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Home, sweet home

Is Apple's decision to remove the home button from the new iPhone a good move?

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Is this the future of the iPhone? Apple has removed the home button from the iPhone from their latest device, a decision that has sent shockwaves for many Apple users worldwide.

The **iPhone X** (pronounced 'ten') features an incredible 5.8" Super Retina HD display that spans across the whole front of the phone, only disrupted by a small notch at the top for the camera, speaker and numerous sensors. In designing a phone that's all screen, a few sacrifices had to be made; with the most notable being the removal of the home button.

While the loss of a home button is a rather large change, it's not the first major alteration to the iPhone's iconic home button.

In **2007**, the first iPhone was released, introducing the home button with its familiar rounded rectangle icon. The home button for the first iPhone could only take you to the home screen or turn the phone on.

In **2010**, the iPhone 4 was released, with the ability to double tap the home button. The design of the home button was still the same, with the rounded rectangle in the middle of the button, but the functionality had changed slightly.

In **2013**, the biggest change to the home button so far was announced - Touch ID. Touch ID included a fingerprint sensor in the home button. This sensor allowed you to quickly unlock your phone and make purchases by using Touch ID.

2016 saw the release of the first iPhone to remove the home button. The iPhone 7 features a glass panel in place of the home button, which didn't press in like the other iPhones, but instead was a pressure-sensitive vibrating panel.

Now, in **2017**, the iPhone X showcases the complete removal of the home button, with an all screen front. We are now being introduced to what seems to be the future of Apple, with "Face ID".

The removal of the home button is said to be the biggest change in the design of the iPhone since its first launch ten years ago.

So, what does this mean for the future of iPhone design and Apple consumers?

A primary concern for many loyal iPhone users is the relearning of muscle memory.

The new gestures that Apple have introduced for the iPhone X include: swipe from the bottom to go home, swipe up and pause for multitasking, unlock with Face ID and tap screen to wake the display. Key features such as Siri can now be activated through pressing and holding the side button, and Apple Pay can be operated via double clicking the side button.

The build-up to the iPhone X has raised speculation as to what the future of Apple design is. Many believe the removal of the home button is a development that will continue to the newest models of the iPad and possibly the Mac. "In a few years when the home button is just a memory, one device is poised to carry on its legacy: The Apple Watch" (Steeber, 2017).

Senior Vice President of Apple, Philip Schiller conducted a presentation of the iPhone X on September 22nd, stating "Nothing has ever been simpler or more natural" than facial recognition. Schiller further claims that there is a one in a million possibility of someone being able to access your phone with the security of Face ID compared to that of the Touch ID system where the odds are one in fifty thousand.

While the removal of the home button may come as a shock to many, Apple has in fact been encouraging millions of iPhone users to change their home screen navigation over the previous models of their iPhones since 2013.

The home button has technically already been removed. The 2016 launch of the iPhone 7 and the 7 Plus had no physical 'button' but instead "featured a solid-state panel that used subtle vibration to simulate a button press". This launch had presented many mixed opinions, particularly concerning the haptic click. However, many are concerned that assimilating to the use of Face ID may be more difficult, "I still think Touch ID needs to exist. And if the home button is removed, Touch ID's functions need to be relocated" (Sturmer, 2017).

While many believe that Apple has laid too much groundwork for Touch ID and continues to implement it into their models, it seems that facial recognition is the inevitable future of Apple iPhone design. As the iPhone X is already being referred to as 'the future of smartphones and iOS' this could only be the beginning for what's to come for iPhone design.

