGE_NETWORK_STATE
- android.permission.CHANGE_WIFI_MULTICAST_STATE
- android.permission.CHANGE_WIFI_STATE
- android.permission.DISABLE_KEYGUARD
- android.permission.EXPAND_STATUS_BAR
- android.permission.FLASHLIGHT
- android.permission.GET_ACCOUNTS
- android.permission.GET_PACKAGE_SIZE
- android.permission.INTERNET
- android.permission.KILL_BACKGROUND_PROCESSES
- android.permission.MODIFY_AUDIO_SETTINGS
- android.permission.NFC
- android.permission.PERSISTENT_ACTIVITY
- android.permission.READ_SYNC_SETTINGS
- android.permission.READ_SYNC_STATS
- android.permission.READ_USER_DICTIONARY
- android.permission.RECEIVE_BOOT_COMPLETED
- android.permission.REORDER_TASKS
- android.permission.SET_TIME_ZONE

- `android.permission.SET_WALLPAPER`
- `android.permission.SET_WALLPAPER_HINTS`
- `android.permission.SUBSCRIBED_FEEDS_READ`
- `android.permission.TRANSMIT_IR`
- `android.permission.VIBRATE`
- `android.permission.WAKE_LOCK`
- `android.permission.WRITE_SETTINGS`
- `android.permission.WRITE_SYNC_SETTINGS`
- `android.permission.WRITE_USER_DICTIONARY`
- `com.android.alarm.permission.SET_ALARM`
- `com.android.launcher.permission.INSTALL_SHORTCUT`

Summary

As you saw, the Android permission system and model is vast and has introduced a few changes that can help app developers and applications gain more traction and installations and give the users the ability to decide when your applications will be able to use each permission-dependent feature. Keep in mind, though, that this is just a starting point and Android Marshmallow still needs to gain market share and get adopted by OEMs, enabling users with freedom of choice. You as an app developer must prepare in advance and make sure your application development is forward-facing, allowing new users to enjoy the latest updates as soon as possible while maintaining a high level of performance for your applications.

In the next chapter, we will go over a small yet important feature in the Android Marshmallow version: app linking.

Chapter 2. App Links

One of the major improvements to the new Android Marshmallow version is powerful **app linking**. It allows the association of your app with your owned web domain. With this association, you as a developer allow the system to determine the default app that should handle a particular web link and skip prompting users to select an app. Saving clicks means less friction, which means that you reach the content faster; this leads to users and developers being happy. In this chapter, we will cover the following topics:

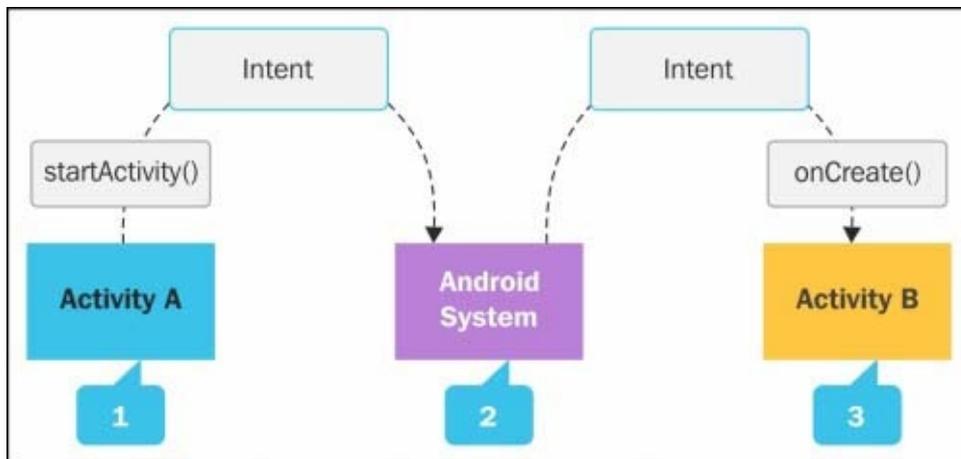
- The Android Intent system
- Creating a website association
- Triggering app link verification
- App link settings and management
- Testing app links

The Android Intent system

Almost every developer knows what an **Android Intent** system is, but we will explain it a bit and lay out the basic principles required to understand the app links feature. The Android Intent system can be found in the Android platform; this allows the passing of data in a small, simple package. Intent means that we want to perform an action. You may already know about the basic intents:

- `startActivity()`
- `startActivityForResult()`
- `startService()`
- `sendBroadcast()`

The following figure shows an Android Intent system for the `startActivity()` and `onCreate()` intents:



Source: <http://developer.android.com/guide/components/intents-filters.html>

The Android Intent system is a flexible mechanism that is used to enable apps to handle content and requests. Multiple apps may declare matching **URI** (short for **Uniform Resource Identifier**) patterns in their **intent filters**. When a user clicks on a web link that does not have a default **launch handler**, the platform may display a dialog for the user to select from a list of apps that have declared matching intent filters.

Intents are also used to trigger actions across the system, and some of these actions are system-defined, such as `ACTION_SEND` (referred to as the *share* action), where you as an app developer can share/send specific information to another application in order to complete an action required by a user.

Until Android Marshmallow, browsers handled each link clicked on the Web, and the system checked whether a **custom URI scheme** was available. Your application could handle specific custom actions via the custom URI scheme. This was tricky at times and didn't allow the handling of links under an entire web domain. Now, it's possible. Android Marshmallow's added support for app links allows you, as an app developer, to associate an app with a web domain. Automatically, this will allow you to determine the default app

that will handle a particular web link instead of showing the selected application to handle the dialog.

Note

If you wish to read more about intents, you can go to the following link:

<http://developer.android.com/guide/components/intents-filters.html>

Creating a website association

You as an app developer as well as a website owner need to declare a website association with an app. The declaration is done by hosting a JSON file, which is specifically named `assetlinks.json`. The file must reside in a specific location on the domain in question, such as:

```
https://<domain>:<optional port>/.well-known/assetlinks.json
```

Note

This file is accessed and verified over the HTTPS protocol and not HTTP.

Why this file?

The JSON file holds information about the Android application that will be the default handler for the URLs under this domain. In the JSON file, you must have the following structure:

```
[{
  "relation": ["delegate_permission/common.handle_all_urls"],
  "target": {
    "namespace": "android_app",
    "package_name": "com.yourapp.androidapp",
    "sha256_cert_fingerprints": [""]
  }
}]
```

The following are some elements of the preceding structure:

- `package_name`: This is the package name from your app's **manifest**
- `sha256_cert_fingerprints`: This is the SHA-256 fingerprint of your app

Use the following command if you don't have this **SHA** (short for **Secure Hash Algorithm**):

```
keytool -list -v -keystore app_release_signing.keystore
```

Triggering app link verification

You can request automatic verification for any app links declared in the `assetlinks.json` file. Requesting a verification is done by adding the `android:autoVerify` attribute to each intent filter in the manifest and setting it to `true`.

Let's say we own a WhatsApp application and domain. We want to autoverify an intent filter that has the `android.intent.action.VIEW` action.

The following is a sample activity from WhatsApp that handles app links and the autoverification attribute:

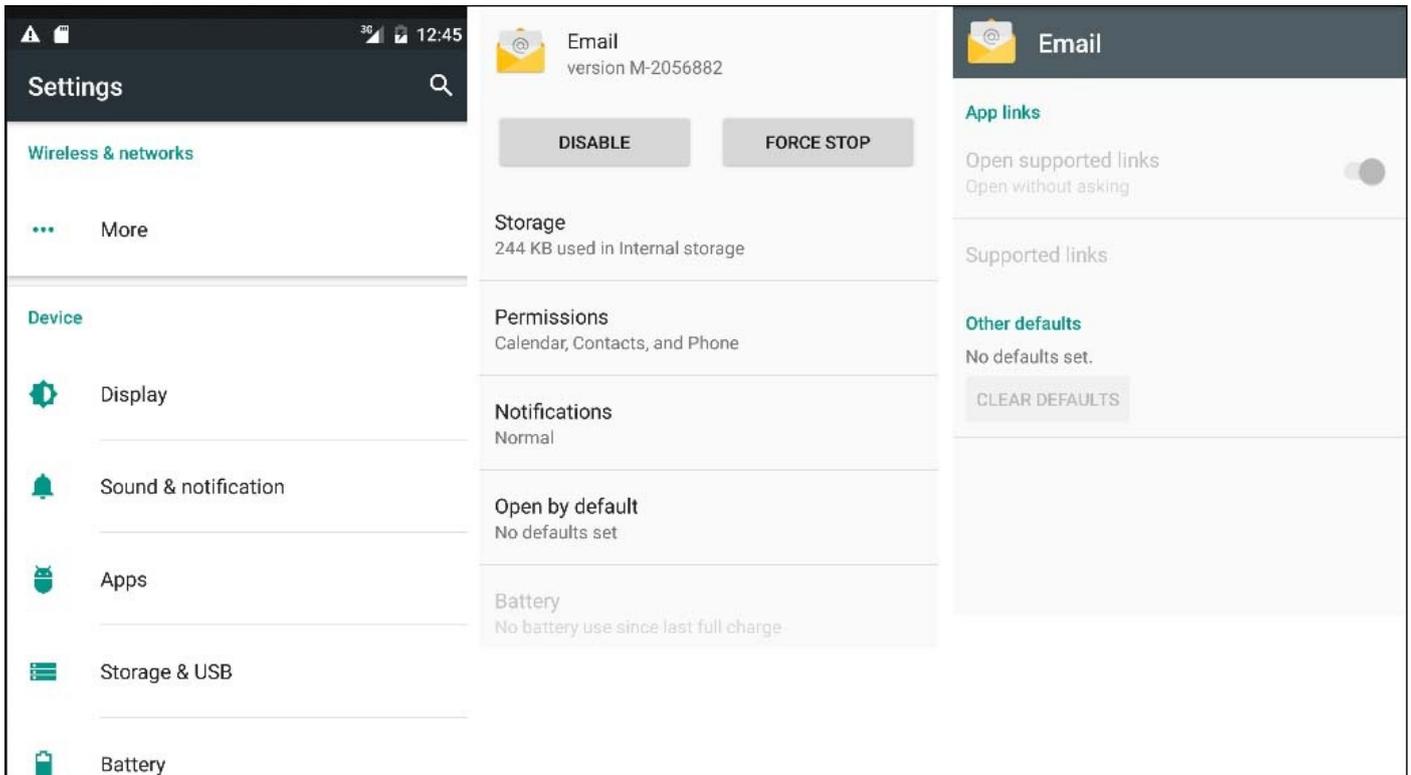
```
<activity android:name="com.whatsapp.XXX" ...>
  <intent-filter android:autoVerify="true">
    <action android:name="android.intent.action.VIEW"/>
    <category android:name="android.intent.category.DEFAULT"/>
    <category android:name="android.intent.category.BROWSABLE"/>
    <data android:scheme="http" android:host="www.whatsapp.com"/>
    <data android:scheme="https" android:host="www.whatsapp.com"/>
  </intent-filter>
</activity>
```

The `android:autoVerify` attribute alerts the platform to verify app links when the app is installed. If the app link's verification fails, your app will not be set as the preferred app to handle these links. If there is no preferred app to handle these links whenever a user opens one of them, a dialog to choose an app is displayed.

If a user has used the system settings and set an app as the preferred app, then the link will go directly to the app but not because the verification was successful.

App link settings and management

For easy management, you can enter the system settings and tweak the URL handling by navigating to **Settings | Apps | App info | Open by default**.



Testing app links

As with every new feature we add, we must test the app links feature that we will add to our application.

Checking manifest and listing domains

Our first step is to go over the manifest and make sure all the domains are registered correctly and all intent filters are well defined. Only the links/domains under all the criteria mentioned in the following bullets are the ones we need to test:

- The `android:scheme` attribute with a value of HTTP or HTTPS
- The `android:host` attribute with a domain URI pattern
- The category element, which can be one of the following:
 - `android.intent.action.VIEW`
 - `android.intent.category.BROWSABLE`

The Digital Asset Links API

We can use the **Digital Asset Links API** to confirm that our link's JSON file is properly hosted and defined using the following syntax:

```
https://digitalassetlinks.googleapis.com/v1/statements:list?  
source.web.site=https://<DOMAIN>:<port>&  
relation=delegate_permission/common.handle_all_urls
```

Testing our intent

Now that we have confirmed that the hosted JSON file is valid, we will install the app on our device and wait for at least 20-30 seconds for the verification process to complete. After this, we can check whether the system has verified our app and set the correct link-handling policies using the following syntax:

```
adb shell am start -a android.intent.action.VIEW \ -c  
android.intent.category.BROWSABLE \ -d "http://<DOMAIN>:<port>"
```

For example, if we take YouTube videos, we can trigger the YouTube app to open the video directly using the following command:

```
adb shell am start -a android.intent.action.VIEW -c  
android.intent.category.BROWSABLE -d "http://youtu.be/U9tw5ypqEN0"
```



```

Mini- MatrixX$ adb shell dumpsys package d
App verification status:
Package: com.google.android.apps.plus
Domains: google.com www.google.com plus.google.com
Status: undefined

Package: com.google.android.apps.magazines
Domains: google.com *.google.com
Status: undefined

App linkages for user 0:

Package: com.google.android.youtube
Domains: youtu.be www.youtube.com youtube.com www.youtube.com
Status: always : 20000001

Package: com.google.android.apps.docs.editors.docs
Domains: docs.google.com
Status: always : 20000002

Package: com.google.android.apps.docs.editors.sheets
Domains: docs.google.com spreadsheets.google.com
Status: always : 20000003

Package: com.google.android.apps.docs.editors.slides
Domains: docs.google.com
Status: always : 20000004

Package: com.android.wending
Domains: search.play.google.com market.android.com
Status: always : 20000005

Package: com.google.android.apps.maps
Domains: mapy.google.pl www.google.com.ag www.google.com.ai www.google.com.ar www.google.com.au www.google.com.bd www.google.com.bh www.google.com.bn www.google.com.bo www.google.com.br www.google.com.bz www.g
google.com.ca www.google.com.cu www.google.com.do www.google.com.ec www.google.com.eg www.google.com.et www.google.com.fj www.google.com.gh www.google.com.gi www.google.com.gt www.google.com.hk www.google.com.jn
www.google.com.kh www.google.com.kw www.google.com.lb www.google.com.lv www.google.com.ly www.google.com.mm www.google.com.mt www.google.com.nv www.google.com.ny www.google.com.nz www.google.com.ng www.google.com
.ni www.google.com.no www.google.com.om www.google.com.pa www.google.com.pe www.google.com.ph www.google.com.pk www.google.com.pr www.google.com.py www.google.com.qa www.google.com.sa www.google.com.sb www.google
le.com.sg www.google.com.sl www.google.com.sv www.google.com.tw www.google.com.us www.google.com.uy www.google.com.vc maps.google.co.ao maps.google.co.bw maps.google.co.ca maps.google.co.ck maps.google.co.cr maps.google.co.id map
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www.google.co.lk www.google.co.lc www.google.co.lz www.google.co.nz www.google.co.th www.google.co.tz www.google.co.ug www.google.co.uz www.google.co.vv maps.google.com.ar maps.google.com.au maps.google.com.bd maps.google.com.bh maps.google.com.bn maps.google.com.br maps.google.com.ca maps.google.com.cu maps.google.com.do maps.google.com.ec maps.google.com.eg maps.google.com.et maps.google.com.fj maps.google.com.gh maps.google.com.gi maps.google.com.gt maps.google.com.hk maps.google.com.in maps.google.com.jn maps.google.com.kh maps.google.com.kw maps.google.com.lb maps.google.com.lv maps.google.com.ly maps.google.com.mm maps.google.com.mt maps.google.com.nv maps.google.com.ny maps.google.com.nz maps.google.com.ng maps.google.com.no maps.google.com.om maps.google.com.pa maps.google.com.pe maps.google.com.ph maps.google.com.pk maps.google.com.py maps.google.com.qa maps.google.com.sa maps.google.com.sb maps.google.com.sg maps.google.com.sl maps.google.com.sv maps.google.com.tw maps.google.com.us maps.google.com.uy maps.google.com.vc
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```

Note

We must wait at least 20-30 seconds after the installation for the system to complete the verification process.

The following listing indicates apps' association with domains per user:

- **Package:** This refers to the app's package name, as declared in its manifest
- **Domains:** This refers to the list of hosts whose web links are handled by this app; blank spaces are used as delimiters
- **Status:** This refers to the current link-handling setting for this app

Passing the verification and android:autoVerify="true" will show a status of always.

The hexadecimal number after the status (as shown in the preceding screenshot) is the Android system's record of the user's app linkage preferences. It does not indicate that the verification has succeeded.

Note

The user can change the app link settings before the end of the verification process, which means that we may see a false positive for a successful verification. User preferences take precedence over programmatic verification, so we will see that the link goes directly to our app without displaying a dialog, as if verification had succeeded.

Summary

As we saw, app linking has become powerful in Android Marshmallow. This allows you, the app developers, help the system better decide how to act. Handling web URLs will give you wider exposure, a bigger funnel for your apps, and better experience, which you can provide to your users (which in turn leads to better ratings, more downloads, and vice versa).

App linking is simple to implement, easy to understand, and is a must-have feature in the mobile/web world today. While app linking enables better action handling for those using your applications, users can have multiple devices, expecting the same behavior on each device, and would be more engaged if their data and action handling happens smoothly. This brings us to our next chapter, which will teach you how to back up user settings and more.

Chapter 3. Apps' Auto Backup

Have you ever taken the time to set up an app on your phone, use it for a while, pour in a lot of content, and switch phones due to a mishap just to discover that your data and settings have gone with the wind?

One of the key features of Android Marshmallow is that it supports full automatic data backup and restore for user apps. This improves the user experience, makes the overall engagement more fun, and shortens the boarding time for multiple devices. Like we discussed in the previous chapters, happy users lead to happy developers.

You can unload the burden of setting up a new device; it doesn't matter whether it's an added device or a replacement. The user will end up with the same app configuration and data, allowing work to be more **device-agnostic**. For this feature to be enabled on your applications, you must target the Android Marshmallow SDK's version 23; no extra code is needed by default even though you can configure the feature and allow specific behavior whenever required. Data is automatically restored when a user changes or upgrades the device.

In this chapter, we will learn how this feature works and configure the information that we want to back up. We'll cover the following topics:

- An overview
- Data backup configuration
- Backup configuration testing
- Important bytes

An overview

The automatic backup feature is created by taking the data created within your app and uploading it to the user's Google Drive account, keeping it encrypted. This doesn't affect the user's drive quota or your quota, for that matter. Each app is limited to 25 MB backup per user, and once you reach that amount, your app will stop backing up. Also, note that it's *completely free!*

Backup is done in cycles of 24 hours, nights only, and it's done automatically, usually when the device is idle, charging, and connected to a Wi-Fi network. These conditions are there for battery efficiency, data charges, and, of course, to keep the user interference to a minimum. Android systems have a **Backup Manager** service, which uploads all the available backup data to the cloud. Switching to a new device or uninstalling and reinstalling the app will trigger the restore operation, which in turn copies the data into the app's data directory.

Note

This new behavior allows you to keep using your existing backup service calls as well.

To read more about the **Android Backup Service** that was used prior to Android Marshmallow, head to:

<https://developer.android.com/guide/topics/data/backup.html>

Data backup configuration

We have a lot of data that we want to back up for our users, but we also don't want to back up all the data. Let's say we all agree not to back up users' passwords or other sensitive data, but what if you have a specific app configuration that is generated based on the device the user is using? This too should be excluded in a manner similar to device tokens such as **Google Cloud Messaging (GCM)** and others. I would recommend that you figure out which data your app keeps persistently and whether this data should and can be device-agnostic.

You can configure what is being backed up besides the automatically excluded files mentioned earlier. This configuration should be declared in your app's manifest via the `android:fullBackupContent` attribute. You will need to create a new XML file that should reside in your `res/xml` folder, and this will have specific rules for the backing up of your app's data.

Including or excluding data

XML file configuration includes a simple batch of `include/exclude` tags, which indicate whether or not you need to back up a directory or a specific file. Keep in mind that by default, the XML is *reductive*, which means that you back up everything possible unless there is an instruction to exclude it in your XML.

Another possible configuration is the constructive configuration in which you specify only the things you want to back up, and they will be added to the backup. This configuration behavior is done by adding an `include` tag to your XML, and from then onward, it will remain constructive.

As we can see in our example, we specify a backup scheme configuration in the app's manifest:

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="utf-8"?>
<manifest xmlns:android="http://schemas.android.com/apk/res/android"
xmlns:tools="http://schemas.android.com/tools"
package="com.yourapp.androidapp">
  <uses-sdk android:minSdkVersion="16" />
  <uses-sdk android:targetSdkVersion="23" />
  <app android:fullBackupContent="@xml/androidapp_backup_config">
    </app>
</manifest>
```

