

# HCI: TASKS AND SUBTASKS

Dr Kami Vaniea

**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.**

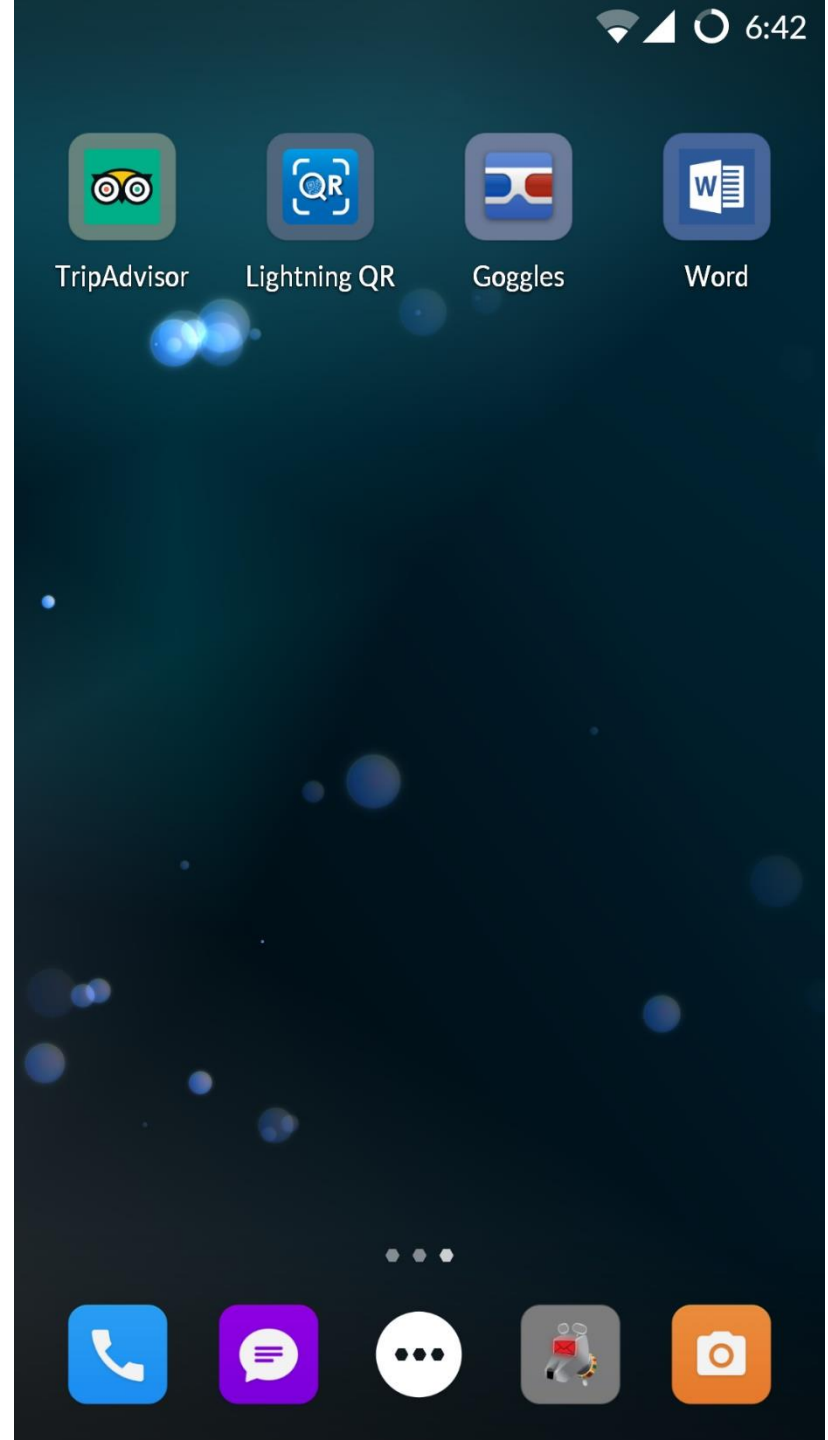
# Tasks and subtasks

- 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**

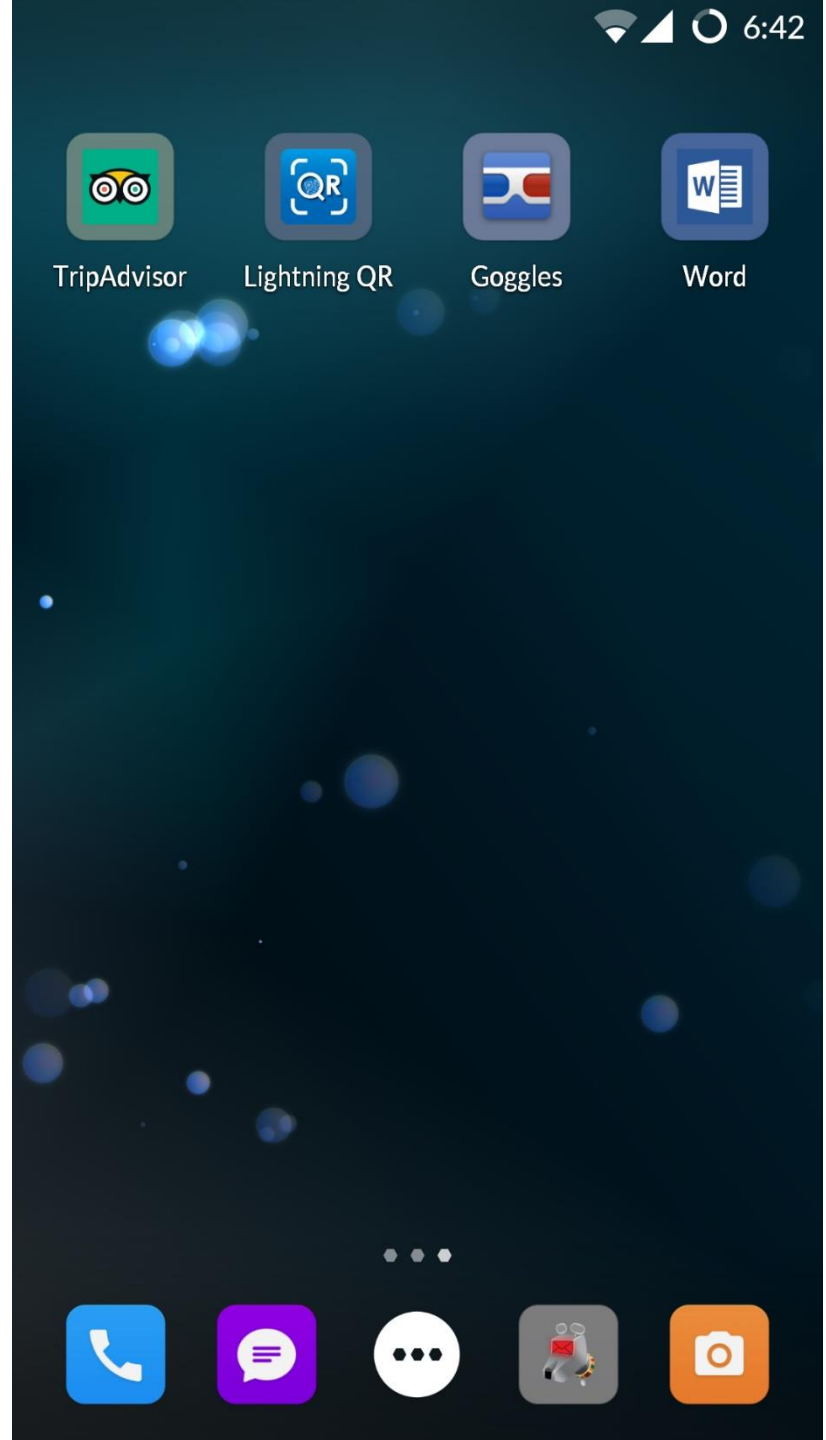
Task: Set an  
alarm for 7:00am



Task: Set an alarm for 7:00am

Subtask 1:

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



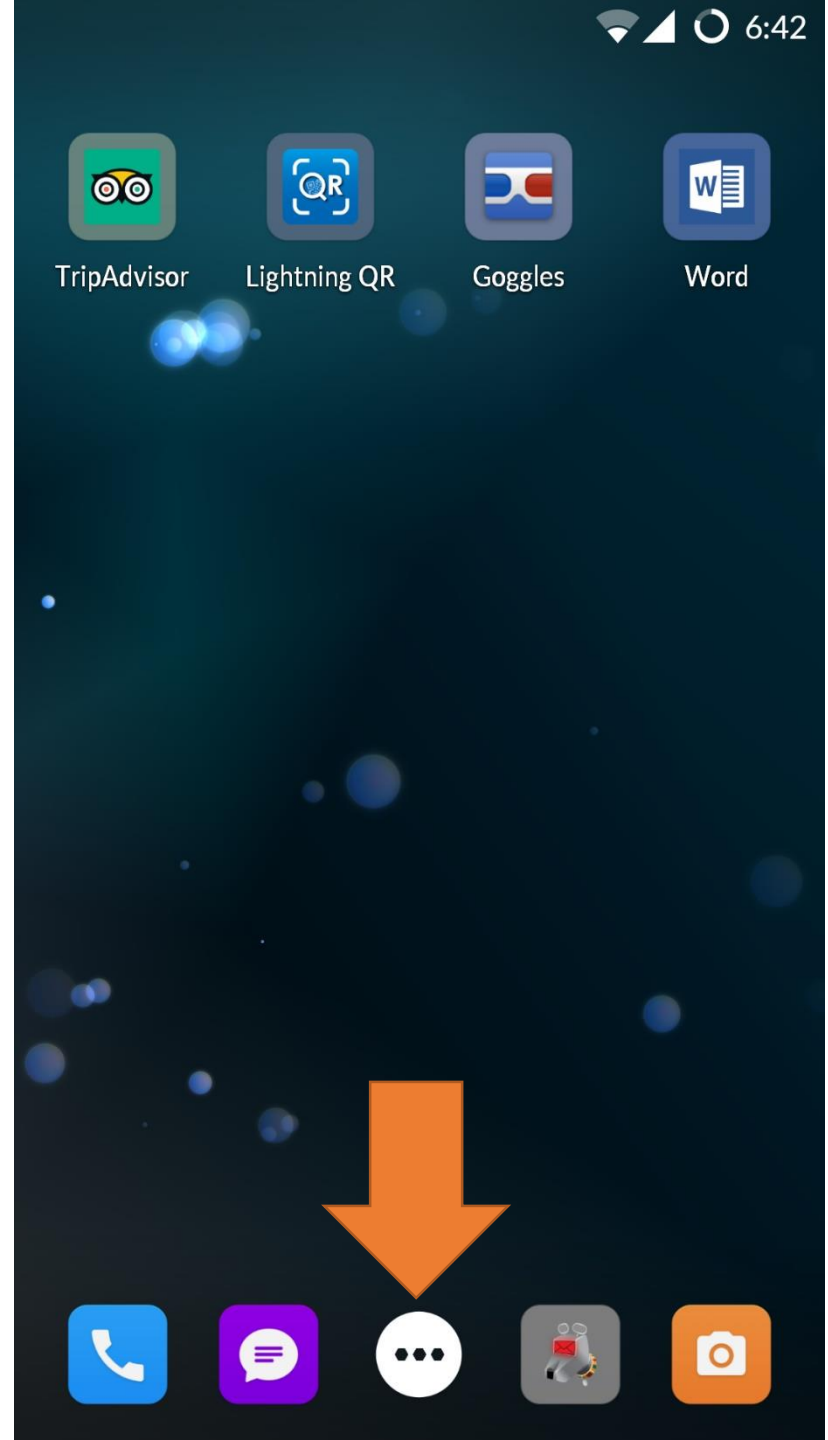
Task: Set an alarm for 7:00am

Subtask 1:

