Tasks - understanding your user

No one interacts with a computer because they want to use it.

They interact with the computer to do something with it. To accomplish a task of some sort.

A large part of human-computer interaction is about making those tasks easy to accomplish using the computer.

Tasks and subtasks

- A “task” is basically something someone wants to do. It is typically high level and expresses some state that user wants to achieve.
  - Determine if I need to buy anything fridge-related from the store.
  - Spend an hour playing not-too-challenging games
  - Play the song I just thought of.
- A subtask is a smaller task that must be completed to complete the larger task
  - What was the name of the song?
  - Which music service is likely to have it?
  - There are two versions, which one do I want to play?

Simple example:

Task: Set an alarm for 7:00am

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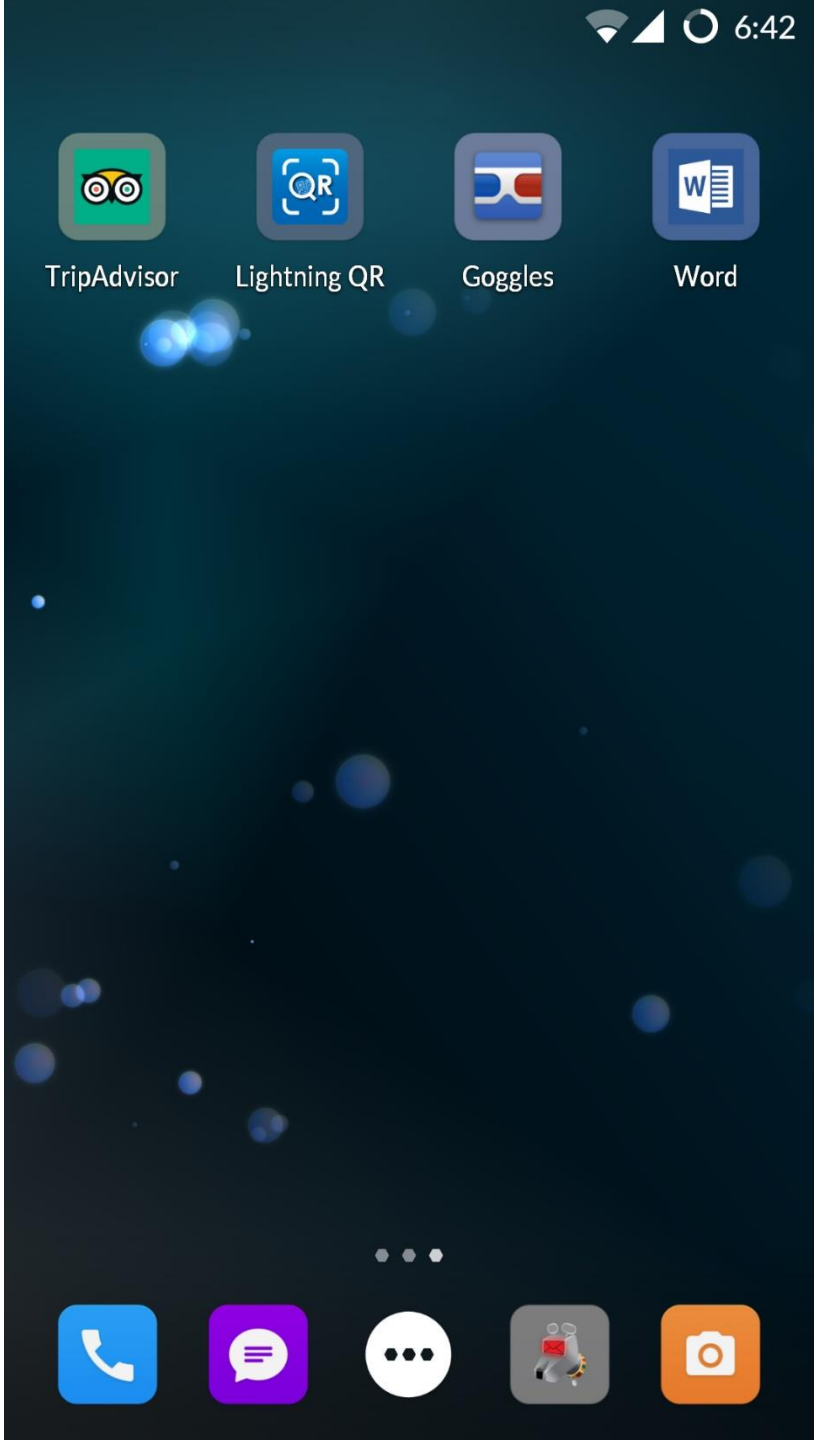
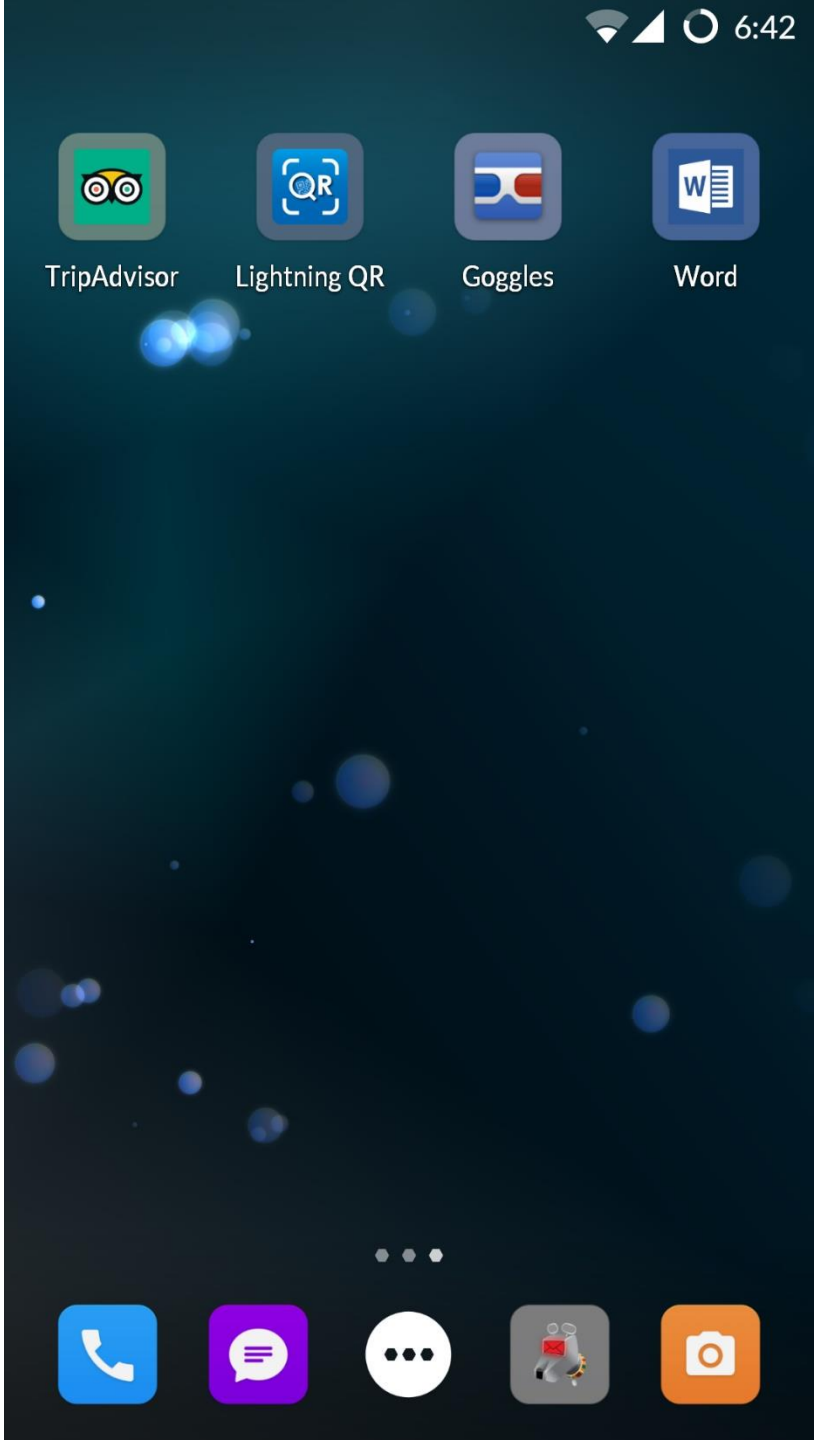