After declaring the file in our manifest, we also need to construct it in our `res/xml` folder; for example, take a look at the following:

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="utf-8"?>
<full-backup-content>
  <exclude domain="database" path="sensitive_database_name.db"/>
  <exclude domain="sharedpref" path="androidapp_shared_prefs_name"/>
  <exclude domain="file" path="some_file.file_Extension"/>
  <exclude domain="file" path="some_file.file_Extension"/>
</full-backup-content>
```

This example backup configuration excludes only specific data from being backed up. All other files are backed up.

The backup configuration syntax

Although you should've sorted out your app's specific persistent data, we can go over the configuration syntax that should be in the XML. The syntax for the configuration XML file is as follows:

```
<full-backup-content>
  <include domain=[ "root" | "sharedpref" | "database" | "file" |
"external"] path="string" />
  <exclude domain=[ "root" | "sharedpref" | "database" | "file" |
"external"] path="string" />
</full-backup-content>
```

Don't forget to read the explanation for each attribute and element here:

- **<include>**: You should use this tag whenever you want to specifically add a resource from any of the approved sorts to the backup. Remember that whenever you specify an **<include>** tag, the backup behavior changes to constructive, and the system only backs up resources specified with the **<include>** tags.
- **<exclude>**: You should use this tag whenever you want to exclude any of the app's resources from the backup. As mentioned earlier, you should exclude sensitive data and your app's device-specific data. Here, the behavior is like this: the system backs up all of your app's data except the resources specified with the **<exclude>** tag.
- **domain**: This appears on **include** as well as **exclude** tags. It allows you to declare the resource type you want to include or exclude from the backup. The domain has specific valid values that you can choose from:
 - **root**: This implies that the resource should be in the app's root directory
 - **file**: This implies that the resource is a file located in the `Files` directory and is accessible via the `getFilesDir()` method
 - **database**: This implies that your resource is a database file that can be located via the `getDatabasePath()` method or the `SQLiteOpenHelper` class
 - **sharedpref**: This implies that your resource is a `SharedPreferences` object that can be accessed via the `getSharedPreferences()` method
 - **external**: This implies that your resource is a file in an external storage located in a directory accessed by the `getExternalFilesDir()` method
 - **path**: This a `String` path to the resource that you want included in or excluded from backup

Opting out from app data backup

On some occasions, you might decide that you wish not to use the app data backup feature in your app. In such a situation, you will be able to notify the system that your app has opted out.

Setting the `android:allowBackup` attribute to `false` in your manifest is done using the following command:

```
android:allowBackup="false"
```


Backup configuration testing

By now, you have created a backup configuration and you might (should) test it and make sure that your app saves the data, restores it, and works without any issues.

Setting backup logs

Before you test your app's configuration, you might want to enable logging; this is done via adb, where you set the parser log property to VERBOSE:

```
$ adb shell setprop log.tag.BackupXmlParserLogging VERBOSE
```

Testing the backup feature can be split into two parts:

- Testing the backup phase
- Testing the restore phase

Testing the backup phase

The backup can be run manually, but first, you must run the Backup Manager via the adb command:

```
$ adb shell bmgr run
```

After the Backup Manager is up and running, we can trigger the backup phase via adb and run our app's package name as the `<PACKAGE.NAME>` parameter:

```
$ adb shell bmgr fullbackup <PACKAGE.NAME>
```

Testing the restore phase

We executed the backup phase and all went well. Now, we want to test the restore phase and verify that all the backed-up data is restored properly and we didn't miss out on any resource. We manually run a restore (*must* be done after your app data is backed up). This is done via the adb shell, specifying the package name for your app as the `<PACKAGE.NAME>` parameter:

```
$ adb shell bmgr restore <PACKAGE.NAME>
```

Note

The restore action stops your app and wipes its data before actually performing the restore operation.

Troubleshooting

Issues can occur in any place, including our case. If you run into issues, you should try and clear the data by turning backup on and off by navigating to **Settings** | **Backup & reset**, factory resetting the device:

← Backup & reset

Back up my data

On

Backup account

[Redacted]

Automatic restore

When reinstalling an app, restore backed up settings and data



Network settings reset

Factory data reset

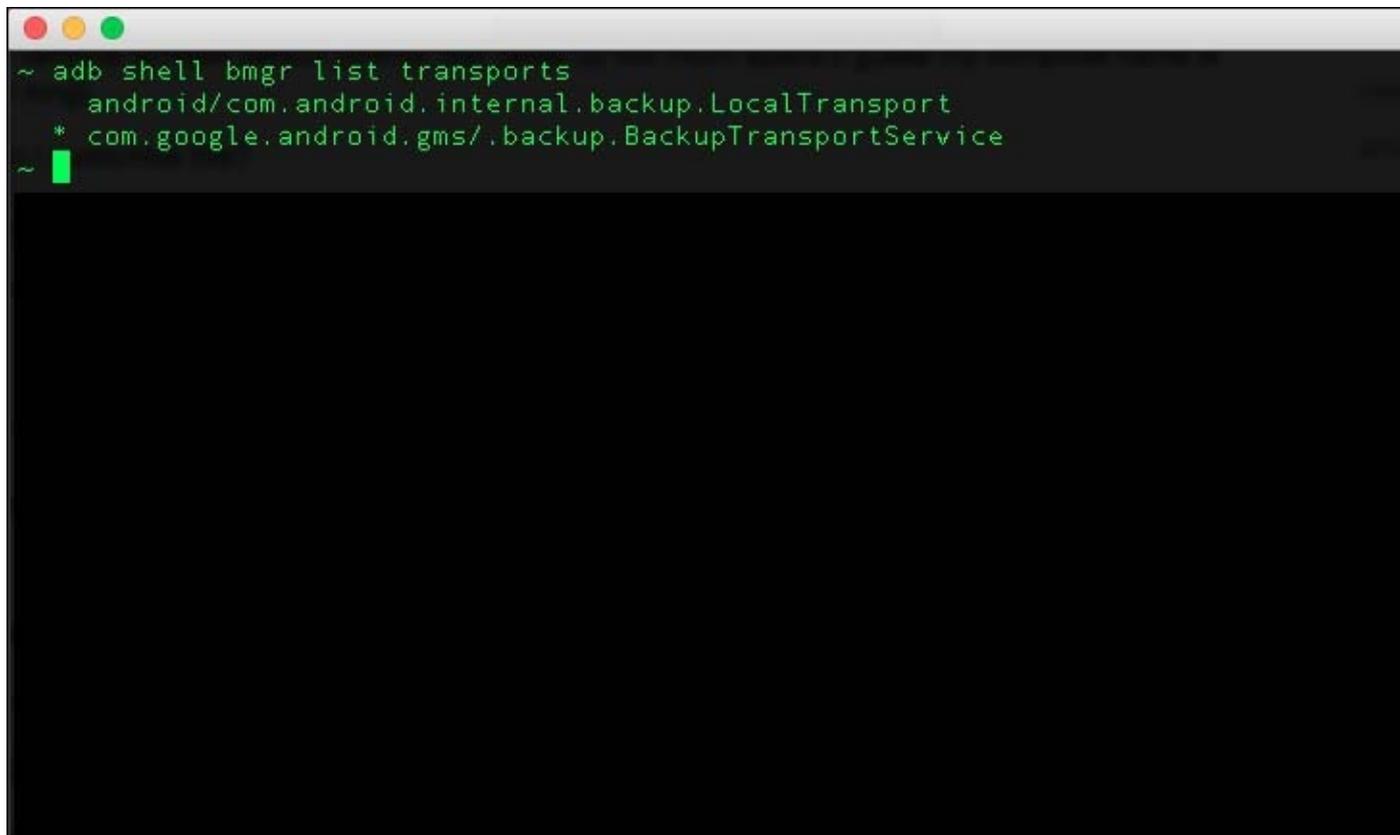
You can clear the data using this command:

```
$ adb shell bmgr wipe <TRANSPORT> <PACKAGE.NAME>
```

The <TRANSPORT> tag is prefixed by `com.google.android.gms/`. To view the list of transports, you can run following adb command:

```
$ adb shell bmgr list transports
```

The following screenshot is the result of the preceding command:

A screenshot of a terminal window with a dark background and green text. The window has a title bar with three colored buttons (red, yellow, green) on the left. The terminal shows the command `adb shell bmgr list transports` being executed. The output lists two transport services: `android/com.android.internal.backup.LocalTransport` and `* com.google.android.gms/.backup.BackupTransportService`. A green cursor is visible on the line following the second service.

