TECH ADVISOR

JANUARY 2026

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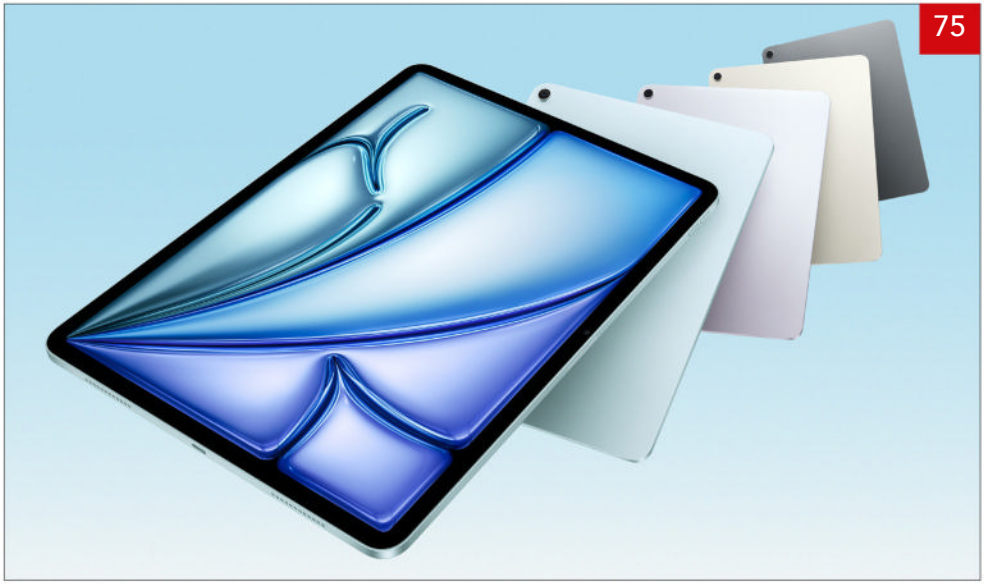
CONTENTS

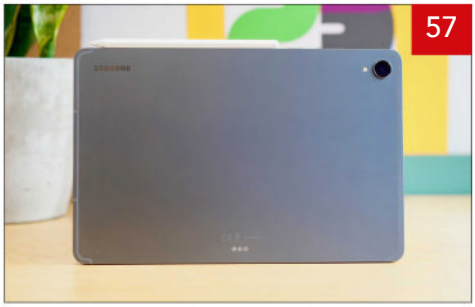


NEWS

REVIEWS

BUYING GUIDE

Main cover image: Xiaomi



FEATURES

Credit: Nicoleta Ionescu/Shutterstock

Google's latest Pixel Drop update includes some great new features

Here's everything you need to know. JON MUNDY reports

The latest Pixel Drop is here, bringing several new features to Pixel smartphones. Google has commenced rolling out its latest Pixel Drop, which is the name it gives to major Pixel smartphone software updates laden with fresh features. Here are the main additions you can expect.

NOTIFICATION SUMMARIES

Google has put its powerful AI to use in offering bite-sized summaries of

incoming notifications right there in the notification shade. This means you can get the gist of a lengthy message or conversation at a glance, without even opening the app. We've seen something similar from Apple in recent versions of iOS, though it's often not very useful. Here's hoping Google's provision gives more useful insight. From late 2025, Google says you'll be able to silence lower-priority notifications.

PERSONALISED PHOTO EDITS

Continuing the development of its spookily naturalistic image editing tools, Google now provides the ability to fix group shots with a sentence.

Tap 'Help me edit' and ask Photos to 'Remove Riley's sunglasses, open my eyes, make Engel smile and open her eyes' (other friend names are available), and Photos will now pull image info from other photos in your gallery to make the appropriate edits – provided your contacts are properly labelled in Face Groups.

Again, this is US-only for now (sigh), and you'll need to be 18 or over and with location estimates enabled.

SCAM PROTECTION IN MESSAGES

Google has upped its Scam Detection game app with the new Pixel Drop, offering scam alerts across a number of popular messaging services.

When a potentially dodgy message comes in, Google will give you a 'Likely scam' heads-up notification.

Unfortunately, this is a US-only feature for now, and it'll only work on Pixel 6 phones and later.

WICKED THEME PACKS

This addition was heavily featured in leaks ahead of the latest Pixel Drop, but Google is adding themed customisation packs to its Pixel phones. These include custom wallpapers, icons, GIFs, and even sounds.

To kick this off, it's provided a Wicked: For Good theme pack to tie in with the new musical movie. There are three styles to choose from the off: For Good, Glinda and Elphaba.

VIP PRIORITIES

As predicted, Google is giving its half-baked VIP contacts feature some love. Notifications from your selected VIPs will now be prioritised, and there's now a crisis badge in the Contacts widget to keep you updated on critical alerts.

PHOTO REMIXES

Google has added a Remix feature to Google Messages, allowing you to make on-the-fly edits within the message

thread. If the other party is also on Google Messages, you can even bat remixes back and forth between you.

And yes, the results will show up for whoever is in the chat with you, regardless of the phone they're using.

SAVE POWER IN GOOGLE MAPS

This one's neat. Press the power button while navigating in Google Maps, and it'll switch to a simplified layout showing only key information like your next turn. It means you'll still have navigation even when your phone is about to die.

SCAM DETECTION AND CALL NOTES EXPANDS

We've already signalled our annoyance at the US-only availability of some of these new features, but Google is bringing some of its previous additions to more people.

Scam Detection in voice calls is now coming to Google Pixel 9 (and later) users in the UK, Ireland, India, Australia and Canada.

Call Notes is rolling out to Australia, Canada, the UK, Ireland and Japan, allowing users to transcribe and summarise phone calls.

MAGIC CUE GETS A BOOST

Remember Magic Cue? It's the Google Pixel 10 feature that apparently offers one-tap cross-app suggestions, but which many people (myself included) have never really been able to get to work. Google says it'll now offer "more timely suggestions", which I'm hoping means "will actually work for most people". We'll see.

Google might finally address this annoying Pixel phone feature

Avert your Glance. JON MUNDY reports

You could soon be able to remove Google's contentious At a Glance widget from your Pixel smartphone home screen.

For several members of the Tech Advisor team, you'd have to pry their Google Pixel 10 phones from their cold dead hands. But even these Pixel converts would admit (indeed, grumble loudly) that there's an annoyingly persistent flaw with the Pixel Home Screen layout.

It continues to be impossible to remove the At a Glance widget from the main Home Screen on a Pixel phone.

Google's multi-functional widget might be extremely useful (I'm a fan, personally), but the fact that you can't opt to replace it with something else (or indeed nothing) is deeply irritating.

And while we're at it, why does it have to take up so much space?

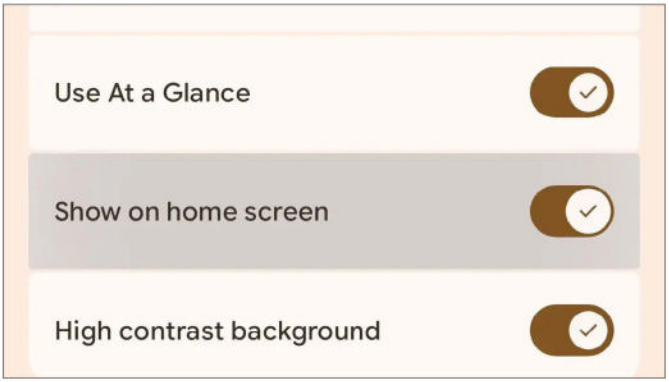
GLANCING BLOW

Thankfully, there's evidence that Google is planning to change all this.

In the latest pre-release build of the Android OS, Android Authority (tinyurl.com/mrkkns4a) has spotted a new 'Show on home screen' toggle in the At a Glance settings.

The purpose of this seems pretty unambiguous. In some not-too-distant future version of Android, you'll be able to remove the At a Glance widget from the Home Screen. It might well remain active on the lock screen, which is an irritation in itself, but this would be real progress.

The ability to remove this all-encompassing widget as been requested for years now, its permanent status seeming to run counter to Android's customisable reputation. We could finally be set to see such requests fulfilled.



Credit: Android Authority

In some not-too-distant future version of Android, you'll be able to remove the At a Glance widget from the Home Screen.

Galaxy Ring set to get a superpower as two more rivals enter the arena

'Gesture' command found. JON MUNDY reports

The Samsung Galaxy Ring is about to get a powerful new mixed reality feature, just as two new smart ring competitors join the fight.

Android Authority (tinyurl.com/2kzc6c96) has uncovered code in the latest update to the Galaxy Ring Manager app that refers to a "Ring gesture for glasses".

Samsung, of course, recently announced its Galaxy XR headset, which is the first hardware to run on Google's Android XR mixed reality platform.

While there's no further information here, the reference would certainly seem to indicate that you'll be able to use your Samsung Galaxy Ring for gesture-based control of the Galaxy XR headset.

SOUNDBAR STREAM

It's a good job Samsung is filling out its smart ring's feature set, because it's set for some fresh competition.

Two former Meta employees have launched a start-up called Sandbar, which is leading with a smart ring product called Stream.

It's being referred to as "a mouse for voice", presumably due to its ability to hone vocal inputs into a reliable interface mechanism.

You can talk into it to issue memos, interact with a chat bot, control your music playback, add reminders and more. It seems to tie in with your earbuds and smartphone to provide a heads-up assistant.

The Soundbar Stream is available to pre-order now, in matt silver or polished gold, for $249 (around £189). It looks like a Pro subscription will cost $10 (around £7.60) per month, with the first three months free. It's set to ship, in limited quantity, in Summer 2026.

EVEN R1 SMART RING

Another smart ring contender is here in the form of the Even R1. Kind of.

Wearable smart tech brand Even Realities is launching its latest Even G2 smart glasses with the option of a smart ring controller. The Even R1 sounds like more of an accessory to a main product than an out and out smart ring – but then, isn't every smart ring, to one extent or other? In addition to this smart glass hook-up, the Even R1 contains biometric sensors and a new Productivity Score for continuous monitoring of your health. The company promises "gentle feedback and real-time wellness insights".

The Even R1 Smart Ring is available globally today for £239, alongside the £599 Even G2 Display Smart Glasses.

WhatsApp finally arrives on the Apple Watch – and it's only taken 10 years

Dedicated messaging app out now. JON MUNDY reports

WhatsApp has released a dedicated app for the Apple Watch smartwatch, and not before time. The immensely popular Meta-owned messaging service has waited more than 10 years to supply an app to Apple's also-immensely-popular smartwatch, but it's finally here.

Over on the official WhatsApp blog (tinyurl.com/5ya3mh76), the company outlines some of the features and benefits to downloading the free app.

Naturally the main positive is that you'll be able to check and respond to your messages (even really long ones) without needing to bring your iPhone

into play. It's possible to view more of your chat history on screen when you're reading these messages, too.

But there are some other cool features that have been added to this dedicated app.

FEATURES

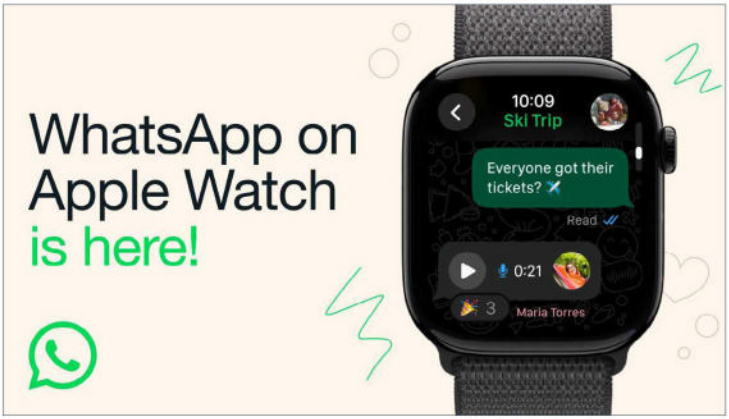
You'll also be able to see who's placing those WhatsApp calls, again without the need to pull out your phone.

The ability to record and send voice messages from your Apple Watch will make it even more convenient for that person in your life (you know who) to take up a precious portion of your time and attention with another recorded screed. So thanks for that, WhatsApp.

At the other end of the scale, WhatsApp has made it possible to quickly react to messages with emoji.

Finally, images and stickers should look much clearer on this native Apple Watch app. The company stresses that all your calls and messages remain end-to-end encrypted – a message that Apple itself would surely approve of.

This new WhatsApp Apple Watch app is available to download now for free from the App Store, and requires an Apple Watch Series 4 or later, which much be running watchOS 10 or later.



The news was announced on the official WhatsApp blog.

THE iPHONE SECURITY FEATURE YOU NEED TO TURN ON NOW

Macworld

DECEMBER 2025

iPHONE AIR

THIN IS IN

THE FUTURE
OF THE iPHONE IS
SLIM AND POWERFUL

APPLE WATCH S3:
BRILLIANCE
ON A BUDGET

Oppo Find X9 Pro

Price when reviewed: £1,099 ★★★★½

Following a few years of absence, Oppo returned to the UK market with the Oppo Find X8 Pro in late 2024. At the time, I said it was probably the best camera phone you could buy. Now, its successor has landed, with a fresh design and upgrades all over, and I couldn't be more excited.

This model sports the latest Dimensity 9500 chip, a gargantuan 7,500mAh battery, a new camera system (including a 200Mp telephoto), and a photography kit with an attachable telephoto extender. All signs point towards it being one of the best camera phones of the past 12 months.

I've had this phone for almost a month, and I've been using it as my primary handset the majority of the time. I've tested absolutely everything and flown around the world with it in my pocket, too. After spending so much time with it, I've got plenty of thoughts, so let's dive in.

DESIGN

With the Find X9 series, Oppo has changed things up. We've seen large centrally placed camera modules for the last few generations, but now, Oppo is reverting to the classic iPhone-esque upper-left corner camera array.

When I first saw the new design, I wasn't too keen. It looks fine, but I just couldn't help feeling that this was a step backwards. Compared to the last few designs, this one looks rather anonymous.

However, once I got my hands on it, I quickly changed my tune. It looks and feels incredibly premium, much more so than the X8 Pro, which, despite being made from aluminium and glass, has a slight plasticky feel to it. This model is cold, dense and professional.

The Find X9 Pro has adopted a fully flat design with boxy side rails, again, very much like an iPhone. This usually makes phones feel larger in the hand, but holding it side-by-side with its predecessor, the new model feels surprisingly compact.

Like the previous generation, the Oppo Find X9 Pro sports a Quick Button, which is essentially Oppo's clone of Apple's Camera Control, and it's positioned in the same spot. This one's been re-engineered to detect swipes as small as 0.3mm, but otherwise it works in the same way. A double press will open the camera app, swiping can zoom in and out, and clicking will take a photo.

The classic notification slider has been replaced on this model, and now you get a customisable button that Oppo calls the Snap Key. Again, the Apple influence is plain to see; it's like a 1-to-1 copy of the Action Button. That said, I love the Action Button, and Oppo's version is just as handy.

It's available in two colourways, either Titanium Charcoal or Silk White, and I have the former in for testing. Both are very minimalist and professional. I like the way they look, but they don't make much of a statement compared to something like

The Find X9 Pro has adopted a fully flat design with boxy side rails.

The notification slider has been replaced by a customisable button that Oppo calls the Snap Key.

the orange iPhone 17 Pro. Depending on your tastes, that could be a good or a bad thing.

Both the rear and sides have a matt finish, and you'll never have to worry about fingerprint smudges, because this panel seems to be immune.

Oppo hasn't mentioned what glass it's using on the display, but there's a factory-applied screen protector included, and it's of excellent quality. I'm a bit of a screen protector hater. I usually rip them off at the first opportunity, either because they smudge too easily, attract dust, or just feel a little tacky. This one, though, didn't bother me at all, and I'm still using it after weeks.

The phone is IP68/69 rated for water and dust resistance, so it should handle the elements with ease. However, there's no case included in the box (unusual for Oppo), so you'll likely want to pick one up to keep your phone looking pristine. If you pick up an official case, most have MagSafe-compatible magnets built in, which is really handy. Using this phone with a MagSafe holder in my car made me appreciate the design change more. The smaller camera bump means the magnets can be much more central, and so accessories like that work better than they do with my Find X8 Ultra.

HASSELBLAD TELECONVERTER KIT

Vivo saw a lot of success earlier this year with its optional Zeiss teleconverter

The kit comes with a slim-line aramid fibre case, complete with MagSafe-compatible magnets.

add-on for the X200 Ultra, and it doubled down with the new X300 series phones. Now, Oppo is getting in on the action with a teleconverter of its own.

This one, as you might expect, has a Hasselblad logo on it, but otherwise it looks a lot like Vivo's one, and functions in basically the same way.

The kit comes with a very nice slim-line aramid fibre case, complete with MagSafe-compatible magnets. It looks and feels almost identical to a high-end case from a brand like Pitaka. It's a massive improvement on Vivo's plasticky and chunky photography kit case.

