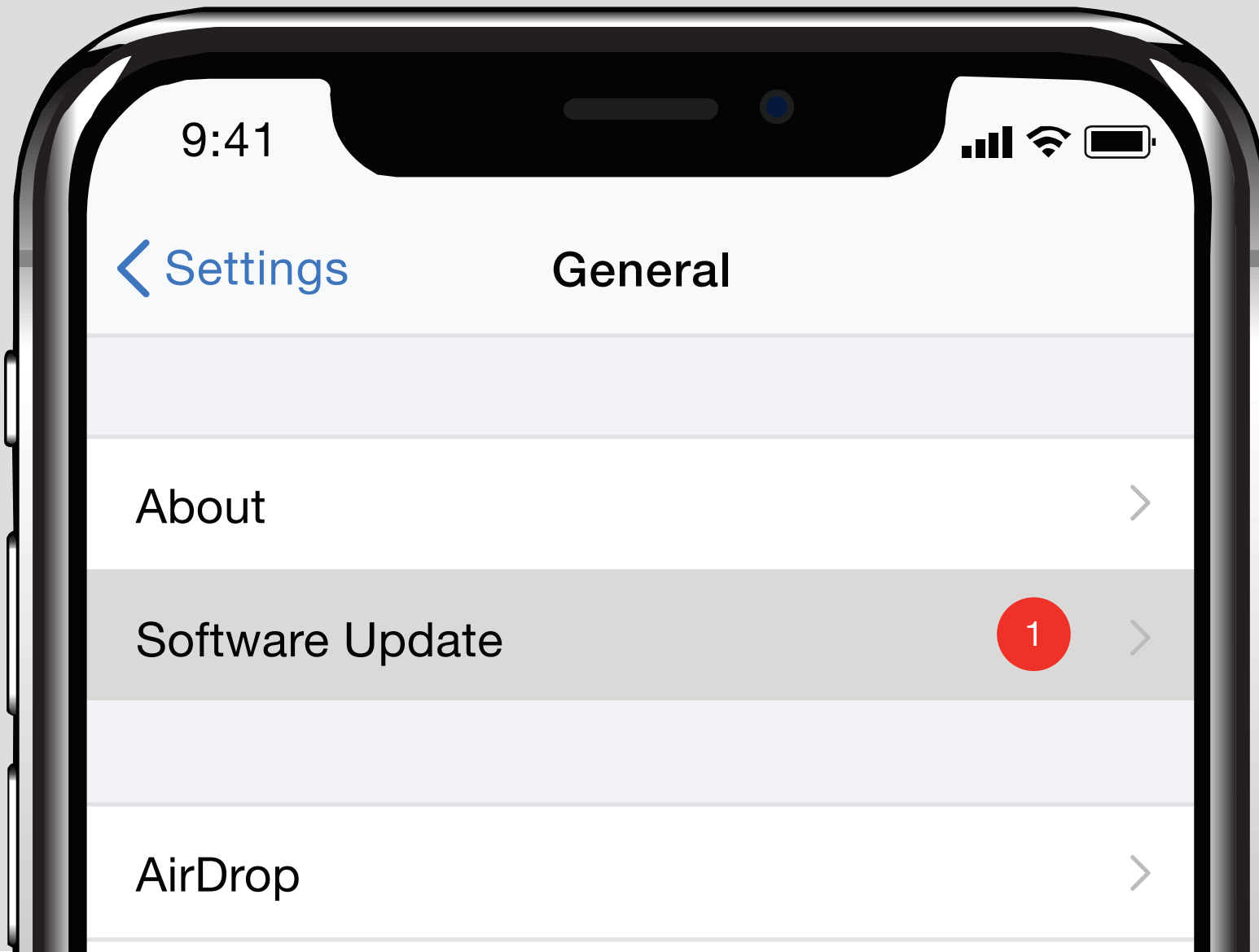


# Designed to fail?

Is Apple deliberately slowing down our phones? What's the truth?