Task: Set an alarm for 7:00am

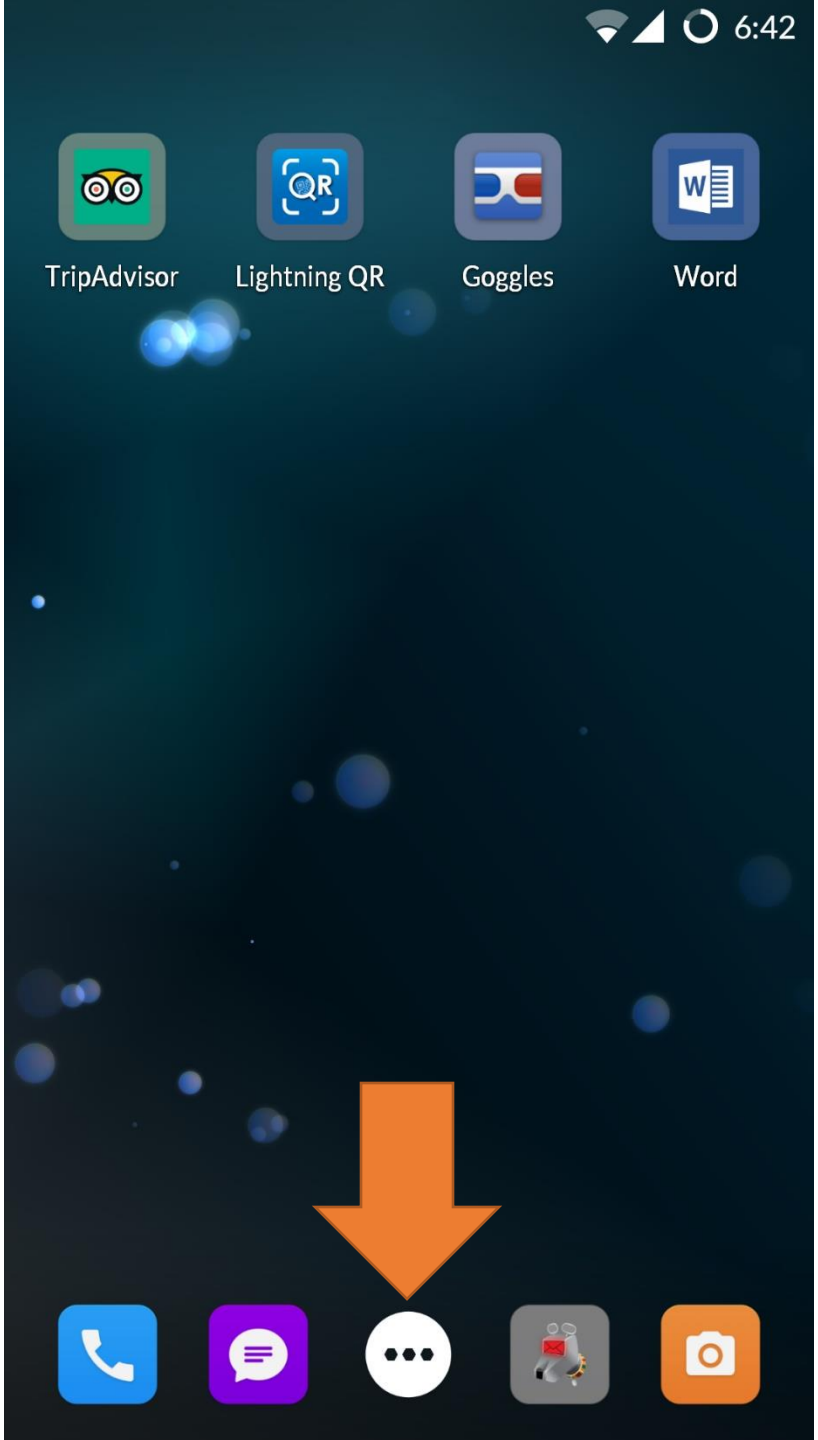
Subtask 1:
Find an app that supports “alarm clock” type functionality.



Task: Set an alarm for 7:00am

Subtask 1:
Find an app that supports “alarm clock” type functionality.

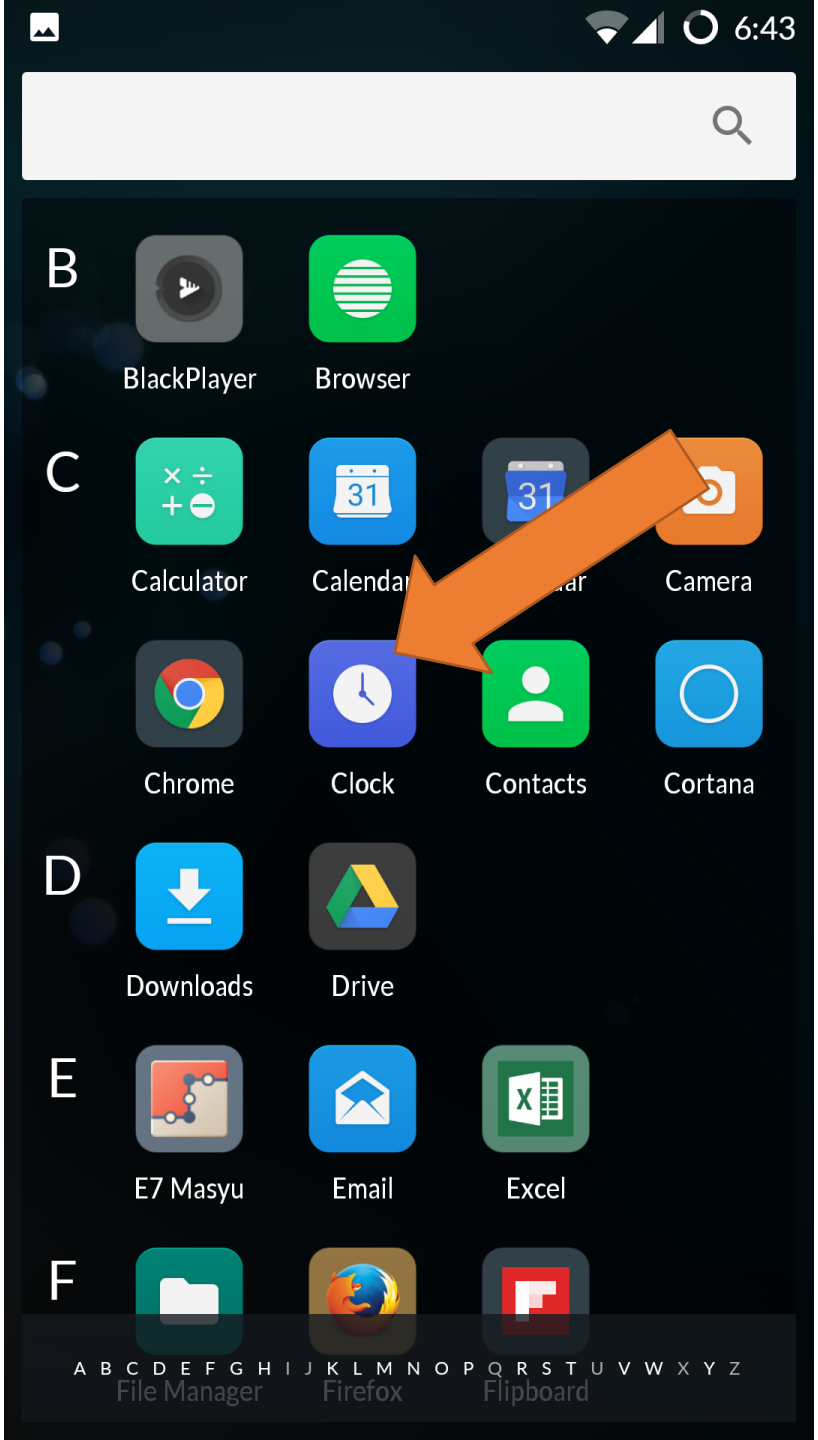
Subtask 2:
Find a list of all apps



Task: Set an alarm for 7:00am

Subtask 1:

Find an app that supports “alarm clock” type functionality.

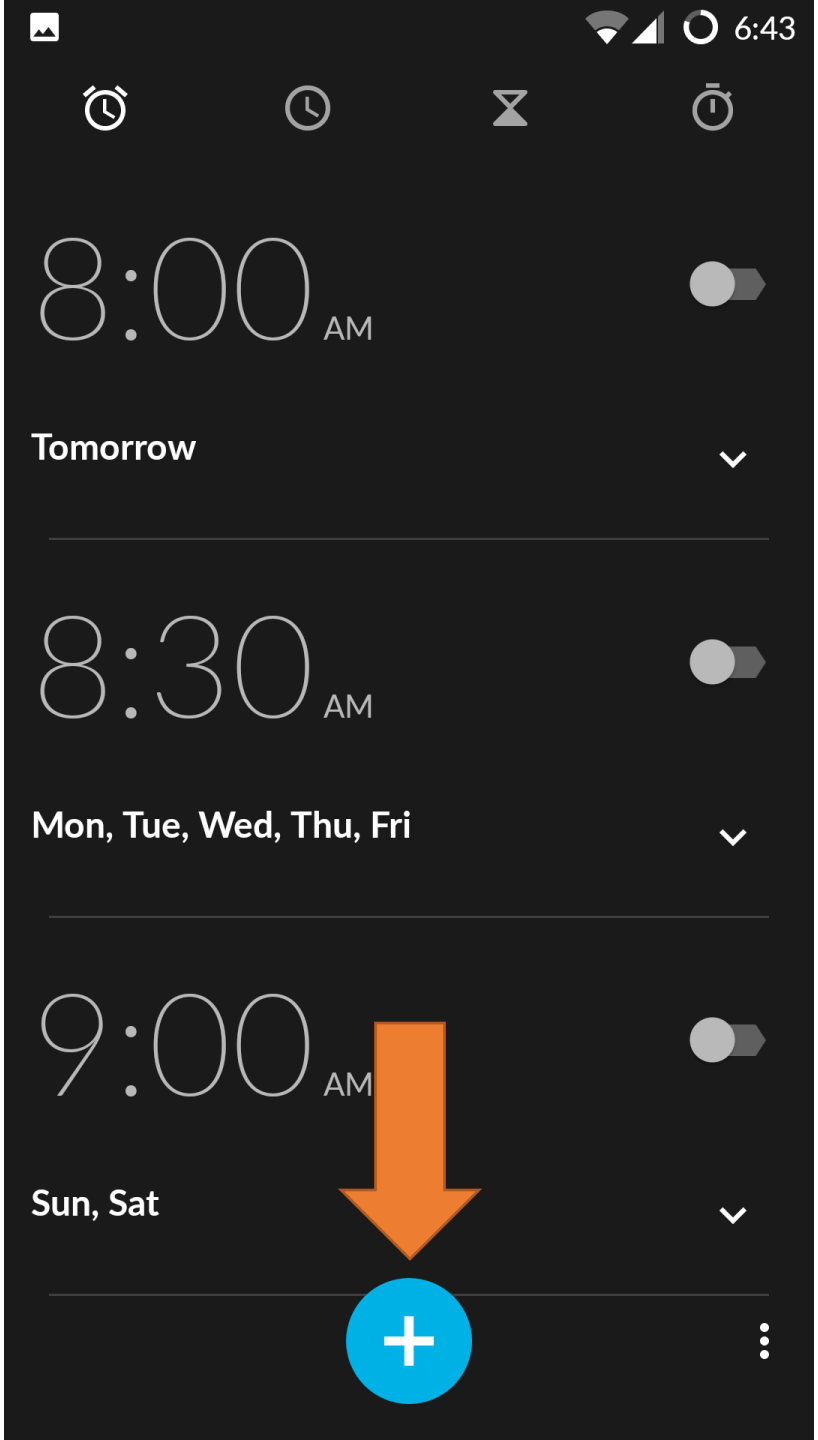


Task: Set an alarm for 7:00am

Subtask 1:
Find an app that supports “alarm clock” type functionality.

