



Troubleshooting iPhone Volume Issues

iPhone Without Tears ♦ May 15 2025 ♦ Stephen Huston



This presentation touches on 10 areas of settings, controls and other issues which can keep your iPhone's sounds from playing at the levels you expect or want:

1. Action Button / Mute Switch
2. Up/Down Volume Buttons
3. Control Center settings
4. Notifications Settings
5. Sound & Haptics
6. Attention Awareness
7. Silenced Messages
8. Contacts Tones & Emergency Bypass
9. App Default Overrides
10. 🍏 Watch Notifications



1. The **Action Button** or, on older models, the **Mute Switch**. Located directly above the two volume controls on the left sides of the iPhone, this toggles the iPhone in and out of being Muted — which silences some of the iPhone's sounds. The older Mute toggle should be checked to see if the red-orange background is showing next to the toggle edge, indicating it is silenced.

On newer models with the Action Button, Settings includes a new Action Button area to pick the action of the button. The button's default is to toggle Silent Mode between On & Off.

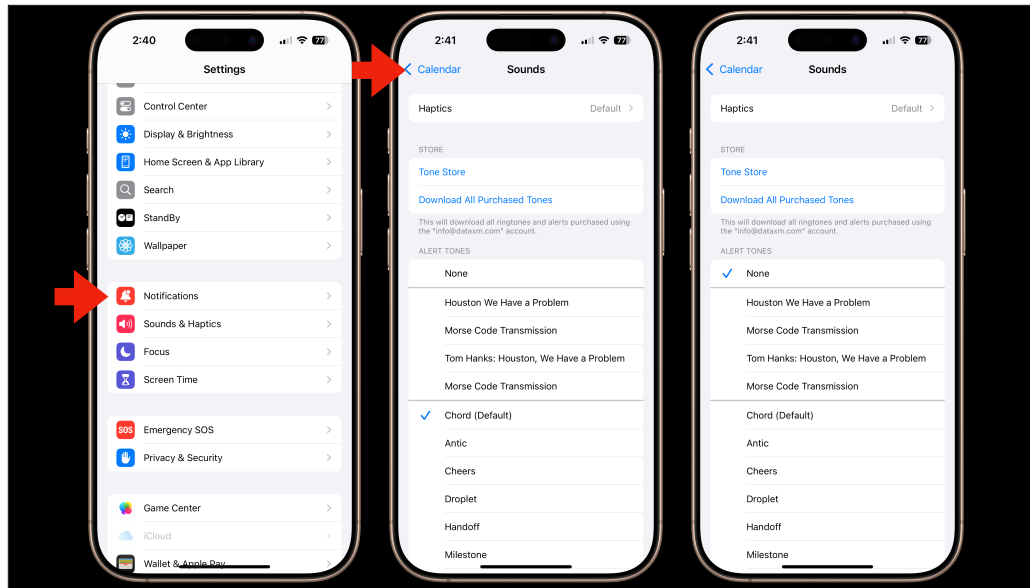


2. The Up and Down **Volume Buttons** on the left of the iPhone are just one of the places which can adjust your volume. Try pressing them while watching for an indicator at the top or left side of the screen to indicate how the volume is changing with each press.

There may also be a bell with or without a Mute Line through it in the status area at the top next to the time. More on that later...