The teleconverter lens attaches via a small bayonet mount on a plate, which slides over the camera module and clicks into place.

The teleconverter lens attaches via a small bayonet mount on a plate, which slides over the camera module and clicks into place. It blocks all lenses except for the telephoto when it's attached, but it slides on and off pretty easily, so it's not too inconvenient to remove and reattach as and when it's needed.

The lens itself feels extremely premium. It's made from metal with glass lenses, and it has some heft to it. It provides a 3.28x magnification, so when you place it in front of the 3x telephoto, you get a shot equivalent to just under 10x zoom.

It feels a bit crazy shooting with such a large lens sticking out of your phone, and I think that stood out to me more as I wasn't sent a grip to counterbalance it. Early teaser images show that some kind of grip accessory does exist, but whether that launches internationally or not remains to be seen.

To use the lens, you need to go into the dedicated 'Hasselblad Teleconverter' mode in the camera app, as otherwise the image will be upside down. It's very similar to the X200 Ultra's setup, wherein your options are slightly more limited using the external lens.

Video maxes out at 4K 60fps, rather than 4K 120fps, and there are no pro options or Log recording. When shooting photos, you get some basic options like stage mode and picture style options, but there are no manual controls, and you can't shoot in RAW or at the full 200Mp resolution.

To be fair, this was what I expected. But after taking the Vivo X300 Pro for a spin, which allows you to access essentially every part of the camera app with the teleconverter attached, this feels like a step backwards. Of course, there's every possibility that Oppo will expand the functionality via software updates.

DISPLAY

The screen on the Oppo Find X9 Pro is easily among my favourites. It's now a spacious 6.78-inch fully flat display, with an incredibly narrow symmetrical bezel. As far as I'm aware, this might be the slimmest bezel of any smartphone so far, measuring just 1.15mm on all sides.

The screen on the Find X9 Pro is easily among my favourites.

It makes the phone feel extremely sophisticated, and means that you get maximum screen size with a minimal physical footprint.

The display can dim all the way down to 1 nit, so you can scroll socials in bed without disturbing your partner. And if you're worried about eye strain,

When it comes to audio, the phone has dual stereo speakers.

When it comes to audio, the phone has dual stereo speakers. One fires from the base of the phone next to the USB-C charging port, and the other doubles up as the phone's earpiece.

They're a very decent set of speakers, offering both clarity at the top end and a full, weighty bass response. My only complaint is that they're not the loudest around, but on the plus side, they don't distort or sound too harsh at maximum volume.

you needn't be, as this panel boasts 2160Hz high-frequency PWM dimming.

On the other end of the scale, the screen can boost to 3,600 nits to compete with bright sunlight, but Oppo measures its output differently than some other brands, so it's brighter than it may sound. In any case, I certainly never had trouble seeing it outdoors.

It's a 10-bit display that covers 100 percent of the DCI-P3 colour space, and it's certified to playback Dolby Vision, HDR10+ and HDR Vivid content. This means TV shows and movies from your favourite streaming apps always look as they were intended.

PERFORMANCE

The Oppo Find X9 Pro is one of the first phones (alongside the Vivo X300 series) to feature MediaTek's latest flagship

I demand a lot from my phones, whether it's playing Wuthering Waves on maximum settings, editing videos or serious multitasking. The Dimensity 9500 easily kept pace throughout.

chip, the Dimensity 9500. Supposedly, it's around 30 percent faster than the previous-gen in CPU and GPU workloads, and around 42 percent more power efficient.

In short, the new chip is a rocket. I demand a lot from my phones, whether it's playing Wuthering Waves on maximum settings, editing videos or serious multitasking. The Dimensity 9500 easily kept pace throughout.

I got some weird results from the GFXBench suite (which happens from time to time), but the phone posted an impressive 3DMark Wildlife Extreme score of 7,062, handily outperforming the Galaxy S25 Ultra, with its special overclocked Snapdragon 8 Elite chip.

The bigger question, though, is how it compares to the fresh new Snapdragon 8 Elite Gen 5. We haven't properly tested a production model yet, and there's every chance it could be quicker. In reality, though, I think you'll struggle to find something you can't run at maximum settings on this phone – who really needs more than that?

Sustained performance is decent, but the phone will throttle somewhat if you're pushing the limits for extended periods. On the plus side, the phone never gets too hot, so you can game for a long time without uncomfortably sweaty palms.

Only one model is launching internationally, which comes with 16GB of RAM and 512GB of storage. It's more than enough for my needs, and I dare say many others will feel the same way.

Geekbench 6 (multi-core)

Oppo Find X9 Pro: 6,288
Google Pixel 10 Pro XL: 5,123
Samsung Galaxy S25 Ultra: 9,413
Honor Magic 7 Pro: 9,180
OnePlus 13: 9,482
Apple iPhone 17 Pro Max: 9,450
Oppo Find X8 Pro: 8,551

GFX Manhattan 3.1

Oppo Find X9 Pro: 60fps
Google Pixel 10 Pro XL: 111fps
Samsung Galaxy S25 Ultra: 120fps
Honor Magic 7 Pro: 120fps
OnePlus 13: 119fps
Apple iPhone 17 Pro Max: 60fps (Metal)
Oppo Find X8 Pro: 120fps

Battery life

Oppo Find X9 Pro: 26 hours, 40 minutes
Google Pixel 10 Pro XL: 14 hours, 19 minutes
Samsung Galaxy S25 Ultra: 19 hours, 48 minutes
Honor Magic 7 Pro: 12 hours, 36 minutes
OnePlus 13: 15 hours, 27 minutes
Oppo Find X8 Pro: 14 hours, 36 minutes

Charge in 30 minutes

Oppo Find X9 Pro: 50%
Google Pixel 10 Pro XL: 38%
Samsung Galaxy S25 Ultra: 70%
Honor Magic 7 Pro: 94%
OnePlus 13: 95%
Apple iPhone 17 Pro Max: 71%
Oppo Find X8 Pro: 69%

CAMERAS

The Oppo Find X9 Pro takes a different approach to its predecessor. Rather than having two separate telephoto lenses, it opts for a more common three-lens array. There's now only a singular 3x telephoto, but it has a massive 200Mp resolution and a large 1/1.56-inch sensor.

It might sound like a downgrade, but in theory, the high-resolution sensor will make up for the lack of a 6x lens, as it can use pixel-binning to capture high-quality, cropped-in shots.

We've seen similar from the likes of Vivo and Honor, which both use 200Mp telephoto sensors on their 2025 flagship phones. They both consistently outperform the S25 Ultra for long-range zooms, too, despite the S25 Ultra having the quad-lens setup. So, this approach has merit.

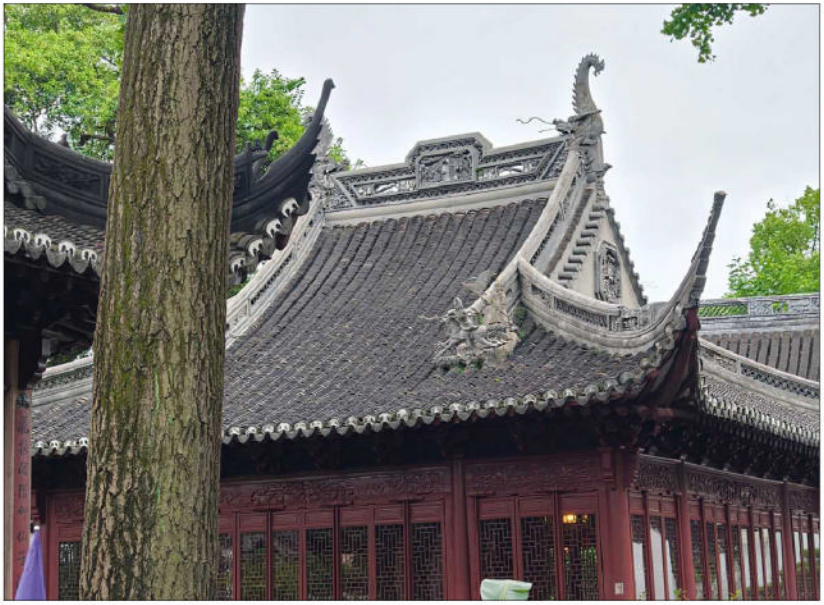
As for the other sensors, there's a 50Mp 1/1.28-inch main with a super-wide f/1.5 aperture, and a 50Mp ultrawide with autofocus. Around the front, you get a 50Mp selfie snapper, which also has autofocus, making it perfect for group photos.

Another big change with the Oppo Find X9 Pro is that it defaults to 50Mp resolution whenever the light is sufficient. If it's darker, the cameras will bin down to a more common 12Mp resolution to let more light in.

Rather than having two separate telephoto lenses, the Find X9 Pro opts for a more common three-lens array.

Apple changed the iPhone's default resolution to 24Mp a couple of years back, but most Android brands have yet to follow suit. Oppo has decided to just leapfrog the iPhone and shoot at over double the resolution, and I respect it.

We'll start off our test shots with examples of the same subject taken with the different zoom lenses.



Next up, we have a low light photo.

Here's a macro image.

We'll finish off with a selfie.

Overall, I have been very pleased with my shots from the Find X9 Pro, regardless of the lighting conditions. The default image profile gives you a very natural and true-to-life look, but that's easily tweaked with the library of filters and editing options, if you want to give your photos a little more flavour.

I noticed the colour accuracy has been greatly improved on this model, perhaps thanks to the new dedicated colour sensor. The Find X8 Pro and Ultra would both tend to favour cooler tones, but that wasn't a problem with this model at all.

When it comes to zooming, the lack of a 6x lens doesn't seem to hold this phone back at all. Oppo's image processing is outstanding, and you can take photos that remain somewhat usable up to around 30x. Pushing beyond that, you'll have the option to enable Oppo's Generative AI to clean up the image. It works shockingly well, but it makes up details that aren't there, and I'm not too keen on that, personally.

The optional teleconverter turns the 70mm equivalent telephoto lens into approximately a 230mm lens, and of course, you can zoom further than that with a digital crop. It makes a big difference to the clarity at 230mm, and it's much better in low light at an equivalent focal length, as it uses the whole sensor rather than cropping in.

As for whether it's worth using, that depends on your expectations. For long-range zooms, I didn't find the quality difference too impressive, and I felt the same way about the X300 Pro's teleconverter. The processing on the built-in lens is so good that the difference between the two is often quite subtle. It's really with closer subjects that this lens comes to life.

Shooting middle-distance portraits, or semi close-ups, the natural compression of this external lens completely blurs the background, and gives images a much more 3D look. It's hard to believe photos like that come from a phone, and I absolutely love it. I had a great time using it for wildlife and candid street snaps.

Video shooting on this phone is excellent, too. You get some seriously professional-level features here, including the ability to shoot at 4K 120fps in 10-bit Log or Dolby Vision with both the main and telephoto cameras. Otherwise, the stabilisation is solid, and the clarity is superb. It could be a great companion for content creators.

BATTERY LIFE

The Oppo Find X9 Pro comes with a gigantic 7,500mAh silicon-carbon

The phone comes with a gigantic 7,500mAh silicon-carbon battery, the largest of any phone I've tested so far.

battery, the largest of any phone I've tested so far, and double the capacity of the base iPhone 17. Bucking recent trends, you'll get this same massive battery, no matter where you reside, too.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the battery life is phenomenal. I used the X9 Pro as my main device for a week in Shanghai, which was an absolute torture test, and it surpassed my expectations over and over again. I carried my power bank with me all week, and I never needed it.

To give a little more context, I was constantly using the phone for navigation and ride-hailing, using it as my primary payment method, translating everything with Google Lens and taking loads of photos and videos. Even still, I'd get to the end of a very long day with 30- to 40 percent left in the tank.

In more normal circumstances, when I'm working at my desk, two days on a charge is easily achievable, and I sometimes get into a third day.

You might think that such a massive battery will take ages to charge, but thankfully, that's not the case. With an official 80-watt Oppo charger (sadly not included), you can go from fully flat to 50 percent charged in just half an hour. Wireless charging is rapid, too, supporting up to 50-watt speeds with Oppo's AirVooc adapter.

SOFTWARE

ColorOS has grown to become one of my favourite Android skins in the last few years, and this latest iteration looks to be the best yet. It has received a pretty significant overhaul, and as with a lot of things on this phone, the Apple influence couldn't be more obvious.

There's new Liquid Glass-like styling, split notifications and quick settings shades, upgraded lockscreen options and a Dynamic Island clone. If Apple has it, there's a good chance Oppo has its own version. I'm sure this will rub some Android purists the wrong way, but personally, I'm a fan. Apple does

some neat things with its software, and if they work, why not have them on an Android phone too?

The Apple-like shenanigans don't stop there, either. Oppo has been hard at work ensuring that the Find X9 series phones work with the Apple ecosystem better than most rivals. If you use a MacBook, you can use Oppo's O+ Connect app to wirelessly connect and remotely control one device from the other. You can also share a clipboard, drag and drop files, and more. I have only tested this briefly, but it seems to work as advertised, and it's really handy.

The Oppo Find X9 can also share files to an iPhone with Touch to Share, and it'll even pair with an Apple Watch, so long as it was originally activated with an iPhone. If you're thinking of making the jump from iOS to Android, this phone could be a perfect fit.

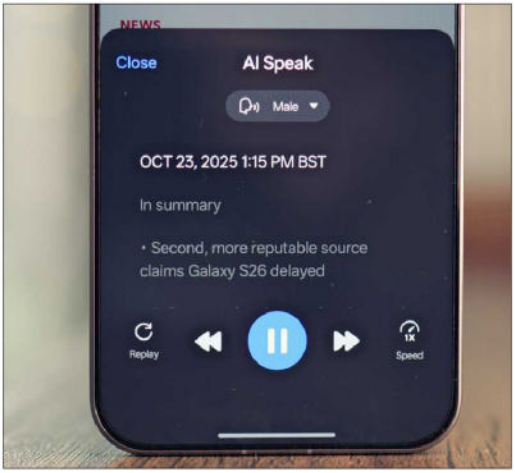
ColorOS has grown to become one of my favourite Android skins in the last few years, and this latest iteration looks to be the best yet.

In addition, Oppo has been working on the smoothness of the OS, and it shows. The animations have been reworked, and the new Luminous Rendering Engine allows for simultaneous rendering of multiple animations and effects. The result is a home screen that feels incredibly quick, no matter how many things you're doing at once.

Oppo's AI features were already my favourite, mainly due to the AI Speak feature, which will read webpages and articles to you in a very natural-sounding voice, so you're free to multitask. Of course, all the usual stuff is included, like advanced image editing tools, translation, transcription, writing assistance, and more. There's also Gemini and Circle to Search, as you'd expect.

What's new, though, is something called AI Mind Space. This is basically Oppo's answer to Nothing's Essential Space, or the Pixel Screenshots app. You can activate it with the new Snap Key, or swipe up with three fingers to take a screenshot that's saved into the new Mind Space.

Then, your screenshots will be



Oppo's AI features were already my favourite, mainly due to the AI Speak feature.

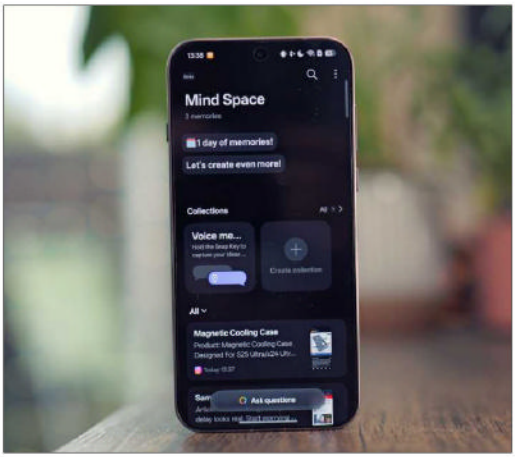
searchable, and you can ask questions about them with the built-in LLM (Large Language Model). It understands the context of images, so if there's a date, for example, it can offer to add it to your calendar.

It's a handy feature, but as I found with the Pixel and Nothing versions, the lack of cross compatibility prevents me from relying on it. If there were a web interface where I could see these screenshots, I'd be much more inclined, but as someone who switches phones almost every week, this just doesn't fit my lifestyle.

One area where this phone lags behind slightly is with the software update policy. Just like the Find X8 series, Oppo is promising five years of OS upgrades and six years of security patches. It's not a bad offering, but it's less impressive than the seven years of both that you get from the likes of Samsung, Google and Honor flagships.

VERDICT

The Oppo Find X9 Pro is easily one of my favourite phones of 2025 (and I've tried most of them). There's not one area where this phone falls short. The battery life is outstanding, the performance is top-notch, the software is slick, and the cameras are stunning. Plus, there's the amazing telephoto extender kit, which adds an extra level of versatility for keen



AI Mind Space is Oppo's answer to Nothing's Essential Space, or the Pixel Screenshots app.

photographers. If you're on the fence and can afford the Find X9 Pro, just get it. This phone will not disappoint.