Task: Set an alarm for 7:00am

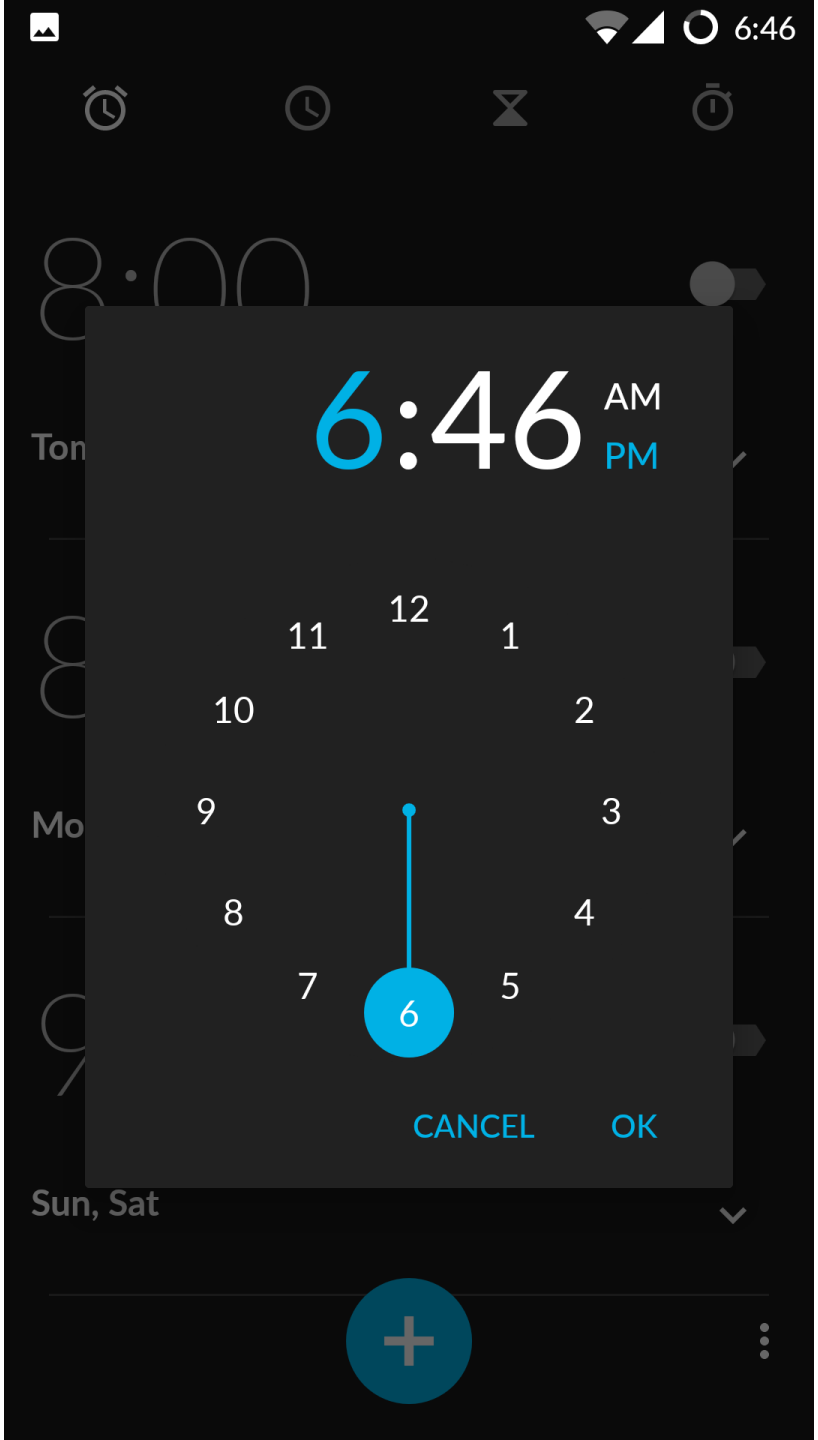
Subtask 3:
Create a new scheduled alarm.



Task: Set an alarm for 7:00am

Subtask 3:
Create a new scheduled alarm.

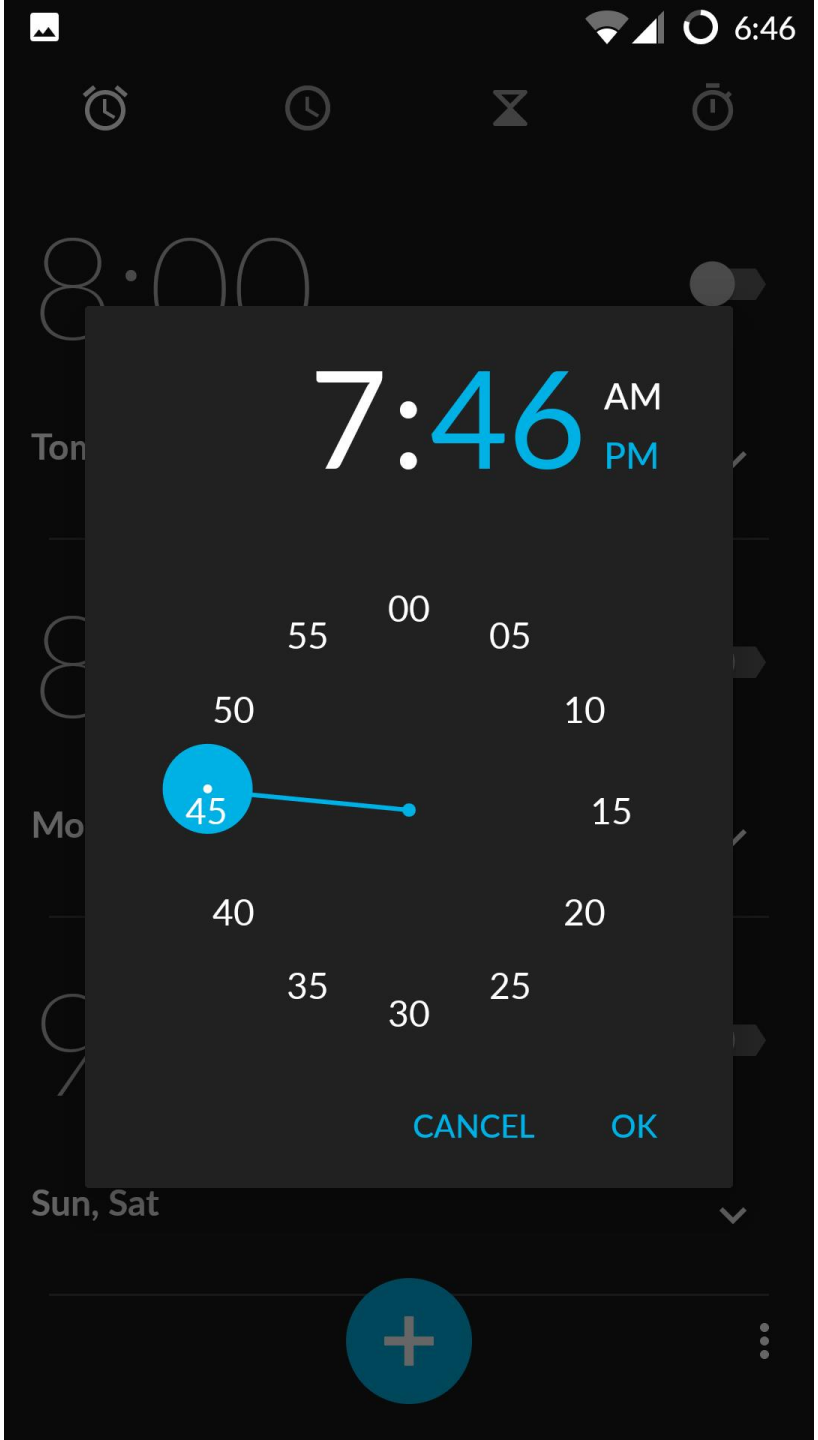
Subtask 4:
Set the hour to 7



Task: Set an alarm for 7:00am

Subtask 3:
Create a new scheduled alarm.

