How To Navigate a 360° Video

There are four common ways to watch a 360° YouTube video:

- With a browser on your computer
- In “magic window” mode on your phone or tablet
- With a phone-based, Google Cardboard-compatible virtual reality (VR) headset
- With a standalone VR headset

Note that not all browsers, phones, tablets, and VR headsets support watching 360° YouTube videos.

Browser

When you play a YouTube 360° video, it will initially look like any other video. The key difference is that you can use your mouse—or finger if you’re using a touch screen—to look left, right, up, and down. These instructions should work for most browsers on most computers.

A 360° video often defaults to low resolution so the first thing you need to do is to increase the resolution. Here are the steps:

- Open your internet browser (e.g. Google Chrome, Safari)
- Visit our tutorial video at bit.ly/2YGlvth
- Click the gear icon in the lower-right corner of the video player to access the Settings options.
- Click on “Quality,” and select “2160s 4K.”
- Start the video. If it does not play correctly, then repeat these steps and select a lower resolution. Use the highest resolution that your network speed will support.
- If you click and release in the video without moving the mouse, the video will pause. To resume, click the play symbol in the lower left section or simply click again in the main screen of the video.
How To Navigate a 360° Video

If you have a mouse, you can navigate in the 360° video by left clicking and holding the mouse button, then dragging the mouse to change your view.

When looking directly up or directly down the video might “stop” moving, as though you had hit a wall. In this case you might need to “look” back down or back up in order to continue navigating.

If you have a touch screen simply touch the video and drag your finger to move your view. As with the mouse, if you touch the screen without moving your finger then the video might pause. Restart by either touching the play button or simply touching the screen again.

“Magic Window” Mode

Most newer devices support “magic window” mode, which allows you to see all around you in 360° by pointing your device in different directions. In essence, you’re provided a “window” into which you can view a spherical 360° world.

To view a 360° video in magic window mode, you will first need the YouTube app installed on your mobile device. In this example we are showing an Android phone; an iPhone works similarly. Here are the steps:

- Install the free YouTube App on your device using the App Store.
- Open your internet browser app (e.g., Android Browser, Chrome, Safari) on your device and visit https://youtu.be/d1eIETcsWu8
- YouTube will display a message that says “360° video playback is not supported on this browser. Please use the YouTube app.” Select the “Play in App” button.
How To Navigate a 360° Video

- YouTube often defaults to a low resolution. To increase the resolution, select the three vertical dots on the upper right to open settings. If you don’t see the three dots then touch the screen to make them appear. Once the settings are open, select “Quality,” then select “2160s.”

- To view the video in full screen magic window mode select the broken square on the bottom right of the video window.
- You are now in magic window mode. The screen will look like the full-screen image below. To see 360° just point the device in different directions, including up and down. You can also turn the phone horizontal to view the magic window in that orientation.
How To Navigate a 360° Video

Phone-based, Google Cardboard-compatible Virtual Reality (VR) Headset

If you have a Google cardboard-compatible VR headset you can use your phone to have an even more immersive experience. Here are a few examples of Google cardboard-compatible VR headsets.

- Start by going into magic window mode, as described above. At the lower right you will see an icon that looks like a VR headset. If you don’t see it, then touch the screen and it should appear.

Click the VR head set icon and turn your device to the horizontal orientation. You will now see two side-by-side images.

Place your phone in the Google cardboard-compatible VR headset by following the instructions that came with it and you can now simply look around to see 360°.

Standalone VR Headset

You can also view 360° YouTube videos in many standalone VR headsets, which come with their own display. Simply install the YouTube VR app and search for 360° videos from Pacific Science Center.

Happy viewing!