

Apple's Patent-Pending Passbook Updates Could Transform Shopping

A newly discovered patent application hints that Apple is planning to update its [Passbook](#) [1] digital-coupon storage app with Near-Field Communication (NFC) technology. This means future iPhone and iPod touch products may come with location-based technology that displays relevant coupons and gift cards as soon as you're near a store.

[Apple Insider](#) [2] discovered that the Cupertino-based company filed a new patent application for "Integrated coupon storage, discover and redemption system" with the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office this week. The application, dated Dec. 20, hints at Apple's intent to integrate "non-transitory computer-readable storage media for managing and redeeming electronic coupons on a mobile device."

In other words, Apple device-holders in the near future will be able to pay for items and redeem digital coupons with a wave of their iPhone or iPod touch. Store employees can either scan an image on the phone or complete a transaction through a wireless connection.

Apple introduced the [Passbook](#) [3], pre-installed on new iPhone and iPod touch devices, with the iOS 6.0 update. The mobile archive can store all your boarding passes, movie tickets, event passes, loyalty cards and coupons. Since Passbook is sensitive to time and location, concert tickets and Amtrak train passes will pop up when you need them, so you don't have to scramble for your keychain or wallet. The digital organizer will even remind you which terminal your plane is, where your concert seats are, when your coupons expire and how much money you have left on your Starbucks card.

Apple's specific claims revolve around mobile-coupon storage, aspects of redemption and location-based notifications. With Apple's proposed "integrated coupon storage," patrons will be able to walk into stores and receive notifications about items for which they have coupons. After the transaction is complete, the customer will receive a digital receipt wirelessly. Alerts will also be pushed for coupons with impending expiration dates. The patent also mentions a verification system for coupons and discounts.

An NFC update to Passbook will mean sweeter deals for shoppers, in addition to simplifying storage for discounts. While the patent application listed a range of new features, it's uncertain which of the claims Apple will incorporate into the Passbook app.

Are you willing to substitute physical gift cards and coupons for a NFC-powered mobile wallet? Tell us in the comments if you have any concerns about NFC-enabled

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