# Designed to fail?

*Luba Ndibali*

Every year, Apple releases new iPhones and to many, it seems like older iPhones begin to slow down. This phenomenon of perceived slowdowns is a common belief among people today. With many believing in the conspiracy that this is done deliberately by Apple to ensure that consumers buy new iPhone models each year. These theories of intentional planned obsolescence have some truth to them as Apple does include some forms of planned obsolescence in their designs.

In its entirety, **planned obsolescence** refers to something purposely built not to last. The definition of planned obsolescence is one that is fluidly interpreted as it is not a constantly changing concept. Essentially, it can be broadly understood as when a product is deliberately designed to have a verifiably limited life span. This specific life span is one that is determined and controlled by the company, through which they try to enforce and encourage customers to make repeat purchases of the brand or product. This strategy involves making products unfavourable, whether that be functionally or psychologically

A form of planned obsolescence is evident across every generation of Apple's iPhone that is released. Other than the incompatible plugs or cables that new versions have, one of the ways in which slowdowns occur in Apple devices are operating system updates that come with the release of a new model. These **iOS software updates** ensure that the latest and more powerful features, which are designed to primarily work on new devices, leaving older generation devices incapable of handling or running on the new updates. This is because system updates are structured by Apple in relation with the device being released, so as the time gap between iPhone versions gets larger, system updates in older devices become upwardly incompatible.

According to Greg Raiz, a former program manager for Microsoft, companies have no incentive to create planned obsolescence but it is the software that "has varied degrees of production bugs", meaning that with every operating system updates, machine performance in older generations will become obsolete, thus



having difficulties in running applications. This evidence that although system updates slowing down devices is a form of obsolescence, it is not a deliberate action taken by Apple but rather a reflection of the performance software they use within older models.

Another key feature in Apple's practice of planned obsolescence is their exclusive tamper-resistance **Pentalobe screw**. These screws, which are subtle and concealed at the base of each iPhone device released, are Apple's security screw of choice. The proprietary **five-point security screwheads**, which have been included in its products since the 2010 iPhone 4 release, are comprised of a unique head shaped into a rounded poppy with five petals. The screw is now an essential component of Apple products, with its only real purpose being to secure the device's internal hardware and presumably the necessity to prevent consumers from self-repair or repairs at third-party stores. This is a technological form of planned obsolescence as it forces users to take

their devices for repair or replacement at their Apple Stores as no approved screwdriver has yet to be released by Apple. Apple uses this design strategy in order to direct where users take their phones for repairs and to encourage them to upgrade to the latest iPhone model.

Planned obsolescence is a strategy used by many technology companies, however, the way in which Apple implements it, quite subtle and unique. A lot of Apple iPhone users, are mostly unaware of these features in Apple's design's, which is something the company needs to be more transparent about. The conspiracy theorists who believe that Apple is doing this purposely, are on the somewhat right, however, the slowdowns in devices can be explained as being a result of the software itself becoming obsolete



#### References:

Clapp, K. K. (2018, April 21). Bit History: The Pentalobe. Retrieved from <https://www.ifixit.com/News/bit-history-the-pentalobe>.