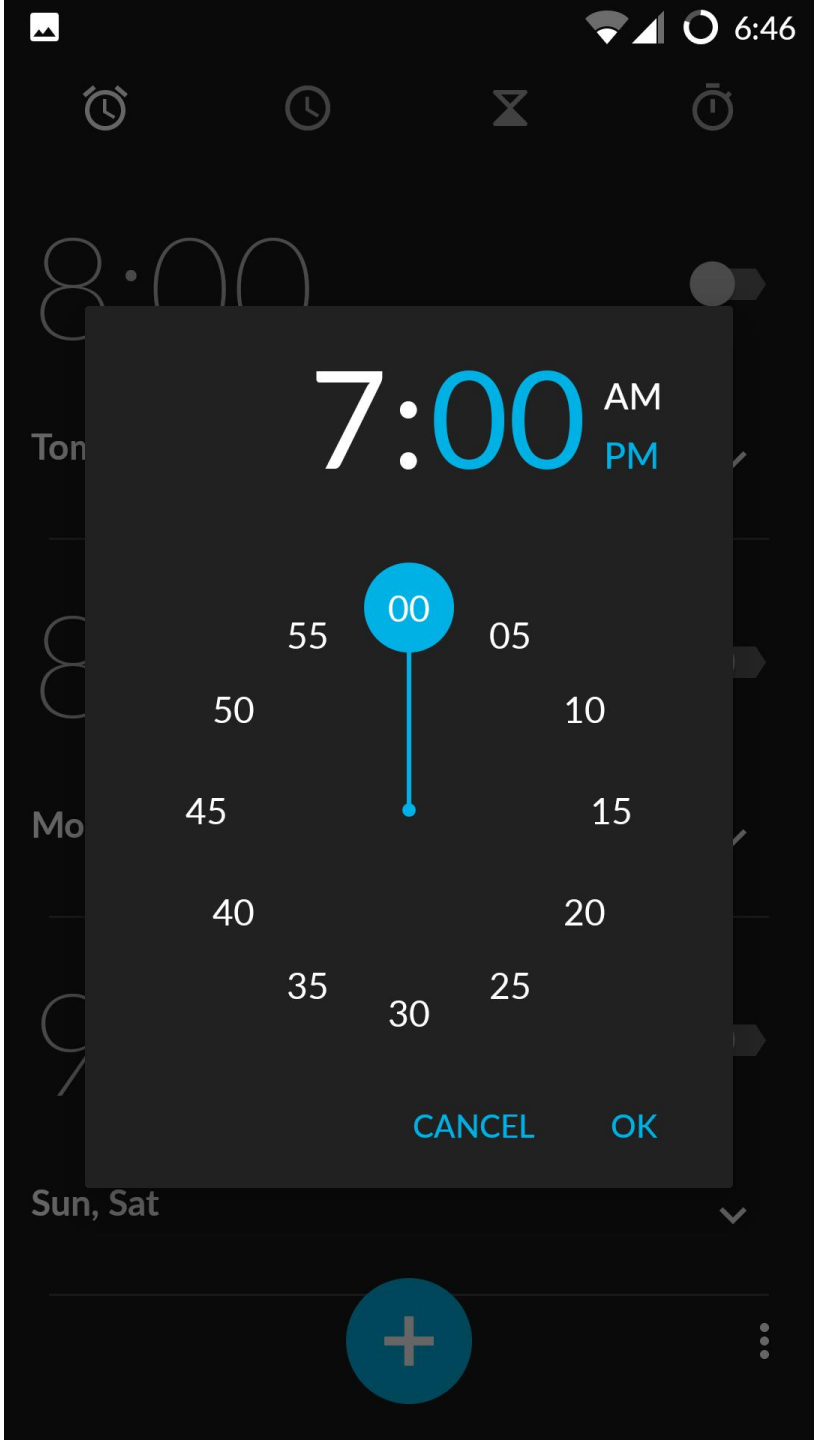
Subtask 5:
Set minutes to 00



Task: Set an alarm for 7:00am

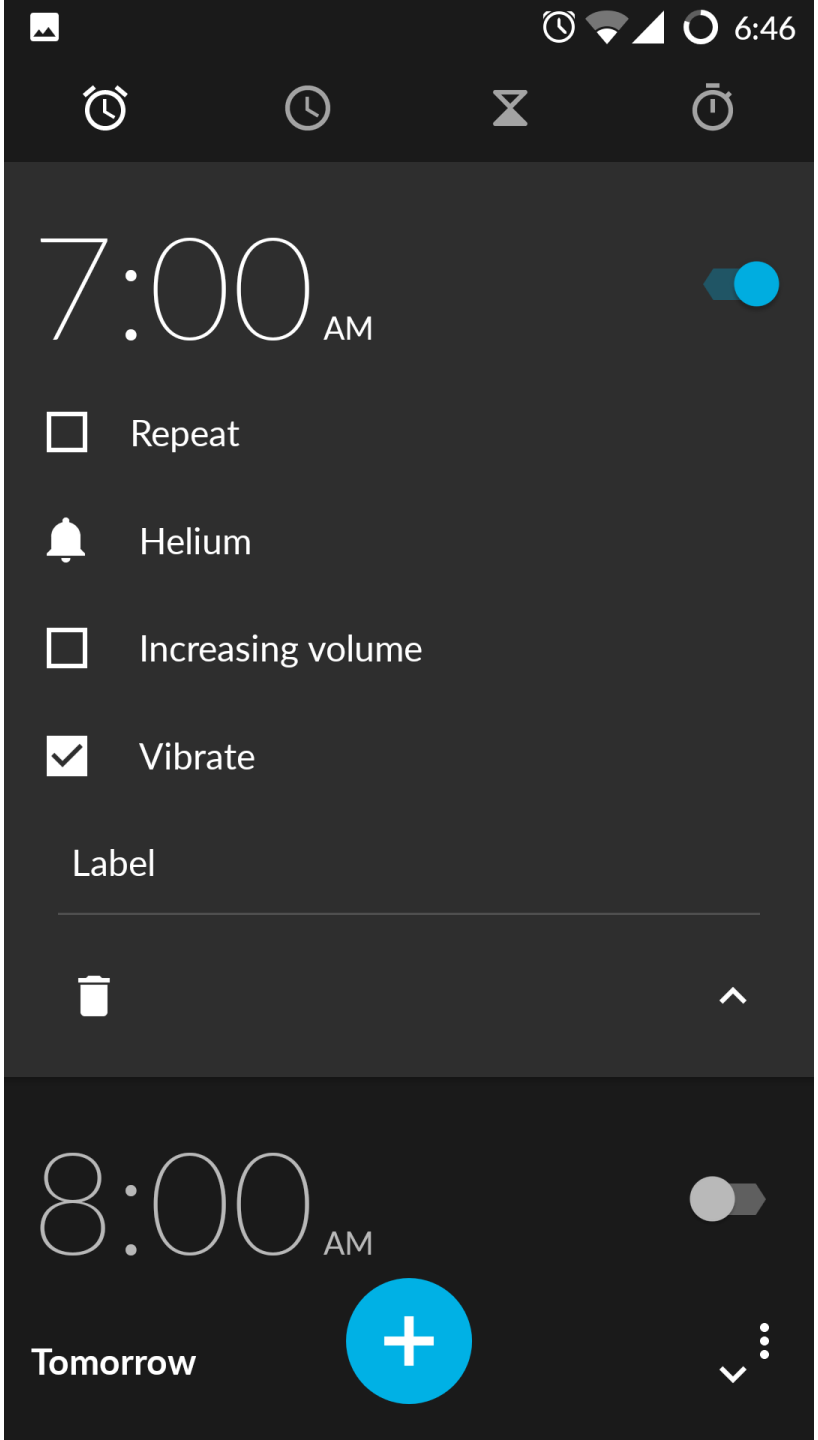
Subtask 3:
Create a new scheduled alarm.

Subtask 6:
Set to “AM”

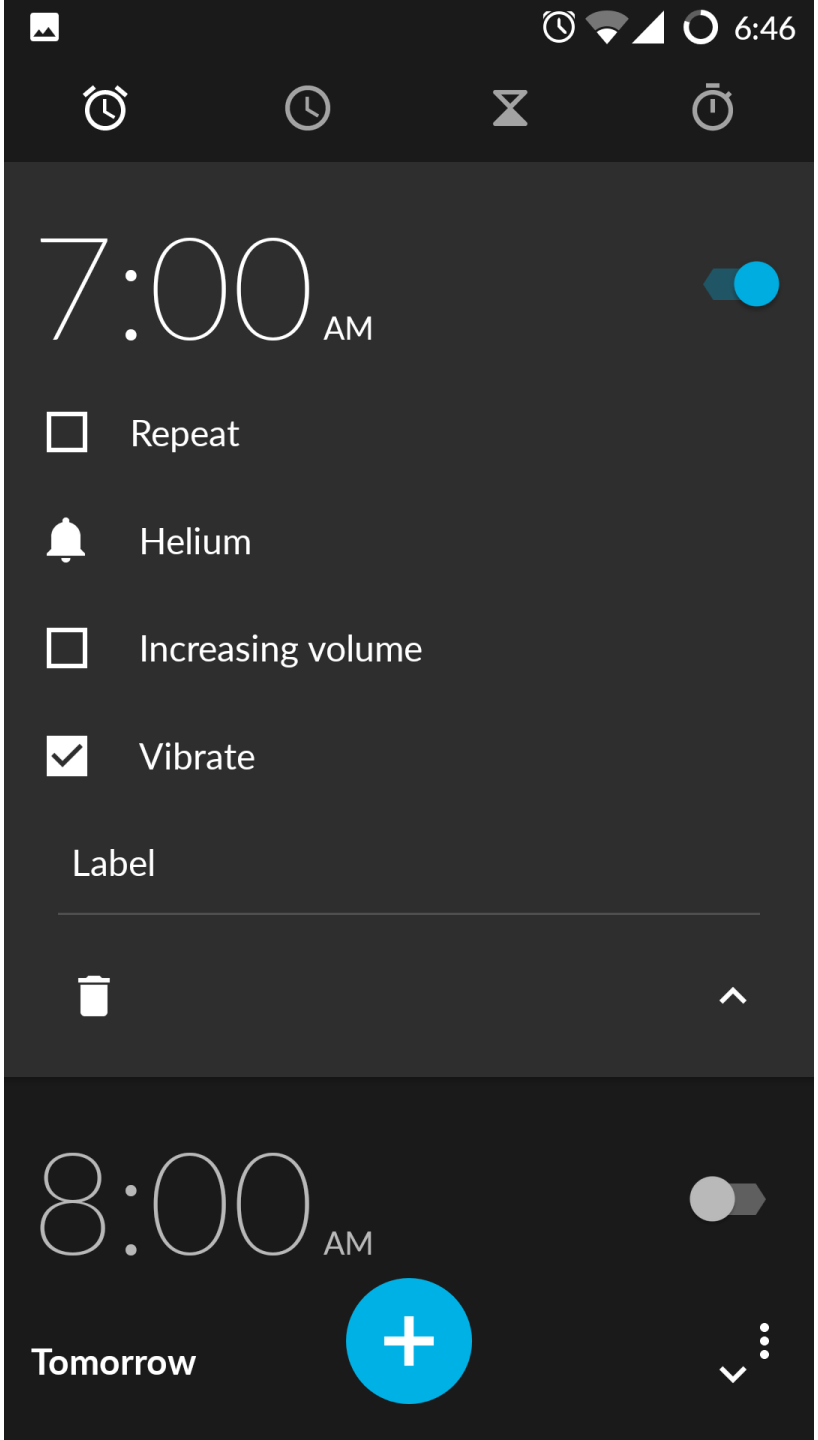


Task: Set an alarm for 7:00am

Subtask 7:
Check that the time has been correctly set and the alarm is now “on”