As for whether this is the best camera phone available, that's a harder question. I'm pretty comfortable saying it's the best model currently sold in the UK, but globally, the Vivo X300 Pro is a hot contender, as is Oppo's own Find X8 Ultra. In any case, you can expect some stunning shots, and that's what it's all about. Luke Baker

SPECIFICATIONS

- 6.78-inch (2,772x1,272; 450ppi) LTPO AMOLED, 1B colours, 120Hz, 2160Hz PWM, Dolby Vision, HDR10+, HDR Vivid, 800 nits (typ), 1,800 nits (HBM), 3,600 nits (peak) display
- Android 16, up to 5 major Android upgrades, ColorOS 16
- Mediatek Dimensity 9500 (3nm) processor
- Octa-core (1x 4.21GHz C1-Ultra, 3x 3.5GHz C1-Premium, 4x 2.7GHz C1-Pro) CPU
- Arm G1-Ultra GPU
- No card slot
- 12GB/16GB RAM
- 256GB/512GB/1TB storage
- Three rear-facing cameras: 50Mp, f/1.5, 23mm (wide), 1/1.28-inch, 1.22µm, multi-directional PDAF, OIS; 200Mp, f/2.1, 70mm (periscope telephoto), 1/1.56-inch, 0.5µm, 3x optical zoom, multi-directional PDAF, OIS; 50Mp, f/2.0, 15mm, 120-degree (ultrawide), 1/2.76-inch, 0.64µm, multi-directional PDAF
- Selfie camera: 50Mp, f/2.0, 21mm (wide), 1/2.76-inch, 0.64µm, PDAF
- Stereo speakers
- No 3.5mm audio jack
- Wi-Fi 802.11 a/b/g/n/ac/6/7, dual-band or tri-band, Wi-Fi Direct
- Bluetooth 6.0, A2DP, LE, aptX HD, LHDC 5
- GPS (L1+L5), BDS (B1I+B1c+B2a+B2b), GALILEO (E1+E5a+E5b), QZSS (L1+L5), GLONASS, NavIC (L5)
- NFC
- USB Type-C 3.2, OTG
- Fingerprint (under display, ultrasonic)
- Non-removable 7,500mAh battery
- 161.3x76.5x8.3mm
- 224g

Google Pixel 10 Pro Fold

Price when reviewed: £1,7449 ★★★★☆

Last year's Pixel 9 Pro Fold brought with it some massive changes, but with the launch of the Pixel 10 Pro Fold, Google is sticking to its tried and tested design. At a glance, you might struggle to tell the two apart, aside from the fetching new colour options.

However, looks can be deceiving, and the latest foldable Pixel has some significant changes beneath the surface. Like the rest of the Pixel 10 line-up, it gets the Pixelsnap magnet treatment, Tensor G5 chipset, and some new software features. It also has a bigger battery, faster charging, better durability and brighter screens.

It must be said, though, that the Pixel 10 Pro Fold is launching in a very different landscape from last year's model. Samsung wowed us with its ultra-thin and massively upgraded Galaxy Z Fold 7, while Honor's Magic V5 also made a big impact. Does the Pixel do enough to compete? Let's dive in.

Google's phone looks extremely similar to its predecessor.

DESIGN

As mentioned in the introduction, the Pixel 10 Pro Fold looks extremely similar to its predecessor. It's basically the same shape, the cameras are in the same place, and the materials aren't too dissimilar. It's only really the colour options that give it away.

It's now available in either Moonstone or Jade, which translates to purple-grey or pale green. I have the Moonstone option in for testing, and it makes an immediate positive impression. The glass rear panel feels velvety-smooth and is completely immune to fingerprint smudges, while the sides have a colour-matched matt aluminium finish, and the hinge is polished to a shine.

While the competition has been slimming down, the Pixel 10 Pro Fold is actually a tiny bit thicker than the last model, and it's slightly heavier, too. There's a good reason, though, and that's because Google has stuffed some magnets and a larger battery inside.

Just like its non-folding siblings, the Fold has adopted MagSa… excuse me, Pixelsnap technology. This means, without needing to attach a case, you can use the phone with pretty much any Apple MagSafe, Qi2 or Pixelsnap-compatible accessory.

I've always been a fan of Apple's MagSafe tech, and while Google can't be awarded any points for originality,

While the competition has been slimming down, the Pixel 10 Pro Fold is actually a tiny bit thicker than the last model.

Just like its non-folding siblings, the Fold has adopted Pixelsnap charging technology.

I'm happy that we finally have internal magnets in a folding phone. That said, I've been slapping third-party magnetic cases on my phones for years now, and they work great. So, it's not really a step forward in utility, but it does mean you can use it without a case – if you're brave enough.

On the topic of durability, Google has achieved another first. This is the first foldable phone to be awarded an IP68 rating for dust and water resistance. There's plenty of water-resistant foldables on the market these days, but they're all susceptible to dust to some degree. Supposedly, the Pixel will fare much better in the great outdoors.

When I tested the Pixel 9 Pro Fold, I was impressed with how sturdy and confidence-inspiring it felt, and it's the same case here. The hinge was already great, but it's been improved on this model, and it's easily one of the best in the business.

The flip side of that is the Pixel 9 Pro Fold felt chunky and almost outdated compared to the competition. That has not been improved this year; conversely, it has only gotten worse.

DISPLAY

Starting with the cover screen, the Pixel 10 Pro Fold has a slightly larger display, measuring 6.4 inches up from 6.3 inches. Unfortunately, I wasn't able to see the two phones side by side, but I assume this was achieved by shrinking the bezels slightly.

The hinge is easily one of the best in the business.

The Pixel 10 Pro Fold has a slightly larger display than its predecessor.

Make no mistake, though, the bezels on the cover display are still the chunkiest of any flagship foldable. A part of me likes the way they look; it's almost like a cartoon outline around the front of the phone, and it's kind of charming. But slimmer bezels would certainly look and feel more modern.

On the inside, the folding display still measures 8 inches diagonally, which means it's still one of the largest book-style folding screens around. Unfortunately, the crease doesn't seem to have improved much, and it feels much more noticeable than Samsung and Honor's latest efforts.

The bezel is pretty chunky on the interior screen, too, but I don't mind that so much. With a large screen like this, it's quite nice to have somewhere to grasp without accidentally triggering touch controls.

The selfie camera cutout is located in the same place as last time, neatly tucked in the upper right-hand corner (or top-left, depending on your orientation). I love to see this, as it means the cutout doesn't affect 16:9 full-screen content, no matter which way you hold the phone.

The screens are both slightly brighter this time around, now able to reach 3,000 nits at peak brightness, up from 2,700 nits on the previous model. Honestly, I had no complaints about the brightness before, but extra lumens can only be a good thing.

The 8-inch folding display is one of the largest around.

The screens are both slightly brighter this time around.

The speakers, as far as I'm aware, are unchanged on this model. In terms of sound quality, I have no real complaints; they're loud, detailed and have a decent amount of low-end response. The positioning is still troublesome, though, as when I held the phone in landscape orientation, I was often muffling one of the speakers with my palm.

PERFORMANCE

As expected, the Pixel 10 Pro Fold makes the jump to Google's latest chip, the Tensor G5. It's a 3nm chip, and Google says it's around 34 percent faster on average than the last generation. When it comes to locally run AI, like Google's Screenshots app and Recorder, the new chip is supposedly 2.6x faster and twice as efficient.

In our usual suite of benchmarks, the difference is plain to see. In both CPU and GPU performance, this chip is a noticeable step up. However, there's still a sizable gap between this Tensor chip and the best from Qualcomm and MediaTek.

In reality, most users won't feel a difference between these flagship-class chips. They're all super quick, and you're very unlikely to see stuttering or notice slowdowns when you're browsing social media, editing documents or using the cameras.

The ample 16GB of RAM means that this phone never struggles with multitasking, either, even with multiple apps on the screen at once.

The speakers are loud, detailed and have a decent amount of low-end response.

It's only those who play extremely demanding games or attempt to edit super-high-quality video footage that will see a marked difference. I played some Wuthering Waves with the settings maxed out at 60fps, and while the Pixel could run it, the frame rates were nowhere near as consistent as they are on 8 Elite-powered handsets.

In both CPU and GPU performance, this chip is a noticeable step up.

It was still playable, but I could feel the phone struggling from time to time. It also got pretty hot, especially in the area just below the cameras on the rear panel. But flipping the phone around and holding it around the cover screen area meant that I could keep that heat away from my paws.

Of course, if you're into less graphically demanding games, this phone will run them without issue. But hardcore gamers will have a better time with something Snapdragon-powered.

Geekbench 6 (multi-core)

Google Pixel 10 Pro Fold: 6,238
Honor Magic V5: 5,391
Samsung Galaxy Z Fold7: 8,882
OnePlus Open: 4,498
Google Pixel 9 Pro Fold: 4,711

GFX Manhattan 3.1

Google Pixel 10 Pro Fold: 120
Honor Magic V5: 120fps
Samsung Galaxy Z Fold7: 112fps
OnePlus Open: 60fps
Google Pixel 9 Pro Fold: 80fps

Battery life

Google Pixel 10 Pro Fold: 13 hours, 1 minute
Honor Magic V5: 9 hours, 1 minute
Google Pixel 9 Pro Fold: 9 hours, 18 minutes

Charge in 30 minutes

Google Pixel 10 Pro Fold: 52%
Honor Magic V5: 62%
Samsung Galaxy Z Fold7: 50%

OnePlus Open: 83%
Google Pixel 9 Pro Fold: 46%

CAMERAS

The camera hardware on the Pixel 10 Pro Fold is identical to the Pixel 9 Pro Fold, and with the exception of the selfie snappers, they match the original Pixel Fold, too. As a camera nerd, this was really disappointing to learn. The Pixel 9 Pro Fold cameras were far from the best in their class already, and while other brands are making strides, Google is resting on its laurels.

Sure, folding phone cameras rarely rival the best bar phones. But personally, I don't think we should be seeing an array of camera sensors that mostly hover around the 10Mp mark on a phone that costs nearly two grand.

That said, part of the Pixel allure can be attributed to the image processing and other software-enabled features, none of which is too reliant on hardware. And indeed, if you're not too picky with your photos, the Pixel 10 Pro Fold is capable of taking some really nice shots.

The cameras do best in the daylight, and at night, you'll want to stick to the main sensor as much as possible. The telephoto and ultrawide are very blur-prone, and heavy-handed denoising obliterates a lot of fine detail.

I really enjoy using the 5x telephoto, but having just tested the Xiaomi 15T Pro with its new 5x snapper, this one felt extremely limiting. It's not great at close-ups, and there's just not enough resolution to allow for longer-range zooms. The Xiaomi's 50Mp telephotos allow for almost lossless 10x shots (thanks to pixel-binning), while 10x shots from this 10.8Mp unit look comparatively awful.

Portrait mode is oddly limiting, too. You can only use the main sensor, while most rivals let you use the telephoto, and for some reason, the phone forces you into a 1.5x or 2x crop. This seems like something that would be easy to address, so I'm not sure why Google is sticking to its guns.

The advantage of the Pixel camera

If you're not too picky with your photos, the Pixel 10 Pro Fold is capable of taking some really nice shots.

We'll start off our test shots with examples of the same subject taken with the different zoom lenses.

Next up, we have a low light photo.

Here's a macro image.

We'll finish off with a selfie.

system is all of its easy-to-use software features. In the camera app, you'll find things like the Camera Coach, which can help guide you into taking a more aesthetically pleasing shot, and Auto Best Take, which merges multiple group photos to ensure everyone's eyes are open.

The battery life is solid, and it could easily see me through an average day's use.

There's even an AI-powered image editing tool that lets you alter your images by typing in plain English, but it's currently only available in the US. If it's available to you, you can ask it to do things like "remove the reflections in the window" or "delete the stain on my shirt".

As a photographer, these features don't really appeal to me, but that's OK. They're designed to aid people who don't know what words like aperture and composition mean, and in some instances, they could make all the difference.

BATTERY LIFE

The Pixel 10 Pro Fold has a 5015mAh battery, which is 365mAh larger than last year's model, and significantly bigger than the 4,400mAh cell in the Galaxy Z Fold 7. This larger capacity, combined with the efficiency gains of the newer Tensor G5 chip, should mean that this phone lasts a lot longer than the previous model.

In our usual PCMark battery test, the 10 Pro Fold survived for 13 hours and 1 minute, a very significant increase on the 9 Pro Fold's score of just 9 hours and 18 minutes. However, it's still shy of the Z Fold 6 (15 hours, 34 minutes). These benchmark scores reflect my real-world experience, too. The battery life is solid, and it could easily see me through an average day's use, which had me flipping between both screens and using the camera a lot.

That said, it's nothing too remarkable, and I found myself reaching for the charger more often than when I used the Z Fold 7 on a daily basis.

When it comes to charging, the Pixel

10 Pro Fold can juice up at 30 watts with a wire or 15 watts wirelessly. It's a solid improvement on the previous generation, which only supported 21 watts with a wire and 7.5 watts without.

As usual, there's no charger in the box, just a cable. But with a suitably powerful wall adapter, you can charge from completely dead to over 50 percent in just half an hour. It's not a bad showing at all, but it's worth noting that the second 50 percent will take a lot longer than the first – a full charge took almost an hour and a half, by my count.

SOFTWARE

Software is a big selling point for Pixel phones, and indeed, if you want that vanilla Android experience, this is the only foldable that delivers the goods.

Foldable devices from the likes of Samsung, Honor and Oppo all use heavily customised versions of Android that change the fundamentals. Google is the only one to bring the Pixel experience to a larger format.

As you might expect, all of the new features that debuted with the Pixel 10 series are available for the Fold, too. This means you get Material 3 Expressive customisation, loads of new Gemini functionality, including video generation with Veo 3, and Magic Cue, which uses AI to pull data from all of your Google applications. There's also seven years of software support and security updates, just like the rest of the line-up.

If you want to know more about all of those features, it's worth having a read of our Pixel 10, 10 Pro and 10 Pro XL reviews. To avoid retreading the same ground, I'll just be focusing on the Fold-exclusive features in this review. In short, though, there's a lot of AI features here, and some of them are super handy. You also get a year of Google AI Pro subscription included, so you can access all the latest features as soon as they become available.

Made You Look has been expanded to include more animations.

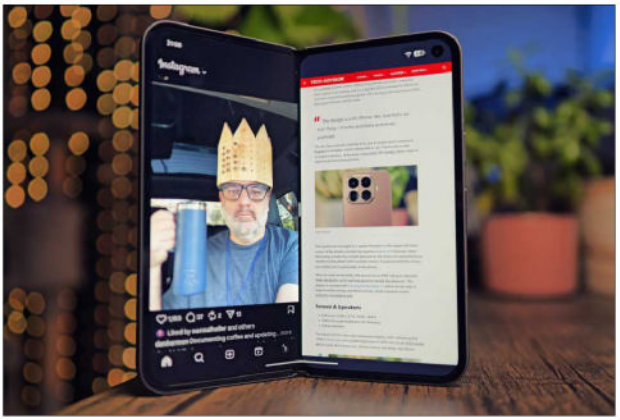
Opting for the Fold gets you a new Instant View feature in the camera app. This lets you use one side of the large inner screen to view your photos immediately as you're taking them. I found this more useful than I anticipated, as it means you can quickly check if a shot was blurry or framed correctly before taking another.

You also get Made You Look, which debuted on the 9 Pro Fold, but it has been expanded to include more animations. Basically, it displays colourful cartoon animations on the outer screen to grab the attention of children (or maybe even pets) and uses AI to detect when the subject is smiling, which will make the animated characters react.

It works shockingly well, kids can't keep their eyes off these animations, and that makes it really easy to capture some lovely photos. The downside, though, is that it uses the cover screen selfie camera to take these photos, rather than the main rear camera. So, the quality is decent, but it could be better, and it's not the best in dim lighting.

Of course, you also get split-screen multitasking and the ability to drag and drop files and images between two apps, which really helps make the most of the larger display. Google's implementation still feels a little basic compared to the competition, but it's fairly intuitive and does enough to satisfy most people's needs.

Finally, there are a couple of quirky new game integrations that take advantage of the folding hardware. If you play either Asphalt Legends or Disney Speedstorm, you can enable a new split-view mode and a dual-screen mode.



The software offers split-screen multitasking and the ability to drag and drop files and images between two apps.

Essentially, this splits the gameplay along the hinge. So your racing action is at the top, while the mini map and controls are separated to the lower portion of the display. In addition, it adds extra controls to

the cover display, which can be tapped on the back like the triggers of a game controller.

It's a clever idea, and I hope we see other developers taking advantage of the hardware like this, but it's not the most practical implementation in its current state. Who knows, maybe this is the start of a whole wave of foldable-optimised titles, but I wouldn't hold your breath.

