

New myTouch 3G phone takes big step forward

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myTouch 3G

When T-Mobile and Google launched the T-Mobile G1 last fall, there were high hopes that the device and its Android mobile operating system would provide a real threat to Apple's iPhone.

But due to an unimaginative and bulky design, complex software and a paucity of apps, that never really happened. Now, the two companies are back with a follow-up to the G1, the myTouch 3G, the second U.S. phone to feature Android.

When I reviewed the G1, I wrote that it was a nice introduction to Android, but that it didn't do a good job showcasing the potential of the

[open-source operating system](#).

"Once Android is released on a phone that comes closer to the sleek design of the [iPhone](#) and developers have more time to build applications for it, I expect it to be more of a competitor."

The myTouch 3G is that phone. It has a slim, stylish design that resembles an iPhone, and there are now 6,000 apps in the Android Market, compared with about 40 when the G1 came out. Keep in mind that there are more than 60,000 iPhone apps.

But although [T-Mobile](#) and the Google have upped their game since last year, the [touch-screen](#) cell phone market has gotten more crowded. There's a new iPhone, the iPhone 3GS, which addresses many of the shortcomings of the previous models, and the Palm Pre from Sprint has quickly distinguished itself as the best iPhone competitor.

Nonetheless, the myTouch 3G is a great phone for T-Mobile customers and for those whose lives revolve around Google products and services including Gmail, Google Calendar, YouTube and [Google Maps](#). The Android OS still has more of a learning curve than other phones.

It costs \$200 with a new two-year plan -- the same as a 16 GB iPhone 3GS and Palm Pre, but T-Mobile offers a cheaper minimum rate plan, which costs \$65 a month.

One thing working in the myTouch's favor is the recent backlash against Apple for its failure to approve the Google Voice iPhone app and other applications. Since Android's app store, the Android Market, doesn't have the same strict approval process for apps as Apple, it's much easier for developers to distribute their apps.

And since [Android](#) is made by Google, the Google Voice app -- which

lets you have one number that rings all your phones -- is very slick and useful. It basically takes over your existing phone number so calls you place come from your Google Voice number.

The myTouch 3G is better looking and sleeker than the G1, but it has a touchscreen keyboard instead of a slide-out, physical one. You can rotate the phone to type in landscape mode, its auto correct feature is adequate and you can set it so the phone vibrates every time you press a letter. Since the screen is smaller than the iPhone (3.2 inches compared to 3.5 inches), typing isn't as easy. You also can't use multi-touch gestures to zoom in and out on a Web page like you can on an iPhone or Palm Pre.

Another big improvement over the G1 is that the myTouch 3G has Microsoft Exchange ActiveSync support, which should make it easier to set up and check your work e-mail account. Battery life is improved (T-Mobile claims six hours of talk time), and the myTouch comes with a preinstalled 4GB microSD card to store music and videos. It has built-in Wi-Fi, stereo Bluetooth support and the ability to record videos and upload them directly to YouTube.

Like the G1, the myTouch 3G doesn't have a standard headphone jack, which is a shame because you need to use an adapter with regular headphones. And since the headphones and phone charger use the same port, you can't use headphones and charge the phone at the same time. And while T-Mobile does have 3G coverage in Orlando, you'll want to check the online coverage maps before you buy, since its 3G network isn't as big as other companies.

T-Mobile is touting the phone as a good match for people who like to personalize their devices, and the company offers a bunch of backs for the phone, as well as the ability to design one yourself or use one of your own photos.

So while the myTouch is a nice improvement to the G1 that should please T-Mobile users and [Google](#) fans, it's still not quite on par with the competition. But it's getting closer.

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