

Tech review: Jitterbug J cell phone

July 1 2009, By Bridget Carey



Jitterbug J cell phone

Features: This super-simple phone for seniors doesn't require a yearly contract -- just pay for minutes monthly. Easy-to-press big buttons. Has text messaging and Bluetooth capabilities. Phone contacts and settings (such as ringtones) can be changed on the phone or via the Web site

MyJitterbug.com. It can also be done remotely for the user anytime by dialing "0" to reach live U.S.-based customer service. Roadside assistance and live nurse calling features available for an extra monthly fee. Calendar feature coming later this year.

Price: \$147 for the phone. Plans start at \$14.99 a month.

Ups: When you open up the clamshell phone, you actually hear a dial tone! I was cracking up, but the truth is, I'm sure the sound of a dial tone can be very comforting to a senior who has used only landline phones.

Instead of "OK," "Call" or "Cancel" buttons, the entire interface just uses "Yes" or "No" buttons. For example, when you enter a phone number, the screen displays a prompt asking "Dial?" Just press yes or no. The phone even incorporates the yes or no buttons in a friendly conversation when calling voicemail, with questions like "Would you like to delete this message?"

I'm also a fan of how it provides a list of 20 prewritten [text message](#) responses, such as "On my way," "Doing fine" and "Call me." After all, if the kids are texting, this is an easy way to respond. There is the option for users to type a personal message.

Downs: The volume controls could be a problem for some folks. They are located on the front cover of the phone, and because you have to have the clamshell open to adjust the volume, it feels awkward.

Bottom line: Coverage is good because it piggybacks off other carriers. I have seen cheaper simple phones on the market designed for seniors, but I've never come across a phone this simple to use. Because if all else fails and you can't figure out how to do something, just dial 0 to have the operator do it for you.

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