

# Can Windows Phone 7 match elegance, versatility of iOS and Android?

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It has taken forever, but Microsoft's overhauled mobile platform is finally here. The stakes have changed drastically since its last major update. Smart phones have taken over as the mobile device of choice for consumers, with the Apple iPhone and Google's Android OS duking it out for supremacy. So does Windows Phone 7 have what it takes to make this a three-way battle? Yes and no.

Most of the basics -- seamless contact and calendar syncing, GPS, an app marketplace, Netflix support, and smooth web surfing -- are in place. But given its late entry into the market, the lack of features like multitasking, copy and paste functionality, universal search, and threaded email is a head scratcher. Though Microsoft plans to deliver some of these missing options in the near future, it's not easy to make a splash when your brand new OS isn't up to par with the competition.

Windows Phone 7's two-dimensional homepage uses large, bright thumbnails rather than the smaller icons found on iPhones and [Android](#) phones. It's not the prettiest interface, but the vibrant, clean design is very easy to navigate. The rest of your apps are tucked onto the Apps hub on a second page, which you'll access often since the homepage houses a fraction of the apps found on other [smart phones](#).

Setting up the phone takes less time than it does to boot up a PC -- we had our [Gmail](#), [Facebook](#), Netflix and Windows Live accounts synced with the phone, including our contacts list and calendar, in a matter of minutes. Rather than offering a separate Facebook app, Microsoft chose

to mesh the Facebook experience with your contacts database in the People hub. On the plus side, this system grabs images of your contacts from Facebook, but it also fills your contact database with people from high school you probably never want to speak to again.

The Xbox Live integration is supposed to be a big selling point for gamers, but after playing around with it a while we don't think it's fleshed out enough to convince Xbox 360 users to migrate to the new platform just yet. From the hub you can peruse your list of mobile games and view your gamerscore and avatar. To check out your friends list, customize your avatar, or send and receive messages you need to download the Xbox Live Extras add-on. Once downloaded, you have to open the Xbox Live app, then wait for Extras to load each time you want to perform any of these operations. We're not sure why Microsoft would force us to essentially open two programs to perform these basic functions, but it's annoying.

The biggest drawback to Xbox Live thus far is the small and relatively expensive game library. The addition of achievements isn't justification enough to price gouge players for \$4.99 to play Bejeweled when its rough equivalent costs \$2.99 on the [iPhone](#). Strangely, Xbox Live also doesn't let you go head to head with friends, either. This compromised feature set isn't enough to make us switch over right now, but we'll be keeping our eye on the platform to see if the game library grows with more Arcade-style games and Microsoft adds the missing multiplayer functionality.

The same can be said for Windows Phone 7 as a whole. The new operating system is a major upgrade that shows a lot of promise, but as it stands, the phone is merely trying to keep pace with Apple and [Google](#).

## **T-MOBILE HTC HD7**

Like the Evo 4G and HD2 before it, this wide-bodied HTC phone sports a massive 4.3-inch display. The capacitive touchscreen is responsive and the additional real estate is great for [web surfing](#), but it doesn't match the high-resolution image quality of the iPhone 4's Retina display. If you're a Netflix and Zune Pass subscriber you won't need to carry a lot media on the device, and the 16GB of storage should be plenty of room to store the photos and HD video you're capturing with the 5-megapixel camera. Our phone calls were crisp, but don't expect to make too many of them in a given day. Like the older iPhone models, the HD7's short battery life had us scrambling for the charger toward the end of each day. If you're a heavy user, you may want to find a [Windows Phone 7](#) model with a larger battery.

Rating: 7/10

Details: \$199.99 (with contract), [t-mobile.com](http://t-mobile.com)

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