

# Nexus One first impression: A sleek Google phone, worthy vs. iPhone

January 10 2010, By Frank Michael Russell

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Google's Nexus One smartphone.

Call it the Google challenge: After a few hours with the new Nexus One, would this longtime Apple fan be willing to trade in his iPhone? The short answer: It's very, very tempting.

The Mountain View, Calif., Internet giant loaned the San Jose Mercury News a [Nexus One](#) running on T-Mobile's [3G network](#). The phone actually is made by Taiwan-based HTC. At first glance, it's so sleek, stylish and sexy, we were almost wondering: Where's the Apple logo?

The user interface -- powered by the Android 2.1 operating system -- is attractive -- in a minimalist, functional and Google-esque manner.

Initially, it's not very intuitive, but it doesn't take long to learn.

One nifty feature is a tiny trackball. Once you get used to it, the trackball makes navigating Web pages speedy -- and prevents fingerprint smudges on the 3.7-inch touch-screen.

At first, I assumed the trackball was like the iPhone's home button, but instead, the Nexus One has a "home" icon, one of four lining the bottom of the screen. The other three are "back," "menu" and (of course, it's [Google](#)!) "search."

Mike Swift, who covers Google for the Mercury News, set up the phone in just a couple of minutes with his existing Google account and downloaded several apps from the Android Market.

I tested Web browsing; checking news, weather, e-mail and [Facebook](#); and using [Google Maps](#) navigation for a quick walk from the Mercury News to our nearest corporate coffee chain. All performed as well as my iPhone and with the agility you'd expect from Google.

Many of the apps allow for voice control. A test e-mail I sent using voice technology unfortunately wasn't exactly what I said. However, voice searches for MercuryNews.com and "finance-dot-google-dot-com" took me exactly where I wanted to go.

You can use the touch-screen keyboard for e-mail and other apps, but that can be awkward (just like with the iPhone). The Nexus One (again like the iPhone) helps out by suggesting complete words as you type.

I downloaded Pandora, the free music service, from the Android Market. The phone warned that Pandora puts a heavy strain on the wireless network -- so you'd want to make sure you have an unlimited data plan. Downloads also inform you what personal data they need to

work.

Google pre-loaded some music on the test phone, and you can buy downloads from Amazon.com's MP3 store. Music streamed at a fidelity comparable to what I'm used to from the iPhone. And as I listened to Pandora while checking Facebook, it suddenly occurred to me: I can't do this on my iPhone.

(By the way, the Nexus One is perfectly adequate as a phone, although I didn't have a chance to test the voice connection very far from the Mercury News.)

A couple of negatives: The touch-screen itself was balky at times, which was frustrating for someone used to the iPhone's responsiveness. And the name! "Nexus One" sounds more like a bad science fiction movie from the early '80s than a cutting-edge "superphone," as Google calls it.

You can buy one at [www.google.com/phone](http://www.google.com/phone) for \$529 unlocked -- meaning you can use it month to month on any compatible network -- or for \$179 with a two-year T-Mobile contract. Verizon Wireless plans to offer it in the spring.

Oddly enough, this writer (recently sprung from a contract with AT&T) is in the market for a smart new phone. I might very well buy a new iPhone, but a few hours with the Nexus One has made that a much harder decision.

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## NEXUS ONE:

- What I like: Sleek, sexy styling; functional, minimalistic interface; tiny trackball; listening to Pandora and checking Facebook at the same time.

- What I don't like: Sometimes balky touch screen; not quite as intuitive as the [iPhone](#); weird "Nexus One" name.
- If you want one: Go to [google.com/phone](http://google.com/phone). It'll cost you \$179 with a two-year T-Mobile contract or \$529 "unlocked." If you can wait a few months, you can get it with a Verizon contract.

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Citation: Nexus One first impression: A sleek Google phone, worthy vs. iPhone (2010, January 10) retrieved 18 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2010-01-nexus-sleek-google-worthy-iphone.html>

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