How to Scan a QR Code From a Screenshot on iPhone (4 Methods)

Got a QR code saved as a screenshot? Here are 4 ways to scan it on your iPhone — from built-in iOS features to the fastest ad-free method.

Author: Lubor Šimůnek · Published: March 20, 2026 · Productivity

Online version: https://appstoryo.com/en/blog/how-to-scan-qr-code-from-screenshot-iphone



The Problem: You Can't Point Your Camera at Your Own Screen

Someone sends you a QR code in a text message. You see one in an email. You screenshot a QR code from a website for later. Now what? You cannot exactly hold your iPhone camera up to your own screen.

This is one of the most common QR code frustrations, and Apple's built-in camera scanner is completely useless here — it only works with live, physical QR codes in front of you. But there are several ways to scan a QR code that is already saved as an image on your iPhone.

Method 1: Live Text in Photos (iOS 16+)

If your iPhone runs iOS 16 or later, Apple's Live Text feature can sometimes recognize QR codes directly in the Photos app.

How to do it:

1. Open the **Photos** app and find your screenshot.
2. Open the image full-screen.
3. Look for the **Live Text icon** (a small square with lines) in the bottom-right corner. Tap

it.

4. If iOS detects a QR code, a yellow outline appears. Tap it to open the link.

The catch:

Live Text is **unreliable with QR codes**. It was designed for recognizing text in photos — not barcodes. It works sometimes with simple, high-contrast QR codes, but fails often with complex or small ones. Many users report that the QR code icon simply never appears, especially with dense codes or those with logos embedded in them.

Reliability: ~50%. Fine to try first, but don't count on it.

Method 2: Visual Look Up / Long Press (iOS 16+)

Another built-in option that occasionally works:

How to do it:

1. Open the screenshot in **Photos**.
2. **Long-press** on the QR code in the image.
3. If iOS recognizes it, a context menu appears with an "Open in Safari" option.

The catch:

Same as Live Text — it relies on iOS image recognition, which is inconsistent with QR codes. It works better on iOS 17 and later, but is still not reliable enough to depend on.

Reliability: ~40%. Worth a quick try, nothing more.

Method 3: QR Code Reader Without Ads (Recommended)

This is the most reliable and fastest method. **QR Code Reader Without Ads** is a free iPhone app built specifically for scanning QR codes — including from screenshots and saved photos.

How to do it:

1. Open the app.
2. Tap the **photo library** button (gallery icon).
3. Select your screenshot.
4. The QR code is scanned **instantly**. The link/content appears immediately.
5. Tap to open, copy, or share.

Why this is the best method:

- **100% reliable** — it uses dedicated QR decoding, not image recognition. Works with every QR code format, including dense codes, codes with logos, small codes, and low-contrast codes.
- **Instant** — select the photo and the result appears in under a second.
- **No ads** — not "ads removable for $4.99." Zero ads. The App Store privacy label

confirms the developer collects no data.

- **Scan history** — every scan is saved locally so you can find it later.
- **19 MB** — installs in seconds, takes almost no storage.
- **No account needed** — open the app and scan. That's it.

Also available on Google Play if you use Android.

Reliability: 100%. This just works.

Method 4: Google Lens via Chrome

If you have Google Chrome installed on your iPhone, you can use Google Lens to scan QR codes from images.

How to do it:

1. Open **Google Chrome** on your iPhone.
2. Tap the **Lens icon** in the search bar.
3. Select **"Choose an image"** and pick your screenshot.
4. Google Lens analyzes the image and shows the QR code content.

The catch:

Google Lens is powerful but heavy — it requires the Chrome app (200+ MB), sends your image to Google's servers for processing, and the QR scanning is buried inside a visual search tool. It works, but it is overkill for just scanning a QR code, and there are **privacy implications** since your images are processed on Google's cloud.

Reliability: ~95%. Works well, but heavyweight and not private.

Comparison: Which Method Should You Use?

Method	Reliability	Speed	Privacy	Ads	Extra App Needed
QR Code Reader Without Ads	100%	Instant	No data collected	None	Yes (19 MB)
Live Text (Photos)	~50%	Slow	On-device	None	No
Long Press (Photos)	~40%	Slow	On-device	None	No
Google Lens (Chrome)	~95%	Medium	Cloud-processed	None	Yes (200+ MB)

What About Other QR Scanner Apps?

There are hundreds of QR scanner apps on the App Store. Most of them can scan from photos. But here is what you will typically find:

- **Gamma Play QR Scanner** — can scan from photos, but the free version is loaded with full-screen ads that appear after every scan. You can pay $5.99 to remove them.
- **QR Reader by TapMedia** — works well, but pushes a $1.99/month subscription. A subscription for a QR scanner.

- **QRbot by TeaCapps** — solid features including CSV export, but the free version has intrusive ads between scans.

All of these work. None of them are free in the way that actually matters — they all interrupt you with ads or subscription prompts. If you just want to scan a QR code from a screenshot without being sold something, QR Code Reader Without Ads is the obvious choice.

Bonus: How to Scan a QR Code From a Screenshot on Android

If you also use an Android phone, here are the quickest methods:

- **Google Lens** — open Google Photos, select the screenshot, tap the Lens icon. Works reliably.
- **Samsung Gallery** — on Samsung phones, open the screenshot in Gallery and look for the "Scan QR Code" option.
- **QR Code Reader Without Ads** — same app, same experience. Open, tap gallery, select photo, done.

FAQ

Can I scan a QR code from a screenshot without an app?

On iPhone, you can try Live Text in Photos (iOS 16+) or long-pressing the QR code. But these built-in methods are unreliable — they work about half the time. For a guaranteed result, a lightweight scanner app is the way to go.

Why doesn't the iPhone camera work on screenshots?

The Camera app scans live video from the lens. It cannot access images in your photo library. Apple has not added a "scan from photo" feature to the Camera app — they expect Live Text in Photos to handle it, but it often does not.

Is it safe to scan QR codes from screenshots?

The QR code itself is just data — usually a URL. The risk is in what the URL leads to, not in scanning it. Use a scanner that shows you the link before opening it, so you can check if it looks legitimate. Both the iPhone camera and QR Code Reader Without Ads preview the URL before you tap.

What if the QR code in my screenshot is blurry?

If the screenshot is low resolution or the QR code is very small, try zooming in before screenshotting, or crop the image to just the QR code area. Dedicated scanner apps like QR Code Reader Without Ads have better error correction than Live Text and can often read slightly degraded codes.

The Bottom Line

Scanning a QR code from a screenshot on iPhone should be simple, but Apple's built-in tools make it frustratingly unreliable. Live Text and long-press work sometimes, but not consistently enough to depend on.

The fastest, most reliable method is a dedicated app. **QR Code Reader Without Ads** does exactly one thing and does it perfectly — no ads, no data collection, no subscription, just instant QR scanning from any photo in your library. At 19 MB, there is zero reason not to have it on your phone.

Download for iPhone | Download for Android

Cite as: Lubor Šimůnek (2026). *How to Scan a QR Code From a Screenshot on iPhone (4 Methods)*. AppStoryo, lapnito.cz s.r.o.. https://appstoryo.com/en/blog/how-to-scan-qr-code-from-screenshot-iphone
© 2026 lapnito.cz s.r.o.