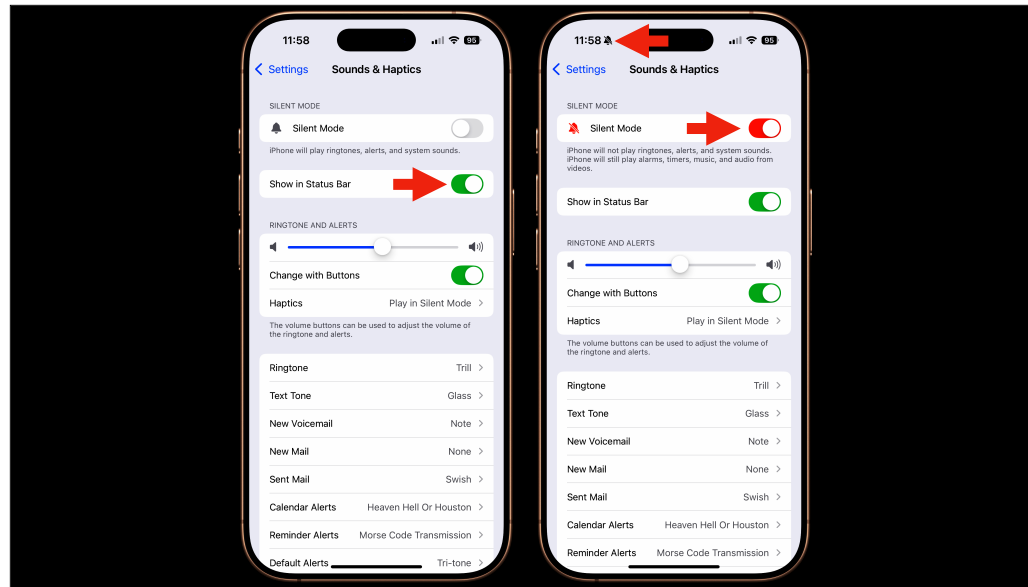
3. The **Control Center** has additional controls over the Volume of the iPhone. On the example screens above you can see the taller **Volume slider**, and below it I have placed the **Mute** control (Bell), which works as a toggle. Use these areas to adjust the volume of some sounds, but not all sounds are controlled by these areas. (More to come...)



4. **Notifications** settings for sounds. Got to Settings > Notifications, then select the App you are concerned with in the list at the bottom of the Notifications screen.

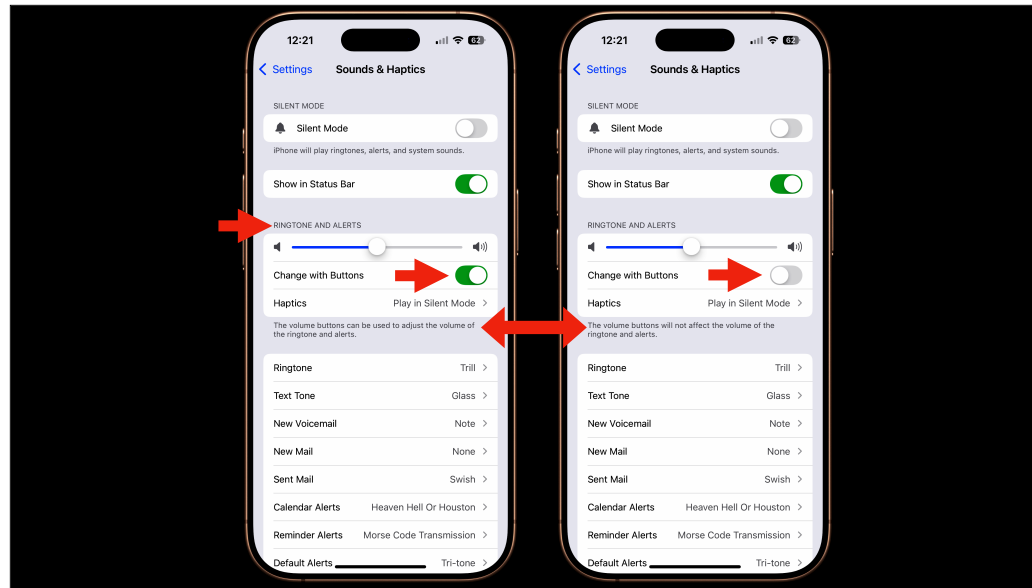
Our sample here is Calendar, where you can see both options for the Default Chord tone and None (which silences all notifications from the Calendar app's events).

Be sure to pick something you can hear easily, and not None if you are having issues with Event notifications.



5. **Sound & Haptics** in Settings provides numerous additional Settings to help you control iPhone sound volumes.

- The **Show in Status Bar** toggle turns on a little muted bell symbol next to the Time at the top left of your screen when you are muted, for additional volume info.
- The **Silent Mode** toggle is an inconvenient but very obvious control of whether or not you are in Silent Mode, though it's more easily changed elsewhere.