There are a couple of quirky new game integrations that take advantage of the folding hardware.

Another key selling point of the 10 Pro Fold is software updates. Google will support it for a total of seven years and, as a Pixel, it'll be among the first in line for any new major versions of Android. Pixel devices offer the most seamless software experience you'll find on any Android phone.

VERDICT

The Pixel 10 Pro Fold leaves me with mixed feelings. I've very much enjoyed using it, and I particularly like how solid and durable it feels. It also has some unique benefits that you won't find with any other foldable, such as IP68 dust and water resistance and built-in magnets.

The main problem is the competition. The Galaxy Z Fold 7 trumps this phone in just about every conceivable way. It's much slimmer and lighter, the crease is less noticeable, it's more powerful, and the cameras are a lot more impressive, too.

This phone, with its chunky design, thick bezels and outdated cameras, just doesn't really do enough to compete. If you love Google's first-party features and UI, and you're very concerned about dust resistance, maybe this model could sway you. Personally, though, I'd pick the Samsung every time. Luke Baker

SPECIFICATIONS

- 8-inch (2,152x2,076; 374ppi) Foldable LTPO OLED, 120Hz, HDR10+, 1800

nits (HBM), 3000 nits (peak) display. Cover display: 6.4-inch (2,364x1,080) OLED, 120Hz, HDR, Corning Gorilla Glass Victus 2, 2,000 nits (HBM), 3,000 nits (peak)
- Android 16, up to 7 major Android upgrades
- Google Tensor G5 (3nm) processor
- Octa-core (1x 3.78GHz Cortex-X4, 5x 3.05GHz Cortex-A725, 2x 2.25GHz Cortex-A520) CPU
- PowerVR DXT-48-1536 GPU
- No card slot
- 16GB RAM
- 256GB/512GB/1TB storage
- Three rear-facing cameras: 48Mp, f/1.7, 25mm (wide), 1/2.0-inch, 0.8µm, dual pixel PDAF, OIS; 10.8Mp, f/3.1, 112mm (telephoto), 1/3.2-inch, dual pixel PDAF, OIS, 5x optical zoom; 10.5Mp, f/2.2, 127-degree (ultrawide), 1/3.4-inch, PDAF
- Selfie camera: 10Mp, f/2.2, 23mm (wide), 1/3.94-inch, PDAF
- Cover camera: 10Mp, f/2.2, 23mm (wide), 1/3.94-inch, PDAF
- Stereo speakers
- No 3.5mm audio jack
- Wi-Fi 802.11 a/b/g/n/ac/6e/7, tri-band
- Bluetooth 6.0, A2DP, LE, aptX HD
- GPS (L1+L5), GLONASS, GALILEO, BDS, QZSS, NavIC
- NFC
- USB Type-C 3.2
- Fingerprint (side-mounted)
- Non-removable 5,015mAh battery
- Unfolded: 155.2x150.4x 5.2mm. Folded: 155.2x76.3x10.8mm
- 258g

Apple iPad Pro (M5)

Price when reviewed: £999 ★★★★½

Apple's iPad line-up is the most extensive it's ever been. There's the cute and compact iPad mini (A17 Pro), the excellent everyday iPad (A16), the powerful and portable iPad Air (M3) and at the top, you have the iPad Pro.

Until recently, that was the iPad Pro (M4), but Apple has now introduced a more advanced processor to this slab in the M5, whilst also improving connectivity and adding, for the first time on iPad, fast charging.

If you have the iPad Pro (M4), it's highly unlikely you'll be upgrading, but if you have an older iPad Pro, another iPad, or you're new to iPad entirely, there's a lot to love in the iPad Pro (M5). Having used it since it was announced, here's why it cements itself as best in class, as well as what to consider before you hit buy.

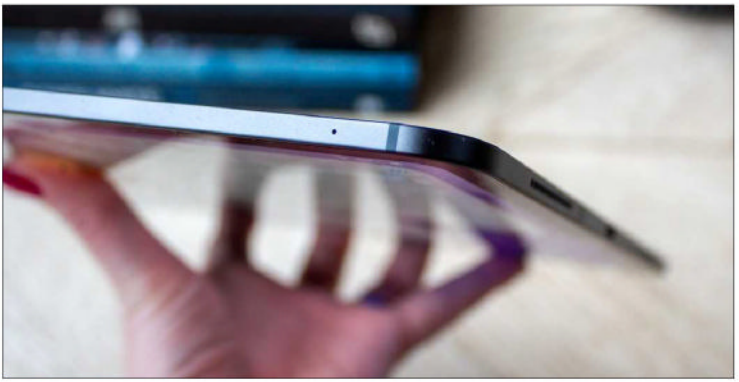
We reviewed the Space Black option.

DESIGN

There's just something about slim devices. I'm not even sure we've all noticed as phones and tablets have increased in thickness over the last few years. Compare the iPhone 6 to the iPhone 17, though, and there is a noticeable difference. When the iPad Pro (M4) was revealed in May 2024, its 5.1mm build was as noteworthy as it was impressive.

At that point, we hadn't seen the iPhone Air or the Samsung Galaxy S25 Edge, so phones weren't anywhere near that slim, let alone tablets. It was so light and portable, even in the 13-inch size, and its design was a real delight.

The iPad Pro (M5) thought it best to keep things exactly how they were, and that's something I won't fault in this case. There are two sizes again – 11- and 13 inches – with the smaller model fractionally thicker at 5.3mm. That's still thinner than the iPhone Air, and just like that phone, get this tablet in your hand and you'll really appreciate how lovely At 444g on the 11-inch model, it's nearly a third of the weight of a MacBook Air, while the 13-inch model (and my review unit) is just 580g – still pretty much half the weight of Apple's cheapest laptop.



Get this tablet in your hand and you'll really appreciate how lovely it is.

The aluminium frame comes in two boring yet classy colour options – Silver and Space Black – with the latter being my preference. All models have a small camera housing on the rear, a Smart Connector for attaching accessories and uniform bezels around the display.

Get this tablet in your hand and you'll really appreciate how lovely it is

DISPLAY

The display on the M5 iPad Pro is also the same as the M4 version. Again, this is by no means a bad thing.

Apple is continuing with what it calls a Tandem OLED display, which effectively means two OLED panels on top of each other to deliver a brighter screen overall. As a result, there's a peak brightness of 1,600 nits on the iPad Pro (M5), which not only makes it usable outside on a sunny day but also ensures HDR photos and videos look superb.

Colours are lovely and punchy, whites are incredibly bright, and you get true blacks during darker scenes. Details in everything from the time stamp in the top left corner to app icons and notification bubbles are crisp and sharp, while viewing angles are great too.

Meanwhile, the ProMotion display technology means support for refresh rates up to 120Hz, ensuring a lovely, smooth scrolling experience.

On the models with 1TB or 2TB of storage, you have the option to add a nano-texture coating. This adds a matt finish to what is otherwise a glossy display, which should reduce glare in the process.

My review unit of the iPad Pro (M5) doesn't have this finish, but I have used and loved it on the iPad Pro (M4). It's excellent for cutting through reflections, so if you're planning on using this iPad outside or in a room with bright lights

The Tandem OLED technology means colours are lovely and punchy, whites are incredibly bright, and you get true blacks during darker scenes.

There are two speakers positioned at either side of the iPad Pro (M5)'s display when held in a landscape orientation.

or large windows, I highly recommend considering it. I don't understand why Apple didn't make it an option on models with less storage.

There are two speakers positioned at either side of the iPad Pro (M5)'s display when held in a landscape orientation. The sound is decent for a tablet, and you'll have no problem watching a movie or taking a video call. I'd always recommend connecting up a pair of headphones or AirPods if you want the best experience, but the four speakers do a more than adequate job when you need them to.

PERFORMANCE

Under the hood, the iPad Pro (M5) sees an upgrade in processor from the Apple M4 we saw in the 2024 model to the Apple M5, which you may have guessed from its name.

Built on a 3nm process, the chip has a 10-core GPU with Neural Accelerators that are claimed to deliver 3.5 times faster AI performance than the M4 iPad Pro. There's also a faster 16-core Neural Engine, according to Apple, said to be helpful for things such as summarising a page of notes or isolating a background in a video.

The CPU make up of the M5 depends on the storage model you select. On the higher storage 1TB and 2TB models, you get a 10-core CPU made up of four performance cores and six efficiency cores, while the 256GB and 512GB models have a nine-core CPU (three performance, six efficiency). My 1TB review sample benefited from the more powerful version, and powerful it most definitely is.

There was nothing I could do on my MacBook Pro that I couldn't do on the M5 iPad Pro – it made light work of anything I threw at it.

I spent hours editing images, wrote thousands of words (including this review), streamed hours of movies and TV shows and had a lovely time

reading the news and casually browsing the web. Multi-tasking is a breeze (especially with iPadOS 26 – more on that later), and switching between apps and tasks is instant with no sign of lag.

I mentioned the storage options already – 256GB, 512GB, 1TB and 2TB – with those higher capacity models getting the more powerful chip and nano-texture display option.

There's no support for microSD storage expansion on any of them, though, so keep that in mind if you like a large library of offline films or want to sync lots of your iPhone photos.

Elsewhere, there's support for Wi-Fi 7, Bluetooth 6, and now Thread, thanks to a new wireless chip called the N1. The latter should make it easier to connect to and control smart home devices, but it's primarily about future-proofing rather than the here and now.

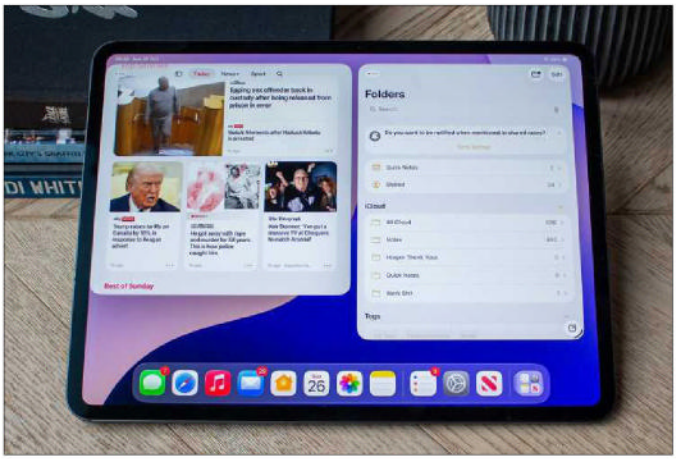
For the cellular models, there's also a new cellular modem called the C1X that is claimed to bring 50 percent faster cellular data performance. I can't say I noticed a huge difference between the iPad Pro (M5)'s connectivity and last year's iPad Pro (M4), but what is perhaps more important is that I didn't notice any connectivity issues either, so Apple is clearly getting something right.

Geekbench 6 (multi-core)

Apple iPad Pro (M5): 16,374
Samsung Galaxy Tab S11 Ultra: 8,488
Samsung Galaxy Tab S11: 9,070
OnePlus Pad 3: 9,004
Apple iPad (A16): 6,176

Charge in 30 minutes

Apple iPad Pro (M5): 43%
Samsung Galaxy Tab S11 Ultra: 30%
Samsung Galaxy Tab S11: 49%
OnePlus Pad 3: 15%
Apple iPad (A16: 22%



There was nothing I could do on my MacBook Pro that I couldn't do on the M5 iPad Pro.

CAMERAS

When it comes to photography, I would never recommend using a tablet as your primary device.

The smartphone in your pocket almost certainly takes better photos, even if it costs a fraction of the price of the iPad Pro. Tablets are typically too big and cumbersome for capturing decent, stable shots – I cringe every time I see someone using one in public.

However, the M5 iPad Pro's single 12Mp rear sensor is better than many tablet rivals, meaning you'll get a decent level of detail and colour accuracy with occasional snaps. It's absolutely fine if you need to scan a document or take a photo of your child's homework to upload to Google Classroom with no issues.

It works in tandem with the LiDAR scanner, which allows for AR experiences like viewing a piece of furniture in real time in your living room, helping you make sure you aren't making a rash decision. That all runs smoothly too, so there's very little to complain about in this department.

You'll probably care about the front-facing lens much more, though, considering a tablet's popularity for the likes of video calls.

The front 12Mp camera does a solid job, especially with its natural positioning at the top of the screen when in landscape orientation. This allows you to get more people in frame, but also makes it natural to use while the Magic Keyboard or Smart Folio case (both sold separately) is attached.

It's not quite as clever as the front camera you'll find on the new iPhone models – it can't switch between landscape and portrait selfies without you rotating the whole device. However, there is Center Stage technology on board to keep you in the frame if you move around. This works well if you're on a video call to a friend and you're cooking and moving around your kitchen at the same time, for example.

The M5 iPad Pro's single 12Mp rear sensor is better than many tablet rivals.

There's also Face ID support in the iPad Pro,

which makes using this tablet significantly more convenient than some other iPads. A quick glance is all you need to unlock it, authenticate payments and allow you to sign into apps or view passwords.

The iPad Pro (M5) supports fast charging, which is a first for iPad.

BATTERY LIFE

Like usual, Apple doesn't quote specific battery capacities for either size of M5 iPad Pro. However, GSMArena suggests it's an 8,160mAh battery on the 11-inch model and a 10,290mAh cell on the 13-inch version I've been testing.

However, it doesn't matter what iPad model you buy from Apple, all are claimed to offer 10 hours of battery life for video watching and nine hours of browsing the web. In my experience, that's pretty much spot on for all of them, too, assuming those are the things you are doing.

You'll find the battery drops quicker if you attach the Magic Keyboard and start typing continuously for a couple of hours – in that scenario, you can expect around half that time. But if you're checking emails, casually scrolling through social media, browsing the web for an upcoming winter holiday or streaming content, you'll get a working day out of the iPad Pro without an issue.

That's not even the best news, though. The biggest story here is that the iPad Pro (M5) now supports fast charging, which is a first for iPad.

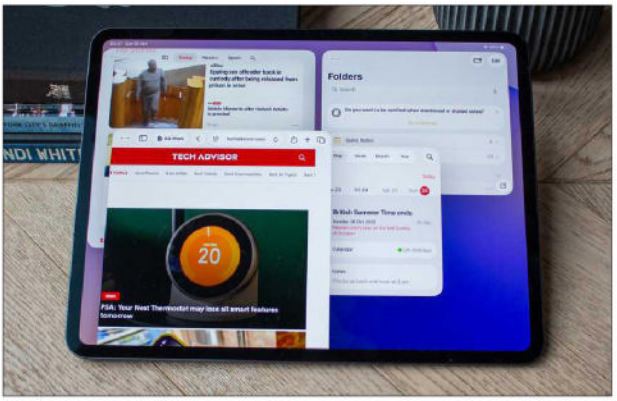
Now, it's not quite as speedy as the likes of Oppo or OnePlus, both of which support 67 watts on their respective Android tablets, but the iPad Pro (M5) is claimed to offer up to 50 per cent battery in around 30 minutes with a 60-watt charger. I got 43 per cent in 30 minutes with a 96-watt charger and 50 per cent in 35 minutes, while it took 1 hour and 45 minutes to reach 100 per cent. That's a significant improvement on what you'll get on the M3 iPad Air.

It's worth remembering that the iPad Pro (M5) doesn't come with a charger in the box, however, so while the support for fast charging is now

there, you will need to source your own charger to take advantage of it.

SOFTWARE

The iPad Pro (M5) runs on Apple's latest software for iPad, which is called iPadOS 26. It takes over from iPadOS 18, and it is arguably the biggest and most important update for iPad since Apple's tablet moved onto its own software and separated itself from iOS.



The windowing setting lets you arrange multiple apps and windows on the screen.

The reason I say that is the support for windowing. During setup, you can choose between the traditional layout of iPad, which is where you typically use one app at a time, or two if you're using the Split Screen functionality, or you can pick the windowing option.

The windowing setting allows the iPad Pro (M5) to run more like a Mac, with the option to arrange multiple apps and windows on the screen, overlay them on top of each other and resize them however you like.

There's also a menu bar like Mac at the top of each app when you swipe down from the top, with the same traffic light system for closing an app, minimising it or expanding it. Pressing and holding the green icon also allows you to snap apps into a grid layout like Mac, with up to four apps being used at once. Honestly, the overall experience is significantly better for multitasking than it's ever been.

Elsewhere, the new software brings a new design called Liquid Glass, which is designed to mimic layers of glass via translucent menus and app icons with controls overlaid on top of the content on your screen, allowing you to see more of what's beneath. It's a little harder to read than the previous version of iPad's software was, but the design itself is nice.

The Phone app comes to iPad for the first time with iOS 26 too, so all your recent calls, contacts and voicemails will appear here if you have an iPhone signed into the same Apple ID, while

there's also a Preview app for viewing and editing PDFs and a Games app for a smoother gaming experience.

There's support for Apple Intelligence here too, as you would expect, and while there are a number of features yet to be fully realised, like a more contextualised and personalised Siri, there are some handy ones already there. I am a particular fan of Clean Up, which offers an easy way to remove objects, people or other distractions from photos.