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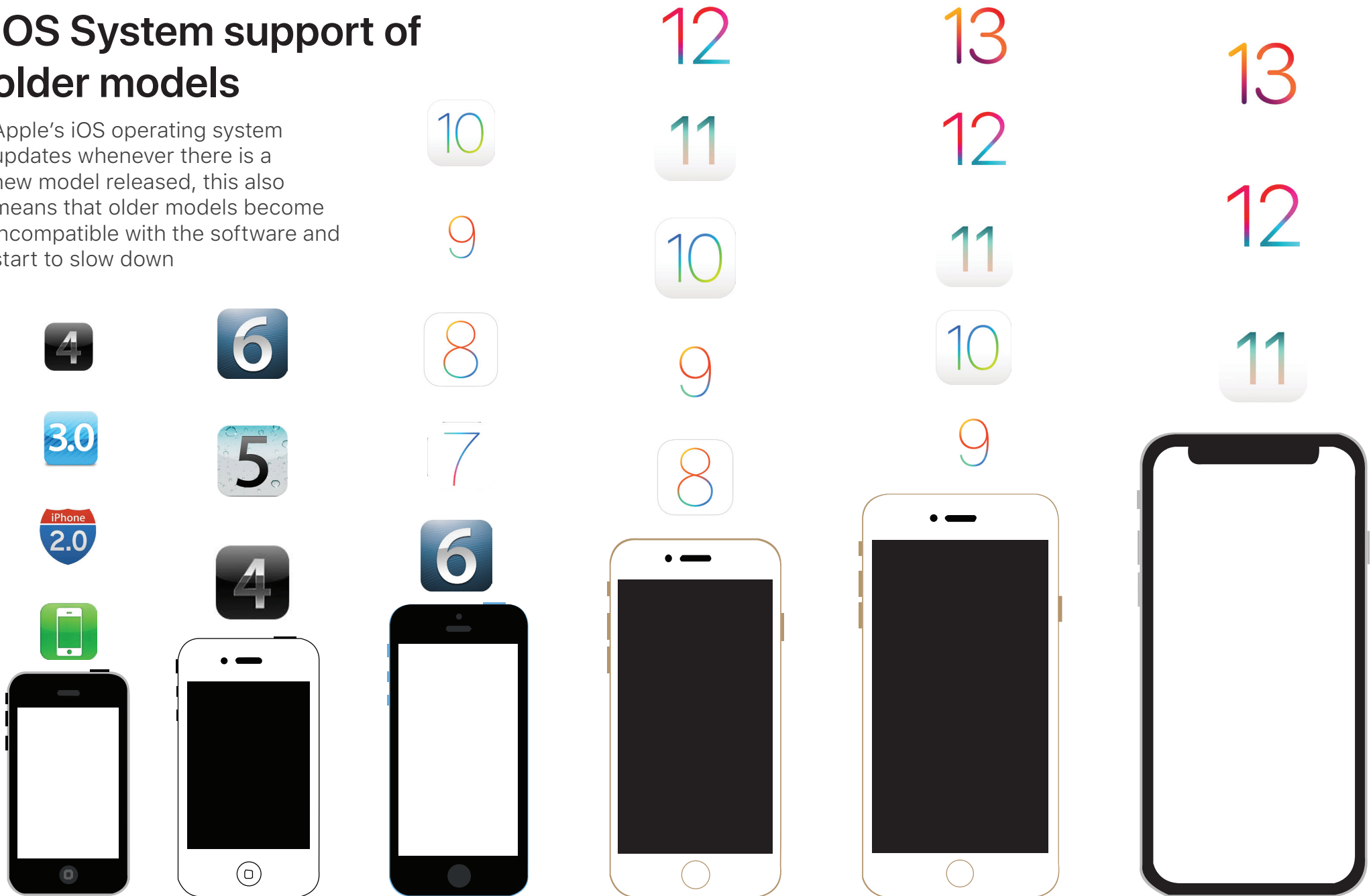
## Pentalobe Screw

Apple's proprietary five-point security screwheads which they use to secure the device hardware. It also ensures users do not attempt to self-repair