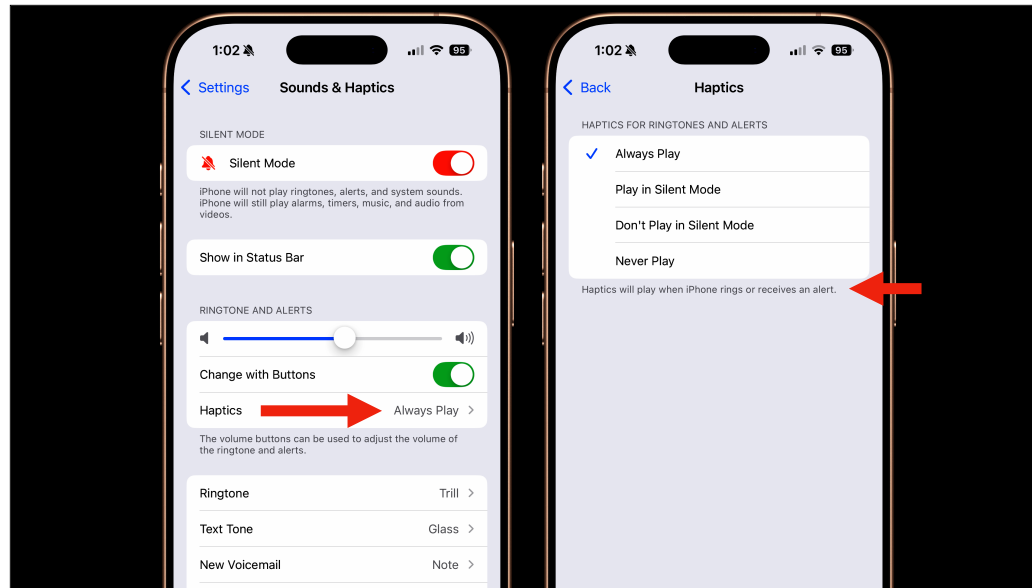


5. Continued. The Ringtone and Alerts controls are very important. Most people don't adjust these, which means the Change with Buttons toggle might be either On or Off without you being aware of it.

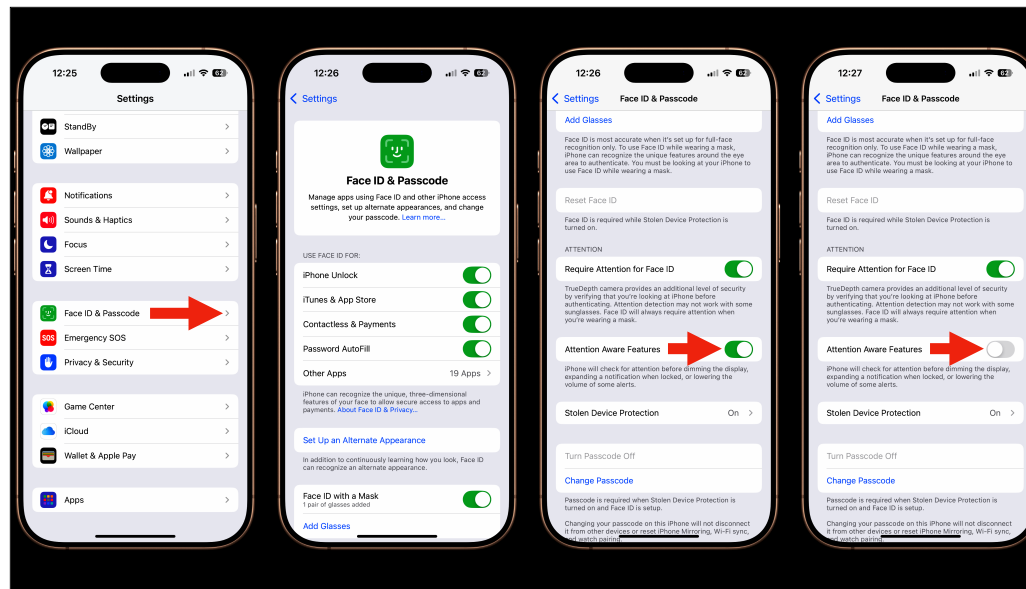
Set the volume slider high enough that your ringer is easy to hear.