The one thing the iPad continues to lack, however, is support for multiple user profiles. It borrows a lot from Mac this time around, but being able to have a guest user or several profiles is still not something that has carried across. It's a shame because when you pay £1,000 or more for a tablet, it should be easier to switch between multiple people in a household if you want to use it as a family tablet.

Still, software support is excellent, and while Apple doesn't specify exactly how many years it will give the iPad Pro (M5) updates for, it's usually around seven years. That would mean this tablet should get new features and security patches until at least 2030.

VERDICT

Apple's iPad Pro (M5) is an exceptional tablet. It offers performance on par with a laptop, a stunning display, a super slim and lightweight design and solid battery life. The user interface has also seen huge multitasking improvements thanks to iPadOS 26, while the fast charging capabilities make a big difference in terms of usability.

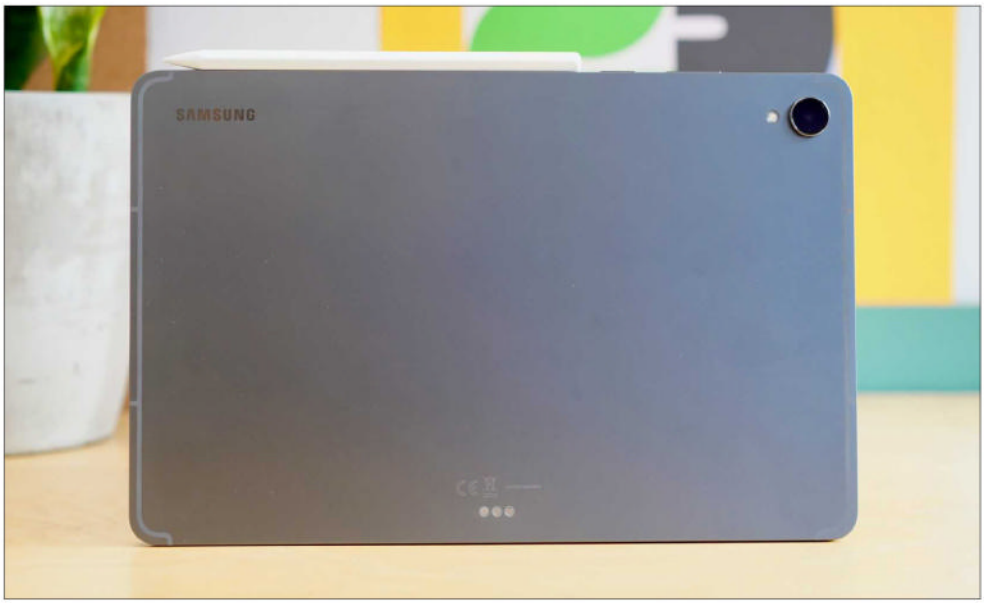
There's still no support for multiple user profiles, accessories cost extra, and there is no getting away from the eye-watering price, no matter how much tablet you get for that money. But none of those are the iPad Pro's biggest problem. Instead, it's the rest of the iPad line-up that's the issue, because almost all of them will be more than sufficient for most when it comes to performance, and they all have the same user experience.

The new iPad Pro is an exceptional tablet.

Still, if you're after the best in class tablet, the Apple iPad Pro (M5) is currently it. It's a superb tablet that will serve you for years to come, and it's a real pleasure to use. Britta O'Boyle

SPECIFICATIONS

- 13-inch (2,752x2,064; 265ppi) Ultra Retina Tandem OLED, 120Hz, HDR10, Dolby Vision, 1,000 nits (HBM), 1600 nits (peak) display
- iPadOS 26
- Apple M5 processor
- 256/512GB models: 9-core (3 performance cores, 6 efficiency cores). 1TB/2TB models: 10-core (4 performance cores, 6 efficiency cores) CPU
- Apple GPU (10-core graphics)
- No card slot
- 12GB/16GB RAM
- 256GB/512GB/1TB/2TB storage
- Rear-facing camera: 12Mp, f/1.8, (wide), dual pixel PDAF
- Selfie camera: 12Mp, f/2.0, 122-degree (ultrawide)
- Stereo speakers
- No 3.5mm audio jack
- Wi-Fi 802.11 a/b/g/n/ac/6e/7, dual-band, hotspot
- Bluetooth 6.0, A2DP, LE, EDR
- GPS, GLONASS, GALILEO, QZSS (Wi-Fi + Cellular model only)
- No NFC
- USB Type-C 4 (Thunderbolt 3), DisplayPort, magnetic connector
- Face ID
- Non-removable 10,290mAh battery
- 281.6x215.5x5.1mm
- 579g (Wi-Fi), 582g (5G)



Samsung Galaxy Tab S11

Price when reviewed: £799 ★★★★☆

What do people actually want from an Android tablet? It's a question that's been on our minds for a few years now, and judging from the Samsung Galaxy Tab S11, it's been on Samsung's too.

After a year in which the company dropped the regular model from its premium tablet range, leaving only the Samsung Galaxy Tab S10+ to accompany the flagship Ultra model, the South Korean manufacturer has decided on yet another new approach. This time around, there's no Samsung Galaxy Tab S11+, with only a Samsung Galaxy Tab S11 and a Samsung Galaxy Tab S11 Ultra to choose from.

With prices starting from £799, you're getting a highly capable 11-inch tablet with strong performance, a bright screen, powerful software, and a bundled-in stylus. But aside from Samsung's line-up indecision, there isn't much that's new or interesting here.

DESIGN

The fact that you can specify your Samsung Galaxy Tab S11 in Grey or Silver speaks to the general lack of inspiration that surrounds the design and feel of this tablet.

It looks a lot like last year's model. And the year before that. In fact, glancing back as far as our Samsung Galaxy Tab S7+ review of 2020 reveals the same basic, flat-edged style.

Tablet design in general has remained pretty samey since the 2018 iPad Pro 3, of course, and Samsung has steadily refined its approach over the years. These days, there's an in-display fingerprint sensor rather than the old power button-based solution.

Progress? Perhaps. It's certainly more convenient to unlock when the tablet is lying flat on a table. Conversely, my own thumbprint doesn't seem to register quite as consistently as I'd like.

IP68 certification is another positive design flourish that Samsung brings to the table(t), making bath times with Disney+ feel much less precarious. It's a sense of reassurance that you don't get with the £999 iPad Pro.

Another thing you don't get with Apple's imperious Pro tablet is a stylus in the box. You do with the Galaxy Tab S11, and this S Pen comes with a remodelled hexagonal form factor. It's even easier to grip, while also helping the stylus to affix to the top edge through magnets.

There's no longer a dedicated strip on the back of the tablet for this purpose, but the new approach is more intuitive. More problematic, for my money is the removal of Bluetooth Low Energy support, so you can't use the S Pen to remotely activate functions such as the camera or navigation features

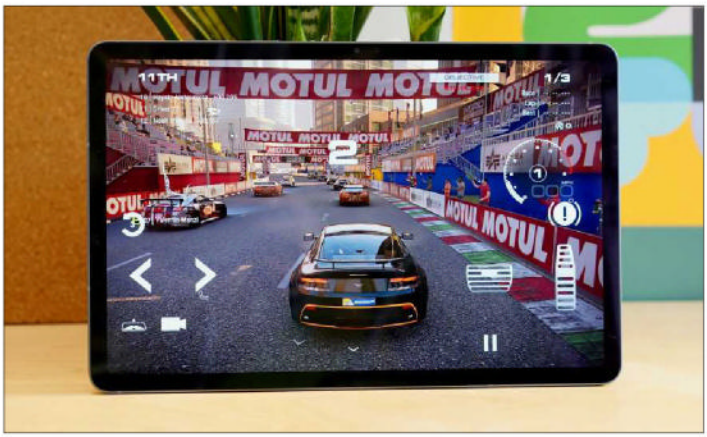
DISPLAY

With Samsung vacillating between the Plus and non-Plus variant, it's worth restating that this is an 11-inch display

The Tab S11 has a rich, vibrant AMOLED panel with a sharp 2,560x1,600 resolution.

– so it's significantly smaller than the 12.4-inch Samsung Galaxy Tab S10+, and only fractionally larger than the 10.9-inch Samsung Galaxy Tab S10 FE.

Thankfully, despite those two points of comparison, it's much closer to the former than the latter in terms of quality. This is a rich, vibrant AMOLED panel with a sharp 2,560x1,600 resolution.



With a full grid of detailed cars jostling for position, the Samsung barely dropped a frame.

Samsung has even bolstered the brightness since last year's model, with a peak of 1,000 nits (up from 650 nits) in High Brightness Mode.

Conversely, it's a shame to see Samsung rolling back from the anti-reflective coating of the Galaxy Tab S10+. This was a most welcome upgrade in last year's model, but there's no such provision to be found on the Galaxy Tab S11.

Sound quality is strong, courtesy of a full quad speaker set-up, with speakers evenly spaced on each corner. There's a nicely deep, spacey sound stage here, especially given the (relatively) compact nature of the device.

PERFORMANCE

Samsung has given the Galaxy Tab S11 a straight-up generational upgrade in the form of a MediaTek Dimensity 9400+ chipset. It might not be the most recognisable chip on the market, but make no mistake – this is a high-performing chip.

Benchmark results are broadly comparable to the OnePlus Pad 3 with its Snapdragon 8 Elite chip, which has been a byword for 'flagship performance' for much of 2025.

Indeed, the Samsung Galaxy Tab S11 actually scored significantly higher than its illustrious rival in our GPU tests. There are mitigating circumstances with the OnePlus Pad 3's more pixel-packed display, of course, but the fact remains

that the Galaxy Tab S11 is a very strong runner.

This is driven home by firing up GRID Legends, one of the most graphically advanced games on the Google Play Store. With the high resolution graphics pack installed and a full grid of detailed cars jostling for position, it barely dropped a frame.

There's a 12GB of RAM as standard, which is decent rather than outstanding, and there's a choice of 128GB, 256GB, and 512GB of internal storage. You can expand that further with a microSD slot.

Geekbench 6 (multi-core)

Samsung Galaxy Tab S11: 9,070
OnePlus Pad 3: 9,004
Xiaomi Pad 7: 5,205
Samsung Galaxy Tab S10 FE: 3,930

GFX Manhattan 3.1

Samsung Galaxy Tab S11: 120fps
OnePlus Pad 3: 50fps
Xiaomi Pad 7: 56fps
Samsung Galaxy Tab S10 FE: 55fps
Google Pixel Tablet: 57fps

Charge in 30 minutes

Samsung Galaxy Tab S11: 49%
OnePlus Pad 3: 15%
Xiaomi Pad 7: 54%
Samsung Galaxy Tab S10 FE: 49%
Google Pixel Tablet: 21%

CAMERA

I'm generally dismissive when it comes to discussing tablet cameras, because they don't really matter. If you're buying this kind of device with the intention of taking any number of pictures or videos, you're doing it wrong.

That said, the fact these components are always included necessitates some form of testing. And if you're spending £800 on any smart device, it's fair to expect every component to at least do an adequate job.

So, the Samsung Galaxy Tab S11 has a 13Mp camera around back, and a 12Mp camera in front. It's much like the Samsung Galaxy Tab S10+ before it, minus the dedicated 8Mp ultra-wide camera.

They're fine. You can take passable snaps with that 13Mp main camera if the lighting's good and you're away from your phone for some unlikely reason, or (as is more likely) you need to snap some documents.

Don't bother with those snaps if said lighting is anything less than optimal. The sensor's tiny, and you don't get OIS to aid with longer exposures.

Samsung's solid image processing does a lot of the work here, lifting the colours and the exposure to almost-unnatural levels. The extra pop arguably serves such inferior

The main 13Mp camera takes passable shots.

components better than on Samsung's flagship phones, as there are more photographic sins to cover.

Video capture extends to 4K and 30fps, which most phones selling for half the price can beat. Again, that's the deal with tablets.

The 12Mp front camera is much more important – not so much for selfies as for video calls. When you do use it to take selfies, it reveals itself to be a predictably limited component. So maybe don't.

BATTERY LIFE

The Samsung Galaxy Tab S11 comes with an 8,400mAh battery. That's exactly the same size as the Samsung Galaxy Tab S9, which is the last comparable premium tablet that Samsung made.

Just like that two-year-old tablet, this is sufficient for a full day of light work or, as is a more likely use case scenario for a tablet of this kind, most of a week of occasional usage (a spot of web browsing and the odd video).

Weirdly, the PCMark 3.0 Work Battery Test didn't work on the Tab S11, despite repeated tries, so I can't offer our usual comparison to rival devices. However, I did record that an hour of Disney+ streaming sapped 8 percent of a full charge, while 30 minutes of light gaming sapped 5 percent.

Those are strong results, and are more than competitive with other full-sized tablets.

Charging support extends to a respectable 45 watts, if you can provide an appropriate charger (there isn't one in the box). I recorded this getting from empty to 49 percent in 30 minutes.

SOFTWARE

The Samsung Galaxy Tab S11 is the first tablet to run on the company's latest One UI 8 interface, running on top of Android 16. Given the sluggish rollout to Samsung's phones, that isn't quite such a minor claim as it sounds.

It looks and feels quite a lot like One

UI 7, and that's no bad thing. Samsung's UI has tightened up significantly over the years, with a colourful look and appealingly sharp widgets.

It's nicely optimised for tablets, too, with a notification pane that pops down from the centre or the left side of the screen, depending on where you swipe from.

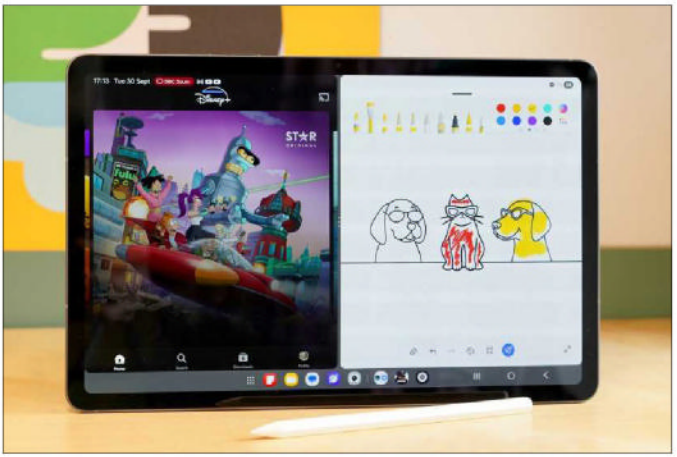
Split screen multitasking is handled intuitively, letting you touch and hold from the app switching screen, or simply drag an app icon from the permanently visible task bar along the bottom. You can run three apps simultaneously in this way.

Samsung's DeX, meanwhile, lets you run multiple instanced desktops side by side, along with windowed apps, essentially turning the Galaxy Tab S11 into a lightweight laptop – especially if you pair it with the optional Slim Book Cover Keyboard.

The S Pen stylus implementation continues to be the best in the business, too, despite the partial regression with the removal of Bluetooth Low Energy support. I'm not entirely sold on using the S Pen to scrawl text for URLs and the like, but you can't fault Samsung's handwriting recognition for this feature.

I have my own personal gripes over Samsung's general approach to software, but these days they largely revolve around its extensive efforts to brand away from Google's stock apps. As someone who's heavily invested in the Google way of doing things, I find it tiresome having to set up Google Wallet, Calendar, and Password Manager on Samsung devices. Perhaps that's just my laziness coming to the fore.

More generally, the Android tablet app scene simply isn't as mature as that of Apple's iPad. You're more likely to bump into apps that are poorly optimised for the form factor, if they exist at all.



Split screen multitasking is handled intuitively.

What can't be denied is the continued generosity of Samsung's seven-year update promise. This arguably makes more sense here on a tablet than it does on Samsung's phones, as you're more likely to keep a tablet around for several years.

The S Pen stylus implementation is the best in the business.

For the second year running, Samsung has gone big on Galaxy AI with its new flagship tablet. Samsung's apps are shot through with it, including Drawing Assist (transform rough sketches into works of art), Writing Assist (refine your hastily written notes), and more.

Meanwhile, Google Gemini is only ever a long power button press away, letting you ask questions about whatever's on screen.

VERDICT

The Samsung Galaxy Tab S11 is another extremely competent tablet with very few weaknesses. It's fast, well built, packs a beautiful AMOLED display, and bundles in a well-integrated S Pen stylus.

However, we've been saying similar things about Samsung's top tablets for years now, and the Galaxy Tab S11 doesn't so much as threaten to attempt anything new.

That's fine – the tablet format in general is pretty static these days. However, rival Android tablet makers have responded to this by offering more for less, and the Galaxy Tab S11 feels ever so slightly expensive.

