

# After Fire flop, Amazon unveils phones with its apps, ads (Update)

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This photo provided by Amazon shows Motorola's Moto G, left, and the Blu R1 HD. After flopping spectacularly with its own Fire phone, Amazon is selling special editions of other phones at a \$50 discount. These phones will come with

ads on the lock screen and lots of Amazon apps on the home screen. You can hide those apps, but won't be able to uninstall them. (Amazon via AP)

Amazon is back in the phone business—sort of.

After its own Fire phone flopped, Amazon is selling special editions of other manufacturers' phones at a \$50 discount. They'll come with ads on the lock screen and lots of Amazon apps on the home screen. You can hide those apps, but won't be able to uninstall them.

Amazon.com Inc. is touting the discount as a benefit of its \$100-a-year Prime loyalty program. Membership is required, and Amazon figures that those customers will appreciate having single sign-in access to Amazon's various services without having to download about 10 individual apps for video, Kindle e-books, music and, of course, shopping.

Apart from the presence of Amazon apps, the new phones will bear little resemblance to the Fire. For one thing, there's no high-tech wizardry like infrared cameras to track your positions and make images appear to be 3-D. There's also no Firefly technology for scanning bar codes, business cards and various products, though a lower-tech cousin called Flow is available.

Most importantly, the new phones will run a standard version of Google's Android system, rather than Amazon's highly modified version, called Fire OS. That means the phones will run the range of apps available for Android. The Fire phone ran only a subset, turning the phone into little more than a tool for directing users back to Amazon's own services.

Seattle-based Amazon took a \$170 million write-down related to the Fire phone in 2014 following mediocre reviews and lackluster sales.

Under the new program, Amazon is offering Motorola's latest Moto G phone for \$150 instead of \$200. The R1 HD phone from a Florida phone company called Blu will go for \$50 instead of \$100. There's no two-year service contract with either.

Amazon has long sold other manufacturers' phones, but these are the first with Amazon apps and ads built in, akin to Amazon's own tablets and e-readers. Orders begin Wednesday, and the phones start shipping July 12—which Amazon says is the same day regular editions of both are available to the public.

Amazon is also selling regular editions at full price, without the ads or Amazon apps. Prime membership wouldn't be required.

For the special editions, Amazon says the lock-screen ads won't block incoming notifications. They will be personalized based on shopping and other Amazon activities, not what you do elsewhere on the phone, according to the company. Amazon offers ads with other devices, too—typically selling for \$15 or \$20 less, rather than the \$50 discount with phones.

The special editions are unlocked, meaning customers will be able to switch carriers, though restrictions apply because the four major carriers use two competing network technologies.

**More information:** [www.amazon.com/prime-exclusive-phones](http://www.amazon.com/prime-exclusive-phones)

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