You may want to turn OFF the **Change with Buttons** toggle so that volume changes made with your volume buttons don't end up turning down your ringtones and notifications so far that you miss calls & texts without being aware they happened.

Note how the tiny grey wooding changes depending on whether the Change with Buttons toggle is On or Off.

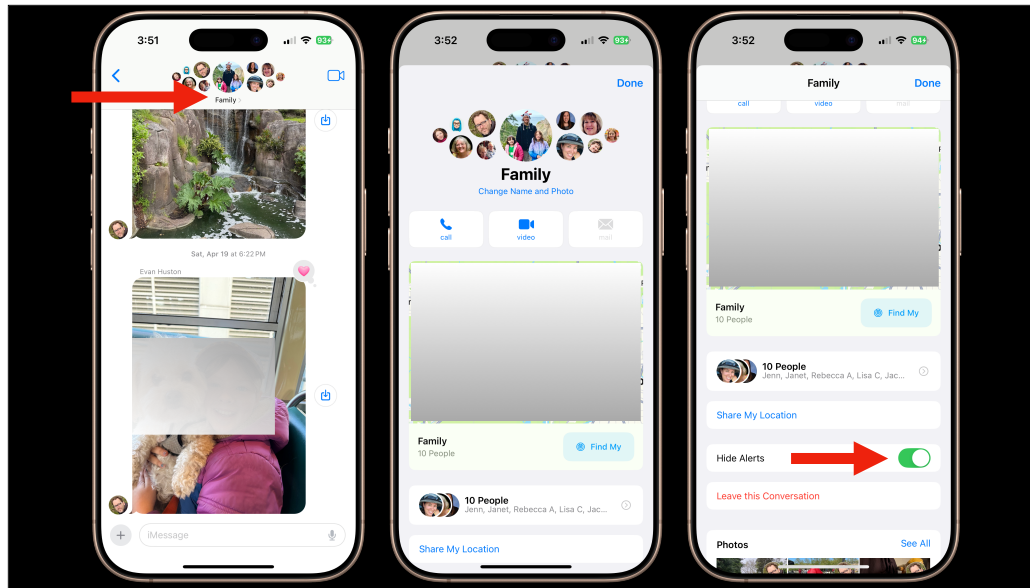


The **Sound & Haptics** area of Settings also controls the vibrations or *Haptics* which may play with some notifications. Note on the right screen that the option you select will change the description that option's effects.