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

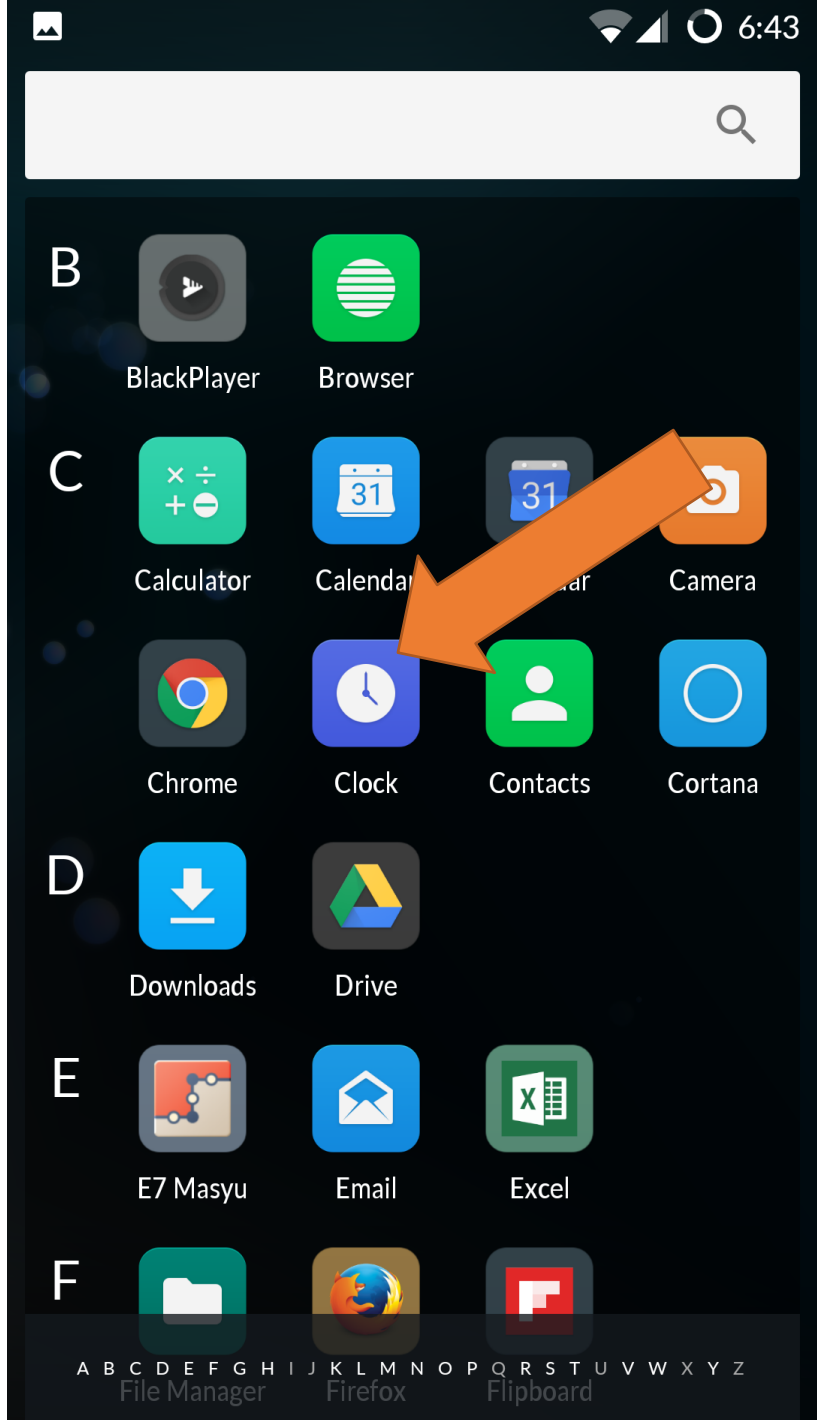
Subtask 2:

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

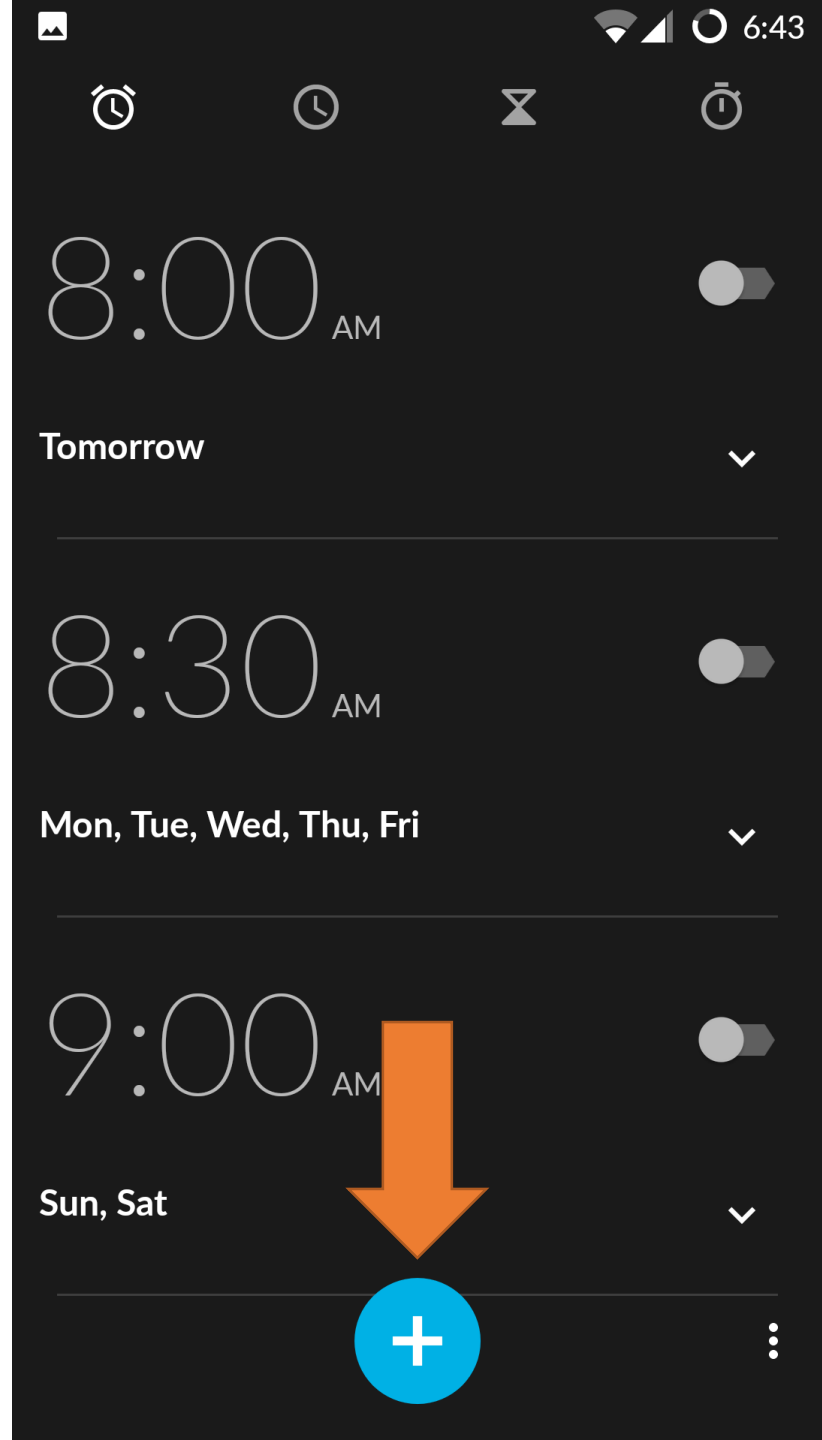
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Task: Set an alarm for 7:00am

