



# Your guide to QR codes



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Contact tracing has proven to be a successful way to help stop or slow the spread of COVID-19, but its success relies on the accurate collection of community members' contact details. So how do businesses like cafes, restaurants, and wedding venues take on the delicate task of collecting and storing patrons' details? Some venues have taken to using pen and paper, while many others have adopted QR code technology, particularly in NSW where it's mandatory for many businesses to use electronic check-in.

In this guide we take a look at QR codes: what they are, how to scan them and things to look out for.

## What is a QR code?

QR (Quick Response) codes are those familiar-looking black and white square barcodes you see at the entrance of many venues like cafes and restaurants. Your smartphone's camera 'scans' or 'reads' the barcode and then takes you to a new web page or online form.

QR technology has been around since the 90's and became common in advertising as an easy way for advertisers to direct people to product websites without the need to type out the web address.

Today QR codes are more commonly used by many venues as a contactless way to check-in. They are used to collect your details so that you can be contacted in the event a positive COVID-19 case has been traced back to a place you previously visited.

## How to scan QR codes

You need a smartphone with a camera.

1. Open your camera app
2. Point your camera at the QR code as if you are about to take a picture of it.
3. If your device recognises the code, a link will appear at the top of your screen. Tap on the link when it appears.
4. Enter your contact details in the online form to check-in.

If you have an older phone and it's having trouble reading QR codes, try downloading a QR code reader from the official Apple Store or Google Play Store for Android phones.

## What if I don't have a smartphone?

Don't worry if you don't have a smartphone, there should be an alternative way for you to provide your details. If you have to write your details down, you can always use your own pen to reduce or eliminate the amount of contact with shared stationery.

## Why do businesses need to collect my data?

Venues collect your contact details to provide them to contact tracing teams who will get in touch with you if they think you have come in to close contact with somebody in the community who has tested positive for COVID-19. The contact tracing process helps to slow or stop the spread of the disease.

## Why not paper records?

Handwriting can sometimes be difficult to read and people's personal details can also be on show for others to see. Also, QR codes are a 'contactless' way to check-in so there's no need to touch pens and paper likely to have been handled by other people. Paper records also need to be turned into electronic format so it means less work for businesses.

## How will my data be managed?

There are many different check-in systems in place so it can be unclear what each business does with your data. However, there are rules and guidelines for businesses to follow, developed by the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner, to help keep your information private, including:

- Businesses must ensure the data is stored confidentially and securely.
- Venues should not ask you for more information than is required for contact tracing, like your date of birth.
- The data needs to be destroyed once the information is no longer needed. Each state and territory has different rules on how long businesses need to store your information: in NSW it's a minimum of 28 days, while in QLD it's 56 days.
- They should be providing the data only to health authorities for contact tracing when/if needed.

## Things to look out for

While businesses should be following privacy guidelines, you can do your bit to protect your personal information.

- Don't offer up more information than you need to. Remember, businesses should only be collecting your details for contact tracing, so they don't need much more than your name, phone number and/or email address
- Read check-in questions carefully and look for check boxes that ask whether you would like to receive marketing information from the venue/organisation. If the box is already ticked, untick it – unless of course you would like to hear more from them.
- If you are not comfortable with the information that's being asked of you in the online form, ask if there's an alternative way to check-in.

## For more information

If you are concerned about a business not collecting or storing your information appropriately, have a chat to the staff first. If you are not happy with the outcome and you think your data has been mishandled, you can [make a complaint to the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner](#). Their website is also a good starting point on finding out more [about your privacy rights](#).