```
~ adb shell bmgr list transports
  android/com.android.internal.backup.LocalTransport
 * com.google.android.gms/.backup.BackupTransportService
~
```


Important bytes

Before we jump into the next chapter, let's go through a couple of important subtopics within the Android apps' backup feature.

System backup does not include the following:

- Files located in `CacheDir` via the `getCacheDir()` method (API 1 and above)
- Files located in `CodeCacheDir` via the `getCodeCacheDir()` method (API 21 and above)
- Files located in the external storage and not in `ExternalFilesDir` via the `getExternalFilesDir(String type)` method, where the type can be as follows:
 - `null` for the root of the file directory
 - Any of these types for a specific subfolder/directory:
 - `android.os.Environment.DIRECTORY_MUSIC`
 - `android.os.Environment.DIRECTORY_PODCASTS`
 - `android.os.Environment.DIRECTORY_RINGTONES`
 - `android.os.Environment.DIRECTORY_ALARMS`
 - `android.os.Environment.DIRECTORY_NOTIFICATIONS`
 - `android.os.Environment.DIRECTORY_PICTURES`
 - `android.os.Environment.DIRECTORY_MOVIES`
- Files located in `NoBackupFilesDir` via the `getNoBackupFilesDir()` method (API 21 and above)

What to exclude from the backup

Though we have discussed this earlier, you may need to revise which app data is eligible for backup.

Among the excluded data, you must exclude any device-specific identifiers that are either issued by a server or generated on the device, including the GCM registration token.

You must also add the excluding logic for any account credentials or other sensitive information.

BackupAgent and backup events

You can implement your own BackupAgent attribute, which allows you to listen to events. BackupAgent has several callbacks that you can override, one of which is the `onRestoreFinished()` method, which is called after a successful restore takes place. You should add the `android:fullBackupOnly="true"` attribute to your manifest in addition to `android:backupAgent`; this will indicate that while your application has a BackupAgent attribute, Android Marshmallow and other devices will only perform full-data backup operations.

This technique can come in handy when you want to exclude a few keys from your **SharedPreferences** backup (device-specific tokens, GCM tokens, and so on). Instead of partitioning SharedPreferences into multiple files, you can simply remove the keys at restore time when `onRestoreFinished()` is called.

Keep in mind that other sensitive data is not supposed to be backed up anyway. You can read more about BackupAgent at:

<http://developer.android.com/reference/android/app/backup/BackupAgent.html>.

Summary

Android Marshmallow has brought in a great backup feature for apps, reducing friction for users migrating to new devices.

In a world full of diverse apps, maximizing the benefits from automatic backups leads to better user experience. The goal of this feature is to unload the burden and shorten the time required to set up a new device with the user's favorite apps.

Allowing the users to enter your app with merely a password prompt after the new installation can be a great experience; try it yourself! You can check out the sample code that's included or go to the GitHub repository at:

https://github.com/MaTriXy/apps_autobackup_example

In our next chapter, we will dive into more changes executed in Android Marshmallow as we unfold its awesomeness.

Chapter 4. Changes Unfold

Android Marshmallow holds some changes that might get overlooked. A lot of these changes are short but will require your full attention to fully understand them and make sure you don't miss out when trying to use a removed/deprecated API, a new *flow*, or a new and improved API.

I've bundled up a group of changes that you might use or need to know and understand when building your applications for Android 6.0 (Marshmallow):

- Power-saving modes
- Removable storage adoption
- Apache HTTP client removal
- Notifications
- Text selection
- Support library notice
- Android Keystore changes
- Wi-Fi and networking changes
- Runtime
- Hardware identifier
- APK validation
- USB connection
- Direct Share
- Voice interactions
- The Assist API
- Bluetooth API changes

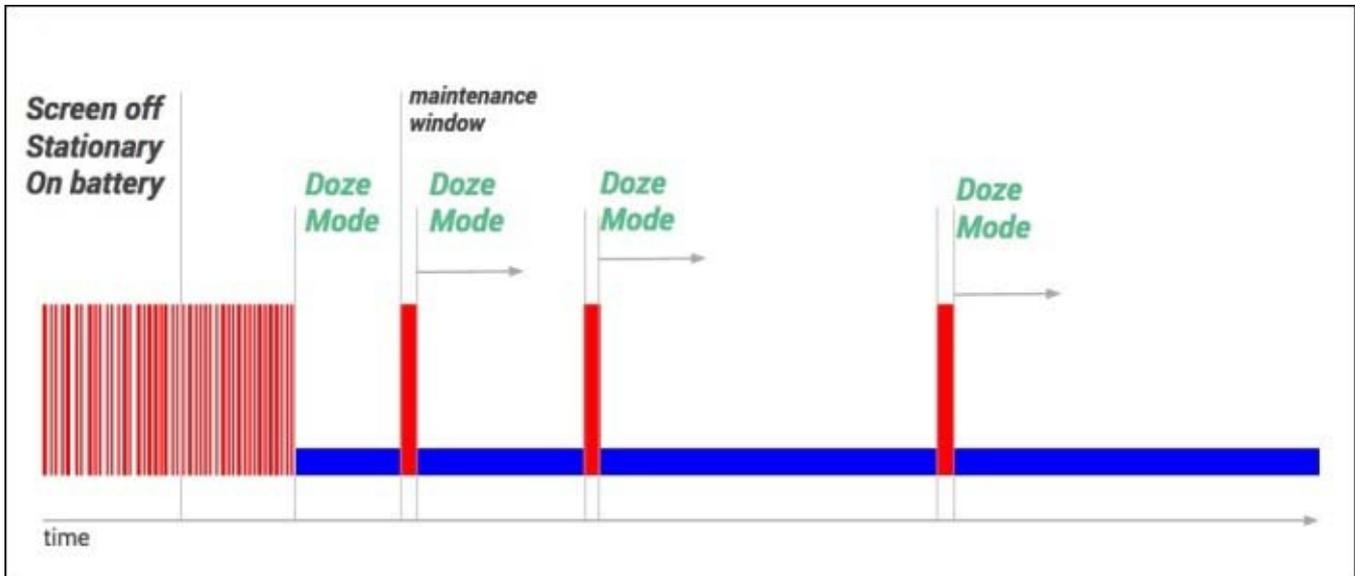
The preceding group doesn't include a separate chapter for major changes, for example, the permissions model covered in [Chapter 1](#), *Android Marshmallow Permissions*, or an improved API, such as the video/audio/camera API that we will cover in the next chapter.

Power-saving modes

Android 6.0 has added new power-saving modes, **Doze** and **App Standby**, prolonged battery life by up to 2 times according to Google's measurements. The Doze mode has been created to improve the sleep efficiency of idle devices, while the App Standby mode has been designed to prevent apps from eating up power while in the idle state. On both occasions, plugging in the device to chargers allows normal operations to resume.

The Doze mode

Dozing is when a device is unplugged, the screen is off, and it's stationary (this can be determined via sensors, such as the accelerometer) for a determined period of time. What we get is a state where the system is kept in the sleep state as long as possible. When an Android 6.0 device is in the Doze mode, not much will happen in the background, as shown in the following figure:



In short, everything you think will happen in the background will not actually happen.

What happens to apps when a device is dozing?

When a device enters the dozing state, you will encounter some battery-efficient system behavior, which will include the following:

- Network access is restricted unless your app receives a high-priority GCM
- **Wake locks** are ignored but are granted to apps
- Syncs and jobs are deferred using the following:
 - Sync adapters
 - JobScheduler (not allowed to run; this is enforced by the system)
- Alarms are deferred

Note

If you have important alarms and need to trigger the UI:

- Use the `setAndAllowWhileIdle()` method
- Can't be abused; this is allowed once every 15 minutes
- Wi-Fi scans are off
- GPS is off

The Doze mode will end shortly before any `setAlarmClock()` alarms; it can also end when the states of being stationary and unplugged are exchanged. Exiting the Doze mode

will trigger the device to execute any jobs and syncs that are pending.

Testing apps with Doze mode

Test apps using your device (with Android 6.0) and adb commands:

1. Simulate an unplugged device using the following command:

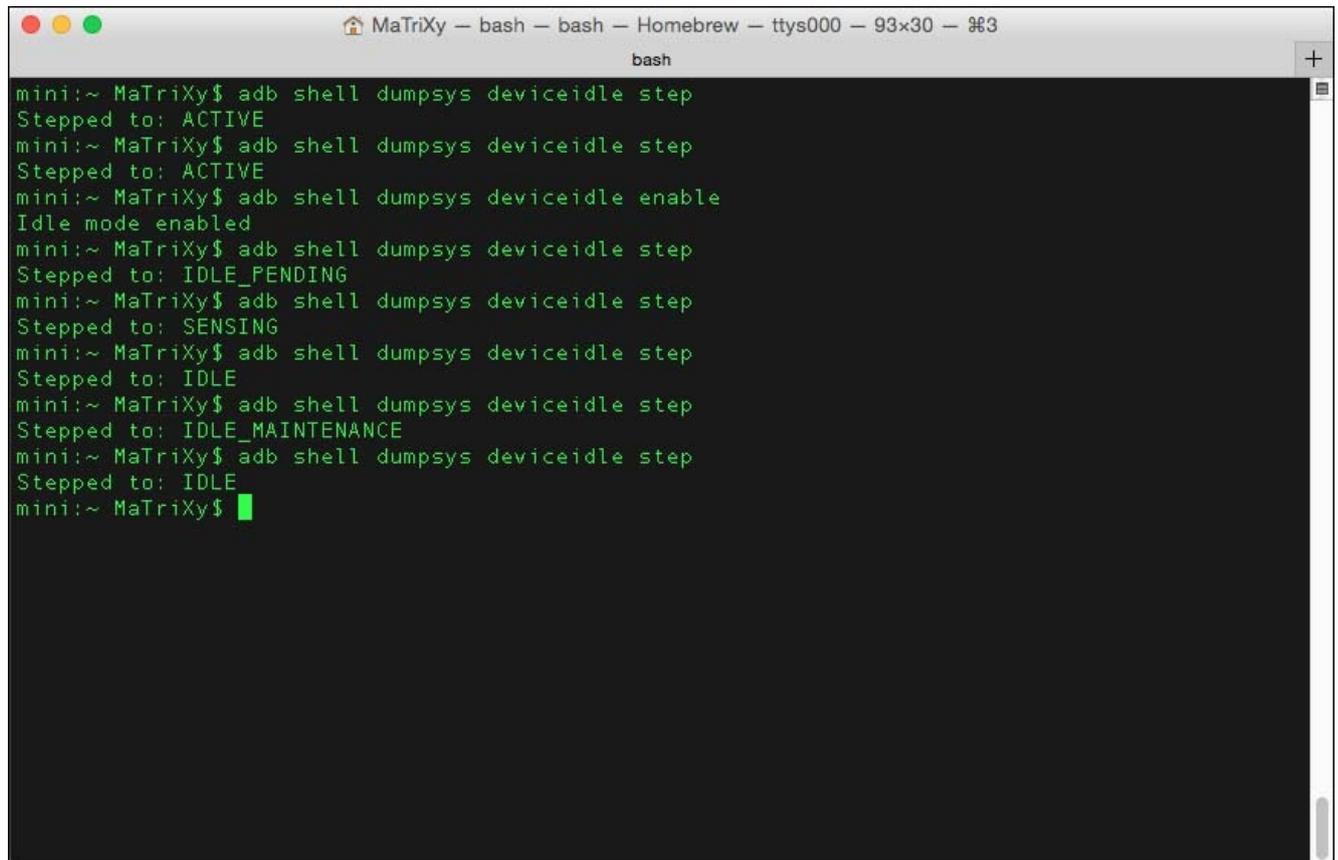
```
$ adb shell dumpsys battery unplug
```

This will cause your battery icon to show as if the device is not plugged in.

2. Take the step to the next state using the following command:

```
$ adb shell dumpsys deviceidle step
```

This can be seen in the following screenshot:



```
MaTriXy — bash — bash — Homebrew — ttys000 — 93x30 — 963
bash
mini:~ MaTriXy$ adb shell dumpsys deviceidle step
Stepped to: ACTIVE
mini:~ MaTriXy$ adb shell dumpsys deviceidle step
Stepped to: ACTIVE
mini:~ MaTriXy$ adb shell dumpsys deviceidle enable
Idle mode enabled
mini:~ MaTriXy$ adb shell dumpsys deviceidle step
Stepped to: IDLE_PENDING
mini:~ MaTriXy$ adb shell dumpsys deviceidle step
Stepped to: SENSING
mini:~ MaTriXy$ adb shell dumpsys deviceidle step
Stepped to: IDLE
mini:~ MaTriXy$ adb shell dumpsys deviceidle step
Stepped to: IDLE_MAINTENANCE
mini:~ MaTriXy$ adb shell dumpsys deviceidle step
Stepped to: IDLE
mini:~ MaTriXy$
```

3. Reset the battery state back to its normal condition using the following command:

```
$ adb shell dumpsys battery reset
```

You can also list the available commands using the following command:

```
$ adb shell dumpsys deviceidle -h
```

This prints more information about the deviceidle usage, as shown in the following screenshot:

```
MaTriXy — bash — bash — Homebrew — ttys000 — 93x30 — 93
bash
mini:~ MaTriXy$ adb shell dumpsys deviceidle -h
Device idle controller (deviceidle) dump options:
[-h] [CMD]
-h: print this help text.
Commands:
step
  Immediately step to next state, without waiting for alarm.
force-idle
  Force directly into idle mode, regardless of other device state.
  Use "step" to get out.
disable
  Completely disable device idle mode.
enable
  Re-enable device idle mode after it had previously been disabled.
enabled
  Print 1 if device idle mode is currently enabled, else 0.
whitelist
  Print currently whitelisted apps.
whitelist [package ...]
  Add (prefix with +) or remove (prefix with -) packages.
tempwhitelist [package ..]
  Temporarily place packages in whitelist for 10 seconds.
mini:~ MaTriXy$
```

The App Standby mode

App Standby is a special mode that apps will be in when a system determines that an app is idle. An app is considered idle after a period of time unless the app exhibits the following features:

- It has a foreground process at that time (an activity or service)
- It displays notifications on the lock screen or in the notification tray
- It was explicitly launched by the user
- It was marked as excluded from optimizations via the settings app

What happens to apps when in the App Standby mode?

If the device is unplugged, syncs and jobs are deferred and network access is restricted.

If the device is plugged in, the system releases the app lock in the standby state, allowing the device to resume access to the network and/or execute any pending jobs and syncs.

Note

When in the idle state for a long period of time, the system allows idle apps to access the network just once a day.

Testing apps with the App Standby mode

Test apps using your device (with Android 6.0) and adb commands:

1. Simulate the app that's going into the standby mode:

```
$ adb shell am broadcast -a android.os.action.DISCHARGING  
$ adb shell am set-inactive <App Package Name > true
```

2. Simulate by waking your app:

```
$ adb shell am set-inactive <App Package Name > false
```

3. See what happens when your app awakens. Test recovering gracefully from standby mode. Check whether your app's notifications and background jobs function as you would anticipate.

You can set your app as inactive via the following command:

```
$ adb shell am set-inactive <App Package Name > true
```

You can also check the status of your app via the following command:

```
$ adb shell am get-inactive <App Package Name >
```

Note

The sample test was done on Google Photos behavior; all rights are reserved.

The console output, for example, is as follows:

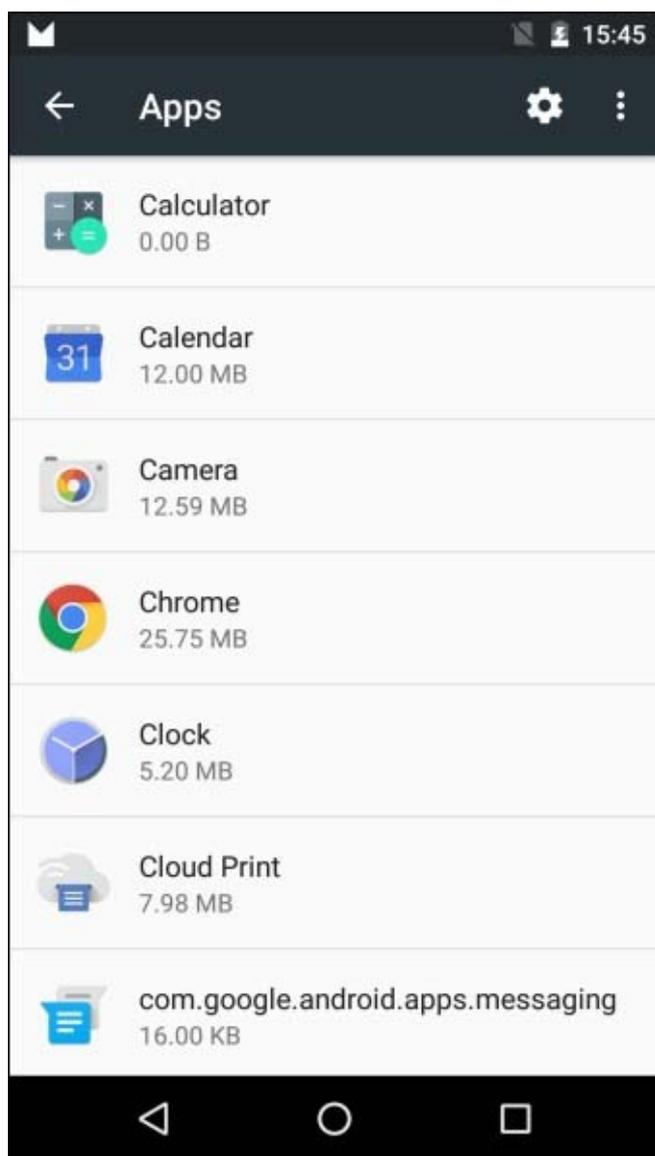
```
~ adb shell am set-inactive com.google.android.apps.photos false
```

```
~ adb shell am get-inactive com.google.android.apps.photos
Idle=false
~ adb shell am set-inactive com.google.android.apps.photos true
~ adb shell am get-inactive com.google.android.apps.photos
Idle=true
```

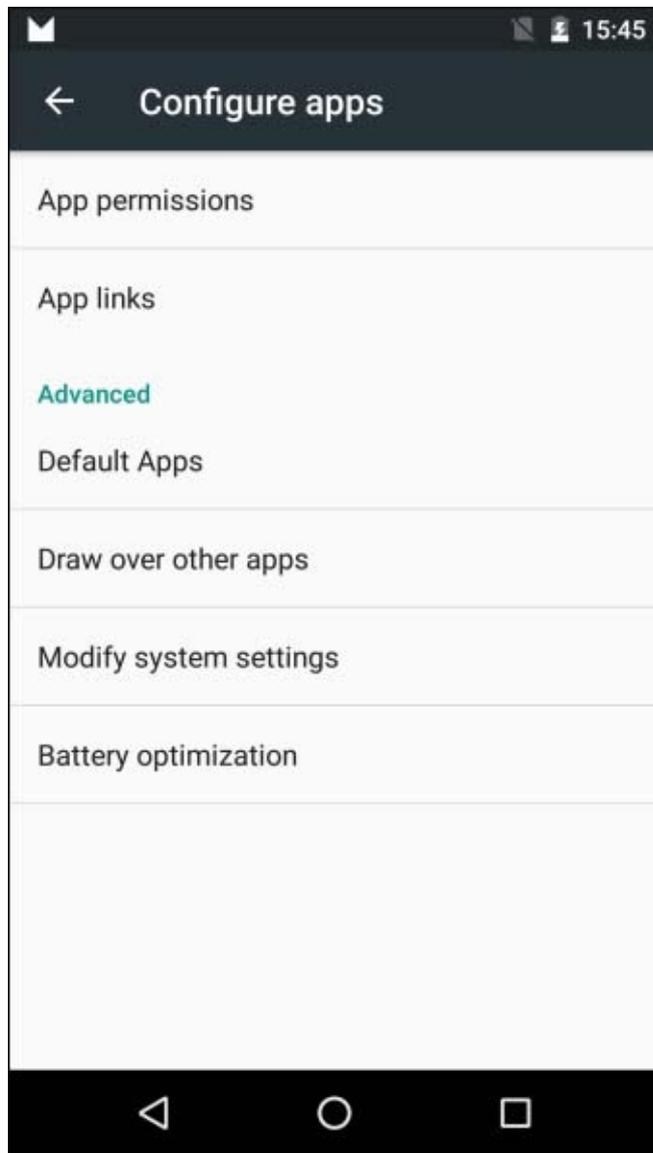
Excluded apps and settings

You can exclude apps from the App Standby mode via the settings apps, as mentioned earlier. The procedure to do this is as follows:

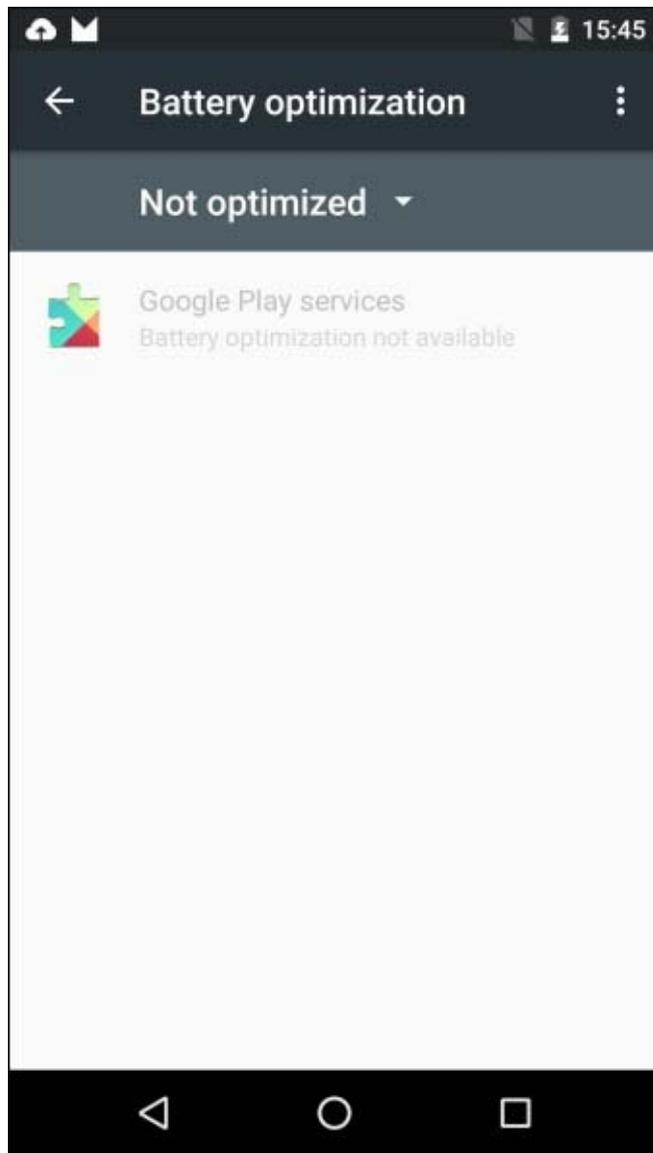
1. Go to **Settings | Apps**.



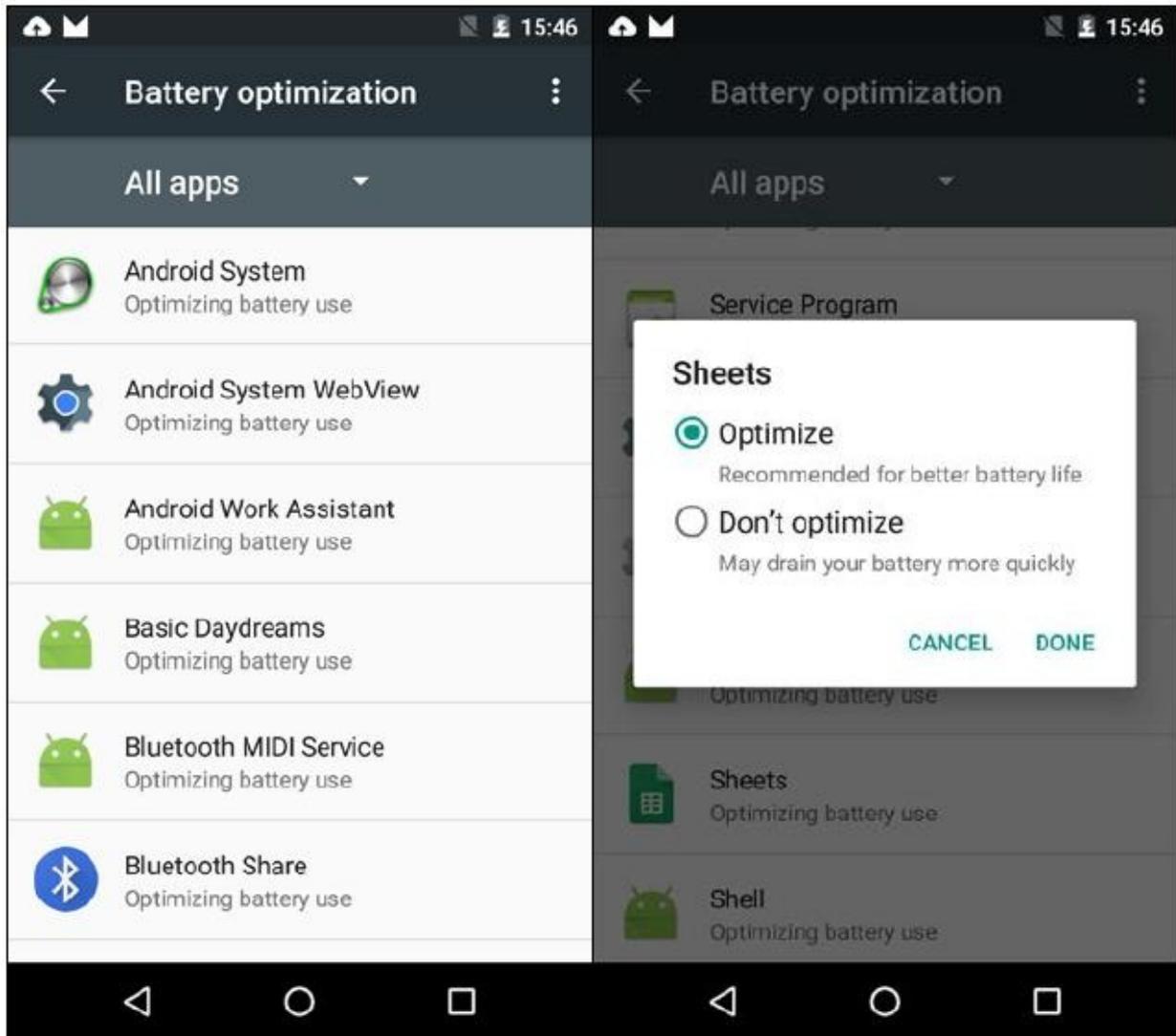
2. Click on the cog/gear icon to open the **Configure apps** screen.



3. Choose **Battery optimization**.



4. The following screenshot shows a list of the apps excluded from the App Standby mode—that is, the ones that are not optimized. You can open the selection for all apps and choose the exact behavior you require for each application.



Tips

Here are a few points and tips for you to note and remember:

- Use `isIgnoringBatteryOptimizations()` with a `PowerManager` instance and check whether your app is on the **whitelist**
- Navigate the user directly to the configuration screen using the following:

```
startActivity(new
Intent(Settings.ACTION_IGNORE_BATTERY_OPTIMIZATION_SETTINGS ));
```

- Perform the following steps to display a system dialog asking about adding a specific app to the whitelist:
 1. Add the `REQUEST_IGNORE_BATTERY_OPTIMIZATIONS` permission to the application's manifest.
 2. Create a URI package pointing to your application.
 3. Wrap the URI in an intent and call `startActivity()` with it as shown in the following code:

```
Intent intent = new
```

```
Intent(Settings.ACTION_REQUEST_IGNORE_BATTERY_OPTIMIZATIONS ,  
Uri.parse("package:" + getPackageName()));  
startActivity(intent);
```

- Note that if our app is already whitelisted, the dialog won't be displayed again

Removable storage adoption

Android Marshmallow allows users to *adopt* external storage devices, such as SD cards. Such adoptions will format and encrypt the storage device and mount it as internal storage. Once done, users can move apps and apps' private data between storage devices. The `android:installLocation` preference in the manifest will then be used by the system to determine the available locations for each app. What you need to keep in mind is that using context methods for directories or files and `ApplicationInfo` fields will return values that can change between runs. You should always call these APIs dynamically. Don't use hardcoded file paths or persist fully qualified file paths.

The context methods are as follows:

- `getFilesDir()`
- `getCacheDir()`
- `getCodeCacheDir()`
- `getDatabasePath()`
- `getDir()`
- `getNoBackupFilesDir()`
- `getFileStreamPath()`
- `getPackageCodePath()`
- `getPackageResourcePath()`

The `ApplicationInfo` fields are as follows:

- `dataDir`
- `sourceDir`
- `nativeLibraryDir`
- `publicSourceDir`
- `splitSourceDirs`
- `splitPublicSourceDirs`

You can debug this feature and enable the adoption of a USB drive connected via an **OTG** (short for **On The Go**) cable using the following command:

```
$ adb shell sm set-force-adoptable true
```

For more on USB, head to

<https://developer.android.com/guide/topics/connectivity/usb/index.html>.

Apache HTTP client removal

The **Apache HTTP client** has been deprecated for quite some time—since 2011 or so. Using this client on Android 2.3 and higher was not recommended; now with Android 6.0 Marshmallow, this API has been removed. So, we'll use the `HttpURLConnection` class instead.

This API is more efficient, reduces network use, and minimizes power consumption.

If you wish to continue using the Apache HTTP APIs, you must first declare the following compile-time dependencies in your `build.gradle` file:

```
android {  
    useLibrary 'org.apache.http.legacy'  
}
```

Note

If you have compile errors in the Android studio, you can head to these questions and solutions on stackoverflow:

- <http://stackoverflow.com/q/30856785/529518>
- <http://stackoverflow.com/q/31653002/529518>

Notifications

There are a few changes to the notifications feature, as follows:

- The `Notification.setLatestEventInfo()` method is now removed. When constructing notifications, we must use the `Notification.Builder` class.
- Updating a notification is also done via the `Notification.Builder` instance using the same instance of the builder, and calling the `build()` method will get us an updated `Notification` instance. If legacy support is required, you can use `NotificationCompat.Builder` instead, which is available in the **Android Support Library**.
- The `adb shell dumpsys notification` command no longer prints out notification text. The proper usage now is `adb shell dumpsys notification --noredact`.
- The newly added `INTERRUPTION_FILTER_ALARMS` filter level corresponds to a new mode: *Alarms only do not disturb*.
- The newly added `CATEGORY_REMINDER` category is used for user-scheduled reminders.
- The newly added `Icon` class allows icons to be attached to notifications via the `setSmallIcon()` and `setLargeIcon()` methods.
- The updated `addAction()` method now accepts an `Icon` object instead of a drawable resource ID.
- The newly added `getActiveNotifications()` method allows you to find out which notifications are currently alive.
- We can obtain some knowledge about what the user is and is not expecting to see under notifications when using the following methods:
 - The newly added `getCurrentInterruptionFilter()` method returns the current notification interruption filter in which notifications are allowed to interrupt the user
 - The newly added `getNotificationPolicy()` method returns the current notification policy

Text selection

Part of the material design guide specifications discuss text selection in your applications. Users select text within your app, and you now have an API to incorporate a **floating toolbar** design pattern that's similar to a contextual action bar. For more information about the design specifications, head to

<http://www.google.com/design/spec/patterns/selection.html#selection-item-selection>.

The implementation steps are as follows:

1. Change your `ActionMode` calls to `startActionMode(Callback, ActionMode.TYPE_FLOATING)`.
2. Extend `ActionMode.Callback2`.
3. Override the `onGetContentRect()` method and provide coordinates for the content `Rect` object in the view.
4. Call the `invalidateContentRect()` method when you need to invalidate the `Rect` object and it's position is no longer valid.

Support library notice

Floating toolbars are not backward-compatible. Appcompat takes control over `ActionMode` objects by default. This will prevent floating toolbars from being displayed.

The implementation steps are as follows:

1. Call `getDelegate()` and `setHandleNativeActionModesEnabled()` on the returned `AppCompatActivity` object.
2. Set the input parameter to `false`.

This call will return control of `ActionMode` objects to the framework, allowing 6.0 devices to support `ActionBar` or floating toolbar modes and allowing earlier versions to support the `ActionBar` modes.

Android Keystore changes

From Android 6.0 onward, the Android Keystore provider no longer supports **Digital Signature Algorithm (DSA)**.

For more information about keystore and its usage, visit <https://developer.android.com/training/articles/keystore.html>.

Wi-Fi and networking changes

Android Marshmallow has introduced a few changes to the Wi-Fi and networking APIs.

Changing the state of `wifiConfiguration` objects is only possible for self-created objects. You are restricted from modifying or deleting `wifiConfiguration` objects created by the user or other apps.

In earlier versions, forcing the device to connect to a specific Wi-Fi network using `enableNetwork()` and setting up `disableAllOthers=true` caused the device to disconnect from other networks. This does not happen in Android 6.0. With `targetSdkVersion <=20`, your app is pinned to use the selected Wi-Fi network. When `targetSdkVersion >=21`, you need to use the `MultiNetwork` APIs and ensure that network traffic is assigned to the proper network. For more information on the `MultiNetwork` API, refer to <https://developer.android.com/about/versions/android-5.0.html#Wireless>.

Runtime

The Android **ART** (short for **Android runtime**) runtime was also updated in Android Marshmallow, and the following are the updates:

- The `newInstance()` method: The **Dalvik** (another runtime) issue for the checking of access rules incorrectly was fixed. If you wish to override access checks, call the `setAccessible()` method with the input parameter set to `true`.
- Using the v7 Appcompat library or the v7 RecyclerView library? You must update to the latest version.
- Make sure that any custom classes referenced from XML are updated so that their class constructors are accessible.
- Behavior of the dynamic linker is updated.
- The ART runtime understands the difference between a library's soname and its path; search by soname is now implemented. There was an open bug with this issue that was fixed; if you wish to extend your reading, visit here:

<https://code.google.com/p/android/issues/detail?id=6670>

Hardware identifier

Android 6.0 has introduced a major change for greater data protection; the `wifiInfo.getMacAddress()` and `BluetoothAdapter.getAddress()` methods now return a constant value of `02:00:00:00:00:00`, which means you can't rely on these methods to get information.

Now, when you're trying to use some of the methods in the API, you need to add permissions:

- `WifiManager.getScanResults()` and `BluetoothLeScanner.startScan()` need one of these two permissions granted:
 - The `ACCESS_FINE_LOCATION` permission
 - The `ACCESS_COARSE_LOCATION` permission
- `BluetoothDevice.ACTION_FOUND`: This must have the `ACCESS_COARSE_LOCATION` permission

Note

When a device running Android 6.0 (Marshmallow) initiates a background Wi-Fi or Bluetooth scan, external devices see the origin as a randomized MAC address.

APK validation

The platform now performs strict validation of **Android Package Kits (APKs)**.

If a file declared in the manifest is not present in the APK itself, then the APK is considered corrupted. Removing contents from the APK requires re-signing of the APK.

USB connection

By default, the USB connection is charge-only. Users must now grant permissions to interact via the USB port. Your applications should take this into account and be aware that permissions might not be granted.

Direct Share

One of the best things about technology, in my humble opinion, is that it gives users great options to interact and benefit from them. **Direct Share** can be treated as a great addition to the list of merits, with great, fluid user experience all around the app world. So, what is Direct Share? Well, almost every app today uses some sort of information/data exchange with other applications on the user's device or with the outside world via the sharing mechanism. The sharing mechanism exposes a piece of information from one application to another. Usually, a user will interact with a few close companions (family, close friends, or colleagues), and this is where Direct Share comes to your aid.

Direct Share is about a set of APIs required to make sharing intuitive and quick for users. You define Direct Share targets that launch a specific activity in your app. These targets are shown in the **Share** menu, allowing faster sharing and fluid data flow.

With Direct Share, users can share content to targets—say, contacts in other apps.

The implementation steps are as follows:

1. Define a class that extends the `ChooserTargetService` class.
2. Declare your service in the manifest.
3. Specify the `BIND_CHOOSER_TARGET_SERVICE` permission and an intent filter `SERVICE_INTERFACE` action.

An example service declaration is as follows:

```
<service android:name=".MyChooserTargetService"
android:label="@string/McTs_name" android:permission=
"android.permission.BIND_CHOOSER_TARGET_SERVICE">
  <intent-filter>
    <action android:name="android.service.chooser.ChooserTargetService"/>
  </intent-filter>
</service>
```

Now, we have a service declared and, for each target we want to expose, we add a `<meta-data>` element with the `android.service.chooser.chooser_target_service` name in your app manifest:

```
<activity android:name=".SampleDirectShareTarget"
android:label="@string/SampleDirectShareTarget_name">
  <intent-filter>
    <action android:name="android.intent.action.SEND" />
  </intent-filter>
  <meta-data android:name="android.service.chooser.chooser_target_service"
android:value=".ChooserTargetService" />
</activity>
```

Let's take a look at the code in our service:

```
public class MyChooserTargetService extends ChooserTargetService {
    private String mDirectShareTargetName;
    private final int MAX_SHARE_TARGETS = 5;
```

```

@Override
public void onCreate() {
    super.onCreate();
    mDirectShareTargetName = "Sharing Person demo #%d";
}

@Override
public List < ChooserTarget > onGetChooserTargets(ComponentName
sendTarget, IntentFilter matchedFilter) {
    ArrayList < ChooserTarget > result = new
    ArrayList < ChooserTarget > ();
    for (int i = 1; i <= MAX_SHARE_TARGETS; i++) {
        result.add(buildTarget(i));
    }
    return (result);
}