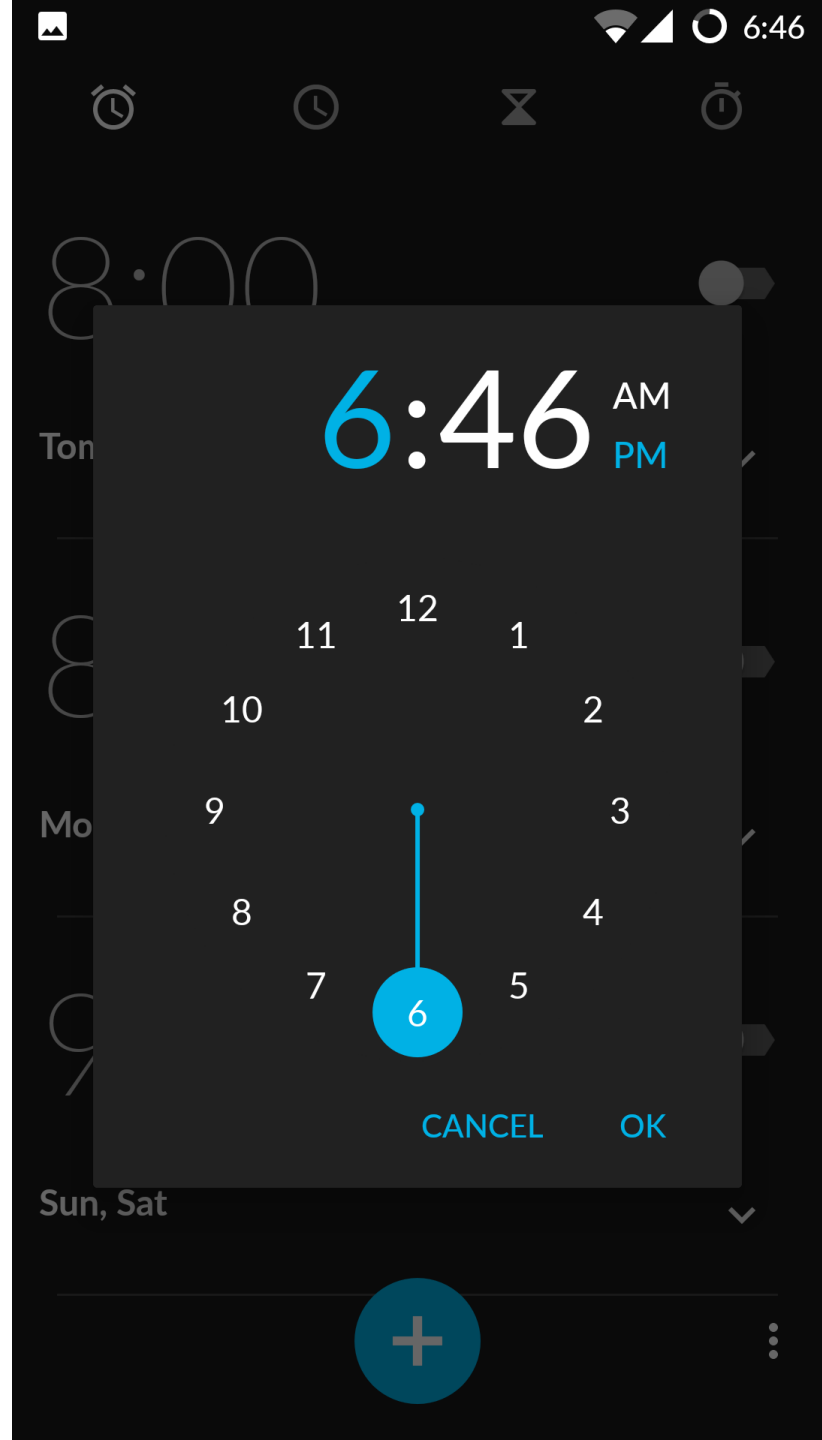
Subtask 3:  
Create a new scheduled alarm.



Task: Set an alarm for 7:00am

Subtask 3:  
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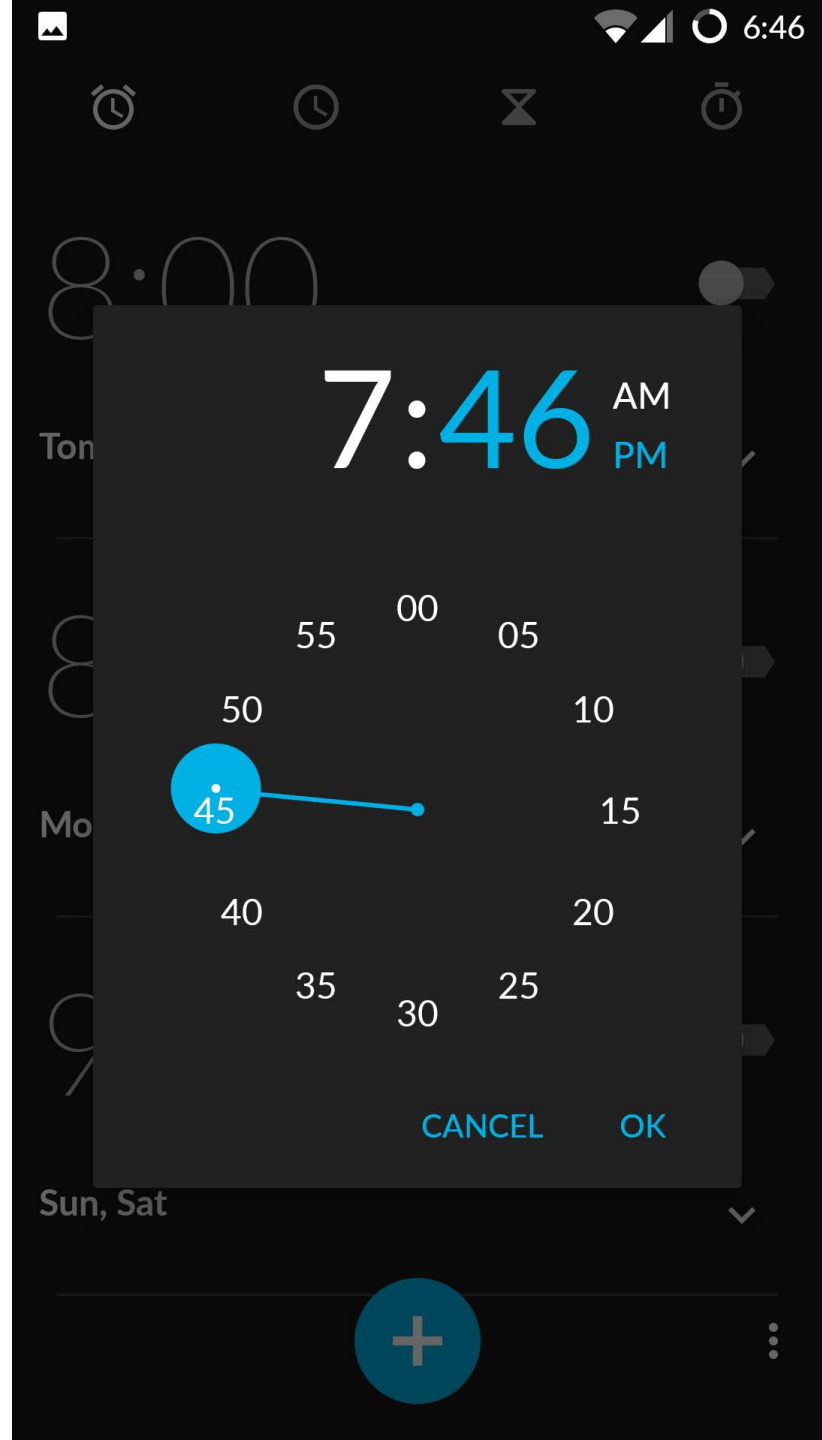
Subtask 4:  
Set the hour to 7



Task: Set an alarm for 7:00am

Subtask 3:  
Create a new scheduled alarm.

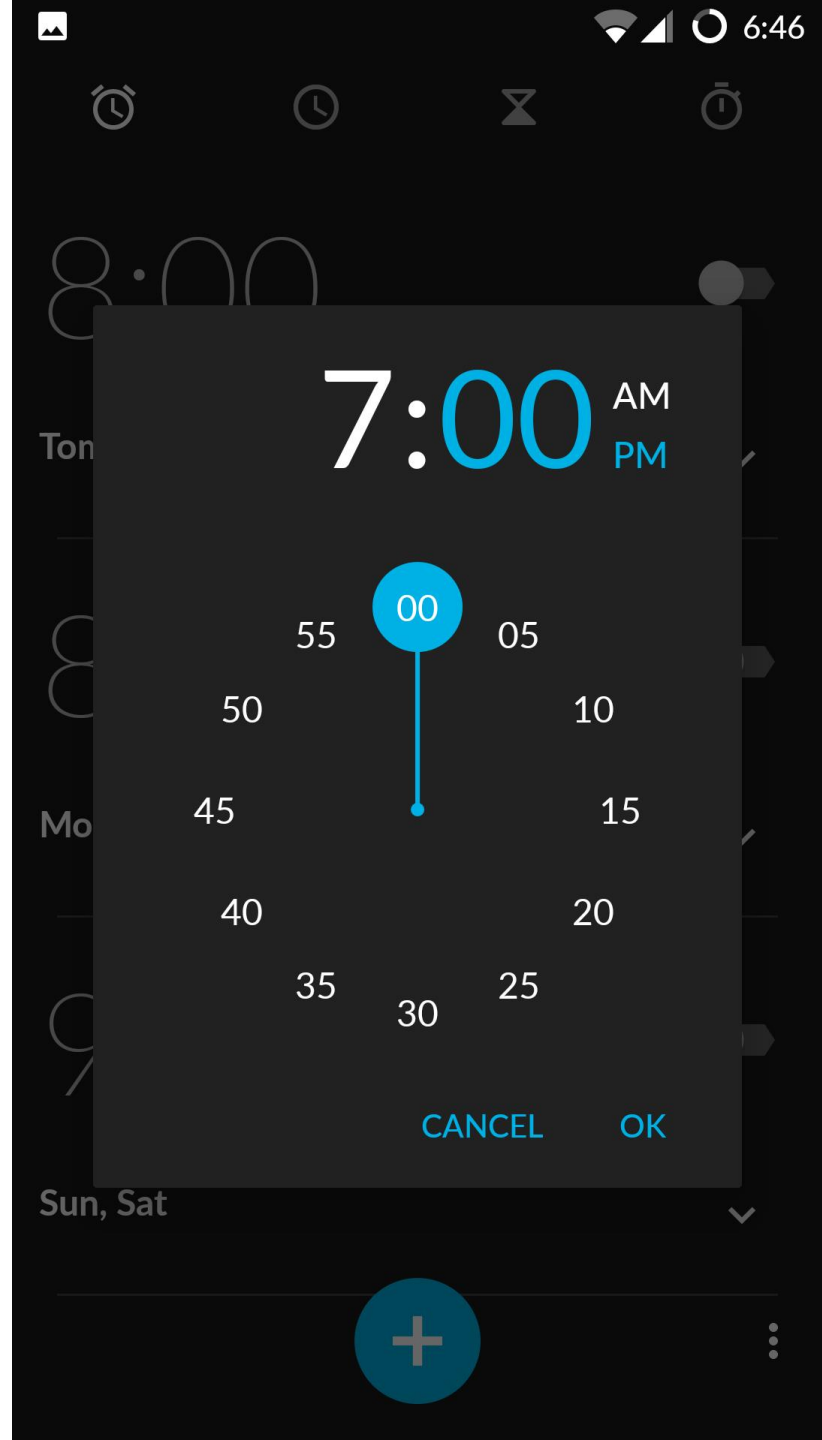
Subtask 5:  
Set minutes to 00



Task: Set an alarm for 7:00am

Subtask 3:  
Create a new scheduled alarm.