It's the most complete 11-inch Android tablet out there, and the closest equivalent to the 11-inch iPad Pro you're likely to find. But it's not as compelling as that formidable Apple rival, while in Android terms you can get a broadly similar (and in some ways superior) experience for significantly less. Jon Mundy

SPECIFICATIONS

- 11-inch (2,560x1,600; 274ppi) Dynamic AMOLED 2X, 120Hz,

HDR10+, 1,000 nits (typ), 1,600 nits (peak) display
- Android 16, One UI 8
- Mediatek Dimensity 9400+ (3nm) processor
- Octa-core (1x 3.63GHz Cortex-X925, 3x 3.3GHz Cortex-X4, 4x 2.4GHz Cortex-A720) CPU
- Immortalis-G925 GPU
- microSDXC (dedicated slot) slot
- 12GB RAM
- 128GB/256GB/512GB storage
- Rear-facing camera: 13Mp, f/2.0, 26mm (wide), 1/3.4-inch, 1.0µm, AF
- Selfie camera: 12Mp, f/2.4, 120-degree (ultrawide)
- Stereo speakers
- No 3.5mm audio jack
- Wi-Fi 802.11 a/b/g/n/ac/6e, tri-band, Wi-Fi Direct
- Bluetooth 5.4, A2DP, LE
- GPS , GLONASS, BDS, GALILEO - cellular model only
- No NFC
- USB Type-C 3.2, magnetic connector
- Non-removable 8,400mAh battery
- 253.8x165.3x5.5mm
- 469g or 471g

Google Pixel Watch 4

Price when reviewed: £349 ★★★★½

Smartwatches are well and truly part of our daily tech ecosystem, and time flies if you'll excuse the pun, because Google is already on its fourth generation of Pixel Watch.

It took Google a while to get into the game, despite making software for wearables for such a long time previously, but the Pixel Watch quickly established itself as one of the best alternatives to the Apple Watch.

The Pixel Watch 4 might look similar to the last model, but that's no bad thing and Google has made various improvements and upgrades which are hard to see at a glance.

With the Galaxy Watch 8 series from Samsung proving something of a disappointment, the Pixel Watch 4 might be the best Wear OS smartwatch of the year. I've been using it for nearly three weeks to find out.

DESIGN

The Pixel Watch 4 looks very similar to the Pixel Watch 3 and, really, all the way back to the original. As tech reviewers, we often call for design overhauls but in this case, I don't think one is needed yet.

Apple's square design has never been to my taste and very few round smartwatches totally suited me either. That was, until the Pixel Watch came along. Google's glass-pebble-like design was stunning back then and it still is now.

Last year, Google fixed a major problem and introduced a larger size. That's the case again this year, so you can opt for 41- or 45mm models and I'm testing the larger one here in the new Moonstone colourway, which I think looks smart yet subtle, with unisex appeal.

The new Moonstone option looks smart yet subtle.

This, like some of the other colours, can possibly be matched with the Pixel 10 phones if you pick the right model. It's not straightforward though, as Moonstone is only available in 45mm and Champagne Gold is only available in 41mm.

Otherwise, your choices are between Matt Black and Polished Silver.

Once again, the Pixel Watch 4 is extremely comfortable to wear all the time. The smooth shape and lightweight aluminium body (only 37g for the larger size) are a match made in heaven.

As usual, you have the digital crown on the side to access your apps and scroll and, although I never seem to use it, a button above it to see your recently used apps.

There are two more design elements to cover before we move on, and the first one proves to be better than expected in person.

Google has moved the charging pin connectors to the side to use with a new dock (more on that later). These were seemingly purposely kept out of images of the watch. This led many, including me, to worry that they would look rather ugly – but fortunately they don't.

If you wear the watch on your left wrist, you'll barely ever see them.

The other design element is invisible as such, because although the device looks essentially the same as before, Google has redesigned it to be repairable.

Google calls the Actua 360 AMOLED screen the 'first-of-its-kind', with its domed display.

That was a popular request from fans and now the Pixel Watch 4 screen and battery can both be replaced if needed. That's great news if you have an accident or want to put a new battery in to extend the life of the device, plus you could even take in on yourself.

Now held together with screws rather than glue, it's possible to repair the Pixel Watch 4 at home. It should even retain its IP68 dust and water resistance.

Ifixit even gave it a repairability score of 9/10, calling it: "The most repairable smartwatch on the market."

Hopefully, you don't need this functionality any time soon, but it's worth noting that the Pixel Watch 4 doesn't have a sapphire glass cover like some rivals but Gorilla Glass 5 instead.

This means it's not as scratch-resistant, but it should be better in a drop or some kind of impact. The same glass has been used on previous generations and we've not had any problems with watches that have been used for a year or more.

DISPLAY

The Pixel Watch 4 hides its upgrades very well because you wouldn't know it had a new screen under the glass front. Google calls the Actua 360 AMOLED screen the 'first-of-its-kind' and features a domed display.

It is genuinely very different from others and its predecessors. So much so that it actually took me a few days to get used to. It offers a slight fish-eye type view, a little like you get from glass beer pumps in bars, so that you can see what is available from the side.

It's not that dramatic, but experience is pleasant, plus it results in a larger 'active area' than before.

Elsewhere, the specs are largely the same, including the resolution and dynamic refresh rate of 1- to 60Hz. There is a new peak brightness of 3,000 nits, which matches many 'Ultra' level smartwatches.

It's been pretty dull weather while I've been testing the Pixel Watch 4, but I had no issues during one very sunny day spent in the garden wearing it.

The speaker on the left side of the Pixel Watch 4 is decent and is perfectly good enough to hear Gemini responding to you. You can also make use of it to have a phone call if you wish.

What it can't do is play audio from apps such as Spotify, which is hardly a major omission but could come in handy sometimes.

PERFORMANCE & SOFTWARE

The Pixel Watch 4 has a combination of a new processor and new operating system. Wear OS 6, Google's latest smartwatch software, is running on Qualcomm's Snapdragon W5 Gen 2.

I had some glitchy performance issues in the first week, but these were quashed with a firmware update. In general, the smartwatch runs very smoothly for navigating and scrolling through menus etc.

There are occasions when things aren't snappy. Loading some apps, including Spotify, and summoning Gemini can take a second or two, which can feel like an age, but it's typically on the first try. If you're connecting to a live feed of a Nest camera, you'll also need to be patient.

Loading some apps, including Spotify, and summoning Gemini can take a second or two.

Like Pixel phones, this has the most vanilla version of Wear OS 6 (Samsung, for example, puts One UI 8 Watch over the top) and the Pixel Watch 4 comes with Google's Material 3 Expressive design language.

Tiles on either side of the watch face (essentially widgets) give you quick access to information and features.

It works really well on the smartwatch, with optimised shapes, animations, colours that pop and more. It feels more stylish than childish, which is how some of it comes across on phones in my opinion. There are a dozen watch faces pre-installed, but it's easy to get more.

Once again, Tiles on either side of the watch face (essentially widgets) give you quick access to information and features, and can be customised to what you need the most.

A new haptic feedback engine enhances the experience further, which is crisp and responsive from scrolling to notifications.

Gemini replaces Google Assistant on the Pixel Watch 4 (the AI bot is being rolled out on every device you can think of) and you can even set it to activate with raise-to-wake if you like.

I've found myself using it far more on the watch than my phone, but it's often hard to know what its limitations are. It can answer questions, of course, but despite a welcome guide when it installed saying it could do things like "tell you about your heart rate", this command is simply a shortcut to my real-time bpm.

Gemini replaces Google Assistant on the Pixel Watch 4.

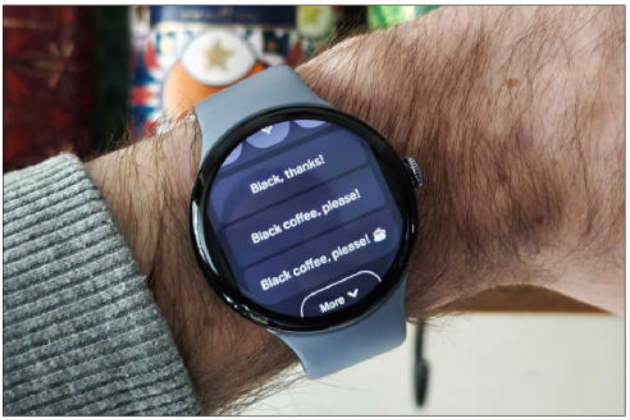
There are also AI features such as Smart Replies, which aims to offer up personalised suggestions in the way you write. The example on the Google Store is a choice of a couple of coffees when someone has asked what coffee you'd like.

Fortunately for me, this works with WhatsApp where I do all my messaging, but it doesn't appear to know me very well. As for the coffee question, it gave me three different ways to ask for a black coffee, which is about the only coffee I don't drink. In a group chat, it solely suggested "hahaha".

So, it's just guessing what coffee I like? Not ideal, and Google says that onboard processing means "the AI doesn't learn from your responses or improve responses as you continue to use it". Fortunately, the other reply methods – even the tiny on-screen keyboard – work very well.

It's also worth noting that you need a Pixel phone for Smart Replies to work (9 or later, according to this help page or 8 Pro or later, according to the official store).

Although I've not needed them, there are various safety features available too (Pixel phone or not), including fall detection, loss of pulse detection, check in, crash detection and emergency SOS. Just note that the LTE models are required for satellite connectivity.



Smart Replies aims to offer up personalised suggestions in the way you write.

HEALTH & FITNESS TRACKING

Google hasn't upgraded the tracking sensors from the Pixel Watch 3, but it does everything you'd expect from a flagship smartwatch.

Steps, calories, floors and such like are all accounted for (and you'll see them around the edge of the larger 45mm screen on the default watch face). There's also heart rate, blood oxygen, skin temperature and various bits of exercise information all within

Google hasn't upgraded the tracking sensors, but it does everything you'd expect from a flagship smartwatch.

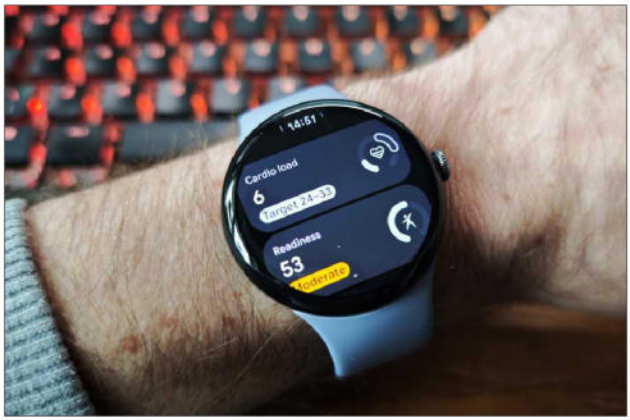
the Fitbit app (which is getting a big redesign very soon).

The Pixel Watch 4 give you a holistic view of your activity and you can delve into different areas on the watch and on the Fitbit app on your phone, too. In my testing, it's all accurate, including sleep tracking, which gives you a score and a breakdown of your night.

You will need Fitbit Premium, which costs £7.99 per month or £79.99 per year to get 'advanced insights, personalised recommendations and energising workouts' and this includes one of the best features, the Readiness score, which takes all information into account to give you an idea of how much you should take on that day.

The Pixel Watch 4 does come with 6 months of Fitbit Premium free, so you can at least give it a good try before deciding whether it's worth paying for. You won't need it for Morning Brief, which gives you an overview of things including your sleep, weather and what's on your calendar.

Via Fitbit, Google does a great job of presenting all the information and helping you achieve your goals.

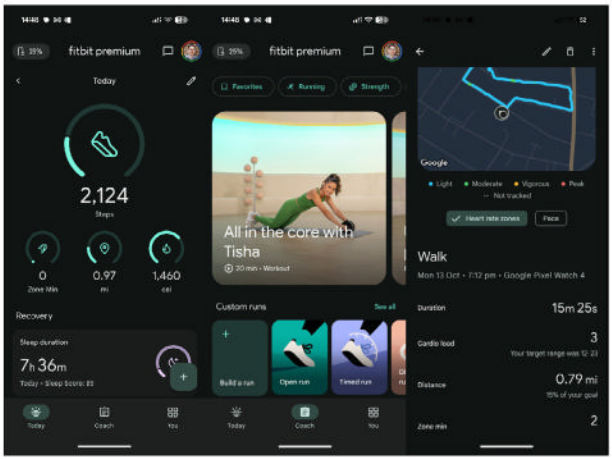


If you're a fitness enthusiast, you can pay more attention to things like the Cardio Load metric.

If you're more of a fitness enthusiast (unlike me), you can pay more attention to things like the Cardio Load metric and the Fitbit phone app has a wealth of workout videos and a running coach (though the AI personal health coach is limited to the US, so I've not been able to try that).

Sure, you can go with a Garmin or similar if fitness is particularly important to you, but I'd say the Pixel Watch 4 does a good job for a more mainstream smartwatch.

For exercise tracking, there are 52 sports available and it can auto-track a number of these. Other watches can do many more, often way over 100, and the selection is a little strange considering boxing is AWOL but pickleball (whatever that is) is right there.



The Fitbit phone app has a wealth of workout videos.

For walks and runs etc, you now have dual-band GPS for more accurate tracking, and I found it acquired a signal in just a few seconds. I don't live in a dense forest where the tech has more impact, but it tracked my walks around the neighbourhood with very high accuracy.

I'm still not convinced by the body responses feature (and similar things on rival watches), which aims to keep track of how you're feeling. However, this still seems rudimentary and appears to detect a raised heart rate, which could be from almost anything.

You'll get a notification and the option to log your mood, which could be happy or stressed, for example. When I could remember what I was doing at the time stated, it was normally something mundane like getting my daughter ready to leave the house and the limited selection of 'feelings' meant I could rarely select how I really felt.

Even when I could, there's nothing groundbreaking here, with the watch mostly saying 'hold onto that feeling' if it's a good one. For me, all this is more of a faff than it's worth and, ironically, stressful.

I haven't tested it for obvious reasons, but after being introduced on the Pixel Watch 3, the device can track your menstrual cycle with potentially useful info like cycle status and predictions.

Google's new Quick Charge Dock is a much neater solution than the previous chargers.

BATTERY LIFE

Google has managed to fit the Pixel Watch 4 with a slightly bigger battery, for both sizes, and that means you can get up to 30 or 40 hours (41- and 45mm respectively) of use with the display always on.

This extends to 48 or 72 hours with Battery Saver on, but you won't want to use the watch in that mode unless you have to.

The battery life you'll get depends on what you need a smartwatch for. I've been testing the 45mm model and I can get two days and nights from a single charge, sometimes more, but this is with a lighter level of use.

Those tracking intensive workouts with GPS every day and using the screen in bright sunlight, along with other battery-draining features, will need to charge more regularly.

However, when you do, it's very fast and Google's new Quick Charge Dock is a much neater solution than the previous chargers.

The dock is small and could do with being heavier to stay flat (cable management is key here), but I much prefer it to the previous version (and most rival solutions). The screen will tell you if the other end of the cable isn't plugged in or the contacts aren't quite aligned and, when it's charging, information including how long is left and the time.

I expected the screen to stay on all the time while charging, but this has to be enabled in the developer settings. It can sometimes struggle with the orientation of the display when docked, but not too often.

Charging is incredibly quick (25 percent faster than the Pixel Watch

3), even for the 45mm with a bigger battery, with my tests exceeding even Google's claims. From completely dead, I saw it reach 50 percent in 15 minutes and 89 percent in half an hour.

As mentioned in the design section, a key feature of the Pixel Watch 4 is that the battery is replaceable and you may even feel confident enough to do it yourself at home. This could be crucial in the device lasting many more years before you need to upgrade.

VERDICT

For my money, the Pixel Watch 4 is the best Wear OS watch out there, with only a few small issues to complain about.

It's the best looking watch (though you may disagree) and Google has done a great job of making it repairable so you can replace the screen or battery – possibly yourself, at home.

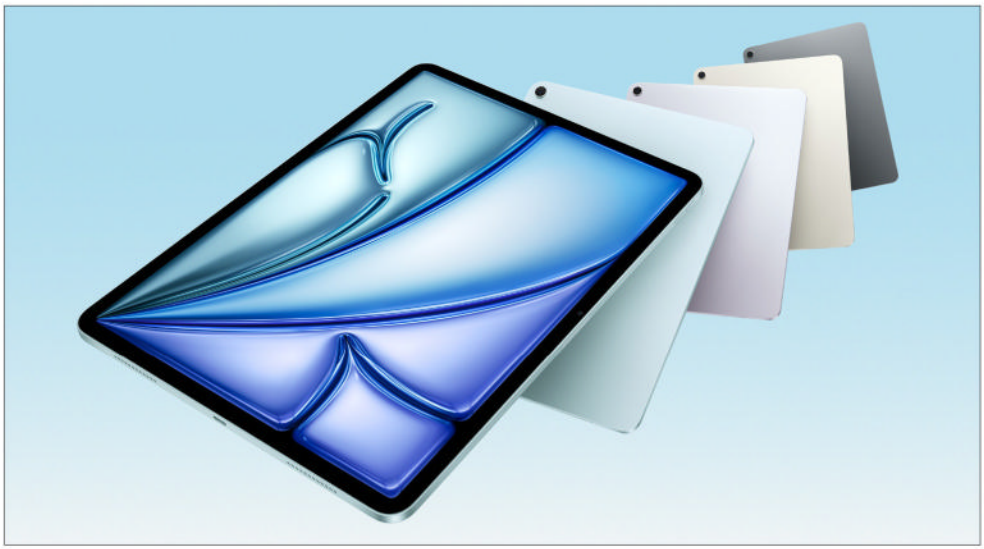
Performance is smooth for the most part, the domed screen is a delight, the interface looks and works great, the new Quick Charge Dock is a boon and health, fitness and smartwatch features are plentiful.