private ChooserTarget buildTarget(int targetId) {
    String title = String.format(mDirectShareTargetName, targetId);
    Icon icon = Icon.createWithResource(this,
R.drawable.share_target_picture);
    float target_value = ((float)(25 - targetId) / 25);
    ComponentName componentName = new
ComponentName(MyChooserTargetService.this, TargetActivity.class);
    Bundle bundle = new Bundle();
    bundle.putInt("simple_key", targetId);
    return (new ChooserTarget(title, icon, target_value, componentName,
bundle));
}
}

```

You can head to the **gist** if you wish to better view the code; you can visit <https://gist.github.com/MaTriXy/adeacdf5496bcdade5f42>.

You have to implement the `onGetChooserTargets()` method as it will be called when direct-share is triggered. You return a list of `ChooserTarget` objects that represent sharing entry points to your application. The `onGetChooserTargets()` results are included along with the regular `ACTION_SEND` activity itself. So, we only want `ChooserTarget` objects that improve the flow and not duplicates.

When creating several `ChooserTarget` objects, each of them will probably point to the same activity. You must ensure that the extras bundle will contain distinguishing information so that each request will be unique. *Do not* put custom `Parcelable` objects in this bundle as it will cause crashes. You can find out more about `ChooserTarget` at <https://developer.android.com/reference/android/service/chooser/ChooserTarget.html#ChooserTarget>

What if we have nothing to share?

Sometimes, you won't have any direct-share targets for a particular request; then, returning an empty list would be great. You can also disable the service via `android:enabled="false"` if you know that no results will be available until future usage of the app. Another option is to enable the service just for Android 6.0. This can easily be done using Boolean resources:

- Let's add a Boolean resource named `is_share_targets_on`:
 - The default value is `res/values/bools.xml`; set it to `false`
 - Android 6.0 is API 23, so in `res/values-v23/bools.xml`, set it to `true`
- Add `android:enabled="@bool/is_share_targets_on"` to your service declaration

Direct Share best practices

The following are few of the best practices followed in Direct Share:

- Android 6.0 limits the number of share targets, only showing eight of them. Providing more than eight share targets will show the best eight according to the score.
- The `FAILED_BINDER_TRANSACTION` exception can pop in for a visit if your list of targets exceeds 1 MB.
- Try to limit/cap how many share targets you try to return from your `ChooserTargetService` class.
- Make sure your app's icon is shown properly as it will be applied as a badge over the icons that you use for Direct Share targets.

Voice interactions

Voice interactions usually originate from user voice action. However, the voice interaction activity starts without any user input. Android Marshmallow has a new voice interaction API that, together with **voice actions**, allows us to build conversational voice experiences into our apps. Use the `isVoiceInteraction()` method to determine whether an activity is triggered by a voice action. Then, you can use the `VoiceInteractor` class and interact with the user.

Don't get confused with the `isVoiceInteractionRoot()` method, which returns `true` only if the activity is also the root of a voice interaction. Here, you will get `true` if your activity was started directly by the voice interaction service and not by another activity (another app) while undergoing voice interaction.

A best practice would be to prompt the users and confirm that this is their intended action. You already know that voice input is invoked from **Google Now**, where you can open URLs with a simple voice input, such as `open android.com`. Now, you can invent new voice actions and register them with Google, driving traffic directly and specifically to your app.

To learn more about implementing voice actions, head to <https://developers.google.com/voice-actions/interaction/>.

The Assist API

Back in **Google I/O 2015**, we saw the *Now on Tap* feature, where Google Now could peek into a running app and provide contextual assistance. The Assist API offers a new way for users to engage through an **assistant**. The assistant must be enabled prior to using it, allowing it to be aware of the current context. Triggering the assistant is done by long-pressing the *Home* button, no matter which app is active.

You can opt out of this by setting the `WindowManager.LayoutParams.FLAG_SECURE` flag.

Opting in requires you to use the new `AssistContent` class.

In order for us to be able to feed additional context from our app to the assistant, we need to follow these steps:

1. Implement the `Application.OnProvideAssistDataListener` interface, which is called when the user requests assistance.
2. Register it using `Application.registerOnProvideAssistDataListener()`.
3. Override the `onProvideAssistData()` callback, which is called when the user requests assistance. It is used to build an `ACTION_ASSIST` intent with all of the context of the current app.
4. Override the `onProvideAssistContent()` callback; this is optional. It is called when the user requests assistance, allowing us to provide references to content related to the current activity.
5. When done, unregister yourself using `Application.unregisterOnProvideAssistDataListener()`.

Bluetooth API Changes

Besides the changes mentioned previously, Android Marshmallow 6.0 has introduced a few more changes to the Bluetooth API.

Bluetooth stylus support

Stylus has been here a for a while; Bluetooth stylus didn't have full support for specifications in versions before Android Marshmallow. You can pair and connect a compatible Bluetooth stylus with either a phone or a tablet. Because you are not bound just to touches on screen, you can fuse the position, pressure, and button state data, allowing more precise user input and experience. Your app can add a listener to the stylus buttons and act accordingly. Just use the `View.OnContextClickListener` and `GestureDetector.OnContextClickListener` objects in your activity.

In order to detect stylus button interactions and movement, you need the following:

- The `MotionEvent` methods
- The `getToolType()` method, which returns `TOOL_TYPE_STYLUS` if a stylus with a button is touched on the screen
- The `getButtonState()` method, which returns (on Android 6.0-targeted apps) the following:
 - `BUTTON_STYLUS_PRIMARY`: Press the primary stylus button
 - `BUTTON_STYLUS_SECONDARY`: Press the secondary button
 - `BUTTON_STYLUS_PRIMARY | BUTTON_STYLUS_SECONDARY`: Press both the buttons
- Targeted apps with a lower API level than Android 6.0 will result in the following:
 - `BUTTON_SECONDARY`: Press the primary stylus button
 - `BUTTON_TERTIARY`: Press the secondary button
 - `BUTTON_SECONDARY | BUTTON_TERTIARY`: Press both the buttons

Improved Bluetooth low energy scanning

Used to Bluetooth low energy in your app? Well, now the scanning process is easier and improved. Use the new `setCallbackType()` method and specify that you want a callback when the system finds/sees an advertisement packet matching the `ScanFilter` class. You get more power-efficiency than in previous Android versions.

Summary

We went over a few of the changes in Android Marshmallow. All of these changes are important to follow and will help you in your app development cycles. There are a few more changes to be discussed in future chapters in a more detailed manner. Our next chapter talks about audio, video, and camera features and the changes made in Android 6.0.6.

Chapter 5. Audio, Video, and Camera Features

Android Marshmallow gives us good audio, video, and camera capabilities, and you can see that improvements have been made to enable and better support new or mint condition protocols or even change the behavior of some APIs, such as the camera service.

In this chapter, we will try and explain these changes with a proper discussion on their usage and benefits. Our journey in the upcoming pages will cover the following topics:

- Audio features
- Video features
- Camera features

Audio features

Android Marshmallow 6.0 adds some enrichments to the audio features that we will cover in the upcoming sections.

Support for the MIDI protocol

The `android.media.midi` package was added in Android 6.0 (API 23).

With the new midi APIs, you can now send and receive **MIDI** (short for **Musical Instrument Digital Interface**) events in a much simpler way than earlier.

The package was built to provide us with capabilities to do the following:

- Connect and use a MIDI keyboard
- Connect to other MIDI controllers
- Use external MIDI synthesizers, external peripherals, lights, show control, and so on
- Allow dynamic music generation from games or music-creation apps
- Allow the creation and passing of MIDI messages between apps
- Allow Android devices to act as multi-touch controllers when connected to a laptop

When dealing with MIDI, you must declare it in the manifest, as follows:

```
<uses-feature android:name="android.software.midi"
android:required="true"/>
```

Pay attention to the `required` part; in a manner similar to other features, setting it to `true` will make your app visible in the play store only if the device supports the MIDI API.

You can also check in runtime for MIDI support and then change the `required` part to `false`:

```
PackageManager pkgMgr = context.getPackageManager();
if (pkgMgr.hasSystemFeature(PackageManager.FEATURE_MIDI)) {
    //we can use MIDI API here as we know the device supports the MIDI API.
}
```

MidiManager

A way to properly use the MIDI API is via the `MidiManager` class; obtain it via `context` and use it when required:

```
MidiManager midiMgr =
(MidiManager)context.getSystemService(Context.MIDI_SERVICE);
```

For more information, you can refer to:

<https://developer.android.com/reference/android/media/midi/package-summary.html>

Digital audio capture and playback

Two new classes have been added for digital audio capture and playback:

- `android.media.AudioRecord.Builder` - digital audio capture
- `android.media.AudioTrack.Builder` - digital audio playback

These will help configure the audio source and sink properties.

Audio and input devices

The new `hasMicrophone()` method has been added to the `InputDevice` class. This will report whether the device has a built-in microphone that developers can use. Let's say you want to enable voice search from a controller connected to Android TV and you get an `onSearchRequested()` callback for the user's search. You can then verify that there's a microphone with the `inputDevice` object you get in the callback.

Information on audio devices

The new `AudioManager.getDevices(int flags)` method allows easy retrieval of all the audio devices currently connected to the system. If you want to be notified when there are audio device connections/disconnections, you can register your app to an `AudioDeviceCallback` callback via the `AudioManager.registerAudioDeviceCallback(AudioDeviceCallback callback, Handler handler)` method.

Changes in AudioManager

Some changes have been introduced in the AudioManager class, and they are as follows:

- Using AudioManager to set the volume directly is not supported.
- Using AudioManager to mute specific streams is not supported.
- The `AudioManager.setStreamSolo(int streamType, boolean state)` method is deprecated. If you need exclusive audio playback, use `AudioManager.requestAudioFocus(AudioManager.OnAudioFocusChangeListener l, int streamType, int durationHint)`.
- The `AudioManager.setStreamMute(int streamType, boolean state)` method is deprecated. If you need to use `AudioManager.adjustStreamVolume(int streamType, int direction, int flags)` for direction, you can use one of the newly added constants.
- `ADJUST_MUTE` will mute the volume. Note that it has no effect if the stream is already muted.
- `ADJUST_UNMUTE` will unmute the volume. Note that it has no effect if the stream is not muted.

Video features

In Android Marshmallow, the video processing API has been upgraded with new capabilities. Some new methods and even a new class has been added just for developers.

android.media.MediaSync

The all new MediaSync class has been designed to help us with synchronous audio and video streams' rendering. You can also use it to play audio- or video-only streams. You can use the dynamic playback rate and feed the buffers in a nonblocking action with a callback return. For more information on the proper usage, read:

<https://developer.android.com/reference/android/media/MediaSync.html>

MediaCodecInfo.CodecCapabilities.getMaxSupport

Now, we have a `MediaCodecInfo.CodecCapabilities.getMaxSupportedInstances` helper method to get the maximum number of supported concurrent codec instances. However, we must consider this only an upper bound. The actual number of concurrent instances can be lower depending on the device and the amount of available resources at the time of usage.

Why do we need to know this?

Let's think of a case where we have a media-playing application and we want to add effects between the movies played. We will need to use more than one video codec, decode two videos, and encode one video stream back to be displayed on screen. Checking with this API will allow you to add more features that rely upon multiple instances of codecs.

MediaPlayer.setPlaybackParams

We can now set the media playback rate for fast or slow motion playback. This will give us the chance to create a funny video app where we slow down parts or play them fast, creating a new video while playing. Audio playing is synced accordingly, so you might hear a person talking slowly or even fast, for that matter.

Camera features

In Android Lollipop, there was the new Camera2 API, and now, in Android Marshmallow, there are a few more updates to the camera, flashlight, and image reprocessing features.

The flashlight API

Almost every device today has a camera, and almost every camera device has a flash unit. The `setTorchMode()` method has been added to control the flash torch mode.

The `setTorchMode()` method is used in the following manner:

```
CameraManager.setTorchMode (String cameraId, boolean enabled)
```

The `cameraId` element is the unique ID for the flash unit camera with which you want to change the torch mode. You can use `getCameraIdList()` to get the list of cameras and then use `getCameraCharacteristics(String cameraId)` to check whether flash is supported in that camera. The `setTorchMode()` method allows you to turn it on or off without opening the camera device and without requesting permission from the camera. The torch mode will be switched off as soon as the camera device becomes unavailable or when other camera resources that have the torch on become unavailable. Other apps can use the flash unit as well, so you need to check the mode when required or register a callback via the `registerTorchCallback()` method.

Refer to the sample app, **Torchi**, to see the entire code at:

<https://github.com/MaTriXy/Torchi>

Note

Turning on the torch mode may fail if the camera or other camera resources are in use.

The reprocessing API

As mentioned earlier, the Camera2 API was given a few boosts to allow added support for **YUV** and private opaque format image reprocessing. Before using this API, we need to check whether these capabilities are available. This is why we use the `getCameraCharacteristics(String cameraId)` method and check for the `REPROCESS_MAX_CAPTURE_STALL` key.

android.media.ImageWriter

This is a new class that's been added to Android 6.0.

It allows us to create an image and feed it into a surface and then back to `CameraDevice`. Usually, `ImageWriter` is used along with `ImageReader`.

android.media.ImageReader

This is a new class that's been added to Android 6.0.

It allows us direct access to the image data rendered in a surface. `ImageReader`, along with `ImageWriter`, allows our app to create an image feed from the camera to the surface and back to the camera for reprocessing.

Changes in the camera service

Android Marshmallow has made a change to the *first come , first serve* access model; now, the service access model has favorites processes—ones that are marked as high-priority. This change results in some more logic-related work for us developers. We need to make sure that we take into account a situation where we get bumped up (higher priority) or debunked (lower priority due to a change in our application).

Let's try and explain this in a few simple bullets:

- When you want to access camera resources or open and configure a camera device, your access is verified according to the *priority* of your application process. An application process with foreground activities (visible user) is normally given a higher priority, which in turn allows a better chance to get the desired access when needed.
- On the other side of the *priority* scale, you can find low-priority apps that can and will be tossed aside (revoked from access) when a high-priority application attempts to use the camera. For example, when using the Camera API, you will get the `onError()` call when evicted, and when using the Camera2 API, you will get the `onDisconnected()` call when evicted.
- Some devices out in the wild can allow separate applications to open and use separate camera devices simultaneously. The camera service now detects and disallows performance issues that are caused due to multiprocess usage. When the service detects such an issue, it will evict low-priority apps even if only one app is using that camera device.
- In a multiuser environment, when switching users, all active apps using the camera in the previous user profile will be evicted in order to allow proper usage and access to apps for the current user. This means that switching users will stop the camera-using apps from using the camera for sure.

Summary

In this chapter, we covered quite a few changes in and additions to the Android APIs. Android Marshmallow is more about helping us, the developers, achieve better media support and showcase our ideas when using the audio, video, or camera APIs.

In the next chapter, we will go over some of the Android features to understand the features, additions, and changes made.

Chapter 6. Android for Work

Most of you know that Android devices have a huge market share percentage worldwide, and more and more businesses are following the **BYOD** (short for **Bring Your Own Device**) policy. This is done with the help of **Android for Work**, a special program for companies where several added features in the Android platform allow better mobile device management, administration, and integration within the company.

When dealing with enterprises or even small-sized and medium-sized businesses, you need to follow specific guidelines and harness the Android API to your benefit. You can read more about Android for Work at:

<http://developer.android.com/training/enterprise/index.html>

Android Marshmallow has made a few changes to the Android for Work program, where a lot of the changes were made for better and easier usage for developers as well as work users.

In this chapter, we will cover the Android Marshmallow changes that reflect or are related directly to Android for Work:

- Behavioral changes
- Single-use device improvements
- Silently installing/uninstalling apps
- Improved certificate access
- Automatic system updates
- Third-party certificate installation
- Data usage statistics
- Managing runtime permissions
- VPN access and display
- Work profile status

Behavioral changes

Android Marshmallow has introduced a few behavioral changes related to Android for Work.

The work profile contacts display option

Using the following setting, you can now display your work profile contacts in the dialer call log:

```
DevicePolicyManager.setCrossProfileCallerIdDisabled(ComponentName admin,  
boolean disabled)
```

You can also display the work contacts over Bluetooth with the new option. Setting this to `false` will allow the display; the default value is `true` (disabling the contact-sharing option):

```
DevicePolicyManager.setBluetoothContactSharingDisabled(ComponentName  
admin, boolean disabled)
```

Wi-Fi configuration options

When adding a Wi-Fi network via a work profile, usually, added configurations stay persistent even after the profile is deleted. Now, all configurations added by a profile owner are removed if the work profile is deleted.

The Wi-Fi configuration lock

A new `Settings.Global` setting has been added:

`WIFI_DEVICE_OWNER_CONFIGS_LOCKDOWN`

This setting is an integer value setting, which means that a zero value or absence will lead to all Wi-Fi configurations being modified or deleted by the user. Setting the integer value to a nonzero value will initiate the lock, which means that the user can't modify or delete Wi-Fi configurations created by a device owner—user-created configurations will still be modifiable. Note that an active device owner has complete privileges in any Wi-Fi configurations, even those not created by them.

Work Policy Controller addition

You can continue to add Google accounts to the device, but now, when adding an account that is managed by **Work Policy Controller**, the flow is changed to include the Work Policy Controller addition. An added account prompts the user to install the appropriate Work Policy Controller. This is also true when adding an account through settings or via the start up device's setup wizard. For more information on how to build a Work Policy Controller, read:

<http://developer.android.com/training/enterprise/work-policy-ctrl.html>

DevicePolicyManager changes

In DevicePolicyManager, you may encounter quite a few changes in behavior; these are listed in the following bullets with a short explanation:

- `setCameraDisabled()` affects the camera just for the calling user; if the profile is a managed profile, then the call doesn't affect the camera apps running on the primary user.
- `setKeyguardDisabledFeatures()` was made available for profile owners and device owners.
- Profile owners can set keyguard restrictions via the following:
 - `KEYGUARD_DISABLE_TRUST_AGENTS`: This will ignore the trust agent state on the keyguard on secure screens (the PIN code, pattern, or the password screen)
 - `KEYGUARD_DISABLE_FINGERPRINT`: This will disable the fingerprint sensor on the keyguard on secure screens (PIN code, pattern, or the password screen)
 - `KEYGUARD_DISABLE_UNREDACTED_NOTIFICATIONS`: This will allow only redacted notifications on secure keyguard screens and only notifications generated by applications in the managed profile
- `createAndInitializeUser()` is deprecated now.
- `createUser()` is deprecated now.
- Using the `setScreenCaptureDisabled()` method, the Assist feature is blocked, but this happens only when an app of the given user is in the foreground.
- `EXTRA_PROVISIONING_DEVICE_ADMIN_PACKAGE_CHECKSUM` is SHA-256 now. Legacy support for SHA-1 still exists, but it will be removed in future versions according to the documentation.
- `EXTRA_PROVISIONING_DEVICE_ADMIN_SIGNATURE_CHECKSUM` is SHA-256 only now.
- `EXTRA_PROVISIONING_RESET_PROTECTION_PARAMETERS` was removed so that NFC bump provisioning would not unlock a factory-reset-protected device.
- Passing data to the device owner during NFC provisioning can be done with `EXTRA_PROVISIONING_ADMIN_EXTRAS_BUNDLE`.
- New DevicePolicyManager API for permissions under Android Marshmallow's new permission model. You can read more about DevicePolicyManager at <https://developer.android.com/reference/android/app/admin/DevicePolicyManager.htm>
- `RESULT_CANCELED` is now returned if users cancel the setup flow initiated through an `ACTION_PROVISION_MANAGED_PROFILE` or `ACTION_PROVISION_MANAGED_DEVICE` intent.
- Changes to `Settings.Global`.
- Disabled the following set of settings via `setGlobalSettings()`:
 - `BLUETOOTH_ON`
 - `DEVELOPMENT_SETTINGS_ENABLED`
 - `MODE_RINGER`
 - `NETWORK_PREFERENCE`
 - `WIFI_ON`
- Enabled the `WIFI_DEVICE_OWNER_CONFIGS_LOCKDOWN` setting via

setGlobalSettings().

Single-use device improvements

You as the device owner can now control added settings, thus improving device management using the following:

- `setKeyguardDisabled()` can be used to disable or re-enable the keyguard
- `setStatusBarDisabled()` can be used to disable or re-enable the status bar
- `UserManager.DISALLOW_SAFE_BOOT` is a new constant that states whether the user can boot a device to safe boot
- `Settings.Global.STAY_ON_WHILE_PLUGGED_IN` will prevent the screen from turning off while plugged in to power

Silently installing/uninstalling apps

Now, you can silently install and uninstall applications using `PackageInstaller` APIs. This means installing apps without user interaction or even removing apps as part of the company policy. This feature enables you to use devices without actually activating a Google account. **Google Play for Work** is not required, allowing you to use devices as **kiosks**, showcasing specific apps not released yet, and so on.

Improved certificate access

Allowing users to grant managed apps' access to certificates without user interaction was not possible prior to Android Marshmallow, so now, a new callback has been added:

```
DeviceAdminReceiver.onChoosePrivateKeyAlias (Context context, Intent intent, int uid, Uri uri, String alias)
```

This callback will allow the device owner to provide the alias silently to the requesting application.

Automatic system updates

The following option has been added in Android 6.0 and its main purpose is to allow device owners to auto-accept a system update:

```
DevicePolicyManager.setSystemUpdatePolicy (ComponentName admin,  
SystemUpdatePolicy policy)
```

SystemUpdatePolicy has been added as well, and you can choose from three options:

- TYPE_INSTALL_AUTOMATIC: update as soon as you get an update
- TYPE_INSTALL_WINDOWED: update should be done within a timed system maintenance and only then, just for 30 days and then return to normal behavior
- TYPE_POSTPONE: postpone updates for up to 30 days and then return to normal behavior afterwards

This can come in handy if you have devices such as showcase tablets or kiosk mode devices, where the update should not mess with the devices' work.

Third-party certificate installation

Third-party apps now have the ability to call `DevicePolicyManager` APIs:

- `getInstalledCaCerts()`
- `hasCaCertInstalled()`
- `installCaCert()`
- `uninstallCaCert()`
- `uninstallAllUserCaCerts()`
- `installKeyPair()`

These API calls can only be done if the permission has been granted by the device owner or profile owner.

Data usage statistics

A new class has been added in Android 6.0: `NetworkStatsManager`. This helps you query for data usage statistics that can be seen in **Settings** | **Data usage**.

Access for profile owners is automatically granted in order for them to query data on their profile. Device owners get access to the data usage of the managed primary user.

Note

The `android.app.usage.NetworkUsageStats` class has been renamed to `NetworkStats`.

Managing runtime permissions

Android Marshmallow introduced the runtime permissions model, and Android for Work had to deal with managing policies for devices. You as device owner can now set a policy for all runtime requests of all applications using `setPermissionPolicy()`.

You can choose to prompt users to grant permissions or automatically grant or deny the permissions silently. The automatic policy means that the user cannot modify the app's permissions screen in **Settings**.

VPN access and display

When heading to **Settings** | **More** | **VPN**, you can now view the VPN apps. When using VPN, the notifications shown are now specific to how that VPN is configured:

- **The profile owner:** Notifications are shown according to the VPN configuration and based on the profile (personal, work, or both)
- **The device owner:** Notifications are shown when the VPN is configured for the entire device

Work profile status

Two new additions were introduced for the users to know that they are under a different profile:

- When using an app from a work profile, the status bar will display a briefcase icon
- When unlocking a device straight from a work profile app, a popup is displayed, alerting the user that this app runs on the work profile

Summary

As we saw in this chapter, Android Marshmallow has brought in quite a few changes to the Android for Work world. As developers, we need to always maintain a viable connection to the needs of an organization. We need to make sure we go over and understand the Android for Work world; the changes in Marshmallow help us build and target enterprise workflows with the benefit of a simpler API.

In the next chapter, we will learn about the Chrome custom tabs API's usage and flow.

Chapter 7. Chrome Custom Tabs

Have you ever wanted to add a **WebView** to your application? Maybe you've wanted to add browsing for a few web pages and show some relevant content from within your application? I know I had to. On almost every occasion, I was reluctant to use the WebView feature as this was one of the ugliest parts of the app.

You can clearly see that the WebView feature is a web portion and the UI was added quite a few Android versions back, which caused my OCD UI/UX sense go kaboom. One of the newest additions released by Google was **Chrome custom tabs**.

In this chapter, we will explore Chrome custom tabs and try to explain and demonstrate the benefits of using it instead of the plain old WebView:

- What is a Chrome custom tab?
- When to use Chrome custom tabs
- The implementation guide

What is a Chrome custom tab?

Well, most of us know tabs from every day Internet browsing. It doesn't really matter which browser you use; all browsers support tabs and multiple tabs' browsing. This allows us to have more than one website open at the same time and navigate between the opened instances. In Android, things are much the same, but when using WebView, you don't have tabs.

What is WebView?

WebView is the part in the Android OS that's responsible for rendering web pages in most Android apps. If you see web content in an Android app, chances are you're looking at WebView. The major exceptions to this rule are some of the Android browsers, such as Chrome, Firefox, and so on.

In Android 4.3 and lower, WebView uses code based on Apple's **WebKit**. In Android 4.4 and higher, WebView is based on the **Chromium** project, which is the open source base of Google Chrome. In Android 5.0, WebView was decoupled into a separate app that allowed timely updates through Google Play without requiring firmware updates to be issued, and the same technique was used with Google Play services.

Now, let's talk again about a simple scenario: we want to display web content (URL-related) in our application. We have two options: either launch a browser or build our own in-app browser using WebView. Both options have trade-offs or disadvantages if we write them down. A browser is an external application and you can't really change its UI; while using it, you push the users to other apps and you may lose them in *the wild*. On the other hand, using WebView will keep the users tightly inside. However, actually dealing with all possible actions in WebView is quite an overhead.

Google heard our rant and came to the rescue with Chrome custom tabs. Now we have better control over the web content in our application, and we can stitch web content into our app in a cleaner, prettier manner.

Customization options

Chrome custom tabs allow several modifications and tweaks:

- The toolbar color
- Enter and exit animations
- Custom actions for the toolbar and overflow menu
- Prestarted and prefetched content for faster loading

When to use Chrome custom tabs

Ever since WebView came out, applications have been using it in multiple ways, embedding content—local static content inside the APK and dynamic content as loading web pages that were not designed for mobile devices at the beginning. Later on we saw the rise of the mobile web era complete with hybrid applications).

Chrome custom tabs are a bit more than just loading local content or mobile-compatible web content. They should be used when you load web data and want to allow simple implementation and easier code maintenance and, furthermore, make the web content part of your application—as if it's always there within your app.

Among the reasons why you should use custom tabs are the following:

- Easy implementation: you use the support library when required or just add extras to your View intent. It's that simple.
- In app UI modifications, you can do the following:
 - Set the toolbar color
 - Add/change the action button
 - Add custom menu items to the overflow menu
 - Set and create custom in/out animations when entering the tab or exiting to the previous location
- Easier navigation and navigation logic: you can get a callback notifying you about an external navigation, if required. You know when the user navigates to web content and where they should return when done.
- Chrome custom tabs allow added performance optimizations that you can use:
 - You can keep the engine running, so to speak, and actually give the custom tab a head start to start itself and do some warm up prior to using it. This is done without interfering or taking away precious application resources.
 - You can provide a URL to load in advance in the background while waiting for other user interactions. This speeds up the user-visible page loading time and gives the user a sense of blazing fast application where all the content is just a click away.
- While using the custom tab, the application won't be evicted as the application level will still be in the foreground even though the tab is on top of it. So, we remain at the top level for the entire usage time (unless a phone call or some other user interaction leads to a change).
- Using the same Chrome container means that users are already signed in to sites they connected to in the past; specific permissions that were granted previously apply here as well; even fill data, autocomplete, and sync work here.
- Chrome custom tabs allow us give the users the latest browser implementation on pre-Lollipop devices where WebView is not the latest version.

The implementation guide

As discussed earlier, we have a couple of features integrated into Chrome custom tabs. The first customizes the UI and interaction with the custom tabs. The second allows pages to be loaded faster and keeps the application alive.

Can we use Chrome custom tabs?

Before we start using custom tabs, we want to make sure they're supported. Chrome custom tabs expose a service, so the best check for support is to try and bind to the service. Success means that custom tabs are supported and can be used. You can check out this gist, which shows a helper how to check it, or check the project source code later on at:

<https://gist.github.com/MaTriXy/5775cb0ff98216b2a99d>

After checking and learning that support exists, we will start with the UI and interaction part.

Custom UI and tab interaction

Here, we will use the well-known `ACTION_VIEW` intent action, and by appending extras to the intent sent to Chrome, we will trigger changes in the UI. Remember that the `ACTION_VIEW` intent is compatible with all browsers, including Chrome. There are some phones without Chrome out there, or there are instances where the device's default browser isn't Chrome. In these cases, the user will navigate to the specific browser application.

Intent is a convenient way to pass that extra data we want Chrome to get.

Don't use any of these flags when calling to the Chrome custom tabs:

- `FLAG_ACTIVITY_NEW_TASK`
- `FLAG_ACTIVITY_NEW_DOCUMENT`

Before using the API, we need to add it to our gradle file:

```
compile 'com.android.support:customtabs:23.1.0'
```

This will allow us to use the custom tab support library in our application:

```
CustomTabsIntent.EXTRA_SESSION
```

The preceding code is an extra from the custom tabs support library; it's used to match the session. It must be included in the intent when opening a custom tab. It can be null if there is no need to match any service-side sessions with the intent.

Note

We have a sample project to show the options for the UI called **ChubbyTabby** at <https://github.com/MaTriXy/ChubbyTabby>.

We will go over the important parts here as well. Our main interaction comes from a special builder from the support library called `CustomTabsIntent.Builder`; this class will help us build the intent we need for the custom tab:

```
CustomTabsIntent.Builder intentBuilder = new CustomTabsIntent.Builder();  
//init our Builder  
  
//Setting Toolbar Color  
int color = getResources().getColor(R.color.primary);  
  
//we use primary color for our toolbar as well - you can define any color  
you want and use it.  
intentBuilder.setToolbarColor(color);  
  
//Enabling Title showing  
intentBuilder.setShowTitle(true);  
  
//this will show the title in the custom tab along the url showing at the  
bottom part of the tab toolbar.  
  
//This part is adding custom actions to the over flow menu
```

```
String menuItemTitle = getString(R.string.menu_title_share);
PendingIntent menuItemPendingIntent = createPendingShareIntent();
intentBuilder.addMenuItem(menuItemTitle, menuItemPendingIntent);
String menuItemEmailTitle = getString(R.string.menu_title_email);
PendingIntent menuItemPendingIntentTwo = createPendingEmailIntent();
intentBuilder.addMenuItem(menuItemEmailTitle, menuItemPendingIntentTwo);

//Setting custom Close Icon.
intentBuilder.setCloseButtonIcon(mCloseButtonBitmap);

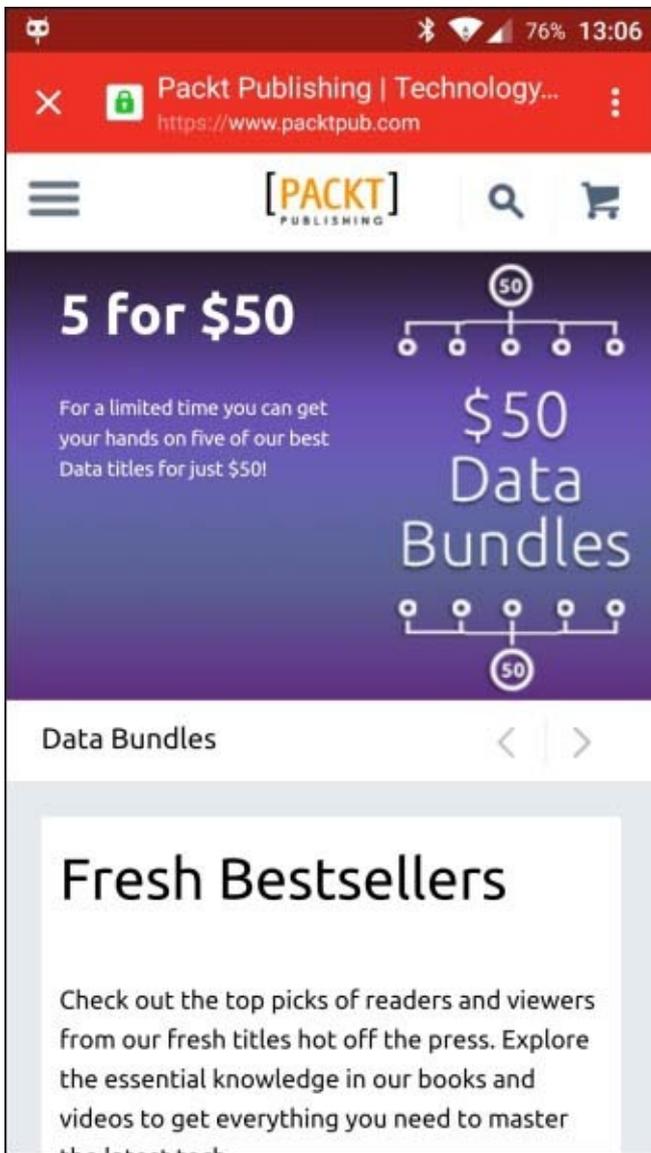
//Adding custom icon with custom action for the share action.
intentBuilder.setActionButtons(mActionButtonBitmap,
getString(R.string.menu_title_share), createPendingShareIntent());

//Setting start and exit animation for the custom tab.
intentBuilder.setStartAnimations(this, R.anim.slide_in_right,
R.anim.slide_out_left);
intentBuilder.setExitAnimations(this, android.R.anim.slide_in_left,
android.R.anim.slide_out_right);
CustomTabActivityHelper.openCustomTab(this, intentBuilder.build(),
Uri.parse(URL), new WebviewFallback(), useCustom);
```

A few things to notice here are as follows:

- Every menu item uses a pending intent; if you don't know what a pending intent is, head to:
<http://developer.android.com/reference/android/app/PendingIntent.html>
- When we set custom icons, such as *close* buttons or an *action* button, for that matter, we use bitmaps and we must decode the bitmap prior to passing it to the builder
- Setting animations is easy and you can use animations' XML files that you created previously; just make sure that you test the result before releasing the app

The following screenshot is an example of a Chrome custom tab:



The custom action button

As developers, we have full control over the action buttons presented in our custom tab. For most use cases, we can think of a share action or maybe a more common option that your users will perform. The action button is basically a bundle with an icon of the action button and a pending intent that will be called by Chrome when your user hits the action button. The icon should be 24 dp in height and 24-48 dp in width according to specifications.

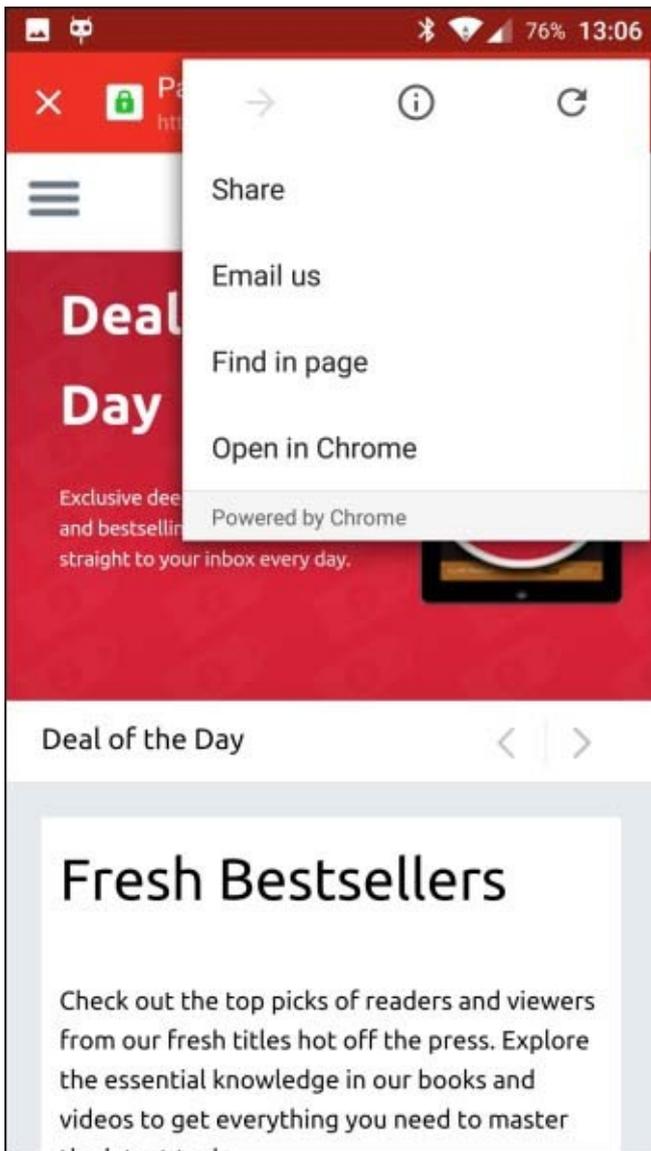
```
//Adding custom icon with custom action for the share action
intentBuilder.setActionButtons(mActionButtonBitmap,
getString(R.string.menu_title_share), createPendingShareIntent());
```

Configuring a custom menu

By default, Chrome custom tabs usually have a three-icon row with **Forward**, **Page Info**, and **Refresh** on top at all times and **Find in page** and **Open in Browser (Open in Chrome** can appear as well) at the footer of the menu.

We, developers, have the ability to add and customize up to three menu items that will

appear between the icon row and foot items as shown in the following screenshot:



The menu we see is actually represented by an array of bundles, each with menu text and a pending intent that Chrome will call on our behalf when the user taps the item:

```
//This part is adding custom buttons to the over flow menu
String menuItemTitle = getString(R.string.menu_title_share);
PendingIntent menuItemPendingIntent = createPendingShareIntent();
intentBuilder.addItem(menuItemTitle, menuItemPendingIntent);
String menuItemEmailTitle = getString(R.string.menu_title_email);
PendingIntent menuItemPendingIntentTwo = createPendingEmailIntent();
intentBuilder.addItem(menuItemEmailTitle, menuItemPendingIntentTwo);
```

Configuring custom enter and exit animations

Nothing is complete without a few animations to tag along. This is no different, as we have two transitions to make: one for the custom tab to enter and another for its exit; we have the option to set a specific animation for each start and exit animation:

```
//Setting start and exit animation for the custom tab.
intentBuilder.setStartAnimations(this,R.anim.slide_in_right,
```

```
R.anim.slide_out_left);
intentBuilder.setExitAnimations(this, android.R.anim.slide_in_left,
android.R.anim.slide_out_right);
```

Chrome warm-up

Normally, after we finish setting up the intent with the intent builder, we should call `CustomTabsIntent.launchUrl (Activity context, Uri url)`, which is a nonstatic method that will trigger a new custom tab activity to load the URL and show it in the custom tab. This can take up quite some time and impact the impression of smoothness the app provides.

We all know that users demand a near-instantaneous experience, so Chrome has a service that we can connect to and ask it to warm up the browser and its native components.

Calling this will ask Chrome to perform the following:

- The DNS preresolution of the URL's main domain
- The DNS preresolution of the most likely subresources
- Preconnection to the destination, including HTTPS/TLS negotiation

The process to warm up Chrome is as follows:

1. Connect to the service.
2. Attach a navigation callback to get notified upon finishing the page load.
3. On the service, call `warmup` to start Chrome behind the scenes.
4. Create `newSession`; this session is used for all requests to the API.
5. Tell Chrome which pages the user is likely to load with `mayLaunchUrl`.
6. Launch the intent with the session ID generated in step 4.

Connecting to the Chrome service

Connecting to the Chrome service involves dealing with **Android Interface Definition Language (AIDL)**.

If you don't know about AIDL, read:

<http://developer.android.com/guide/components/aidl.html>

The interface is created with AIDL, and it automatically creates a proxy service class for us:

```
CustomTabsClient.bindCustomTabsService()
```

So, we check for the Chrome package name; in our sample project, we have a special method to check whether Chrome is present in all variations. After we set the package, we bind to the service and get a `CustomTabsClient` object that we can use until we're disconnected from the service:

```
pkgName - This is one of several options checking to see if we have a
version of Chrome installed can be one of the following
static final String STABLE_PACKAGE = "com.android.chrome";
static final String BETA_PACKAGE = "com.chrome.beta";
static final String DEV_PACKAGE = "com.chrome.dev";
```

```

static final String LOCAL_PACKAGE = "com.google.android.apps.chrome";

private CustomTabsClient mClient;

// Binds to the service.
CustomTabsClient.bindCustomTabsService(myContext, pkgName, new
CustomTabsServiceConnection() {
    @Override
    public void onCustomTabsServiceConnected(ComponentName name,
CustomTabsClient client) {
        // CustomTabsClient should now be valid to use
        mClient = client;
    }

    @Override
    public void onServiceDisconnected(ComponentName name) {
        // CustomTabsClient is no longer valid which also invalidates sessions.
        mClient = null;
    }
});

```

After we bind to the service, we can call the proper methods we need.

Warming up the browser process

The method for this is as follows:

```

boolean CustomTabsClient.warmup(long flags)

//With our valid client earlier we call the warmup method.
mClient.warmup(0);

```

Note

Flags are currently not being used, so we pass 0 for now.

The warm-up procedure loads native libraries and the browser process required to support custom tab browsing later on. This is asynchronous, and the return value indicates whether the request has been accepted or not. It returns true to indicate success.

Creating a new tab session

The method for this is as follows:

```

boolean CustomTabsClient.newSession(ICustomTabsCallback callback)

```

The new tab session is used as the grouping object tying the `mayLaunchUrl` call, the `VIEW` intent that we build, and the tab generated altogether. We can get a callback associated with the created session that would be passed for any consecutive `mayLaunchUrl` calls. This method returns `CustomTabsSession` when a session is created successfully; otherwise, it returns `Null`.

Setting the prefetching URL

The method for this is as follows:

```
boolean CustomTabsSession.mayLaunchUrl (Uri url, Bundle extras,  
List<Bundle> otherLikelyBundles)
```

This method will notify the browser that a navigation to this URL will happen soon. Make sure to `warmup()` prior to calling this method – this is a must. The most likely URL has to be specified first, and we can send an optional list of other likely URLs (`otherLikelyBundles`). The list have to be sorted in a descending order and the optional list may be ignored. A new call to this method will lower the priority of previous calls and can result in URLs not being prefetched. Boolean values inform us whether the operation has been completed successfully.

Custom tabs connection callback

The method for this is as follows:

```
void CustomTabsCallback.onNavigationEvent (int navigationEvent, Bundle  
extras)
```

We have a callback triggered upon each navigation event in the custom tab. The `int navigationEvent` element is one of the six that defines the state the page is in. Refer to the following code for more information:

```
//Sent when the tab has started loading a page.  
public static final int NAVIGATION_STARTED = 1;  
//Sent when the tab has finished loading a page.  
public static final int NAVIGATION_FINISHED = 2;  
//Sent when the tab couldn't finish loading due to a failure.  
public static final int NAVIGATION_FAILED = 3;  
//Sent when loading was aborted by a user action.  
public static final int NAVIGATION_ABORTED = 4;  
//Sent when the tab becomes visible.  
public static final int TAB_SHOWN = 5;  
//Sent when the tab becomes hidden.  
public static final int TAB_HIDDEN = 6;  
private static class NavigationCallback extends CustomTabsCallback {  
    @Override  
    public void onNavigationEvent(int navigationEvent, Bundle extras) {  
        Log.i(TAG, "onNavigationEvent: Code = " + navigationEvent);  
    }  
}
```


Summary

We learned about a newly added feature, Chrome custom tabs, which allows us to embed web content into our application and modify the UI. Chrome custom tabs allow us to provide a fuller, faster in-app web experience for our users. We use the Chrome engine under the hood, which allows faster loading than regular WebViews or loading the entire Chrome (or another browser) application.

We saw that we can preload pages in the background, making it appear as if our data is blazing fast. We can customize the look and feel of our Chrome tab so that it matches our app. Among the changes we saw were the toolbar color, transition animations, and even the addition of custom actions to the toolbar.

Custom tabs also benefit from Chrome features such as saved passwords, autofill, tap to search, and sync; these are all available within a custom tab. For developers, integration is quite easy and requires only a few extra lines of code in the basic level. The support library helps with more complex integration, if required.

This is a Chrome feature, which means you get it on any Android device where the latest versions of Chrome are installed. Remember that the Chrome custom tab support library changes with new features and fixes, which is the same as other support libraries, so please update your version and make sure that you use the latest API to avoid any issues.

In our next chapter, we will take a deep breath and look at some of the new authentication/security features Android Marshmallow has to offer.

Chapter 8. Authentication

Android Marshmallow has introduced a newly integrated API to better support user authentication and user verification. We can now use the new `Fingerprint` API for devices with a fingerprint scanner in order to authenticate the user. We can also set a specific time for user lock screen verification to be considered valid in the app login. In this chapter, we will try and go over these additions and explain how to use them:

- The `Fingerprint` authentication API
- Credentials' Grace Period
- Cleartext network traffic

The Fingerprint authentication API

Android Marshmallow now allows us, the developers, to authenticate users with their fingerprint scans when using such authentication scanners on supported devices.

The Fingerprint API was added to Android Marshmallow via a whole new package:

`android.hardware.fingerprint`

The package contains four classes:

- `FingerprintManager`
- `FingerprintManager.AuthenticationCallback`
- `FingerprintManager.AuthenticationResult`
- `FingerprintManager.CryptoObject`

Each class has a specific role in our fingerprint authentication process.

How do we use fingerprint authentication?

The preceding four classes of the `android.hardware.fingerprint` package can be explained in the following manner:

- `FingerprintManager`: Manage access to fingerprint hardware
- `FingerprintManager.AuthenticationCallback`: Callback used in the auth process
- `FingerprintManager.AuthenticationResult`: Result container for auth process
- `FingerprintManager.CryptoObject`: Specific Crypto object to use with `FingerprintManager`

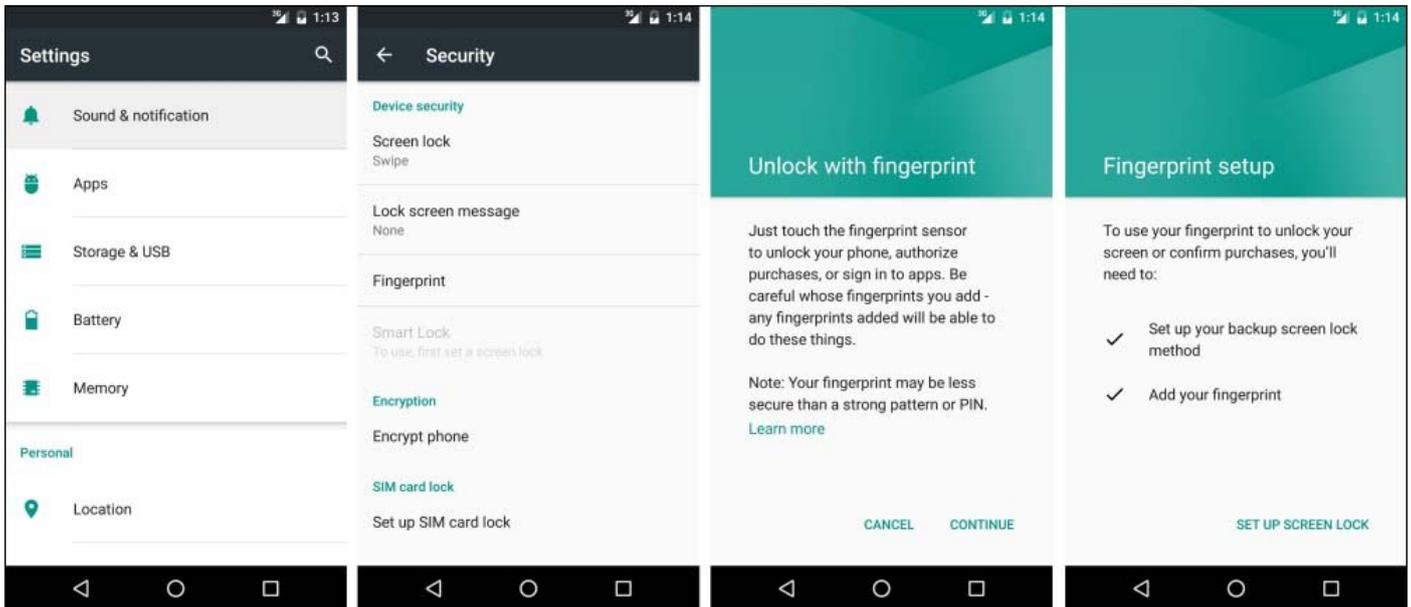
Say, we want to authenticate users via their fingerprints. A device with a fingerprint sensor must be in use; otherwise, we can't use this API. We need to get an instance of `FingerprintManager`, and then we call the `authenticate()` method. We must implement a specific user interface for the fingerprint authentication flow, and the standard Android fingerprint icon (`c_fp_40px.png`) is included in the source. We need to add the appropriate permission to our app's manifest:

```
<uses-permission android:name="android.permission.USE_FINGERPRINT" />
```

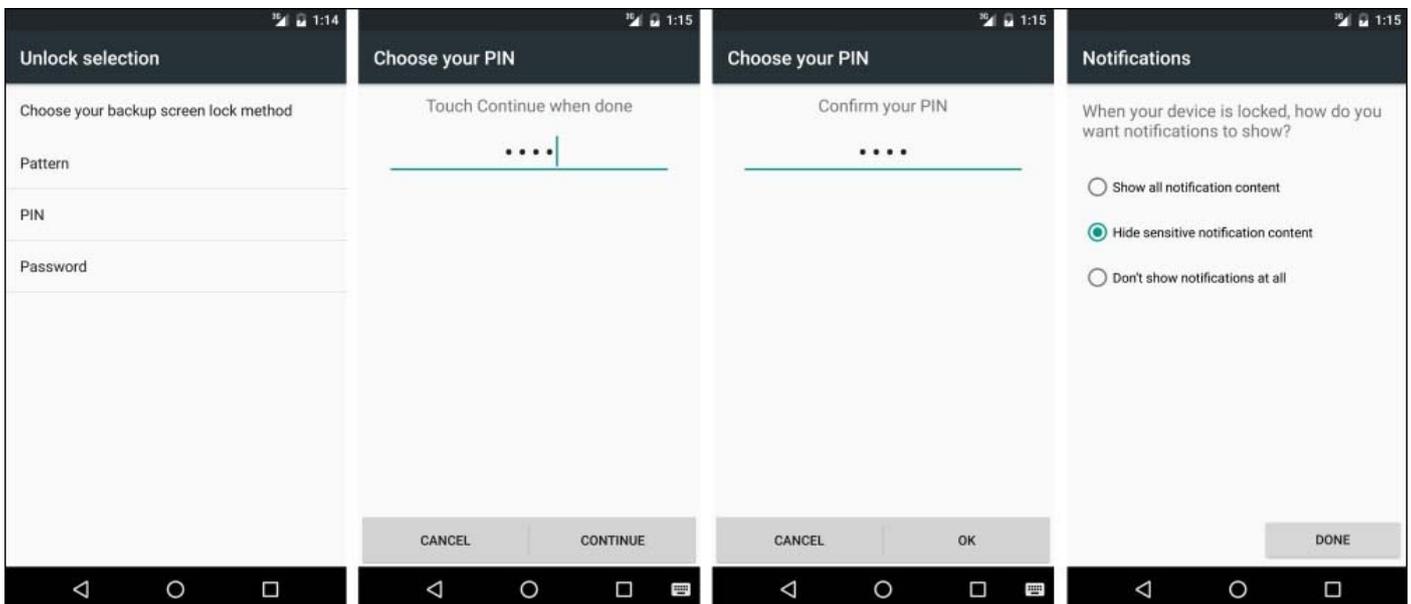
Right now, we don't have a device with a fingerprint sensor, so we will need to test our code from an emulator. (Nexus 5X and Nexus 6P are still with limited supply)

Setting up for testing

Android SDK Tools Revision 24.3 (at least) must be installed. Now, we navigate to **Settings | Security | Fingerprint** and add one fingerprint.



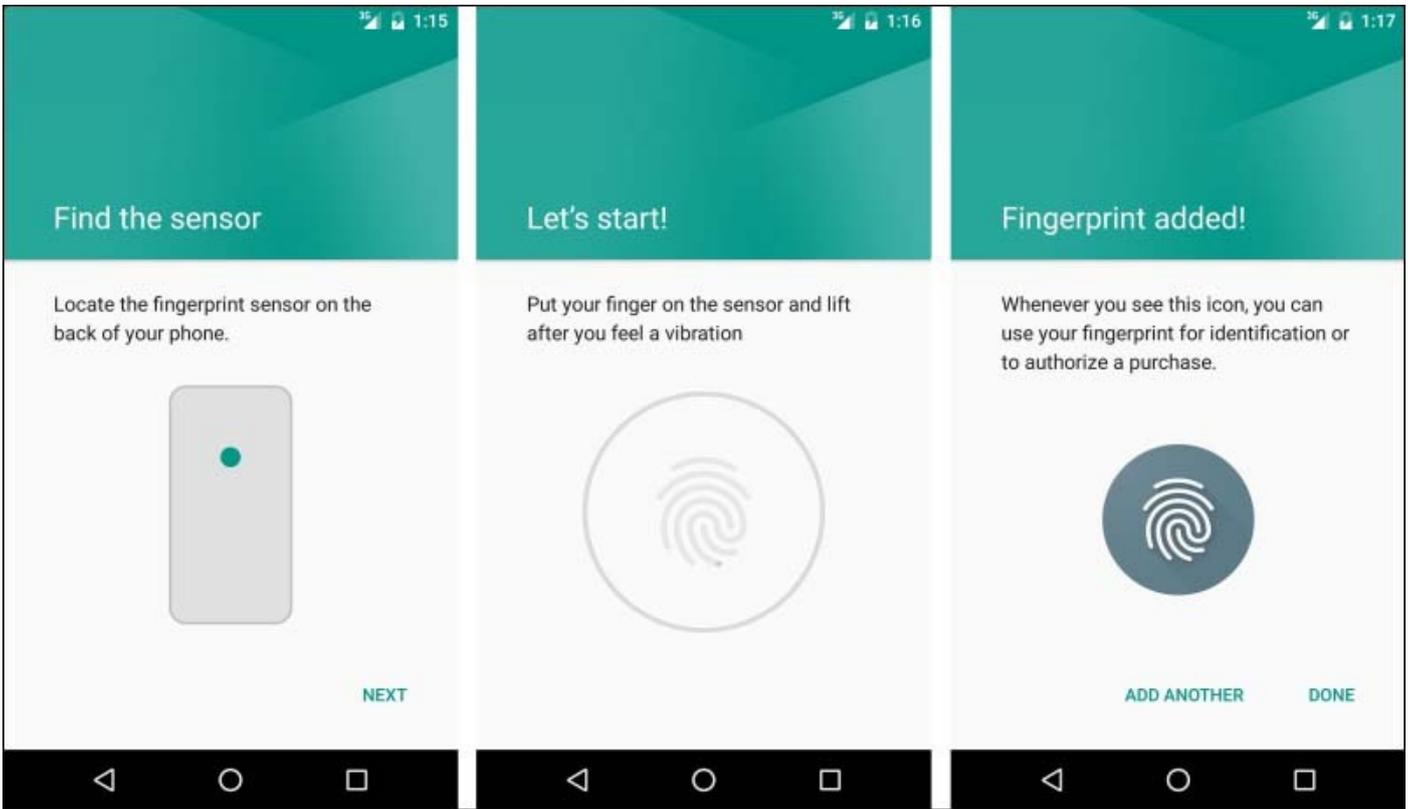
Follow the instructions manually; we are asked to select the PIN and leading us to find the following screenshot:



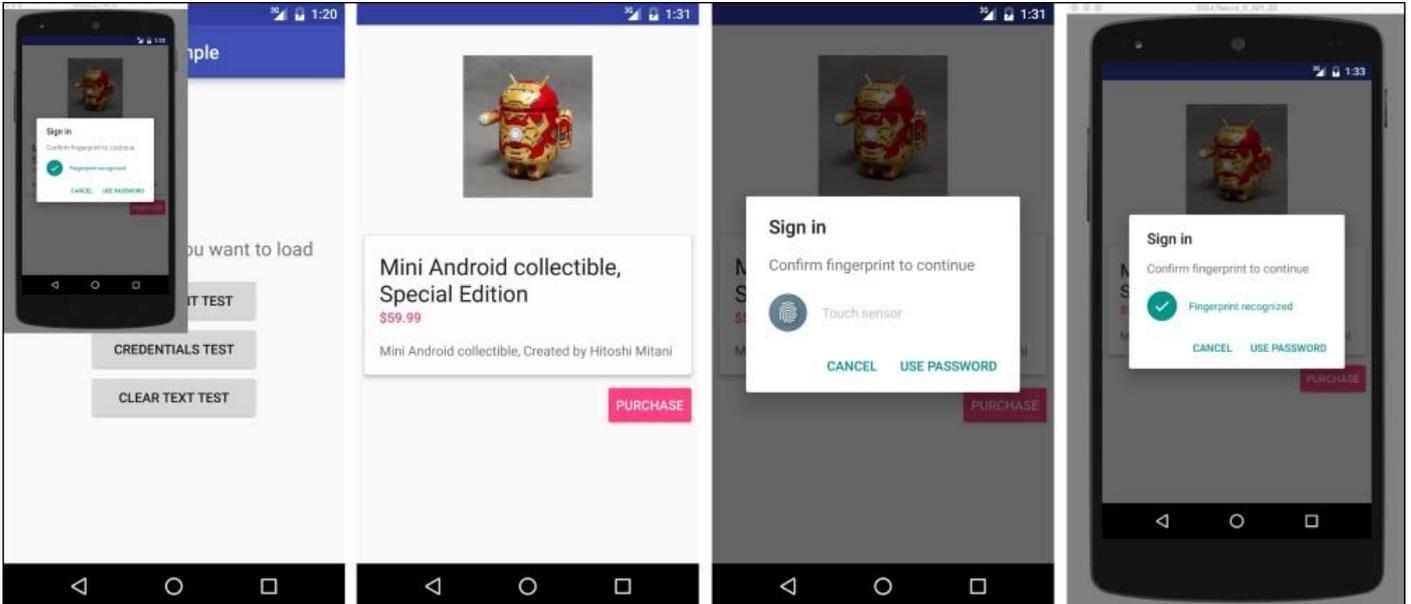
Finally, we must use a special adb command, tricking the sensor into capturing a mock fingerprint:

```
adb -e emu finger touch <finger_id>
```

The resultant screen should look like the following screenshot:



We used `finger_id =1` for a single finger. The same command also emulates fingerprint touch events on the lock screen or in our app.



If you need help to set up an emulator, read:

<https://developer.android.com/tools/devices/index.html>

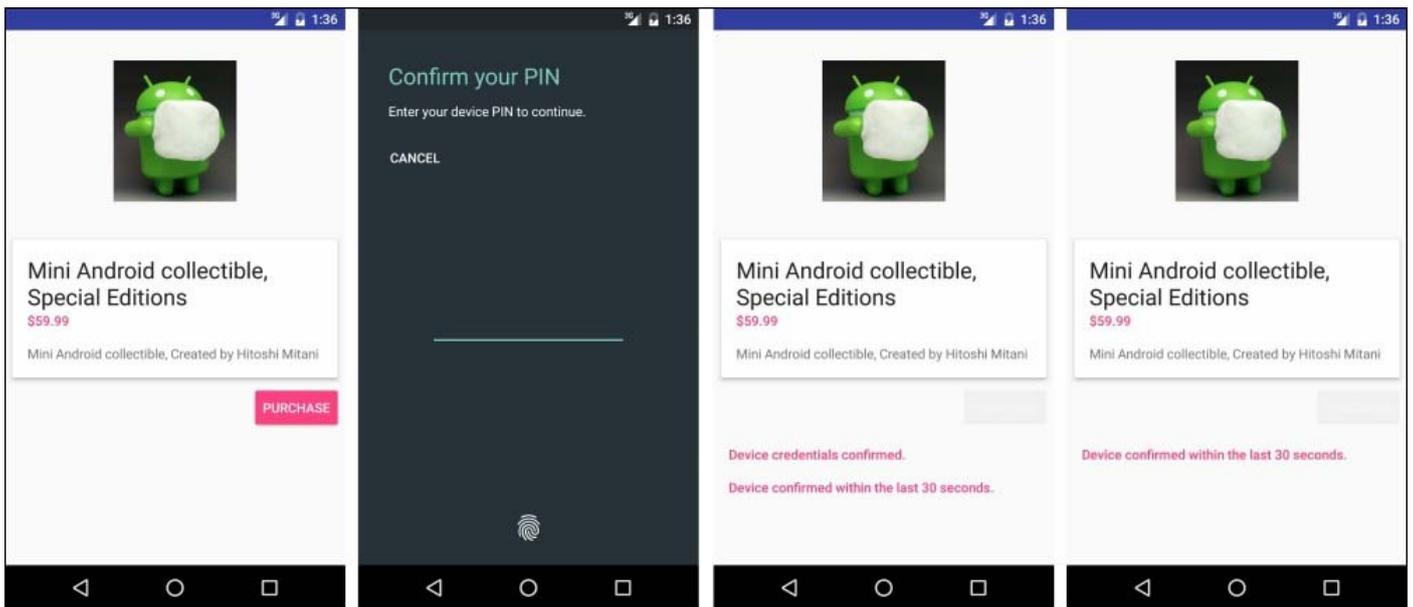
Now, we can launch our application and see that we can use the fingerprint as our authentication method when the user purchases an item.

Credentials' Grace Period

Ever got the itch when you wanted to use an app after device unlock only to find that you need to log in again or enter the app password again? Well, now we can query the device and check whether it was unlocked recently and how recent was it. This will give our users a chance to avoid all the fuss that comes with using our app. Note that this must be used in conjunction with a public or secret key implementation for user authentication. If you want to read more about the **Android Keystore System**, head to <https://developer.android.com/training/articles/keystore.html>.

We use `KeyguardManager` and check whether our lock screen is secured via the `isKeyguardSecure()` method. Once we know that it's secured, we can try and use the feature; otherwise, it'd imply that the user didn't set a secure lock screen and this feature is a *no-op*.

We generate a symmetric key with `KeyGenerator` in Android KeyStore, which can only be used after the user has authenticated with device credentials within the last x seconds. Setting this value (x) is done via the `setUserAuthenticationValidityDurationSeconds()` method, when we set up `KeyGenerator` or `KeyPairGenerator`.



You can check out the sample code for more information. The activity is called `CredGraceActivity`.

Note

Try and display the reauthentication dialog as less as possible. When using a cryptographic object, you should try and verify its expiry, and only if it passes, use `createConfirmDeviceCredentialIntent()` to reauthenticate the user.

Cleartext network traffic

Android Marshmallow also added a new flag to the manifest. This flag indicates whether the application is using a cleartext network traffic such as HTTP. The flag is `android:usesCleartextTraffic`, and the default value is `true`. Setting this to `false` means that some system API components—such as HTTP and FTP stacks, `DownloadManager` and `MediaPlayer`—will refuse to issue HTTP traffic and will only allow HTTPS. It would be a good practice to build a third-party library that honor this setting as well. Why is this good? Well, cleartext traffic lacks confidentiality, authenticity, and protections against tampering, and data can be tempered without it being detected. This is a major risk for applications, and we can now use it to try and enforce a stronger and more secure data transport to/from our applications.

We need to remember that this flag is honored on the basis of the best effort, and it's not possible to prevent all cleartext traffic from Android applications given that they have permissions to use the `Socket` API, for instance, where the `Socket` API cannot determine cleartext usage. We can check out this flag by reading it from either `ApplicationInfo.flags` or `NetworkSecurityPolicy.isCleartextTrafficPermitted()`.

Note

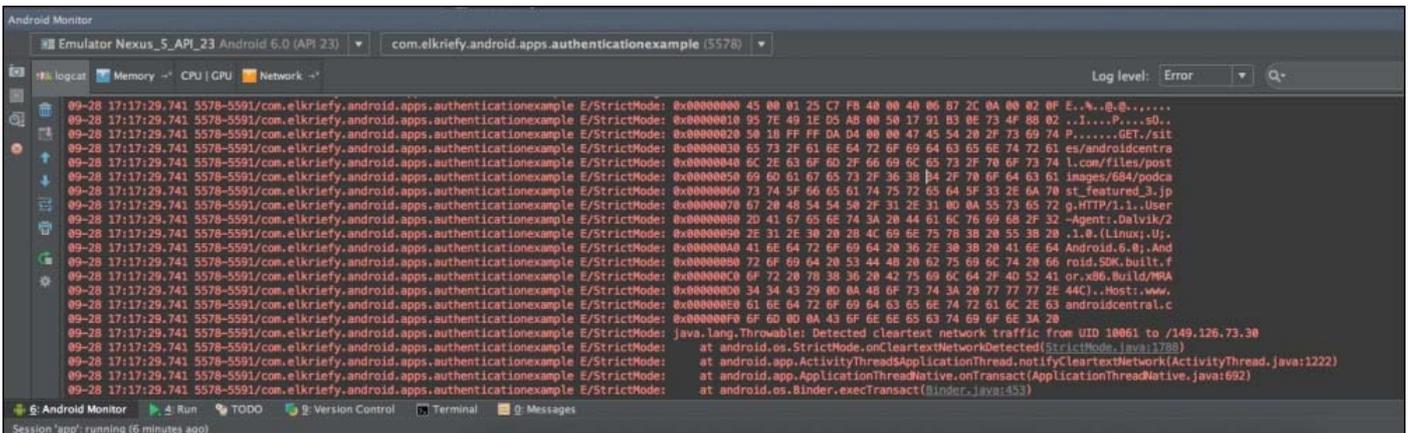
`WebView` does not honor this flag, which means that it will load HTTP even if the flag is `false`.

So, what do we do with the cleartext network traffic flag?

During app development, we can use StrictMode and identify any cleartext traffic from our app using StrictMode.VmPolicy.Builder.detectCleartextNetwork().

The downside of usesCleartextTraffic is that it causes app crashes or process termination when it's not using SSL (short for **Secure Socket Layer**). This is great in theory but not in production, where your SSL certificate, for some reason, has issues and you reroute the traffic to HTTP. So, pay extra attention to where HTTPS is used in your app and where it's okay to use HTTP.

Luckily, we have StrictMode, which now has a way to warn you if your application executes any unencrypted network operations via a detectCleartextNetwork() method on StrictMode.VmPolicy.Builder. In our sample project, we have a ClearTextNetworkUsageActivity activity; when running the TestStrictHttp productFlavor variant, you will see this in LogCat.



```
09-28 17:17:29.741 5578-5591/com.elkriefy.android.apps.authenticationexample E/StrictMode: 0x00000000 45 00 01 25 C7 F8 48 00 40 06 87 2C 0A 00 02 0F E.%..@.0.....
09-28 17:17:29.741 5578-5591/com.elkriefy.android.apps.authenticationexample E/StrictMode: 0x00000010 95 7E 49 1E 05 A5 00 50 17 91 B3 0E 73 4F 88 02 ..I....P....s0..
09-28 17:17:29.741 5578-5591/com.elkriefy.android.apps.authenticationexample E/StrictMode: 0x00000020 50 18 FF FF DA 04 00 00 47 45 54 20 2F 73 69 74 P.....GET./sit
09-28 17:17:29.741 5578-5591/com.elkriefy.android.apps.authenticationexample E/StrictMode: 0x00000030 65 73 2F 61 6E 64 72 6F 69 64 63 65 6E 74 72 61 es/androidcentra
09-28 17:17:29.741 5578-5591/com.elkriefy.android.apps.authenticationexample E/StrictMode: 0x00000040 6C 2E 63 6F 60 2F 66 69 6C 65 73 2F 70 6F 73 74 l.com/files/post
09-28 17:17:29.741 5578-5591/com.elkriefy.android.apps.authenticationexample E/StrictMode: 0x00000050 69 60 61 67 65 73 2F 36 38 B4 2F 70 6F 64 63 61 images/604/podca
09-28 17:17:29.741 5578-5591/com.elkriefy.android.apps.authenticationexample E/StrictMode: 0x00000060 73 74 5F 66 65 61 74 75 72 65 64 5F 33 2E 6A 78 st.Features_3.jp
09-28 17:17:29.741 5578-5591/com.elkriefy.android.apps.authenticationexample E/StrictMode: 0x00000070 67 20 48 54 54 50 2F 31 2E 31 80 8A 55 73 65 72 g.HTTP/1.1;user
09-28 17:17:29.741 5578-5591/com.elkriefy.android.apps.authenticationexample E/StrictMode: 0x00000080 20 41 67 65 6E 74 3A 20 44 61 6C 76 69 68 2F 32 -Agent: Dalvik/2
09-28 17:17:29.741 5578-5591/com.elkriefy.android.apps.authenticationexample E/StrictMode: 0x00000090 2E 31 2E 30 20 28 4C 69 6E 75 78 38 20 55 38 20 .1.0.(Linux;U;
09-28 17:17:29.741 5578-5591/com.elkriefy.android.apps.authenticationexample E/StrictMode: 0x000000A0 41 6E 64 72 6F 69 64 20 36 2E 30 38 20 41 6E 64 Android.6.0;And
09-28 17:17:29.741 5578-5591/com.elkriefy.android.apps.authenticationexample E/StrictMode: 0x000000B0 72 6F 69 64 20 53 44 48 20 62 75 69 6C 74 20 66 roid.SDK.built.f
09-28 17:17:29.741 5578-5591/com.elkriefy.android.apps.authenticationexample E/StrictMode: 0x000000C0 6F 72 20 78 38 36 20 42 75 69 6C 64 2F 40 52 41 or.x86.Build/98A
09-28 17:17:29.741 5578-5591/com.elkriefy.android.apps.authenticationexample E/StrictMode: 0x000000D0 34 34 43 29 00 8A 48 6F 73 74 3A 20 77 77 2E 44C;.Host:www.
09-28 17:17:29.741 5578-5591/com.elkriefy.android.apps.authenticationexample E/StrictMode: 0x000000E0 61 6E 64 72 6F 69 64 63 65 6E 74 72 61 6C 2E 63 androidcentral.c
09-28 17:17:29.741 5578-5591/com.elkriefy.android.apps.authenticationexample E/StrictMode: 0x000000F0 6F 60 60 8A 43 6F 6E 6E 65 63 74 69 6F 6E 3A 20
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09-28 17:17:29.741 5578-5591/com.elkriefy.android.apps.authenticationexample E/StrictMode: at android.app.ApplicationThreadNative.onTransact(ApplicationThreadNative.java:692)
09-28 17:17:29.741 5578-5591/com.elkriefy.android.apps.authenticationexample E/StrictMode: at android.os.Binder.execTransact(Binder.java:453)
```


Summary

Android Marshmallow gave us a new API to authenticate users with the Fingerprint API. We can use the sensor, authenticate the user even within our application, and save it for later use if we want to save the need for user login using the Credentials' Grace Period capabilities Android Marshmallow introduced.

We also covered a way to make our application more secure using HTTPS only, and the StrictMode policy, enforced with the help of the `usesCleartextTraffic` flag, which allows us to make sure that all the nodes we connect to the outer world and examine the need for are a secure connection or not.

I would like to thank you for reading.

I would like to thank the Android team. This product has changed my life.

The Android ecosystem has great developers contributing by publishing libraries, writing blog posts and answering support questions; I'm proud to be part of it.

Looking forward for future editions.

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