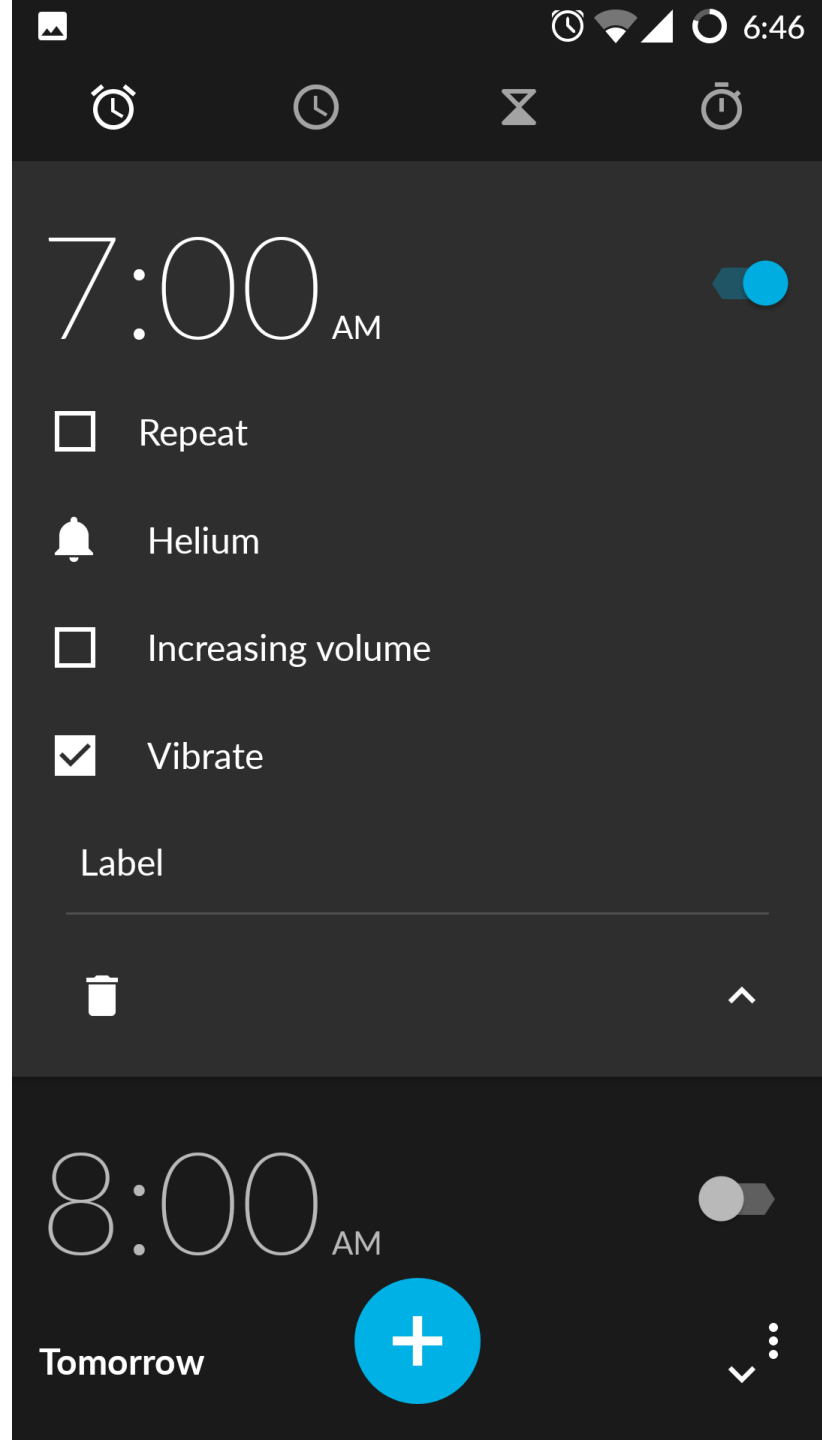
Subtask 6:  
Set to “AM”



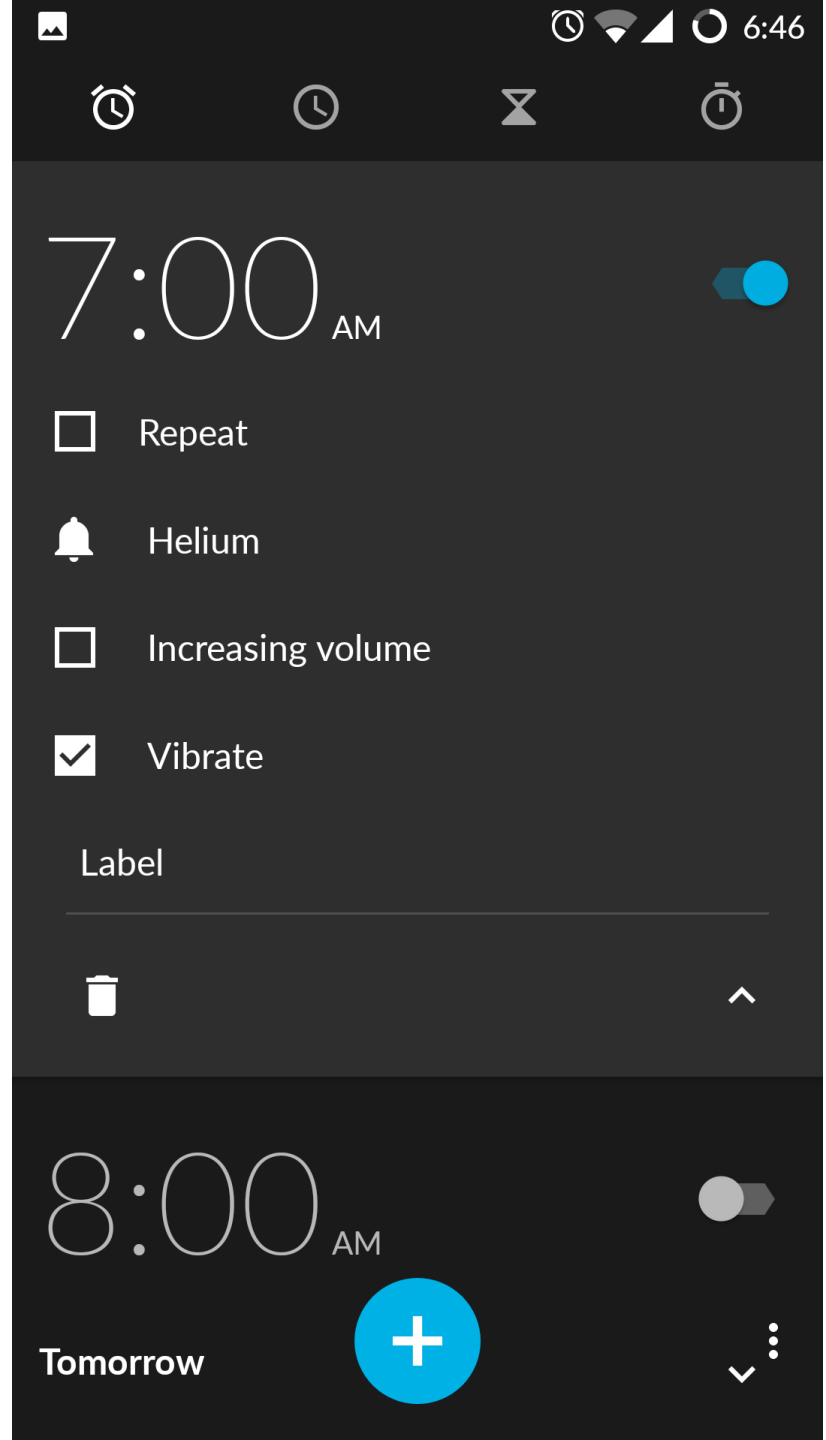
Task: Set an alarm for 7:00am

Subtask 7:

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



# Task Completed!

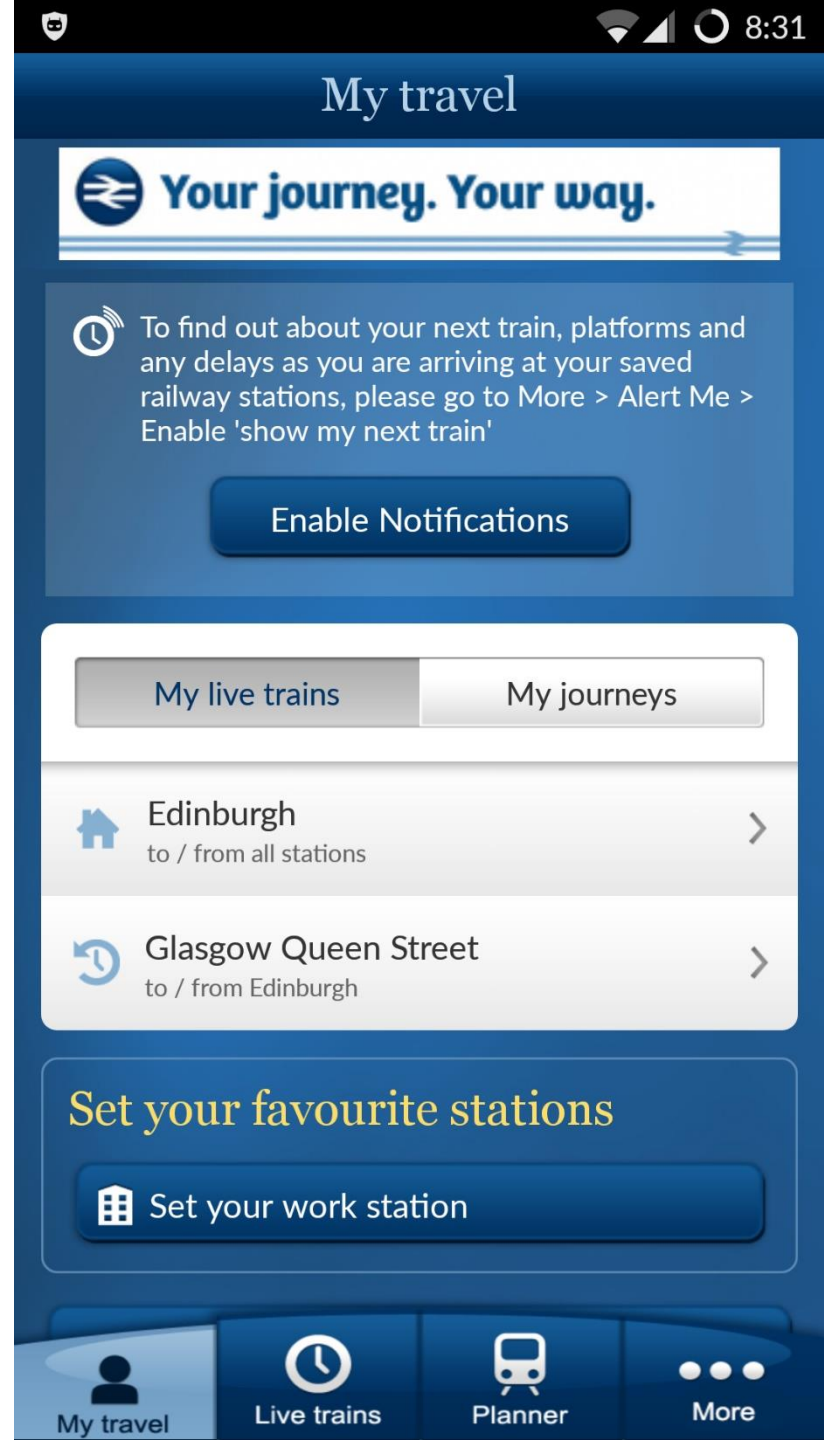


**More complex example:**

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

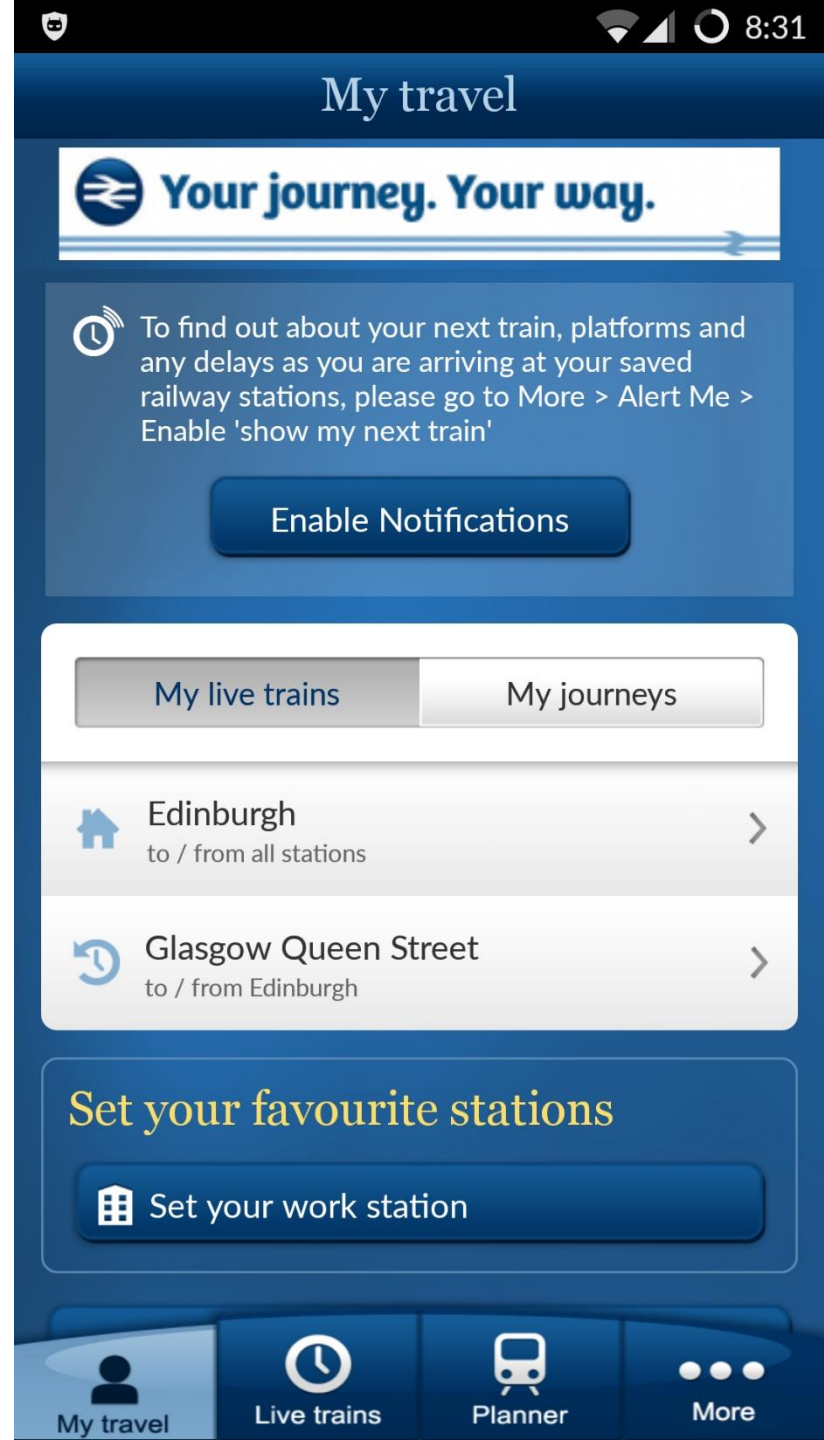


Task: Find the next train from Waverly to U. Strathclyde using the National Rail app.



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Subtask 1:  
Where is the University of Strathclyde?



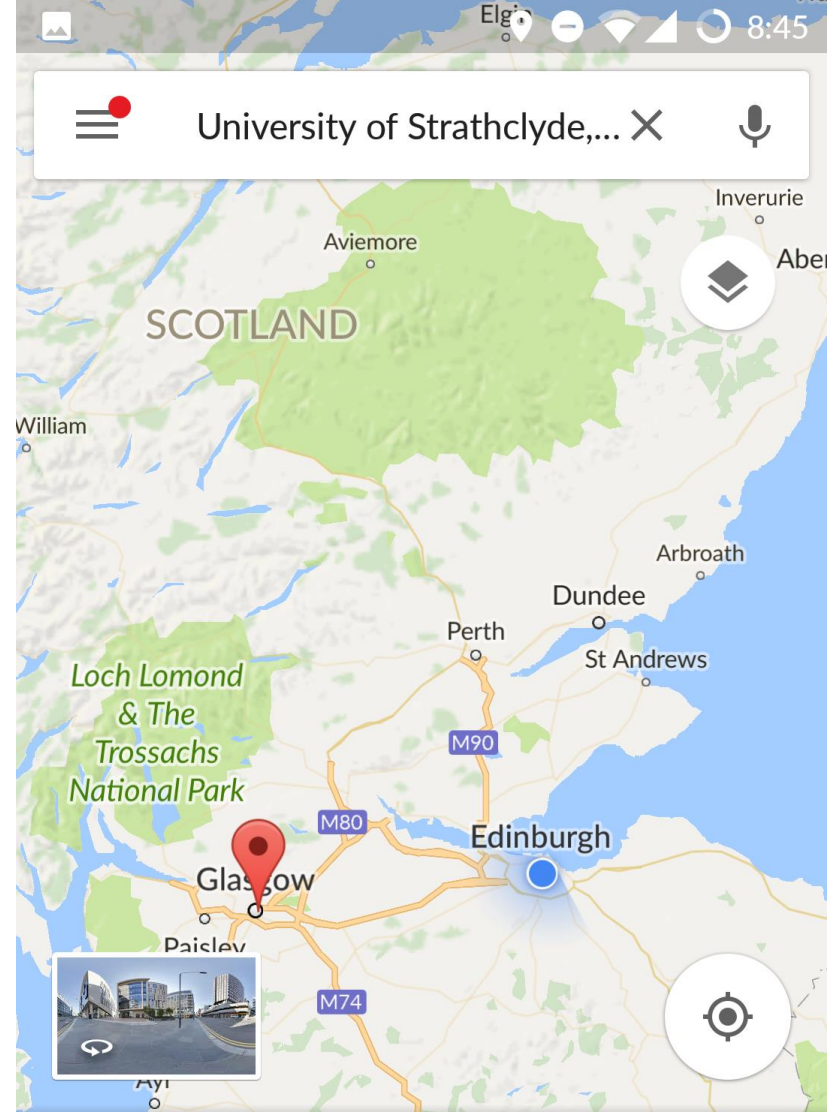
Task: Find the next train from Waverly to U. Strathclyde using the National Rail app.

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 ★★★★★ (12) • 🚆 1 hr 9 min

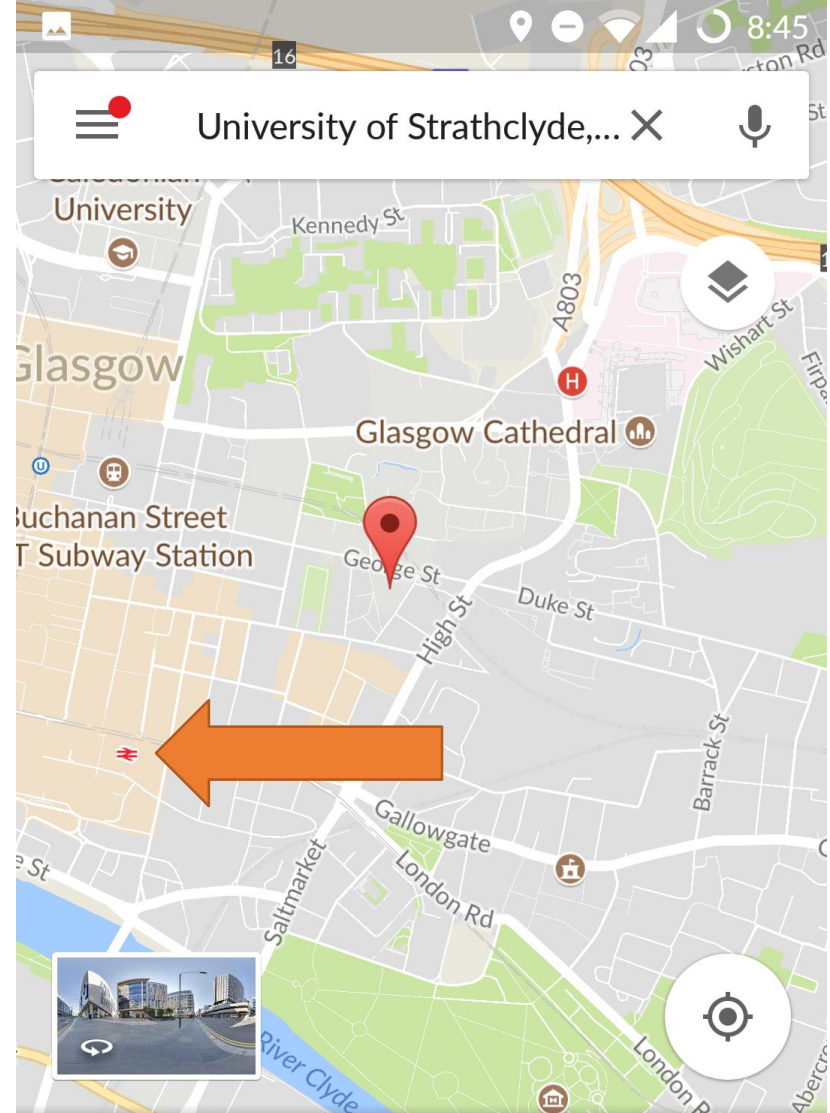
📄 MORE INFO

📍 DIRECTIONS



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

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University of Strathclyde, The Technol...

