# QR Code Not Working? How to Fix Blurry, Dense, Inverted, or Logo-Covered Codes

QR code won't scan? From blurry cameras and poor lighting to logo-heavy or inverted codes — here are the most common reasons and exactly how to fix each one.

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## Why Won't My QR Code Scan?

QR codes are everywhere, but they don't always cooperate. Before you give up and type a URL by hand, work through this checklist. Most scanning failures fall into one of the categories below, and most have a quick fix.

### 1. Blurry Camera or Too Close to the Code

If your camera is hovering just centimetres away, it can't focus properly. Move back 15–20 cm and hold the phone steady for a moment — let autofocus lock on before you trigger the scan. A tapping the screen to manually focus on the code also helps on most smartphones.

### 2. Poor Lighting or Low Contrast

QR codes rely on a clear contrast between dark modules and a light background. In dim rooms the camera struggles. Turn on a nearby lamp, or step outside. If the code is displayed on a screen, try inverting the display — some scanners read a dark-background version better than the standard white background.

## 3. The Code Is Too Small on Screen

A QR code crammed into the corner of a poster or shown tiny on a phone screen is genuinely hard to read. Zoom in on the source display, or increase its brightness to the maximum. More pixels of the code landing on your camera sensor makes a real difference.

## 4. Damaged or Torn Code

QR codes include built-in error correction. There are four levels — L, M, Q, and H — that allow for 7 %, 15 %, 25 %, and up to 30 % of the code's surface to be damaged and still decoded correctly. If a corner is torn or a sticker is peeling, try scanning from a slightly different angle. You might find an angle where the damaged modules matter less.

## 5. Logo Covering Too Much of the Center

Branded QR codes use the error-correction capacity to hide a logo in the finder region. This is fine up to a point. When the logo takes up too much area, even maximum error correction can't recover enough data. Your best option: save a photo of the code and scan it from your image gallery rather than live camera — some dedicated apps process images more aggressively than real-time viewfinder scans.

## 6. Dense or High-Version QR Codes

A QR 'version' describes how many modules (tiny squares) the code contains. Version 40 packs 177×177 modules into the same space as a version 1 code that holds only 25×25 modules. Dense codes require a decent camera resolution and stable focus to read reliably. Again, importing an image into a dedicated scanner app is more reliable than a live camera scan for these codes.

## 7. Inverted Colors — White Modules on Black Background

The QR standard assumes dark modules on a light background. Some designers flip it for aesthetic reasons. Many built-in phone cameras refuse to scan inverted codes at all. A dedicated scanner app with proper inversion support handles these without complaint.

## 8. Screen Glare and Reflections

Glossy screens, overhead fluorescent lights, and bright windows all create reflections that effectively 'erase' parts of the code for your camera. Tilt your phone slightly, reposition yourself relative to the light source, or cup your free hand to shade the target screen.

## 9. Damaged Print — Coffee Stains, Folds, Creases

A crumpled receipt or a QR code with a coffee stain over it may still be recoverable. Smooth out the paper as flat as possible, make sure the lighting is even (no harsh shadows in the crease), and try scanning at a high angle looking straight down rather than at an angle. High-contrast environments help the camera distinguish intact modules from damage.

## 10. The Scanner Itself Is the Problem

Some built-in camera apps do only the most basic QR parsing. They may reject inverted codes, struggle with dense codes, and offer no way to scan from a saved image. A dedicated scanner app with image-import support solves all of these gaps in one step.

## The Nuclear Option: Scan From a Saved Image

When a live-camera scan simply won't work — screen glare, camera blur, an awkward angle — take a screenshot or photo of the QR code first, then open it in a dedicated scanner app and import it from your gallery. Because the app processes a static pixel file instead of a live video feed, blur is eliminated entirely and the app can spend more time on decoding. This trick rescues a surprising number of 'impossible' codes.

## QR Code Reader Without Ads

If you need a scanner that handles all the edge cases above, **QR Code Reader Without Ads** is worth installing. It reads codes from the live camera and from images already saved in your photo gallery, which is what makes it useful for the tricky situations described here — logo-heavy codes, blurry screenshots, and dense high-version codes that defeat the default camera app. It is free and available on both iOS (search 'QR Code Reader Without Ads' on the App Store) and Android (search on Google Play).

**Download QR Code Reader Without Ads free for iOS or Android** — no ads, no tracking, and it works fully offline.

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