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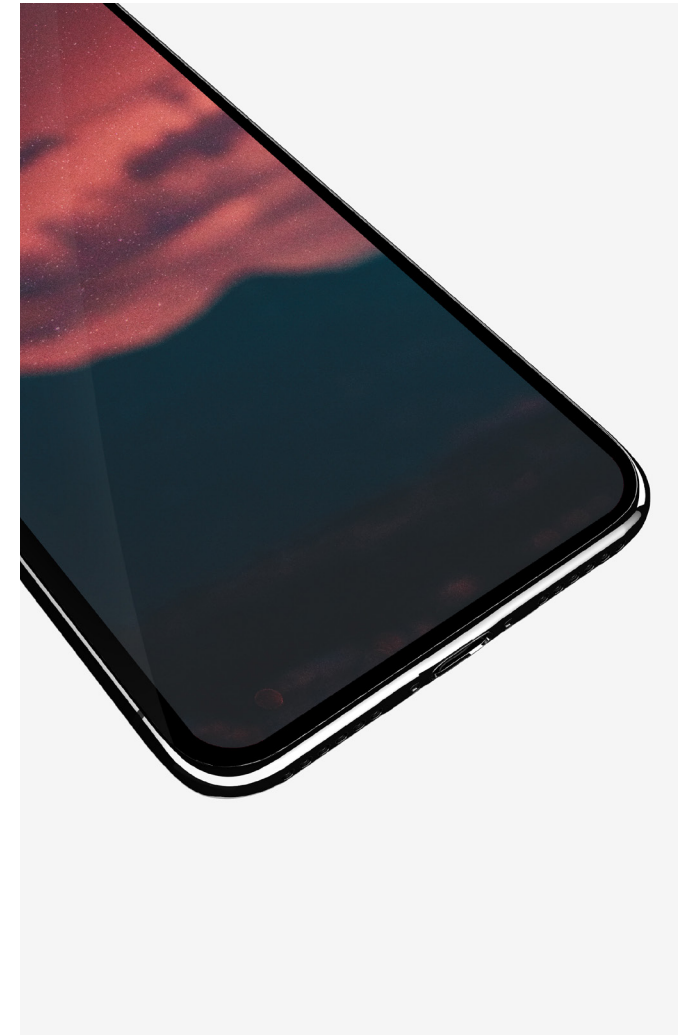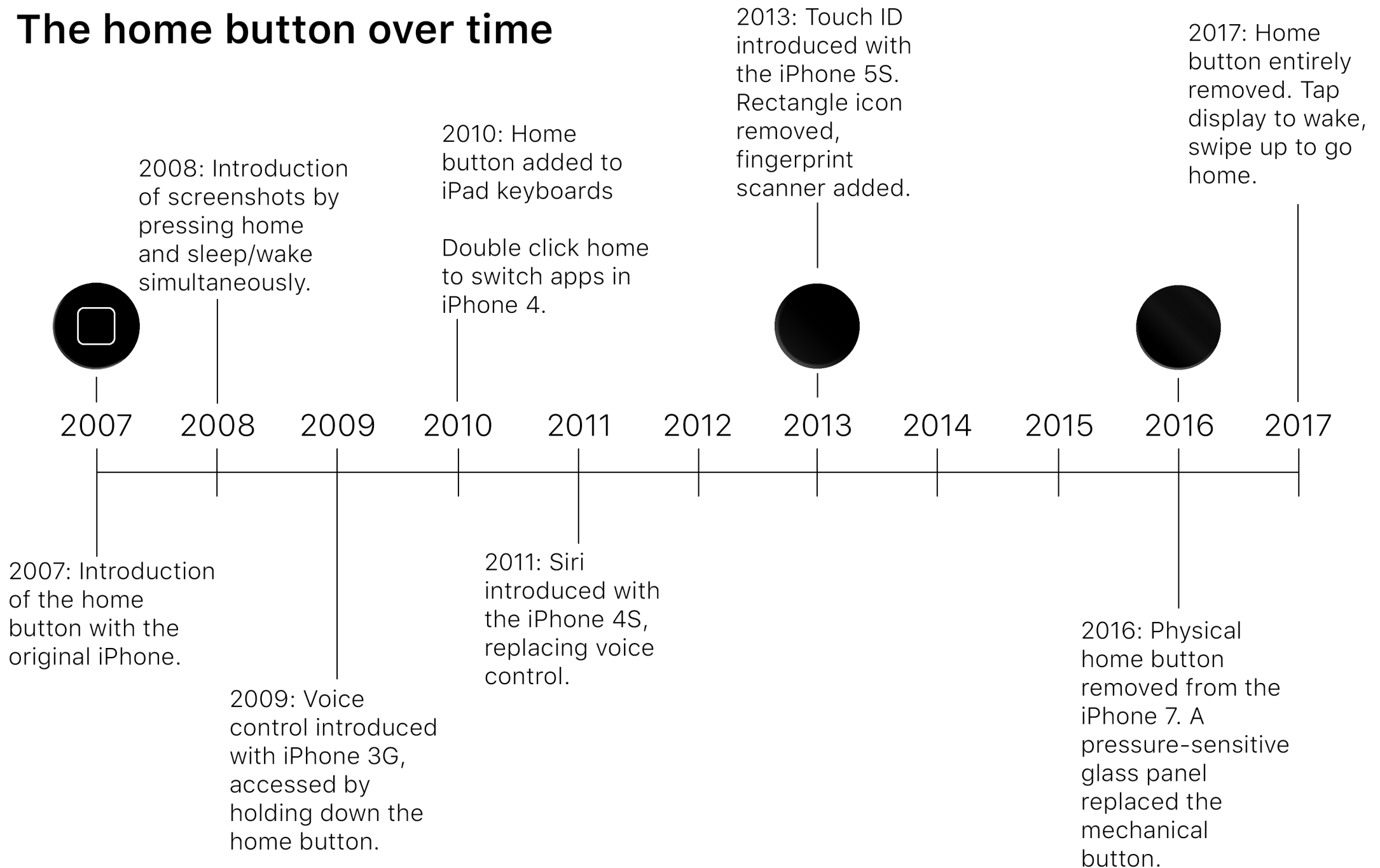
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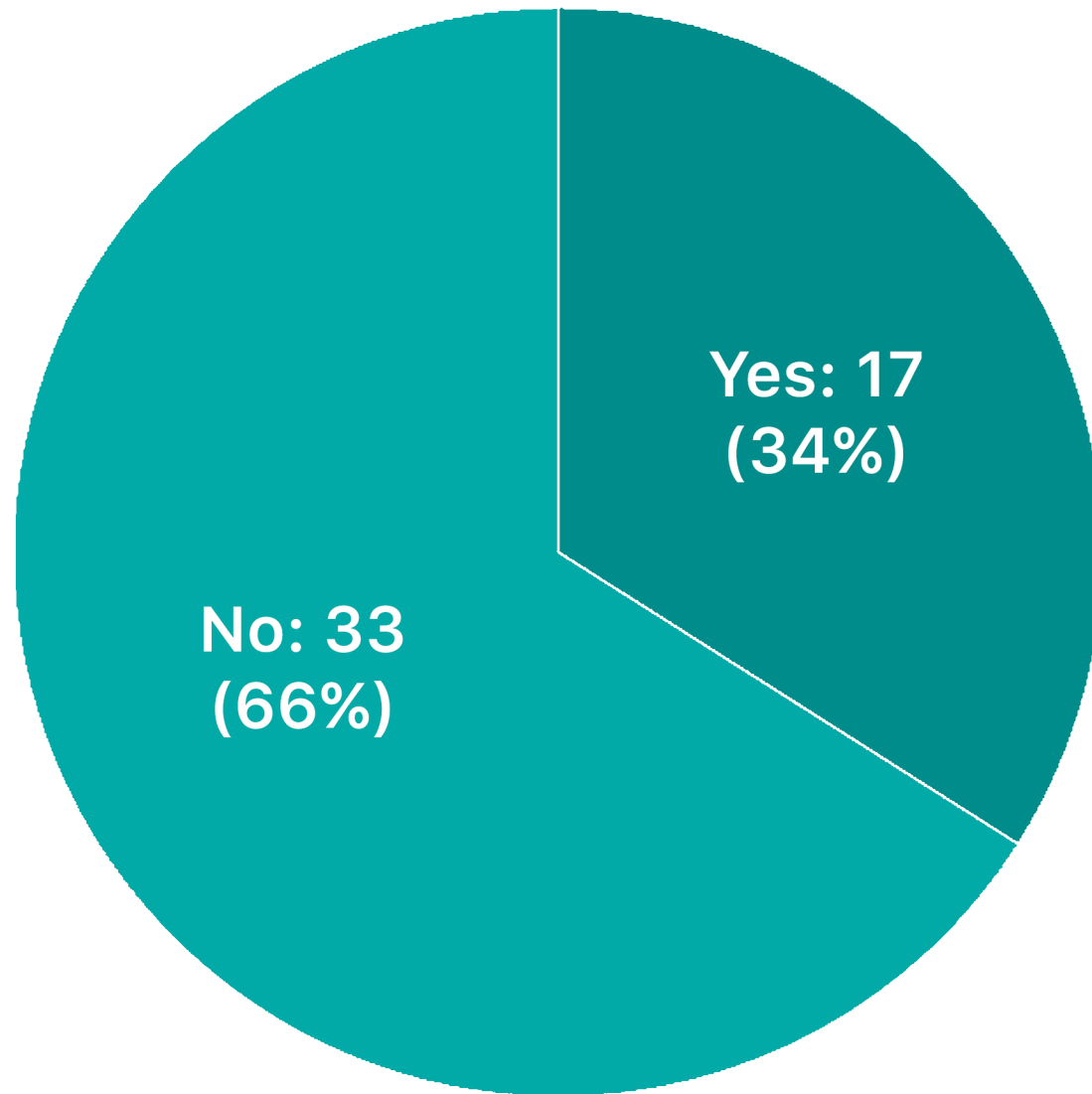
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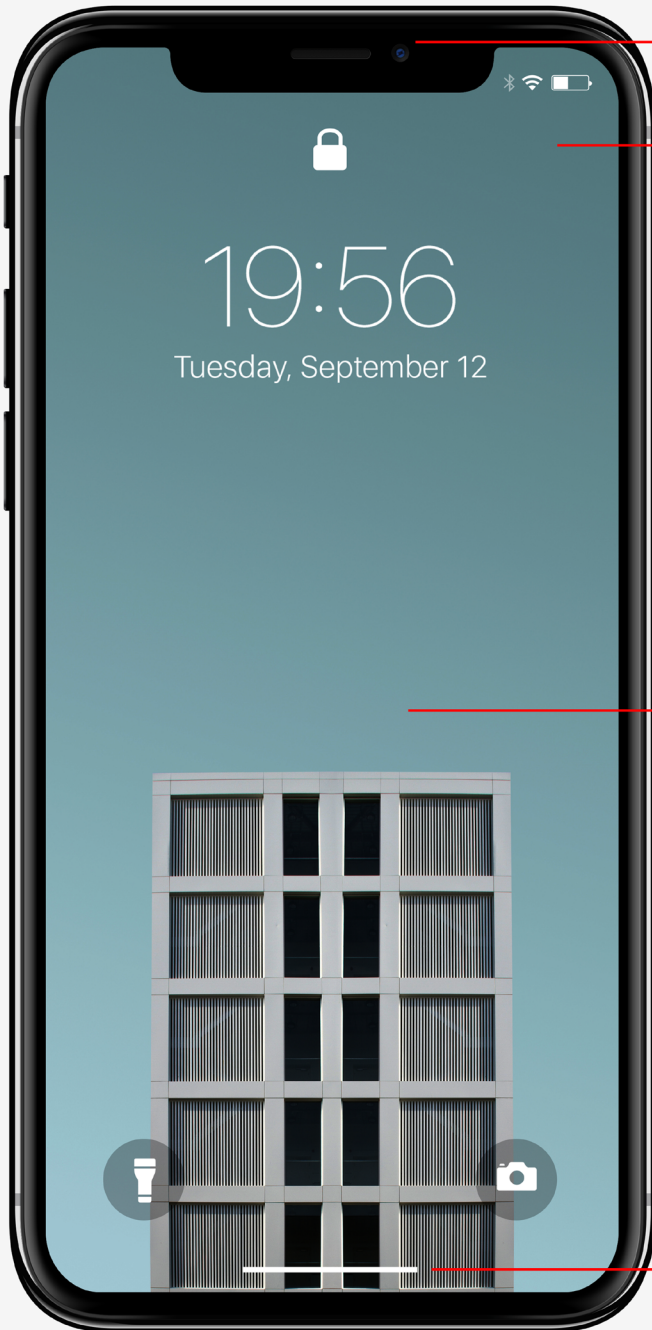
The home button over time

2007: Introduction of the home button with the original iPhone.

2008: Introduction of screenshots by pressing home and sleep/wake simultaneously.

2009: Voice control introduced with iPhone 3G, accessed by holding down the home button.

2010: Home button added to iPad keyboards

Double click home to switch apps in iPhone 4.

2011: Siri introduced with the iPhone 4S, replacing voice control.

2013: Touch ID introduced with the iPhone 5S. Rectangle icon removed, fingerprint scanner added.

2016: Physical home button removed from the iPhone 7. A pressure-sensitive glass panel replaced the mechanical button.

2017: Home button entirely removed. Tap display to wake, swipe up to go home.

2007 2008 2009 2010 2011 2012 2013 2014 2015 2016 2017

Are you in support of Apple's decision to remove the home button?

Yes: 17 (34%)

No: 33 (66%)

New Gestures for the iPhone X

Unlock iPhone using Face ID.

Swipe down from the top to access Control Centre.

Hold side button to activate Siri.

Double press to activate Apple Pay.

Tap display or raise device to wake screen.

Swipe up from the bottom of the screen to return home.

Swipe up and pause to access multitasking.

Swipe right to go back to previous app.

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