# iOS System support of older models

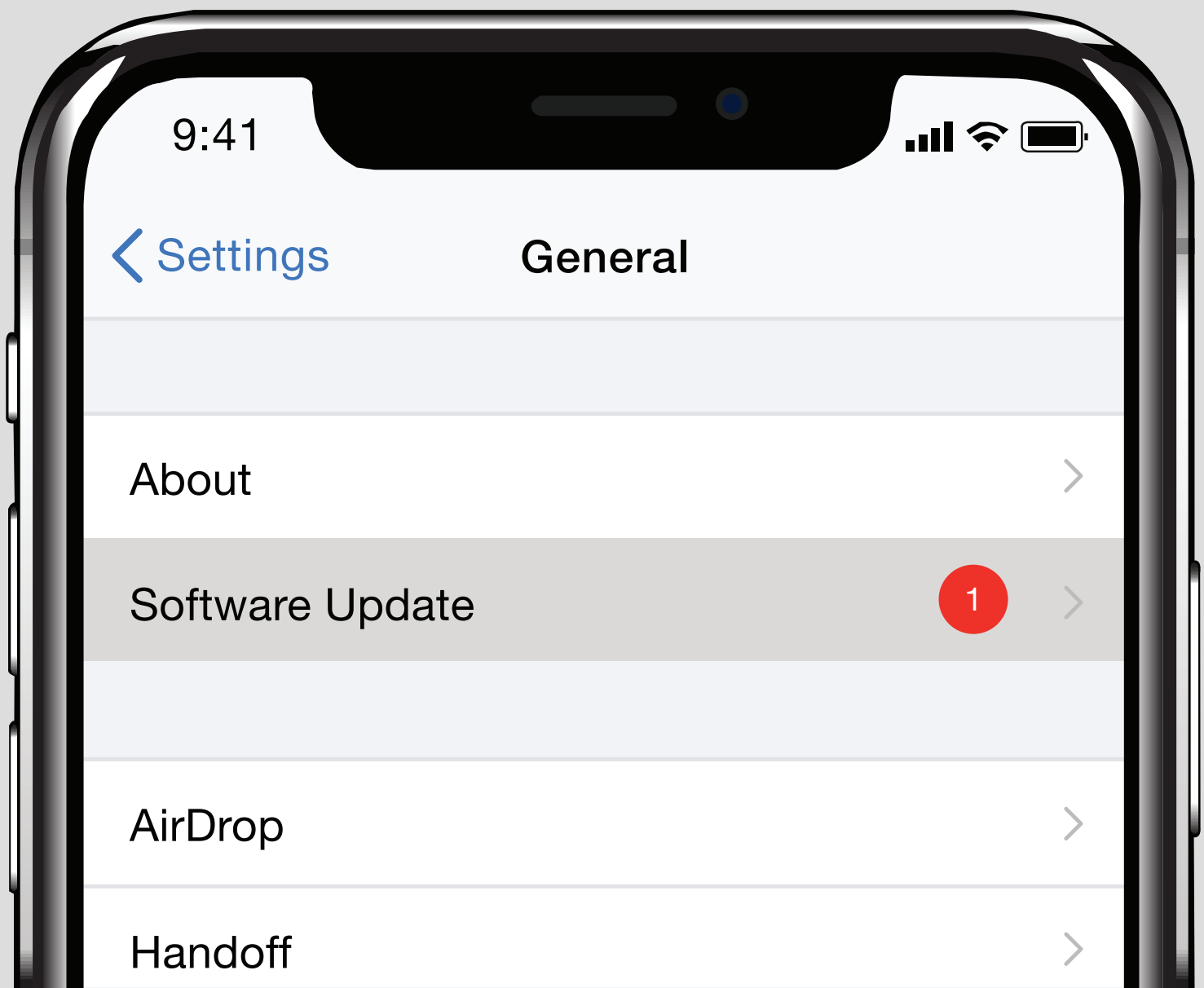
Apple's iOS operating system updates whenever there is a new model released, this also means that older models become incompatible with the software and start to slow down



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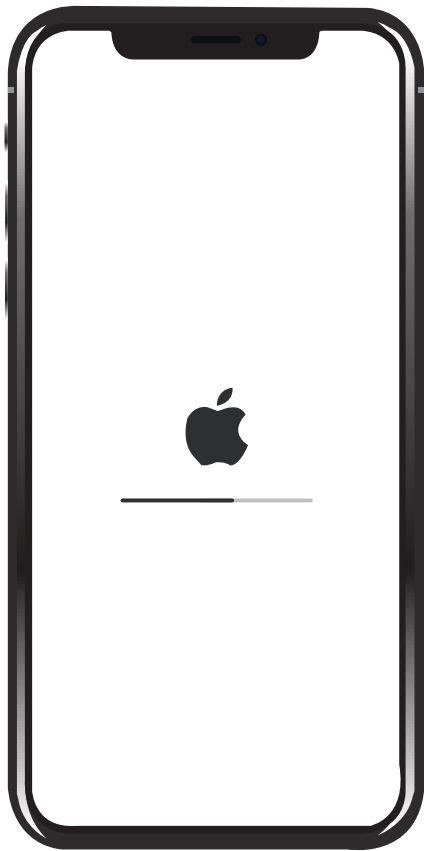
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