

# Which smart phone works for you?

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The best-selling tech item around the world is a cell phone and, for the last two years, it's been all about the smart phone, the device that puts the Internet in your pocket.

But unlike computers, which give you two main choices, Windows or Mac, [smart phones](#) come in four distinct varieties offered by several different wireless carriers.

Each platform - Apple, Google's Android, BlackBerry and Windows - has its pros and cons. (Palm, bought by Hewlett-Packard, is no longer heavily marketed.) Most smart phones sell for \$199, with a two-year contract, although some carriers are offering holiday deals.

## Apple

The iPhone helped reinvent the category in 2007. Roughly 50 million iPhones have been sold, fueled by the App Store, a collection of about 300,000 software programs, for free and for sale, that enhance the iPhone. Apps include everything from airline schedules and calendars to games. There's even a program that lets you plug in your electric guitar and have the iPhone replicate an amplifier.

"The experience on the iPhone is still the best," says Charles Golvin, an analyst at Forrester Research. "The range of apps and things you can do with it and the amount of information that is out there helping you learn about interesting and new things you can do with the iPhone is almost overwhelming."

The major drawback with the iPhone is the phone service. Consumers complain about dropped calls with the iPhone, and Consumer Reports declined to recommend it earlier this year because of problems with its antenna. And AT&T, the iPhone's only U.S. wireless carrier for now, was just rated dead last among the big four carriers, by CR. The biggest problem: dropped calls.

Verizon (No. 1 in CR's rankings) is expected to add the iPhone to its offerings soon. "I tell everyone who's interested in buying an iPhone, 'Wait until next year for Verizon,' " says Jessica Foust, a supervising producer for the TopTenReviews website, which lists the iPhone at No. 1 and No. 3 (for the older iPhone 3GS model.) "The network is so much better."

## **Android**

Google's line of state-of-the-art smart phones is the fastest growing. By next year, they'll become the most popular, some tech analysts predict. An estimated 300,000 Android phones are being activated daily, up from 100,000 daily in August, Google says.

Manufacturers love Android because [Google](#) offers the software to them free. Verizon has the Motorola Droid X and HTC Droid Incredible. Sprint offers the HTC Evo 4G. AT&T sells the Samsung Captivate. T-Mobile markets the G2. All have similar interfaces.

The app store, called Android Market, offers 100,000 apps compared with Apple's 300,000.

TopTenReviews ranks the Droid X as the No. 2 smart phone because of its large 4.3-inch touch-screen, 8-megapixel camera and its ability to capture 720p high-definition video. "It's the phone to get if you don't want the iPhone," says Foust.

## BlackBerry

The dean of business phones, BlackBerry is "still a really good platform, especially if you're a business user," says Golvin. "It's the best solution for e-mail, calendar and managing your day."

BlackBerry phones have come a long way from the basic phone/e-mail combo. They now have cameras, full Web browsers, qwerty keyboards and touch-screens. Like Apple and Android, BlackBerry has apps, too, though far fewer. There are both traditional BlackBerrys with a small keyboard and touch-screen BlackBerrys. The Torch, No. 5 on the TopTenReviews list, has both a qwerty keyboard and a virtual touch-screen keyboard. "It's the best of both worlds," Foust says.

## Windows

The Windows phones of the past have been overhauled. A new line of Windows Phone 7 smart phones arrived this fall, months behind other smart phone competitors but sporting a distinctly different look from [iPhone](#) and Android models. A group of tiles highlight the main screen of the Samsung Focus, LG Quantum and HTC Surround. The phones also offer integration with Windows services, such as the Internet Explorer browser, Bing search and Microsoft Office.

Windows "is aimed at getting you where you want to go," says Golvin.

AT&T and T-Mobile offer the first Windows Phone 7 models, but Sprint and Verizon will follow with more models next year. Windows has only about 1,000 apps available for the phone. "They have a lot of catch-up to do, but it's not too late," Golvin says. Talking Tech

The lowdown on which smart phones to buy from among Apple,

[Android](#), [Windows](#) and BlackBerry versions.

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