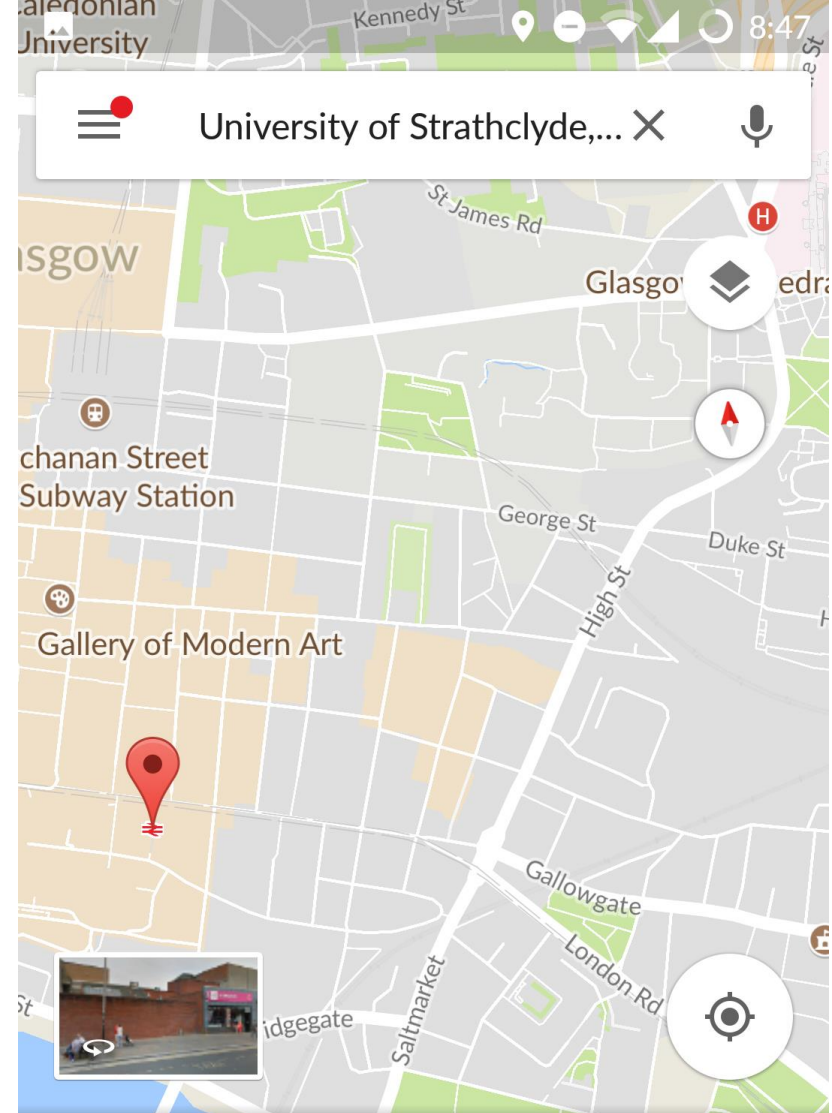
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📍 DIRECTIONS

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

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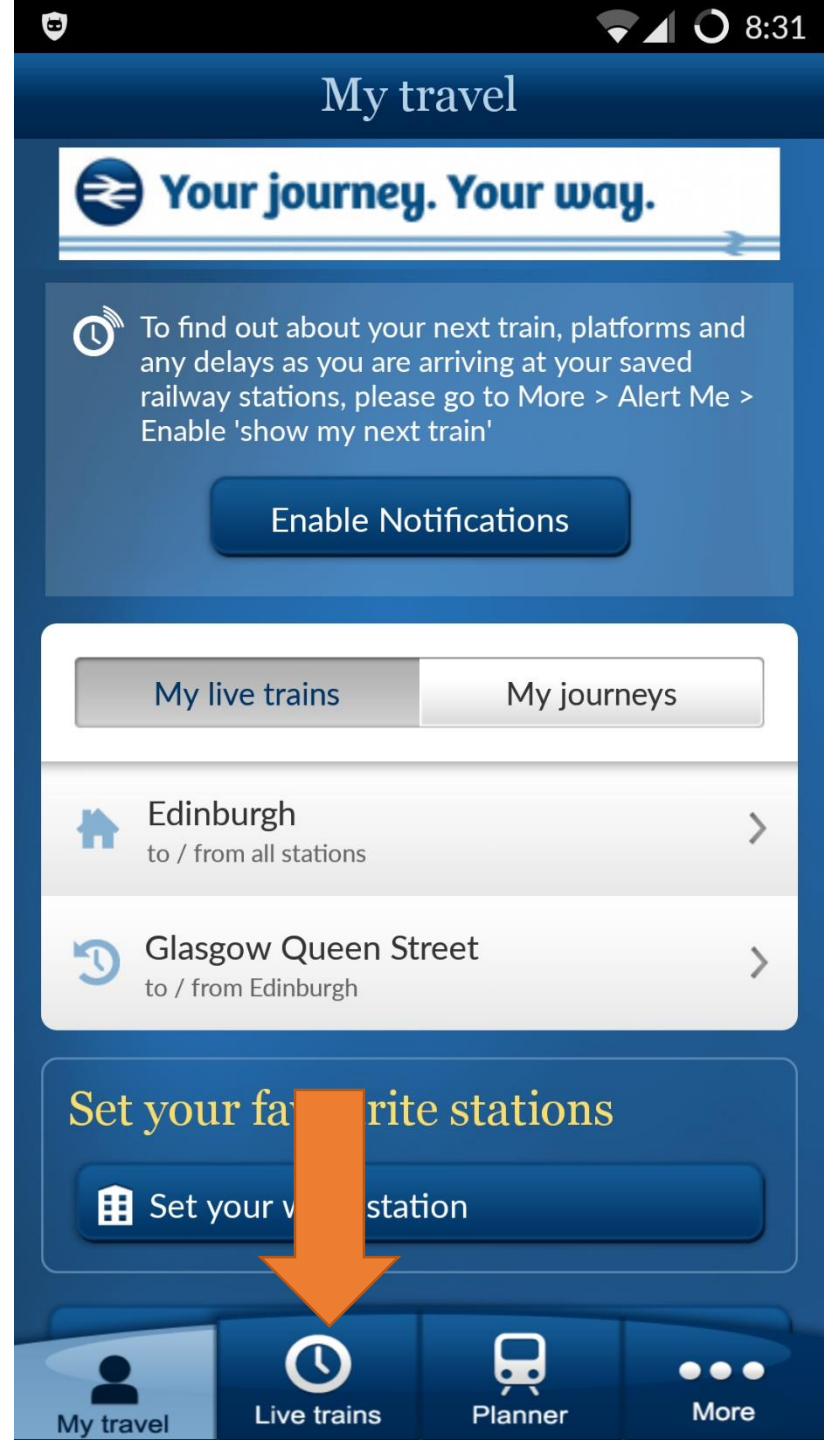
Argyle Street