There's still a bit of work to be done with Gemini and Smart Replies are restrictive, plus you can get a longer-lasting smartwatch for less money in the OnePlus Watch 3.

However, the Pixel Watch 4 is an excellent all-rounder and easy to recommend if you're looking for a flagship smartwatch that does just about everything well. Chris Martin

SPECIFICATIONS

- 1.4-inch (456x456; 320ppi) LTPO AMOLED, 3,000 nits (peak) display
- Android Wear OS 6
- Qualcomm Snapdragon W5 Gen 2 (4nm) processor
- Quad-core (4x1.7 GHz Cortex-A53) CPU
- Adreno A702 GPU
- 2GB RAM
- 32GB storage
- Loud speaker
- No 3.5mm audio jack
- Wi-Fi 802.11 a/b/g/n/ac/6, dual-band
- Bluetooth 6.0, A2DP
- GPS (L1+L5), GLONASS, GALILEO (E1+E5a)
- NFC
- Sensors: Accelerometer, gyro, heart rate, altimeter, compass, SpO2, thermometer (skin temperature), skin conductance
- Non-removable 455mAh battery
- 45x45x12.3mm
- 31g or 37g



The best tablets you can buy, reviewed and ranked

There's no shortage of choice. ANYRON COPEMAN reports

Tablet computers are now more powerful than ever, with some being capable of operating heavy-duty productivity apps and even serving as a laptop replacement in some cases. Regardless of the type of tablet that you're after, you can lean on our expertise to choose from one of the best tablets currently available.

It seems strange to think now that when tablet devices first hit the scene, it was quite a spectacle to see them provide a seamless web browsing experience, as well as the chance to indulge in some entertainment, whether that was a spot of YouTube or a quick round of Angry Birds. Nowadays, it's a completely different story.

With tablet-friendly versions of Final Cut Pro, Microsoft Office and more, you can get through an entire working day with just a tablet at the helm. They're

not a perfect replacement for laptops across the board, of course, but in certain industries, they can absolutely get the job done.

HOW TO CHOOSE THE BEST TABLET

Unlike smartphones, which have more verticals to choose from, such as deciding whether or not you value performance, cameras, AI features or more, the decision over which tablet to buy essentially breaks down into a single question: do you want it for work or pleasure?

If you're going with the latter, then you have plenty of options available to you, and at a more affordable price point as well. Tablets that sit below the £300 mark have lots of crucial features such as bright displays and long-lasting battery life. If you just want to kick back and stream several hours of the latest must-watch Netflix show, then you have the freedom to do so.

Alternatively, if you're a student or a professional who is considering a tablet (either as a companion to their laptop or a complete replacement for it), there are still great options available, but they'll typically come with a higher price tag.

Performance is crucial when it comes to productivity, which is why it's worth investing a bit more (ideally £500 or more) in a tablet that comes with a higher-end processor, ideally one that can handle multitasking without breaking a sweat.

It's also worth factoring in the cost of additional accessories that complete the experience of using a tablet as a workstation, such as Bluetooth keyboards and mice, not to mention needing a stylus if your work involves digital art or note-taking.

What to look for

When buying a tablet, there are lots of things to consider, including build quality, design, size, core specifications, operating system, features, performance, battery life and more.

Which elements are important to you depends on what you need a tablet for. For entertainment, you'll likely want to prioritise a large, colourful screen and good speakers. For productivity, performance, battery life and accessories like a keyboard case are probably top of your list.

We have ranked the tablets above, but that doesn't automatically mean the one in first place is the best suited to your needs.

Operating system

In the tablet world, you've got four main choices for operating systems: an

Windows tablets offer the advantage of being able to support the same programs you're likely already used to running on your laptop or PC.

iPad, an Android tablet, an Amazon Fire tablet or a Windows tablet.

Apple iPads run the company's own iPadOS, which is widely regarded as one of the best out there. It's easy to use and app developers usually make it their first choice, so you're pretty much guaranteed to find what you're after, whether it's a banking app or the latest games.

If you have an iPhone, then it'll also be very familiar. This is valuable when you buy accessories that require apps, mainly smart home or fitness gadgets, as you may not be able to control these from a Windows (or Fire) tablet.

In most cases, apps are made available on Android as well as iPads, but not always. Android tablets can be cheaper than iPads, but there are some Samsung models which cost the same or are more expensive.

Windows tablets come in both cheap and expensive guises, with the advantage of being able to support the same programs you're likely already used to running on your laptop or PC. There just aren't as many finger-friendly tablet-optimised apps as you'd find on your phone or an iPad.

And that's why most Windows tablets come with a keyboard (or at least offer one as an optional accessory), they're really a hybrid of a laptop and tablet. But as you'll find out in most of our Windows tablet reviews, this is rarely a case of getting the best of both worlds. One exception is the Surface Pro line from Microsoft.

The fourth option is Amazon's Fire tablets. These are based on open-source Android but are locked into Amazon's own ecosystem, running on what's called Fire OS. As such, you won't find any Google services or apps

on them natively, so bear this in mind. They are very affordable, though.

Bear in mind that some tablet makers use their own custom OS, such as the ReMarkable 2.

Best brand

Apple is probably the brand most people think of first when it comes to tablets, thanks to the dominance of the iPad. If you can afford one and it ticks your boxes, then great, but there are reliable alternatives.

As mentioned, Amazon makes its own Fire Tablet range, but when it comes to Android and Windows slates, there are almost too many to choose from – although we are big fans of Microsoft's own Surface devices, many of which are tablets.

Many of the top brands make both Windows and Android tablets, and we'd recommend looking at devices from the likes of Samsung, Lenovo, Asus and Xiaomi. Other brands include Huawei, Nokia, Realme and OnePlus.

1. BEST OVERALL
Apple iPad Air (2025)

Price when reviewed: From £599
Pros: Excellent performance; premium design; great battery life; portable, lightweight build; slick iPadOS software
Cons: Slow charging; no Face ID; only 60Hz LCD display; Accessories not included

Equipped with Apple's M3 processor, the latest iPad Air delivers incredible performance in basically every scenario. Coupled with strong battery life and the premium yet lightweight design we've come to expect from the iPad Air, there's a lot to like here.

1.

With LCD rather than OLED and just a 60Hz refresh rate, the display might seem like a downside, but in day-to-day usage, it's still mightily impressive.

You will have to compromise in the charging department, though, while the lack of Face ID or any included accessories is frustrating.

On the software side, iPadOS continues to offer the best user experience on any tablet, with loads of dedicated apps and prompt updates for years to come.

If you're looking for a premium tablet that strikes a balance between features and price, the iPad Air is a great choice.

Perfect for: Those who want the perfect mix between performance and affordability within Apple's range.

Further considerations: Unless you're a power user, most people are better off with the iPad A16 (see below).

2. BEST VALUE
Xiaomi Pad 7

Price when reviewed: From £369
Pros: Premium build; excellent screen; solid performance; range of accessories
Cons: No fingerprint scanner; mediocre AI implementation

Don't want to pay high-end prices but still want a premium tablet? Go for the Xiaomi Pad 7 – you won't be disappointed. For just £369 at launch, you can get a high-end build, gorgeous 11-inch display and strong performance from the Snapdragon 870 chipset. Throw in solid battery life and decent charging speeds, and Xiaomi is onto a winner.

While no accessories are included in the price, the keyboard cases (two to choose from) and Focus Pen stylus are all very impressive, too.

A patchy software experience from Xiaomi's HyperOS Android skin remains the big compromise, though it's still very usable. You'll also have to make do without a fingerprint scanner, but that's easy to look beyond at this price

Overall, the Xiaomi Pad 7 offers a compelling, premium tablet experience for less than half the price of many rivals, making it a great buy.

Perfect for: You want the most bang for your buck and don't mind getting to grips with Xiaomi software.

Further considerations: You do need to factor in the accessory prices if you want the best experience the Pad 7 has to offer. The Xiaomi Pad 8 series is now official, but it's likely to remain exclusive to China for a while.

3. BEST MID-RANGE
OnePlus Pad 3

Price when reviewed: From £529
Pros: Big and beautiful display; brilliant performance; superb battery life; premium design; useful multitasking features
Cons: Only three years of OS updates; keyboard cover needs work; No IP water or dust resistance

OnePlus has gradually been improving its tablet offering ever since the original OnePlus Pad, but now it feels as though the company has truly hit its stride with its third-gen tablet that takes multitasking to a whole new level.

Originally available on the OnePlus Open, the company's Open Canvas software arguably feels more at home on the Pad 3 as you can have up to three apps open at a time (even more if one is in windowed mode). This just makes the tablet great for those who are constantly on the go but want to get work done on a device that's slimmer and more portable than a laptop.

What helps to keep things feeling smooth is the Snapdragon 8 Elite chipset, which can handle everything from on-device gaming to AI processing with ease. In our time testing the device, there was never really a moment when it buckled under pressure.


3.

What's arguably even more impressive is that, in spite of all the multitasking that the OnePlus Pad 3 is able to achieve, the battery life never falls short as a result. With a 12,140mAh cell under the hood, we were able to get through a full working day and still have more than 50 perfect left in the tank.

Perfect for: Anyone who loves to use a tablet for productivity. It's just unbeaten when it comes to multitasking.

Further considerations: Android just isn't as well optimised for tablets as what you'll find on iPadOS.

4. BEST VALUE iPAD
Apple iPad (2025)

Price when reviewed: From £329
Pros: Great performance for the basics; lovely and lightweight design; good battery life; double the storage of the predecessor
Cons: No anti-reflective display; slow charging; accessories not included; doesn't work with Apple Pencil Pro

Even though there's plenty to be gained by spending a bit more to nab the iPad Air or the iPad Pro, it's incredible to see just how much value the base-level iPad A16 is able to bring to the table.

For starters, when it comes to the core iPadOS experience, you're still getting access to the same great multitasking software iPad is known for, alongside top-tier apps that make it great not just for streaming and gaming, but also a spot of productivity (especially if you bring a keyboard into the mix).

The new A16 chip also means that you're getting a decent processing bump over the previous entry-level iPad, although it's far from the lightning-fast speeds that you'll find on M-series iPads. Plus, the iPad A16 is now the only tablet in Apple's range that doesn't support Apple Intelligence.

Still, Apple has finally done away with the 64GB model, having 128GB storage set as the standard and with no price increase as a result. As a means of getting into Apple's tablet ecosystem without spending a small fortune, the iPad A16 just can't be beaten.

Perfect for: Anyone who wants to experience the joy of iPadOS but doesn't need the M-series power of more pricier iPads.

Further considerations: Things can get expensive when you factor in accessories, which is why Xiaomi tablets tend to be better value overall.

5. APPLE iPAD PRO (M5)

Apple iPad Pro (M5)

Price when reviewed: From £999
Pros: Stunning display; superb performance; gorgeous slim and lightweight design; fast charging
Cons: Very expensive; nano-texture coating only available on some models; accessories not included

If you want the absolute best tablet money can buy, it's probably the latest iPad Pro. But for most people, the upgrade compared to the iPad Air isn't enough to justify the higher price tag.

Like the Air, the Pro is also available in 11- and 13-inch sizes. However, it's the move to OLED that sets the screens apart, delivering incredibly vibrant colours and deep blacks.

You also get Apple's M5 chip, which delivers better performance than the vast majority of laptops. When combined with the Magic Keyboard and/or Apple Pencil (both sold separately), it's a brilliant tablet for creatives.

But is that you? If not, you'll probably be just as happy with the Air or a MacBook if productivity is your top priority. At this price, it's simply not worth it for most people.

However, for the right person, the iPad Pro is a stellar tablet.

Perfect for: Power-users who need the absolute best tablet performance and are willing to pay for it.

Further considerations: The M3-toting iPad Air has enough power for most people, and it's nearly half the price.

6. GREAT AFFORDABLE OPTION
Honor Pad V9

Price when reviewed: From £399
Pros: Gorgeous display; great speakers; premium design; solid performance
Cons: Disappointing cameras; unconfirmed software updates

The Honor Pad V9 is a rare case of a mid-range tablet that has almost no compromises. Unless you need strong cameras or long-term software support, it ticks pretty much all the boxes.

We're talking a stunning 11.5-inch display and an impressive eight-speaker setup, which combine for a great experience while watching movies and TV. A premium yet lightweight design means you can take it most places with you, especially with superb battery life.

Elsewhere, MediaTek's Dimensity 8350 Elite delivers great performance, and Honor's MagicOS skin over Android offers a slick, intuitive user experience. If only we knew how long it'd be supported with updates, or how promptly we might get Android 16.

But even without that, the Honor Pad V9 is easy to recommend in any country where it's available.

Perfect for: Those who want a great tablet for entertainment, but with an affordable price tag.

Further considerations: It just can't match the regular iPad when it comes to long-term software support.

6.

7. BEST FOR TV & MOVIES
Samsung Galaxy Tab S11

Price when reviewed: From £799
Pros: Lovely AMOLED display; stunning quad-speaker sound; excellent bundled S Pen stylus; strong performance
Cons: Expensive; no charger in the box

The Galaxy Tab S11 is an underwhelming update, but it remains one of the finest tablets you can buy.

The audiovisual experience is its key strength, with a gorgeous

7.

11-inch display and stellar quad speakers. It's also more comfortable to hold and use than huge tablets like the Tab S11 Ultra, making it ideal for watching movies and TV while travelling. Strong performance from MediaTek's Dimensity 9400+ chipset means it can handle almost anything, though, including demanding gaming. The included S Pen stylus adds lots of extra versatility.

Disappointing lack of upgrades aside, the Tab S11's main shortcomings are its relatively high price tag and lack of a charger in the box. If you're in the market for a great high-end Android tablet, neither of these should be dealbreakers.

Perfect for: Anyone who wants a large display for drawing, handwriting or watching content on the go but doesn't want to sacrifice the portable design.

Further considerations: The M3 iPad Air offers better performance for less money, while the Galaxy Tab S11 Ultra offers an even bigger screen.

8. BEST BUDGET

Xiaomi Redmi Pad 2

Price when reviewed: From £169
Pros: Sleek design; decent screen; solid battery life; excellent quad speakers
Cons: Slow charging; basic cameras; software quirks

The Redmi Pad 2 is one of those Android tablets that proves Apple doesn't really stand a chance when it comes to the true budget end of the market. At just £169, the Pad 2 is almost half the price of the entry-level iPad, but it has a few features that you won't find on Apple's cheapest tablet.

For example, in spite of its affordability, there's a massive 11-inch LCD panel here that isn't just great for watching films and TV shows, its 90Hz refresh rate also makes gaming

and scrolling through social media feel effortlessly smooth.

Even the build quality manages to outshine the Pad 2's price tag, with a sleek aluminium frame that's not just comfortable to hold, it's also lightweight for carrying around in a bag, clocking in at a reasonable 510g.

There is a trade-off to be had with fairly slow charging speeds and no shortage of bloatware when you first power it up, but it's an understandable compromise given all that you get here for the money. As far as we're concerned, there isn't a better budget tablet right now, despite plenty of competition from the likes of the Galaxy Tab A9 series.

Perfect for: Budget-conscious buyers who are determined not to spend more than a couple of hundred.

8.

Further considerations: The overall software experience can be more refined if you're ready to spend a little extra at the checkout.

9. IMPRESSIVE MID-RANGE
Honor MagicPad 3

Price when reviewed: From £599
Pros: Flagship-grade power; huge battery performance; great display, even without OLED; slick, premium design
Cons: No fingerprint scanner; Honor bloatware; limited software updates

The MagicPad 3 might be a mid-range tablet, but its hardware suggests otherwise.

Top-tier performance, excellent battery life and a premium design all give the impression of a device that's significantly more expensive. Dropping OLED for LCD on this latest model might seem like a downgrade, but an upgraded resolution and higher 165Hz refresh rate ensure it remains a highlight.

Charging speeds are decent, while Honor's optional keyboard and stylus accessories are impressive in a variety of scenarios.

9.

10. BEST SMALL Apple iPad mini (2024)

Price when reviewed: From £499

Pros: Excellent build quality; compact and light; class-leading performance; feature-rich

Cons: Expensive; slow charging; 60Hz refresh rate

On the other hand, Honor's MagicOS software isn't for everyone, with some bloatware and a commitment to just two years of updates. You'll also have to make do without any official IP rating for water and dust resistance.