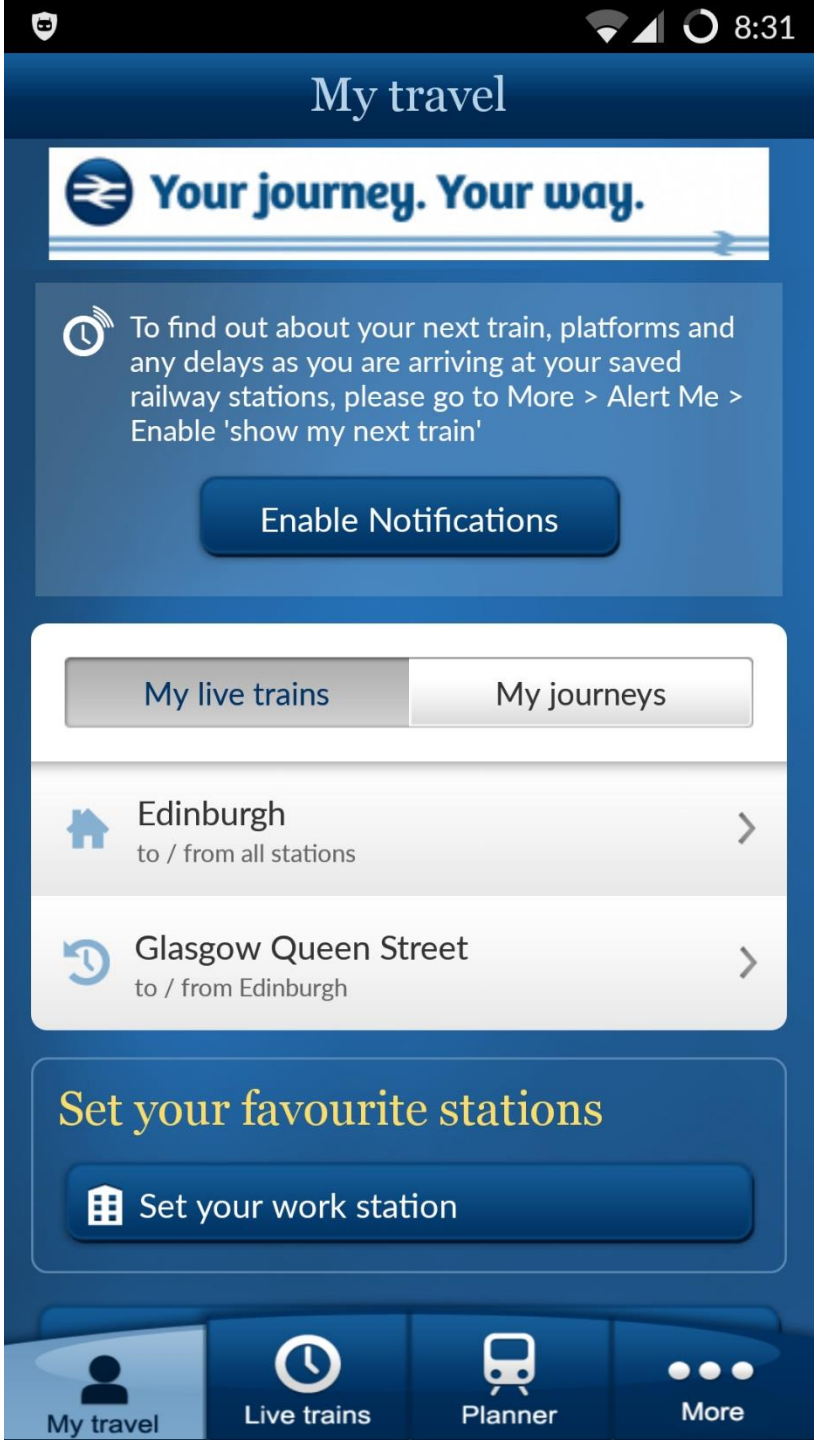
Task Completed!



More complex example:

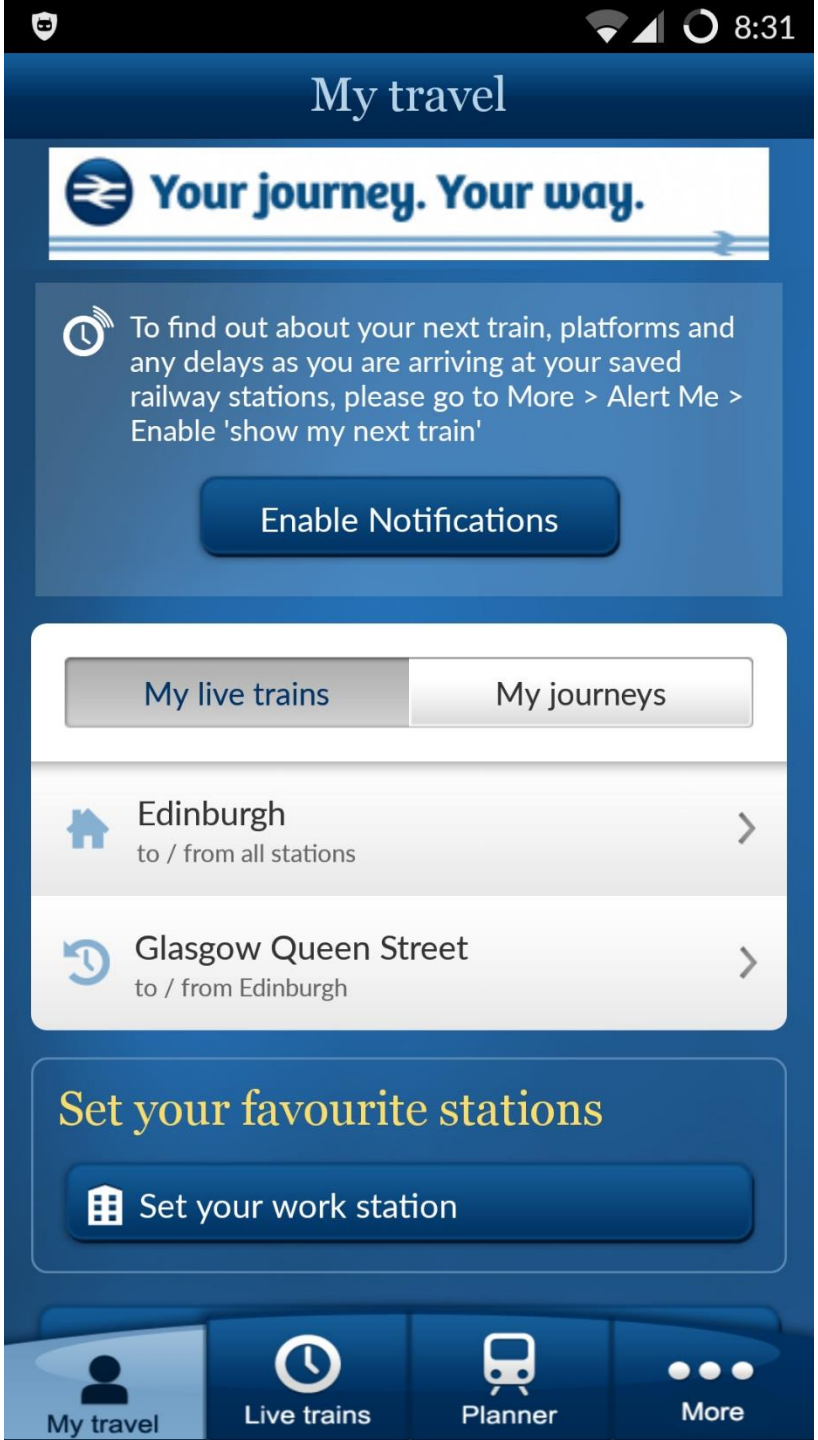
Task: Find the next train from Edinburgh Waverly to University of Strathclyde using the National Rail app.

Task: Find the next train from Waverly to U. Strathclyde using the National Rail app.



Task: Find the next train from Waverly to U. Strathclyde using the National Rail app.

Subtask 1:
Where is the University of Strathclyde?



Task: Find the next train from Waverly to U. Strathclyde using the National Rail app.

Subtask 1:
Where is the University of Strathclyde?

Task: Find the next train from Waverly to U. Strathclyde using the National Rail app.

Subtask 2:
What is the nearest train station to the University of Strathclyde?