3.6 ★★★★★ (7) • 🚆 1 hr 9 min

📄 MORE INFO

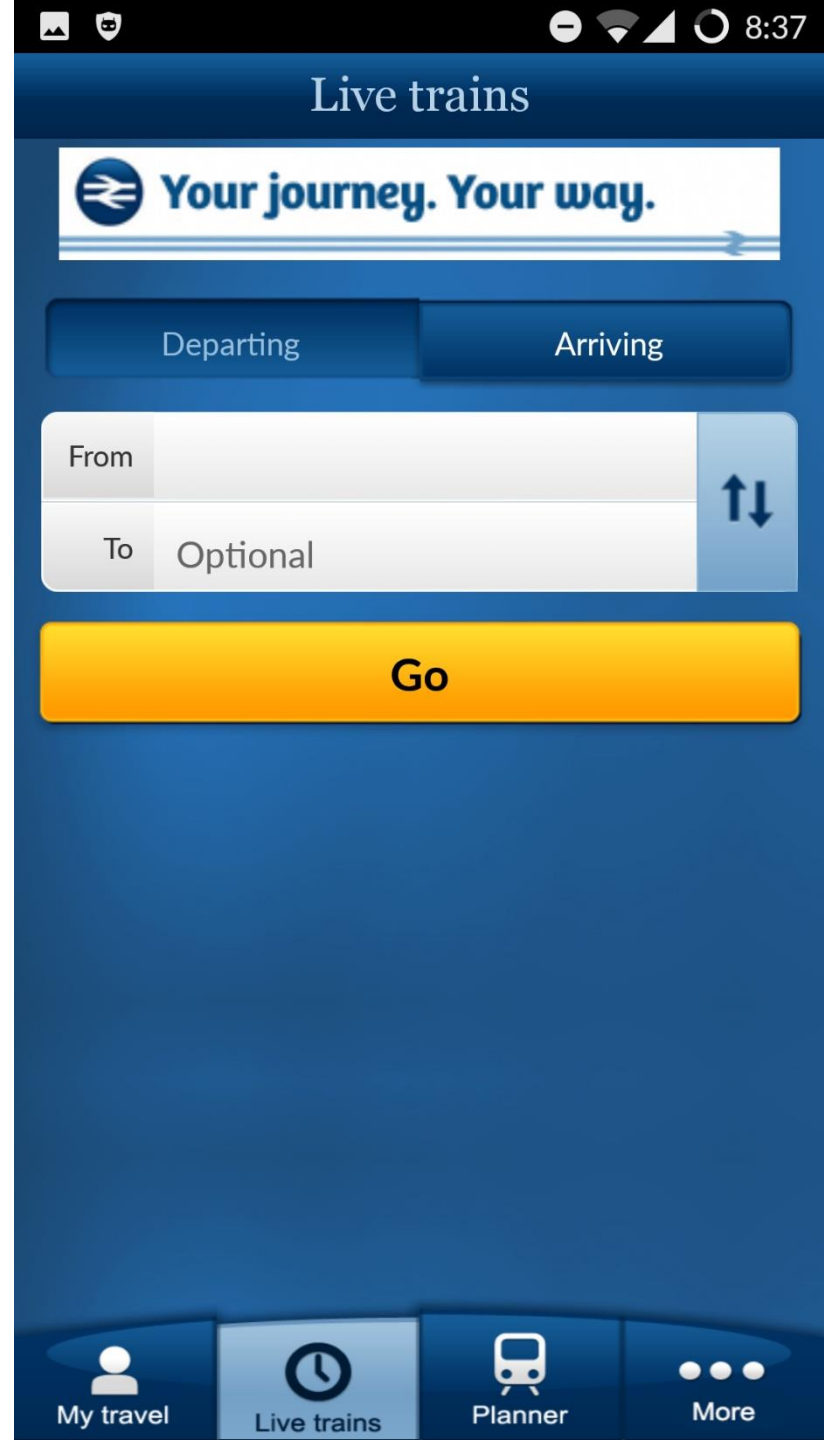
📍 DIRECTIONS

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



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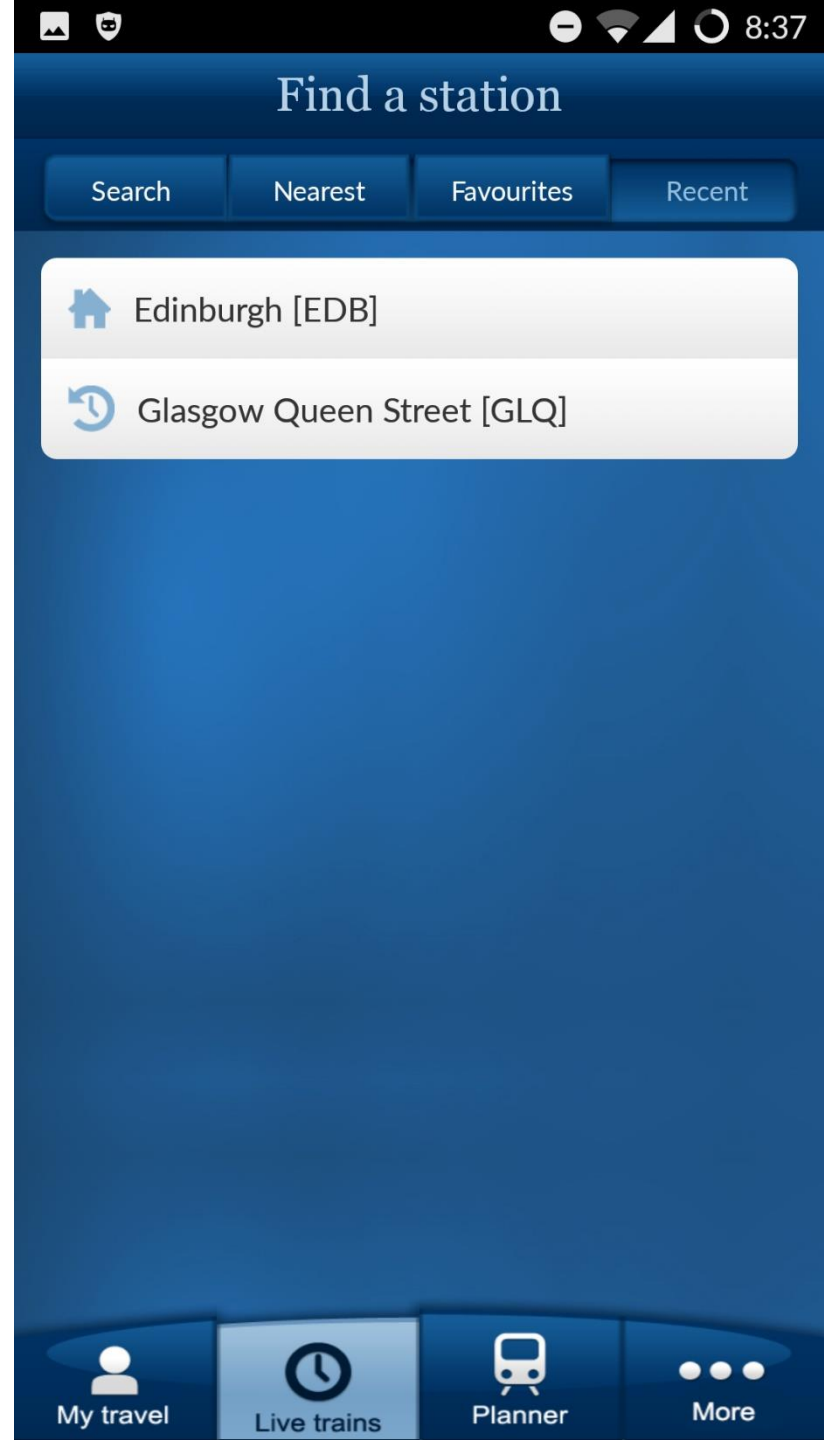
Subtask 3:  
Enter both stations accurately into the app