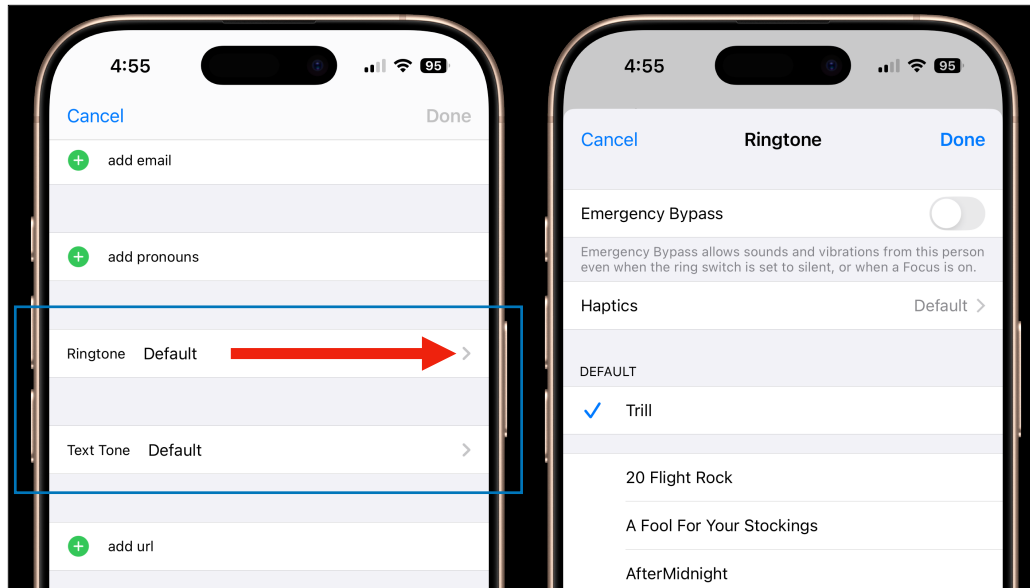
6. Attention Awareness

Settings for the Face ID & Passcode area can also affect the volume of many types of notifications, from clock alarms to the ringer for incoming phone calls on iPhones which support Face ID. Attention Awareness requires scrolling down on the Face ID settings to find the toggle, which is usually ON by default. When this toggle is On, looking at your screen, whether because the phone rang or because you were in the middle of looking at anything else on screen, such as your mail or a book, your *attention* will reduce the notification sound's volume. That sound reduction can keep you from realizing that another notification arrived while you were already looking at your screen. Turning this toggle OFF will stop your face from reducing notification volumes. However, turning it Off will also remove the requirement that your eyes actually look toward the screen for your face to unlock things!



7. Silenced Message Threads

Individual Message threads might be silenced, which will stop any notifications from that message thread. This is actually quite easy to *turn ON by accident* when trying to dismiss a notification, so it bears checking anytime you think a text message is failing to sound its notification on arrival. Go to the Thread and tap on the top area with the image and or name of the thread. On the details screen for the thread, scroll down to Hide Alerts. If the toggle is green, then that thread is being silenced. Toggle Hide Alerts back to OFF (grey) to hear future notifications.

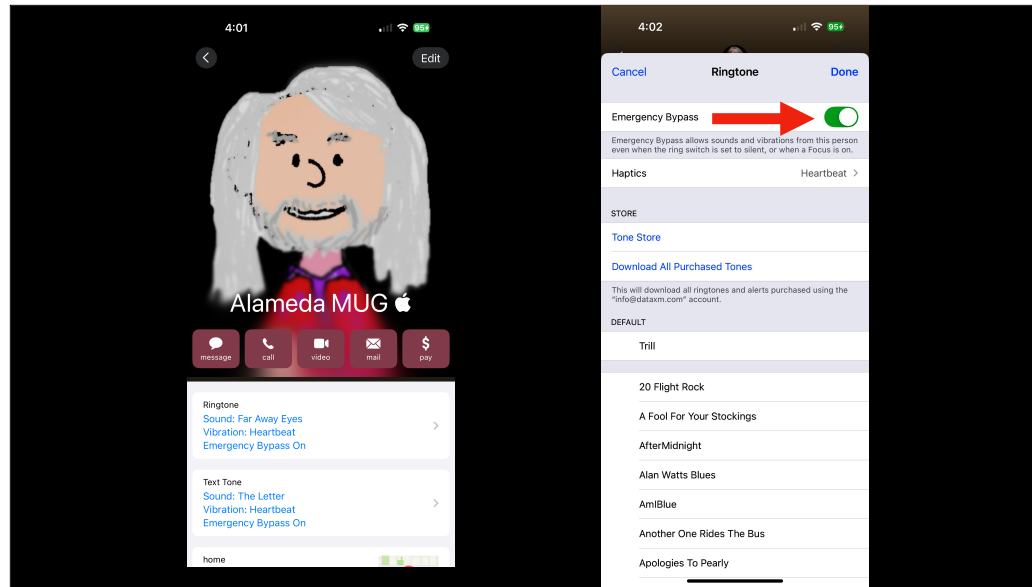


8. **Contacts Special Ringtone** or Text Tone.

If you have a specific Contact whose calls or messages are not triggering notifications, check that individual's Contact records to see if they have had a Special Ringtone or Text Tone assigned, or to assign them one to make stuff from that person easier to hear and identify.

