

5G: What is it? What does it mean for your smartphone?

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Are you ready for 5G?

On Thursday, AT&T confirmed the first smartphones supporting the new wireless service will arrive later this year.

The transition to 5G promises faster smartphones, and a lot more. Here's what you need to know about 5G.

1. What is 5G?

It stands for fifth generation. So, this would mark the fifth generation mobile network.

2. What does this mean for my [smartphone](#)?

Compared to 4G, which is what most smartphones use now, 5G offers a lot more bandwidth and lower latency, which means it can support the transfer of more data with fewer delays. Put simply, smartphone owners will be able to do things like upload or download videos and photos a lot faster. How much faster is still not clear yet.

3. Will I be able to get 5G with my current phone?

That's highly unlikely. If you recall the transition to 4G earlier this decade, your old 3G phone didn't support the faster networks, which meant buying a smartphone capable of running on both 4G and 3G.

Expect something similar here, where newer phones will work on both 5G and 4G networks.

4. Is this the only reason to get excited?

It's more than providing you with a really fast smartphone. Perks such as low latency will benefit technology such as virtual reality, where any delays can really ruin the experience. It also will have enough bandwidth to offer a lot more support to Internet-connected devices. As John Stankey, head of AT&T's Time Warner Merger Integration Planning Team, summarized it during last year's Mobile World Congress: "5G is the enabler of what I would call the connected society that today's current technology wasn't engineered to handle."

5. When can I start using 5G service?

Although AT&T confirmed 5G service will land on smartphones later this year, expect access to really pick up starting in 2019. One of the first big tests for 5G arrives next month at the Pyeongchang Olympic Winter Games in South Korea.

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