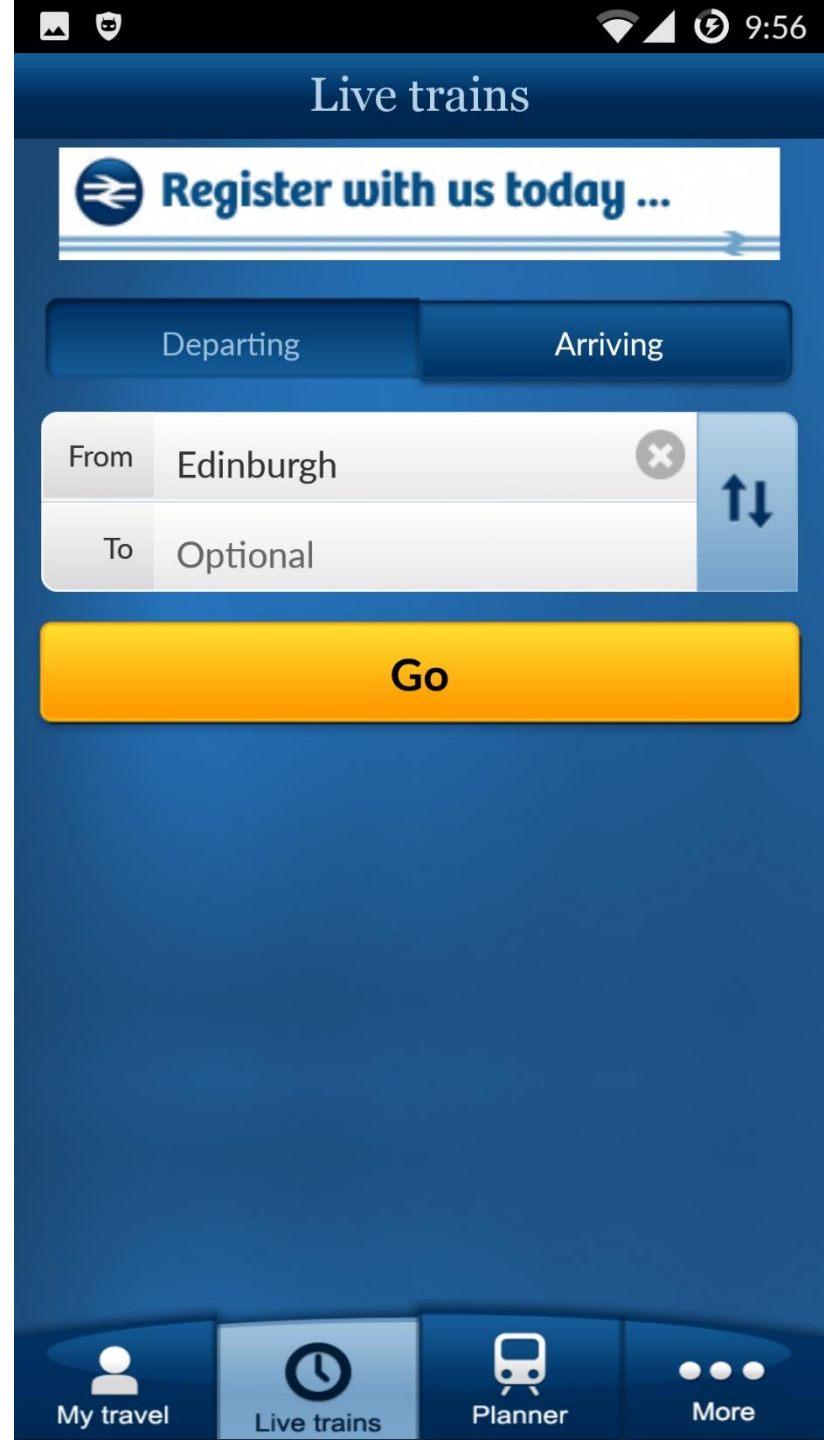
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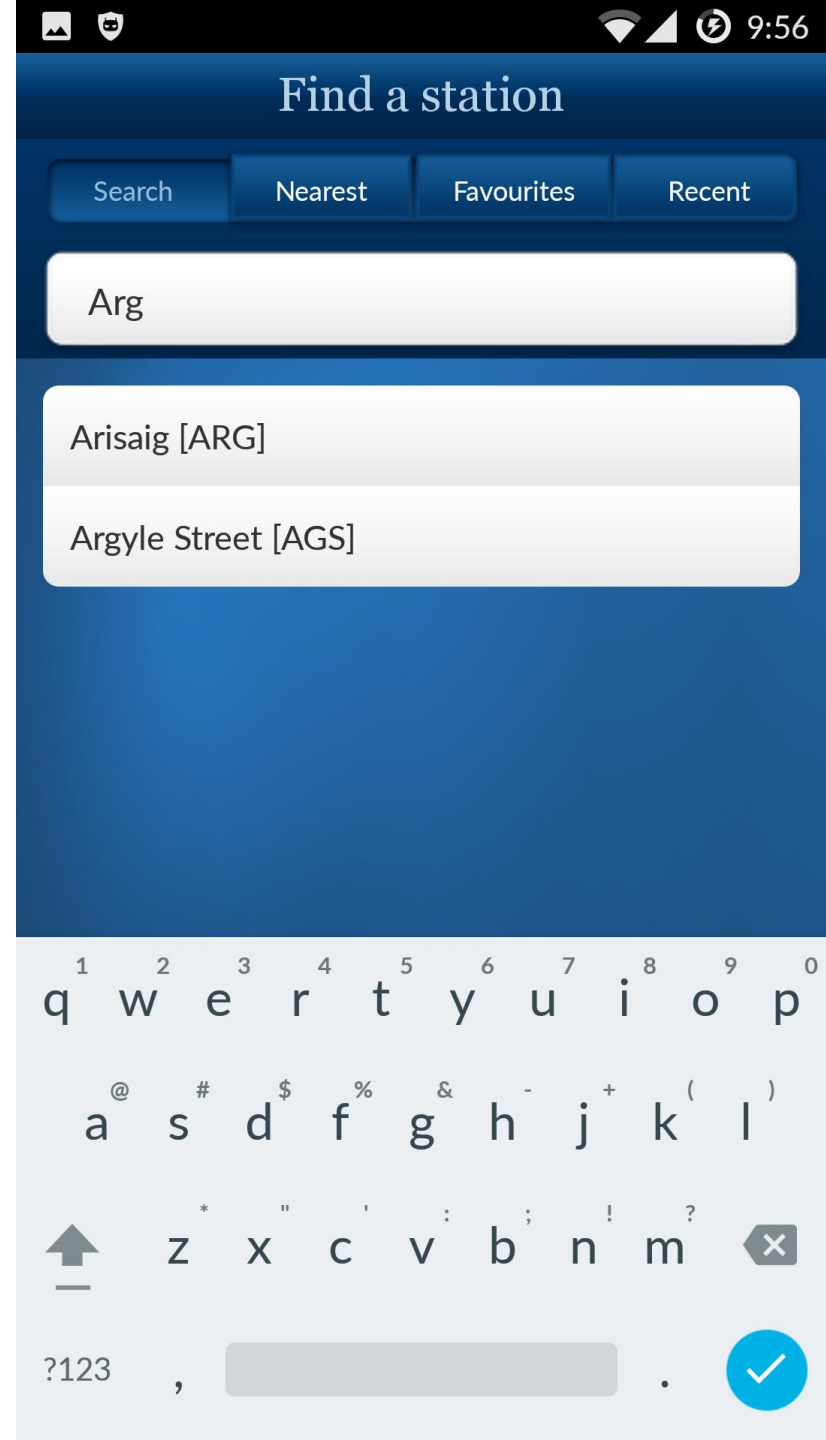
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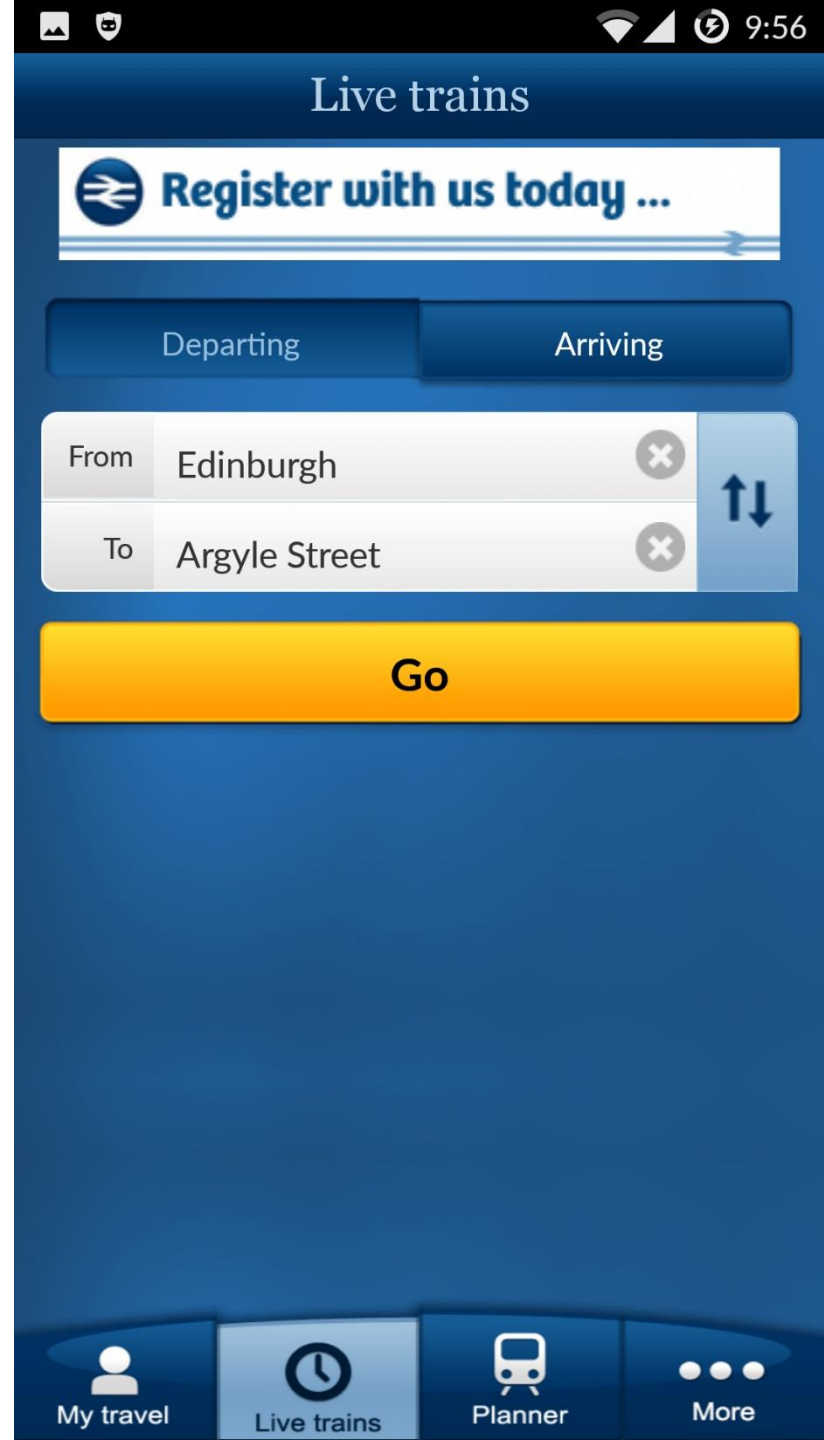
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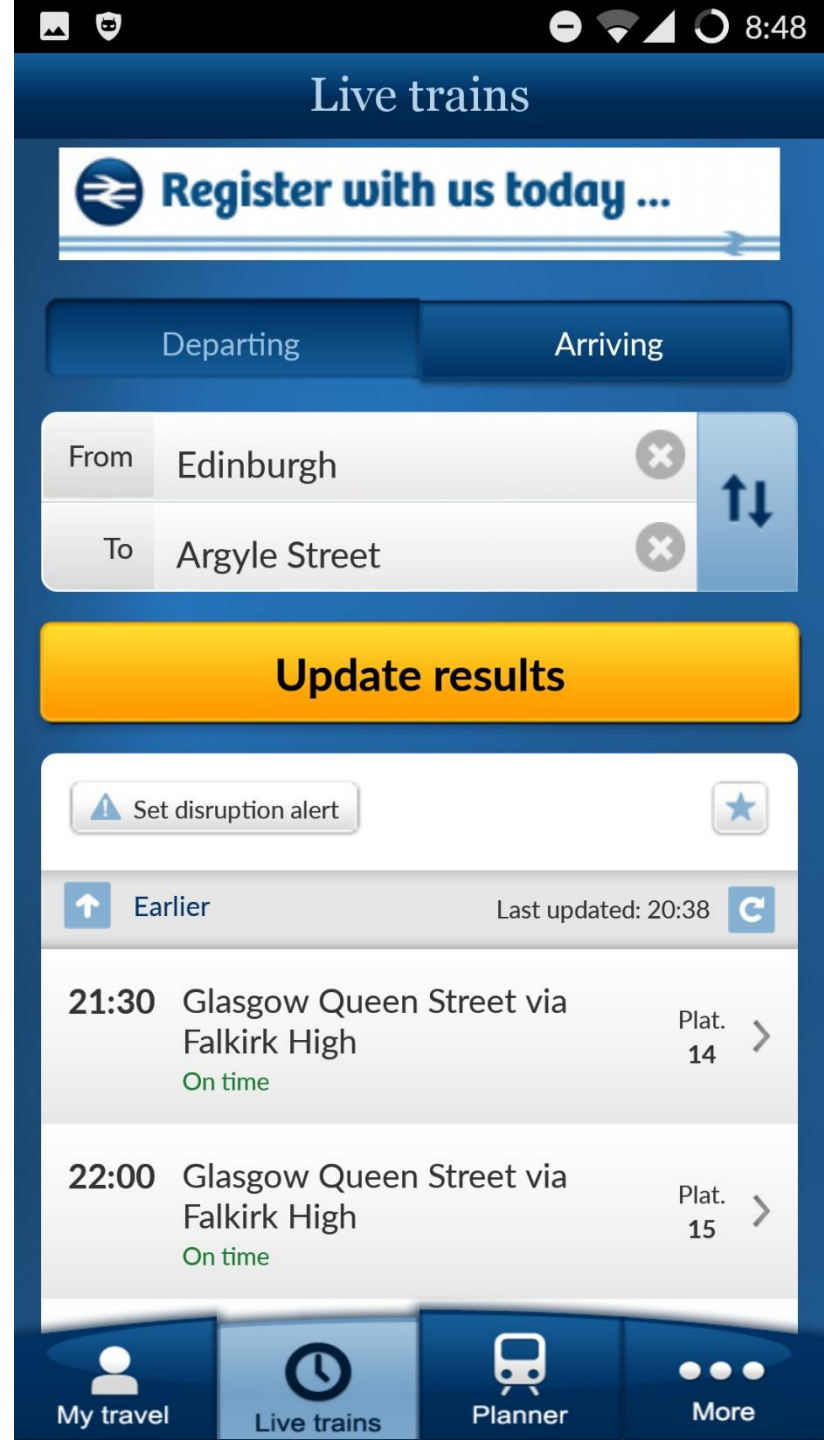
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Task: Find the next train from Waverly to Argyle Street using the National Rail app.

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.**

**Questions?**