Google Fi mobile phone service now works with iPhone and more Android devices—with limits

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Fi meet iPhone. iPhone meet Fi.

Google's Project Fi, as of Wednesday to be known as Google Fi, never became the disruptive force in wireless that some predicted back in 2015. That's when Google first launched its own mobile [phone](#) service, with a then-novel offering for cellphone customers built around the idea that you didn't have to pay for data you didn't use. Other benefits came later: international data coverage in 170 countries, spam protection and more.

But at least one major factor has held Fi back: The service worked only on a few phones, Google's own Nexus devices back then and eventually Pixel devices and select Motorola and LG handsets.

On Wednesday, Google Fi takes a bold step forward, by adding compatibility with most Android devices, including models from Samsung and One Plus—and yes, for the first time, the iPhone.

Google says Fi on the iPhone will be in beta initially, and to get set up with Fi, you'll have to head to the Fi website and wait for Google to send you a SIM card in the mail. Once you insert the SIM and install the Google Fi iOS app on your phone, you'll be walked through the various set-up steps in the app.

Missing features

Keep your expectations in check. Fi features that will be missing on the iPhone include one of the biggest, the ability to switch between multiple cellular networks, not to mention, visual voicemail, Wi-Fi calling and texting, automated spam detection, international tethering, and Family Link account support.

Even on Android phones, the availability of some features will depend on the device that you use, which limits Fi's appeal.

For the full Google Fi experience, you'll still need a phone that was designed for the Fi service, models such as the Pixel 3, and Moto G6, which include special hardware and software that will let you move effortlessly between the networks.

When it launched, Fi was a prime example of what the cellphone industry refers to as an MVNO, shorthand jargon for "mobile virtual network operator." At the time, Project Fi piggybacked off T-Mobile and Sprint, with U.S. Cellular and the international network Three to come later. A compatible phone would automatically choose the fastest and strongest available network whether 4G LTE cellular or Wi-Fi.

The basic one-person Google Fi plan is $20 a month for calling and text, plus $10 a month for each gigabyte of data used, up to a max of $60 monthly. You can add a person for $15 extra. Data remains free but is slowed down for the rest of any month in which an individual person goes over 15GB, which as of last January, Google says, happens less than 1 percent of the time.

On Wednesday only, Google is offering a promotion to attract new subscribers or existing customers who buy a phone from Google Fi. You'll receive the same amount you spent on that phone back in travel

gift cards that you can apply to flights with Delta and Southwest or lodging with Airbnb and hotels.com. If you'd rather set up Google Fi on your current phone, you'll earn $200 of Fi service credit.

Google has claimed in the past that it was never its intention to take on the cellular industry, but rather use Fi as a showcase for what's possible with its own hardware and the software in Android. By opening up Fi to the iPhone and a broader base of Android customers, something customers have been asking for, it appears that Google's ambitions in the space may have increased.

For consumers, meanwhile, more choices are always welcome. Just be mindful that when it comes to Fi, some of those choices come with limits.

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