

Droid X makes right connections

July 29 2010, By Stanley A. Miller II



Trying out an Android phone from Verizon is quickly becoming the same old song, but it's a genuine classic that never gets dull. This time it's the Droid X, released July 15, from Motorola, which has built a beautiful beast of a smart phone screaming with speed, style and size. It sells for \$199 after a \$100 rebate and a two-year contract.

It's the size you'll notice first -- feeling wider and longer than the average mobile phone -- but it's not bulky in that old-school, cell-phone-from-the-'80s kind of way.

The Droid X needs to be a bit bigger to accommodate a massive 4.3-inch wide screen. It's huge in a very good way, offering up generous amounts

of touch-space real estate.

The size of the screen is the star of this show, and it makes using the phone easier than other touch-screen [handsets](#) because buttons are bigger, text is larger, and there is more general screen space available.

The Droid X is running Google's Android operating system -- specifically version 2.1 -- and that means apps from the Android Market. Google's suite of [mobile services](#) also is available, including Gmail, YouTube and [Google](#) Maps Navigation, which is a free online GPS-guided program that provides voiced directions.

Tasks fly by on the Droid X, which is powered by a 1 ghz processor and 512 MB of memory that keep apps humming quickly. Switching between browsing the Web, viewing videos on YouTube or playing around with mobile versions of social media apps is instant and snappy.

So you'll want to pack the Droid X with as many programs as possible. No problem: The phone comes with 8GB of onboard memory and a 16GB microSD card, which can be upgraded to 32GB.

The [storage space](#) will also come in handy for holding media, including all the pictures taken using the Droid's 8-megapixel camera, which includes a dual LED flash. This camera takes great pictures, but the response time from pressing the shutter button to the camera actually taking a photo is just about a half-second too slow.

I missed many adorable shots of my dog, Sophie -- who never sits long for photos -- because she'd wriggle just as Droid X responded to me pulling its trigger.

Thankfully the Droid mitigates this by also catching live action, recording in 720p high-definition video that can be shared using text

messages and e-mail or uploaded to an online album or YouTube.

But the Droid X's deluxe video feature is a micro HDMI port that lets you link it to a high-definition TV or monitor and easily share recordings with others. The Droid X doesn't come with a cable to make this connection -- that's an "optional" accessory that costs \$24.99 from Verizon -- but the HDMI connection works well and puts mobile video on the big screen quickly and cleanly.

After plugging the Droid into a TV, the phone becomes a remote control that plays, pauses and advances the video. More phones need this kind of connectivity.

In addition to home videos, the Droid X plays Hollywood movies downloaded from Blockbuster Online. Droid X owners can rent digital downloads for \$4.21 each with taxes. They'll need an account with Blockbuster for at least \$8.99 a month, which includes one DVD at a time delivered to your door.

The Droid's Blockbuster On Demand app downloaded "Shutter Island," weighing in at 760MB, over a Wi-Fi network in about 20 minutes. The Droid X won't download movies over Verizon's 3G network, so the company's definition of "on demand" is a loose interpretation.

Also, the Droid X's nifty HDMI link that shows off home videos on an HDTV so brilliantly "is not supported at this time" by Blockbuster On Demand. That's too bad, because sharing shows on a bigger screen would add a lot of value.

Watching video, whether it was recorded on the Droid X, streamed from YouTube or downloaded from Blockbuster, was one of the fastest ways to get the device noticeably hot. The back of the phone radiated heat after about 20 minutes of constant use, and although the Droid never

locked up or crashed, the rise in temperature didn't seem normal.

Verizon didn't respond to a question about the heat, but earlier exchanges told me I was using a device still in a "testing phase," so the phones in stores might not heat up at all.

A worked-up Droid X seemed hottest around its battery, which by the way, Verizon says offers up to eight hours of talk time and 220 hours of standby.

However, the [Droid X](#) shares its 3G Internet connection with up to five other devices quite well. The phone's 3G mobile hotspot feature lets you set up a local wireless network that laptops, tablets, gaming systems and other Wi-Fi devices can connect to and then access the Internet.

The speed of the Droid's 3G wireless network will vary depending on location and surroundings, but I was able to link up an Xbox 360 and play several online games without issue.

For users with less frivolous purposes in mind, the Droid's 3G hotspot would be a great option for traveling professionals needing to get a laptop online quickly, and the Droid's wireless network can be password-protected to prevent freeloaders from hopping on.

Droid owners will want to keep their 3G-connected Wi-Fi hotspots private. In addition to a calling plan and \$30-a-month phone data plan, the Droid's 3G hotspot service costs \$20 a month and caps at 2GB of data. Go over that hotspot data limit and get charged 5 cents per megabyte.

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