Open the Contact and hit the Edit button in the top right of their contact screen, then scroll down to the Ring Tone and Text Tone areas to choose the tone you want, or to set it back to the default if the special tone is not playing well for you.

This can allow you to quickly identify incoming texts or calls from specific family members or others you want to learn to recognize by sound.



Contact Emergency Bypass!

Also in the Contact Ringtone and Text Tone areas, you can toggle ON the Emergency Bypass option for special contacts who you want to hear the tones for at full volume — even when the Do Not Disturb focus is turned On or the Mute button is activated!



9. App Defaults & Overrides

Some Apps have their own special methods of handling sound, and some of these seem to ignore anything else in your Settings. For instance, Apple's Music app will sometimes ignore the volume buttons on your iPhone if you airPlay music from your iPhone through another device.

Some 3rd party apps are even worse, ignoring settings about auto-playing video to blast video ads at high volume without you even clicking on the ad, just by opening a story which includes a video to which the app makers sell ad previews before the video.

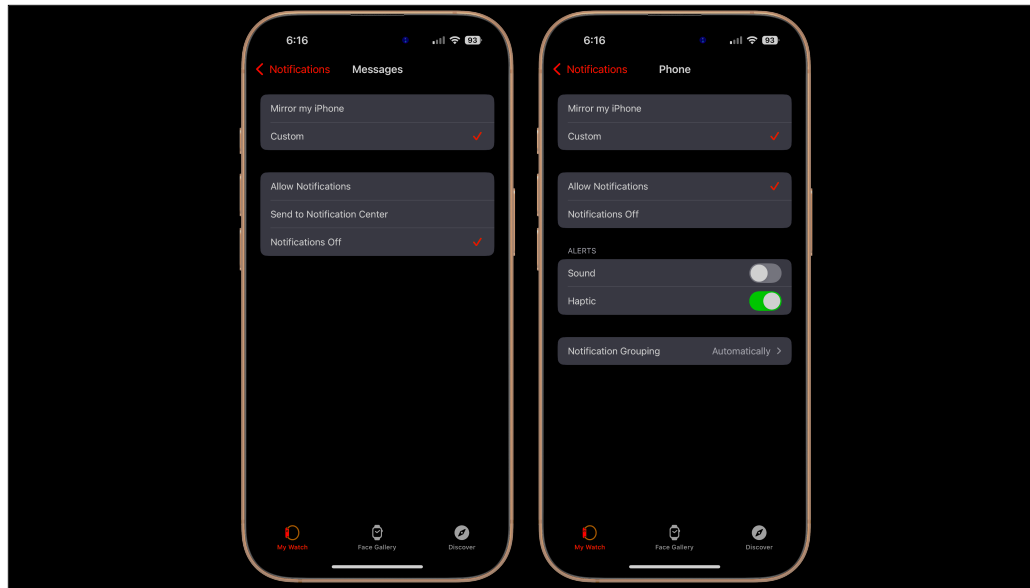
Be aware that any app which is specifically intended to play either audio or video as its main function will probably play its sounds to its own defaults without regard for your iPhone's Settings.



10. **Apple Watch Notifications Settings**

Your **Apple Watch** can affect *how notifications play on your iPhone!*

Watch notifications are controlled in the Watch App on the iPhone. In the Watch App's own Notifications area, scroll down to the entries for Messages and Phone (calls), and click on each of these to check how they are playing with your iPhone's own notifications....



Watch Notifications, cont.

If your custom ringtones have quit playing on your iPhone while you wear your Apple Watch, these settings probably need to be changed from Mirror My iPhone (which lets them take over notification duties from your phone) to Custom, so that you may either turn notifications Off on the Watch or disable it's default sounds so that your iPhone will play it's original Notification sounds as they were set there.

These changes can re-enable any custom ringtones you have set on the iPhone for specific Contacts so that you again hear your expected tones without your watch interfering.



This presentation covered numerous Settings, controls and causes for your iPhone's sounds not playing at the levels you expect or want due to these 10 items:

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