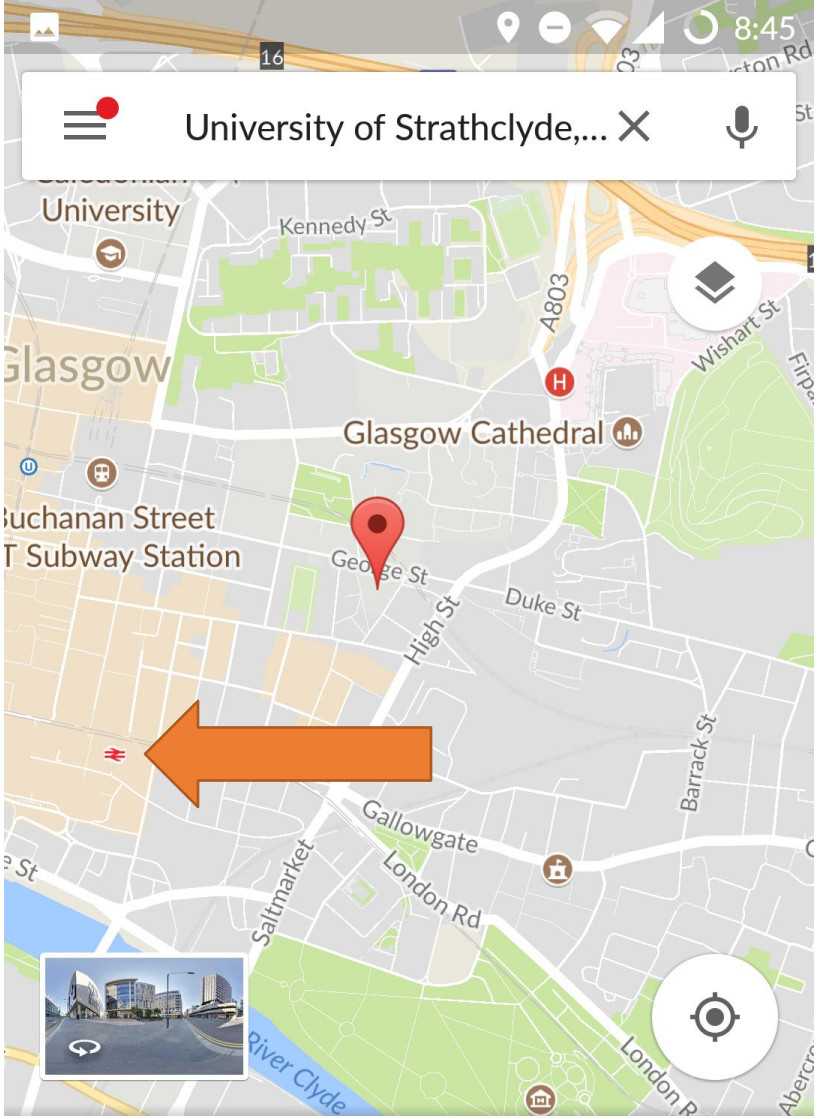
University of Strathclyde,The Technol...

4.7 ★★★★½ (12) • 1 hr 9 min

MORE INFO DIRECTIONS

Task: Find the next train from Waverly to U. Strathclyde using the National Rail app.

Subtask 2:
What is the nearest train station to the University of Strathclyde?



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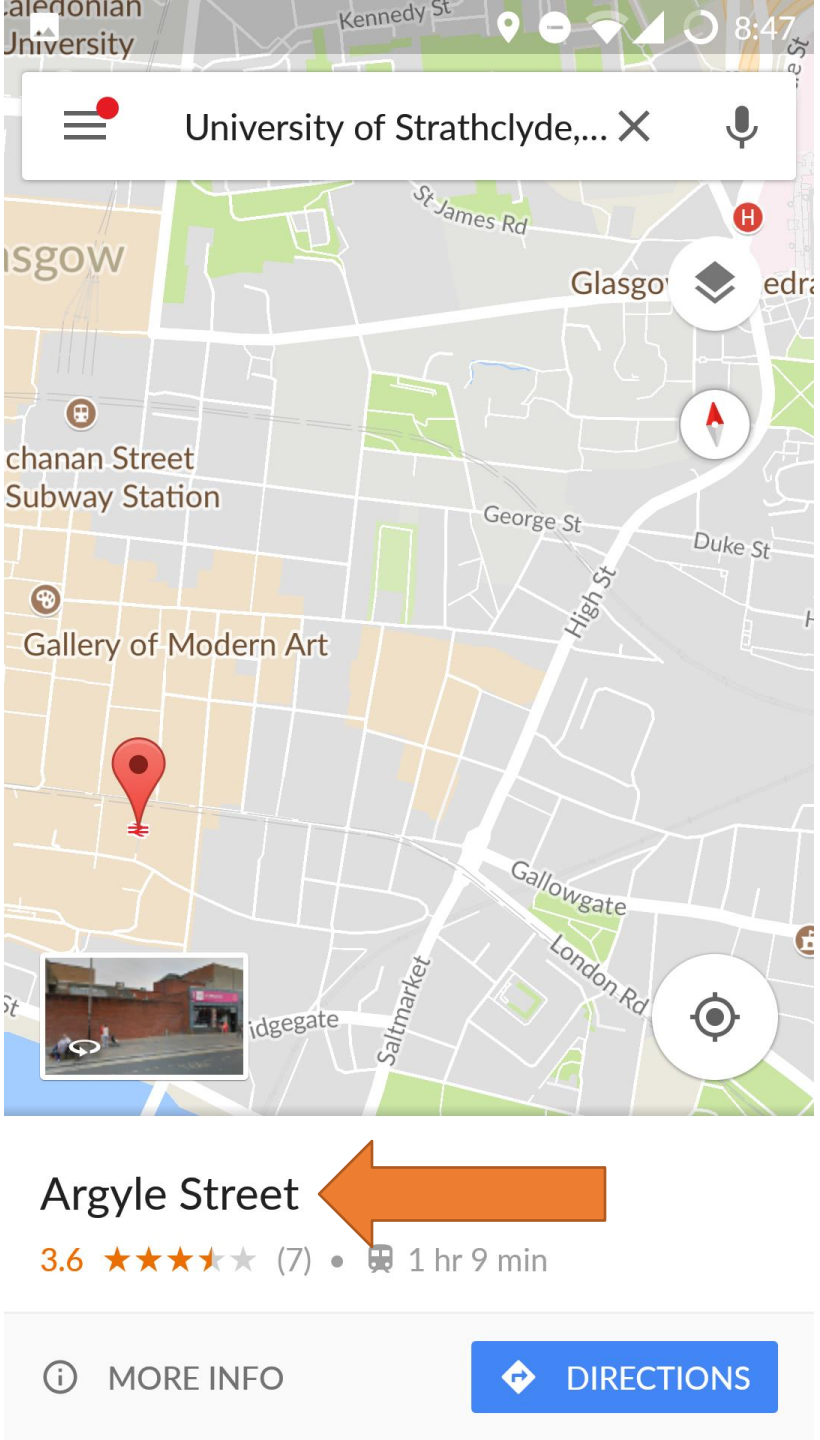
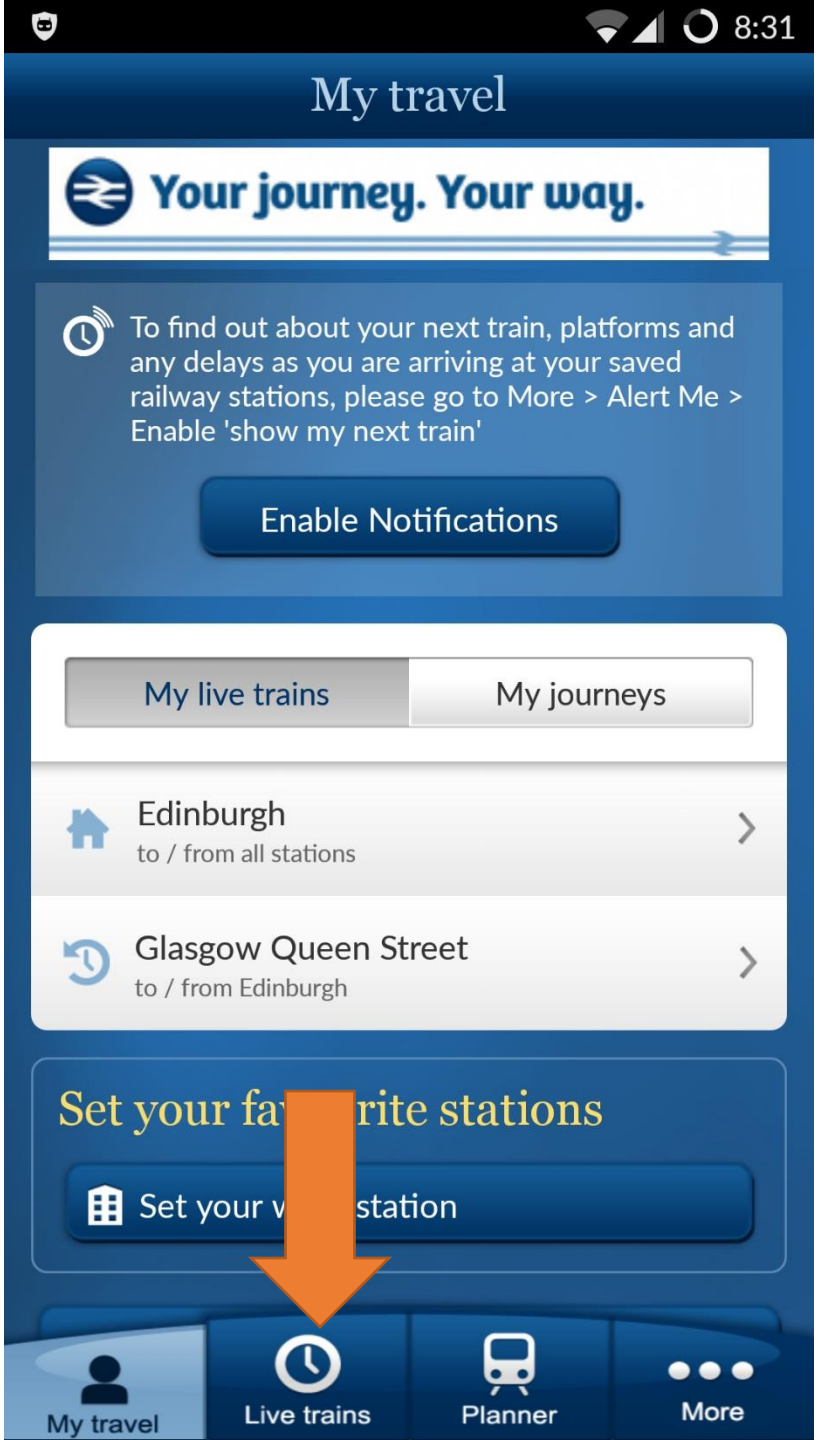
Subtask 2:
What is the nearest train station to the University of Strathclyde?

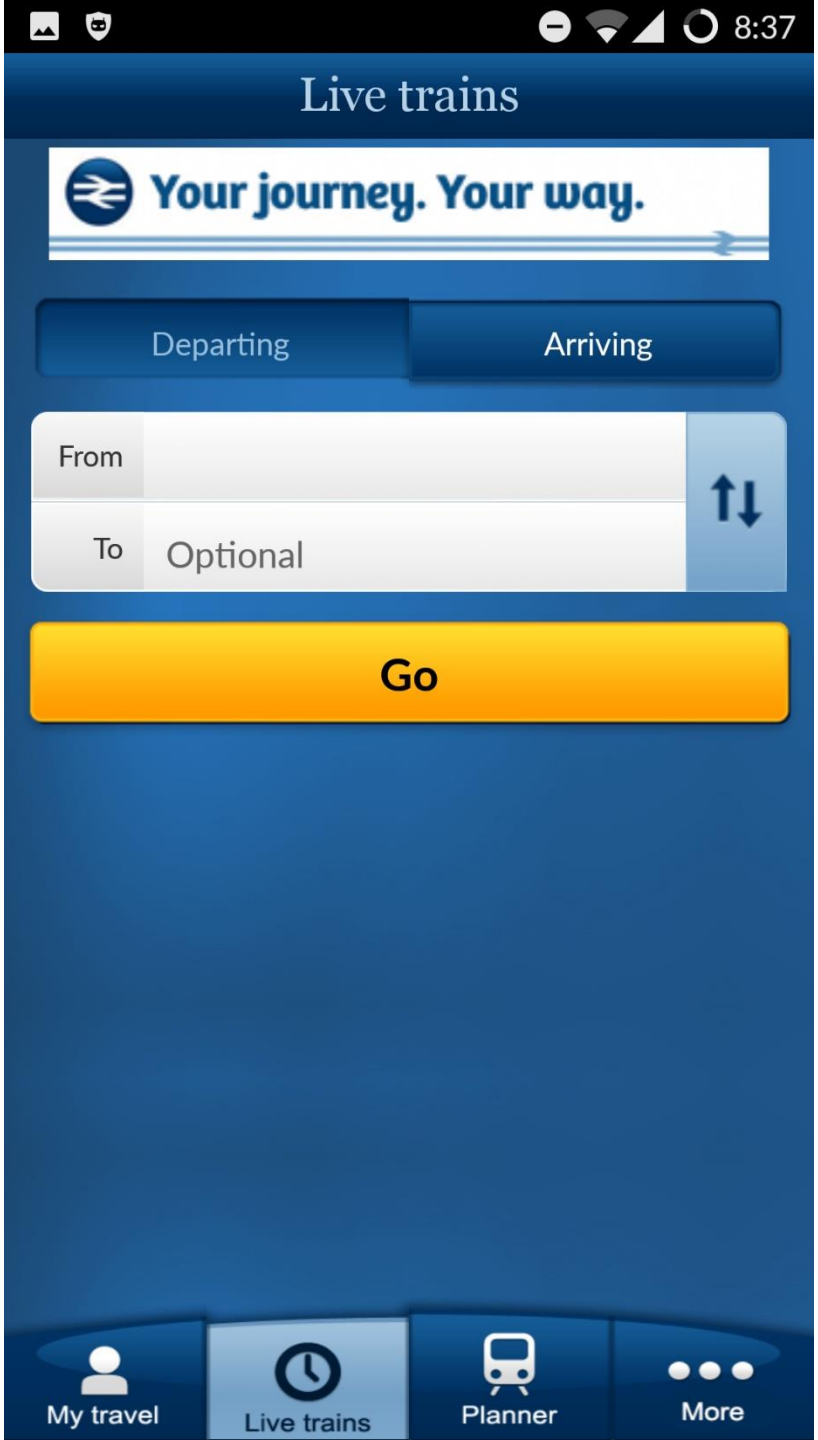


Task: Find the next train from Waverly to Argyle Street using the National Rail app.



Task: Find the next train from Waverly to Argyle Street using the National Rail app.

Subtask 3:
Enter both stations accurately into the app



Task: Find the next train from Waverly to Argyle Street using the National Rail app.

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Enter both stations accurately into the app

Task: Find the next train from Waverly to Argyle Street using the National Rail app.

Subtask 3:
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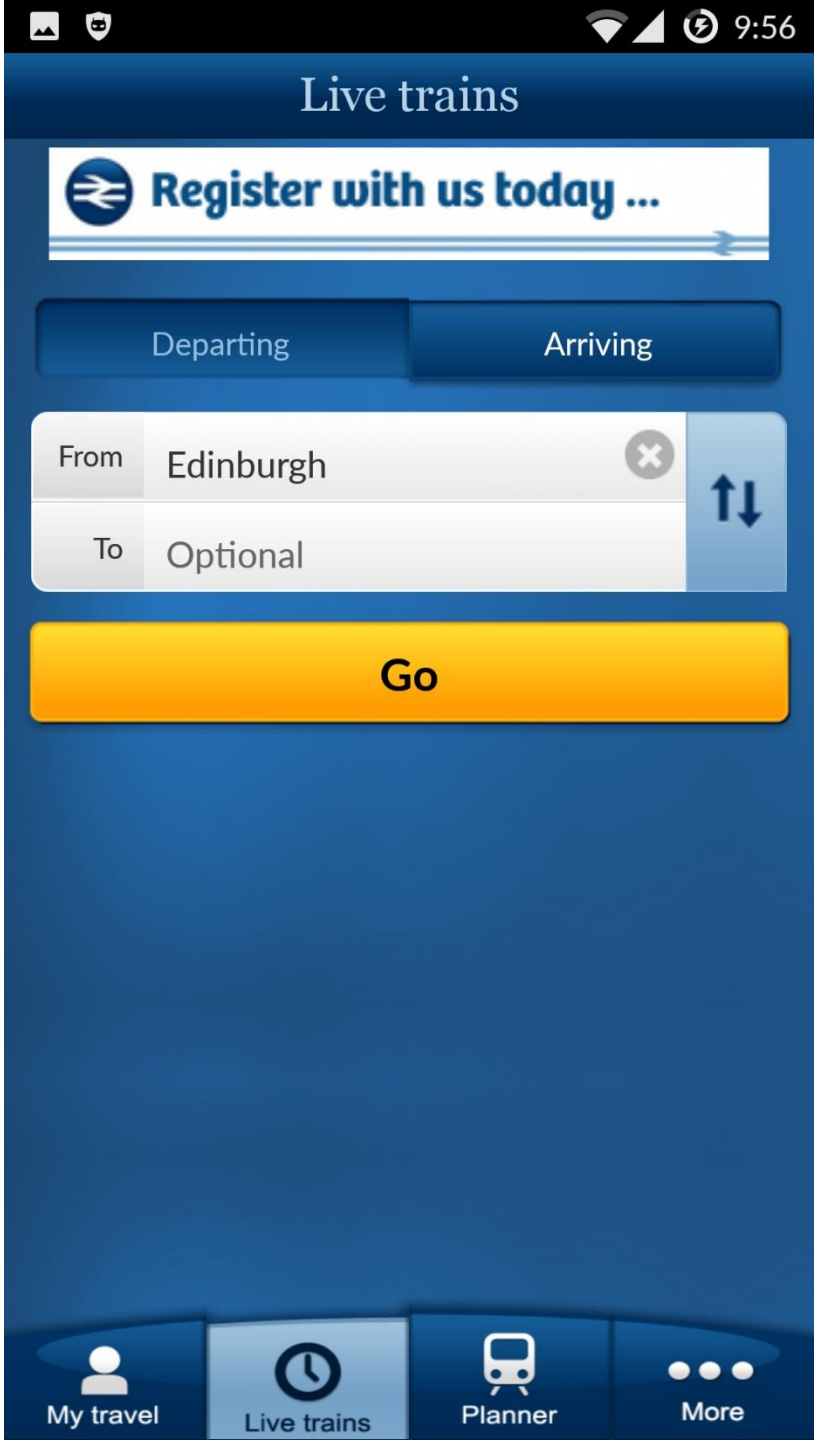

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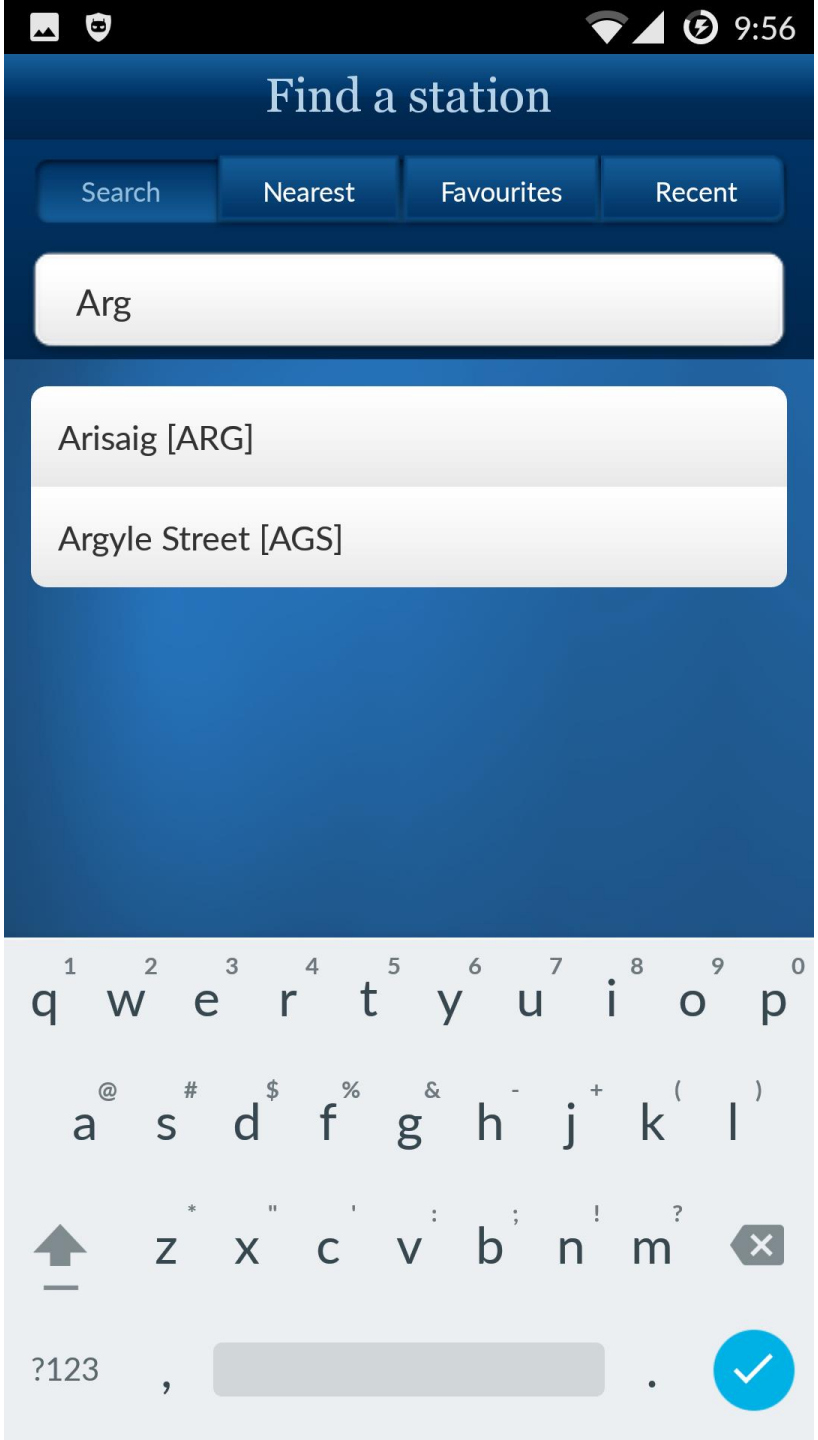

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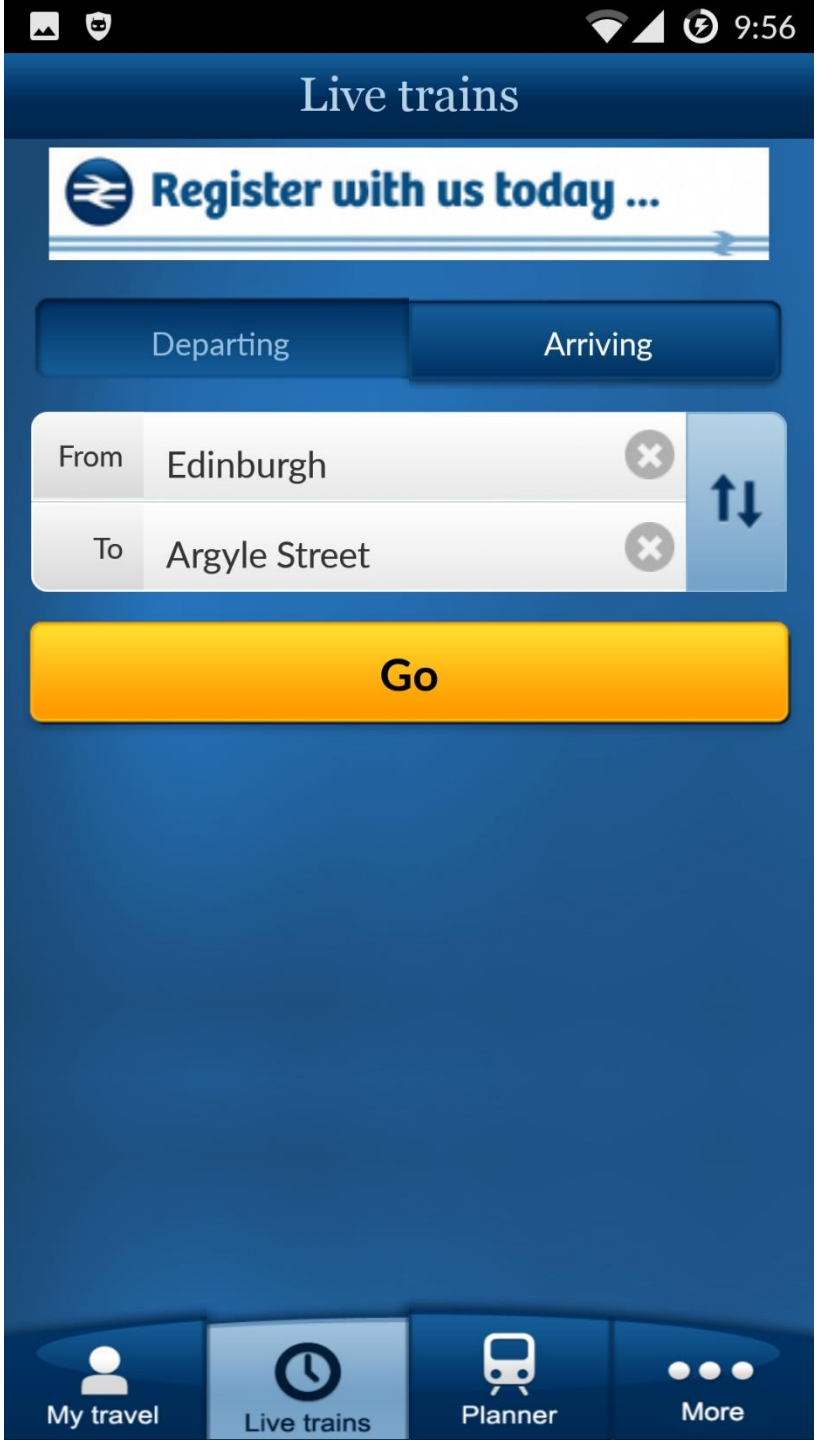
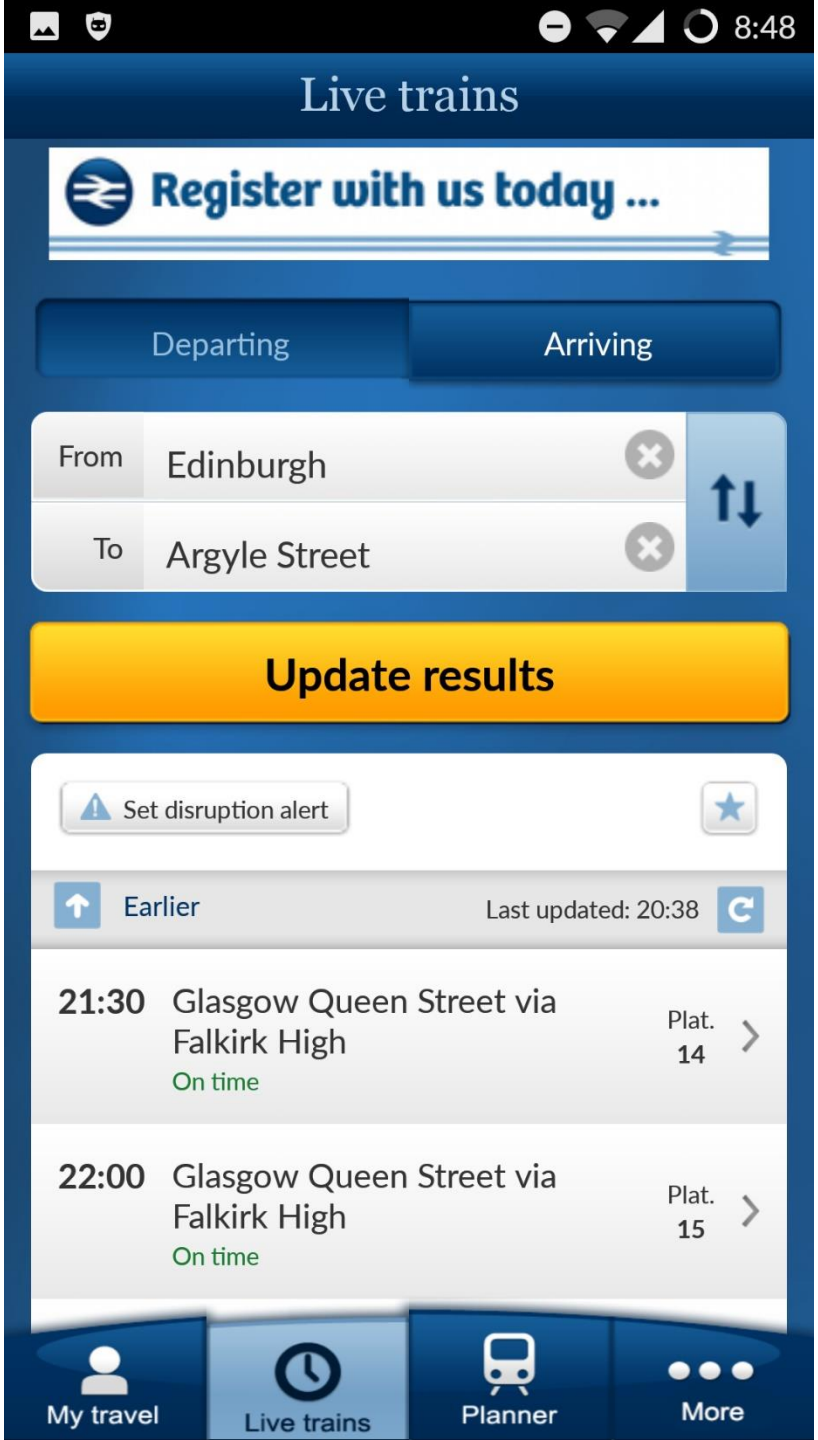


Task: Find the next train from Waverly to Argyle Street using the National Rail app.

Yay! We found the train.



People interact with interfaces to accomplish tasks.

When designing user interfaces always ask yourself what people are going to do with it.