However, overall, the MagicPad 3 remains a strong option that feels a lot more expensive than its sub-£600 starting price.

Perfect for: Anyone who wants a solid mix of performance and a great screen at a mid-range price.

Further considerations: The lack of an IP rating calls into question how durable the tablet can be in the long term.

If you're in the market for a small tablet, there's still no better option than the iPad mini 7. This latest 2024 model offers the familiar iPad experience we've grown accustomed to in a device with a compact 8.3-inch panel.

The LED display itself is good, but nothing remarkable, offering a 1440p


10.

resolution but sticking at a 60Hz refresh rate. But it excels elsewhere, with superb performance from Apple's A17 Pro chipset, brilliant build quality and the best tablet software around in iPadOS, especially with Apple Intelligence support now.

Unlike most Apple devices, the iPad mini doesn't include Face ID, persisting with Touch ID built into the power button. The bezels are also very chunky and charging is slow, though solid battery life helps soften the blow.

If you're after another great budget tablet, then the OnePlus Pad Lite is worth a look.

Ultimately, the iPad mini is only suitable for people who want a small tablet with a lot of power. If that's you, this is the best option on the market.

Perfect for: Someone who wants a super portable tablet with a high-end software experience.

Further considerations: The standard iPad (2025) has a larger display and is also cheaper if size isn't paramount.

OTHER TABLETS TESTED

Even though the tablets featured in this article are our current picks for the absolute best you can buy, there are still plenty of others that almost made the cut.

If you're someone who has their sights set solely on an iPad but you're somewhat put off by the relatively high prices that Apple charges, then the one thing we always recommend is to check out previous-generation iPads that are still being supported but are now available for just a fraction of their original price.

Entry-level iPads released after 2020, for example, are able to enjoy all of the benefits that Apple's latest software (iPadOS 26) brings to the table. This includes a multi-window app interface that more closely mimics the experience of using a MacBook, plus

they boast access to some of Apple's best in-house apps such as Apple News, Apple Music and more.

If you're after another great budget tablet, you might want to give the OnePlus Pad Lite (a look. It just missed the mark due to its speaker placement and its screen being just a tad dimmer than we would have liked it to be, but between OxygenOS, solid battery life and a slick 90Hz refresh rate, it's something of a bargain at its £199 price tag, though it's sadly not available in the US.

At the more premium end of the spectrum, the Lenovo Yoga Tab Plus is priced more closely to the latest iPad Air, but it's a great all-in-one alternative for the Android crowd. Its performance, facilitated by the very efficient Snapdragon 8 Gen 3 chipset, is top-notch for getting a bit of work done. The experience is further bolstered by a battery life that can run for more than 14 hours on a single charge.

And don't forget Nubia's Redmagic Astra, a mid-range tablet that offers true flagship performance. If you're serious about gaming on your tablet, this is definitely worth considering.

I've switched phones 50 times in five years – here are the 11 things I do first

It's a long process, but it's worth it. ANYRON COPEMAN reports

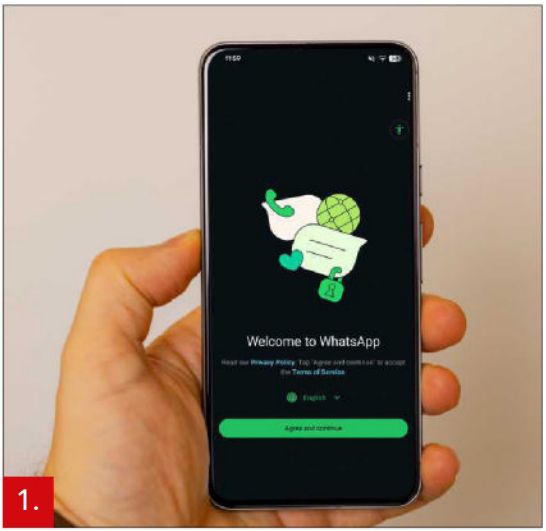
As someone who tests phones for a living, my SIM card rarely stays in the same device for more than a month. On average, I've switched to a new smartphone around 10 times in the past year, and on more than 50 occasions in the past five years. That's a lot!

In 2025, switching from one Android phone to another is easier than ever before. Simply connect your two devices and almost everything will be handled for you. The only thing you really need to worry about is messaging apps such as WhatsApp, which require a separate backup.

However, that doesn't mean your work is done once you land on the home screen. In many ways, it's only just begun. The process of fine-tuning and tweaking everything to your liking is painstaking, but the good news is you'll only have to do this once. It also avoids any annoying surprises further down the line.

But be warned – these 11 steps take me around an hour in total to complete. If you're following along, make sure you set aside plenty of time.

They're also specific to me, and I've only outlined the methods on a Google Pixel or Samsung Galaxy phone. The process may vary if you're using another type of Android phone, and it is very different if you're on an iPhone.



1.

However, regardless of the handset you're using, it's worth reviewing these options before you settle into your phone too much.

1. SET UP WHATSAPP AND RESTORE BACKUP

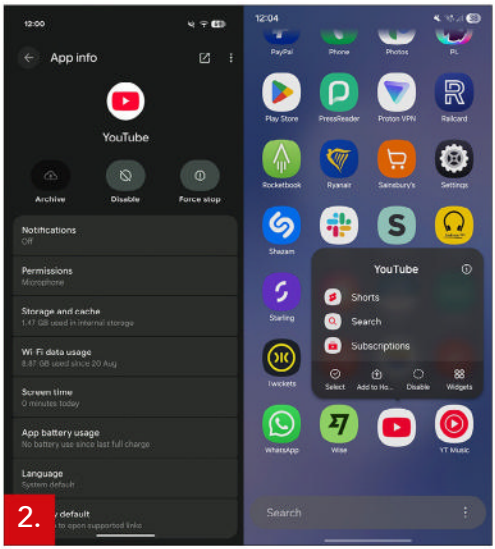
Every time I switch phones, WhatsApp is the app I'm most worried about. It's the only one I use that can't be accessed on any device with a username/email address and password, as it must be registered to your main phone.

Moving your SIM card over doesn't change anything; it must be done manually. Essentially, you have to back up on your old phone (usually to Google Drive), log in on your new phone (including validation), then load the backup that's just been completed. If you get any messages during this time, it's bad news – they won't be transferred. But it's the best you can do.

After this is complete, I always feel a lot calmer.

2. UNINSTALL OR DISABLE UNWANTED APPS

Bloatware is a problem that affects all phones these days, just in varying amounts. Even if you're able to stop optional apps from being downloaded during



setup, there will almost certainly be some pre-installed ones that you don't want to use. If you're lucky, you'll be able to uninstall them in the usual way, just like you would for any app from the Play Store.

But plenty more, including first-party apps, must be disabled. This is what I do for the YouTube app, which is a common source of distraction for me.

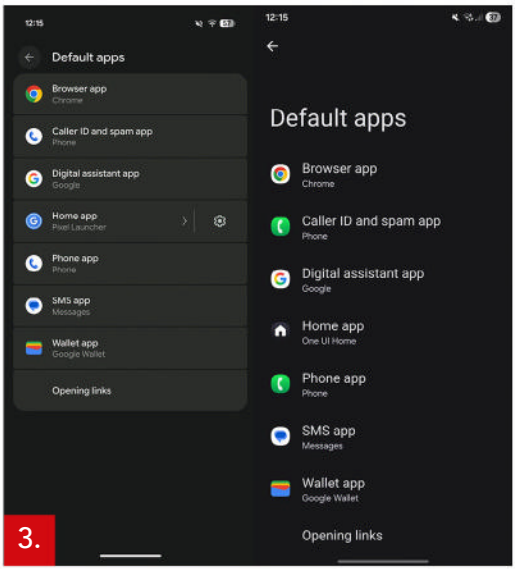
On Google Pixel phones, press and hold the app you want to hide, then tap 'App info' and then 'Disable'. On Samsung Galaxy devices, it's a step quicker – just press and hold and then choose 'Disable'.

Ignore any warnings about it not functioning as intended – that's exactly what you want.

3. EDIT DEFAULT APPS

I've recently switched to the Samsung Galaxy S25 FE, and it has some… interesting suggestions as to what the default apps should be. Let's just say I'd much rather use Chrome instead of Samsung Internet and Google Wallet instead of Samsung Wallet. Luckily, it's easy to change these, or even the whole launcher if you want to.

On both Google Pixel and Samsung Galaxy phones, head to Settings > Apps > Default apps. There are seven different options to adjust,



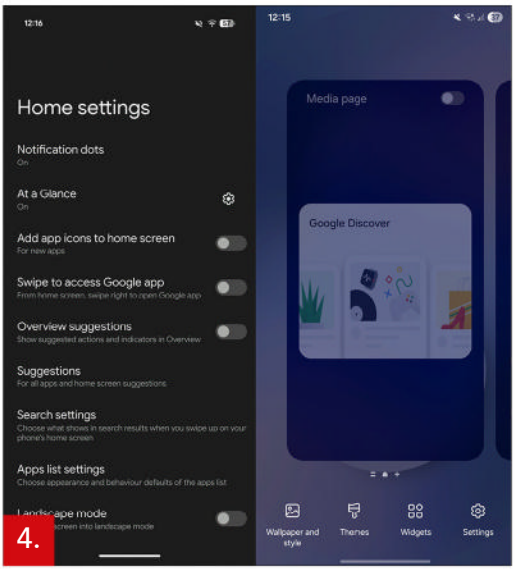
including ‘Home app’ if you want a different launcher.

4. TURN OFF GOOGLE DISCOVER FEED NEXT TO HOME SCREEN

You’ve probably used Google Discover before, even if the name means nothing to you.

It’s the scrollable list of articles you see by default every time you open Chrome on your phone or the Google app. Or, perhaps most annoyingly, every single time you swipe right from the home screen of your Android phone.

The articles that appear here are highly curated and based on your browsing history or other activity.



These can often be really interesting or informative (such as one from Tech Advisor), but I don’t need to have access to the feed directly from the home screen.

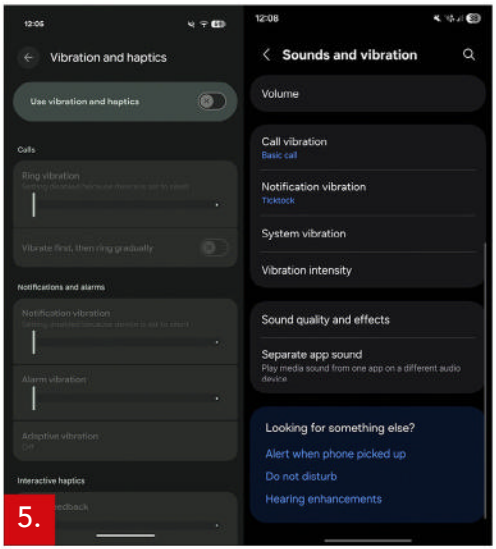
Just like opening a social media app, swiping to the Discover feed became something I did on impulse, without really thinking, leading to hours of wasted time. I’d rather be more intentional with the way I use it, so it had to be switched off.

On Google Pixel phones, press and hold any empty space on the home screen and choose ‘Home settings’. From there, make sure the ‘Swipe to access Google app’ toggle is disabled.

On Samsung Galaxy phones, press and hold any empty space on the home screen, then swipe right. Turn off the toggle at the top of the page that’s labelled ‘Media page’.

5. TURN OFF VIBRATIONS

Some people love the realistic haptic feedback offered by the advanced vibration motors on many phones. I’m not one of them. I like to keep my phone on silent most of the time. On the occasions when I’m expecting a call, the ringtone is perfectly fine. I don’t need to ‘feel’ every button press or tap on the keyboard. Luckily, they’re easy enough to disable.



On Google Pixel phones, head to Settings > Sound and vibration > Vibration and haptics and make sure the toggle labelled 'Use vibration and haptics' is turned off.

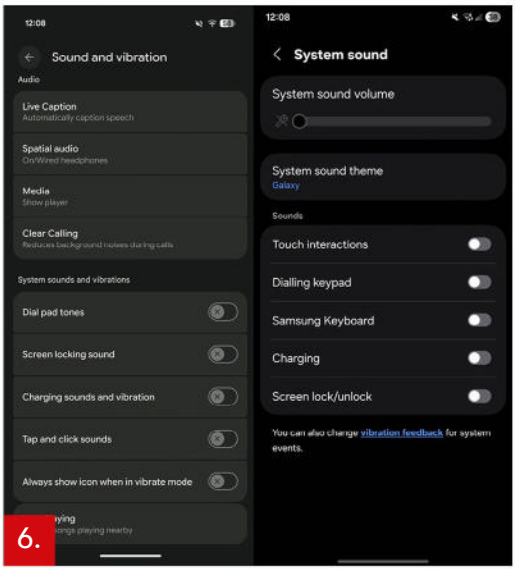
On Samsung Galaxy phones, head to Settings > Sounds and vibration. First, open 'Call vibration' and slide 'Call vibration intensity' down to the lowest possible. Then, do the same in 'Notification vibration' for 'Notification vibration intensity' and 'System vibration' for 'System vibration intensity'. Finally, open 'Vibration intensity', move all four sliders to the lowest possible and disable 'Vibration sound for incoming calls'

6. TURN OFF SYSTEM SOUNDS

Just like the vibrations, system sounds are totally unnecessary for me. I don't need my phone to make a noise when I lock it or plug the charger. And I think everyone knows how annoying it is when someone's phone makes a noise every single time they tap the keyboard. Disabling these is simple.

On Google Pixel phones, head to Settings > Sound and vibration, then scroll to the bottom of the page. Disable the toggles labelled 'Dial pad tones', 'Screen locking sound', 'Charging sounds and vibration' and 'Tap and click sounds'.

On Samsung Galaxy phones, head to Settings > Sounds and vibration >



System sound. Slide 'System sound volume' to the lowest possible, then disable the toggles labelled 'Touch interactions', 'Dialling keypad', 'Samsung Keyboard', 'Charging' and 'Screen lock/unlock'.

7. INSTALL AND ENABLE GBOARD (IF NECESSARY)

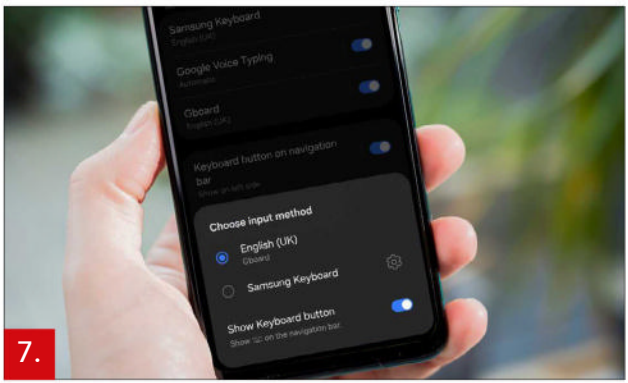
Google's Gboard is the default keyboard on most Android phones. I've tested plenty of alternatives over the years, but it's the one I keep coming back to for its classic design, ease of use and range of customisation options. However, on Samsung phones, the Samsung Keyboard is enabled by default. It has some useful features, including integration with Galaxy AI writing tools, but it feels cluttered to me.

To use Gboard instead, head to the Play Store and download the app. Once installed, open it and follow the on-screen button to Settings. Enable the toggle next to 'Gboard', then tap 'OK' to confirm. Finally, tap 'Default keyboard' at the top of the screen and select the other option – for me, that's 'English (UK)'.

8. ADD FACE UNLOCK OR FINGERPRINT (IF NOT DONE DURING SETUP)

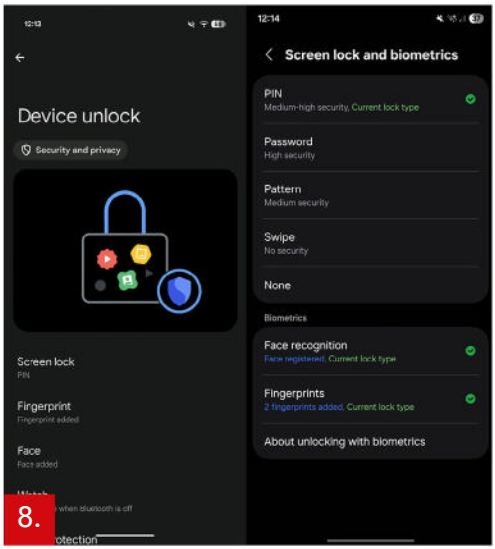
Most phones prompt you to enrol your fingerprint sensor or face during the setup process, but not always both. I find alternating between the two to be most convenient, with face unlock more convenient but fingerprint generally more secure (though some Android phones, including recent Pixels, have a secure 3D face unlock).

To set up your fingerprint or face on a Pixel phone, head to Settings > Security & Privacy > Device Unlock > and choose 'Fingerprint' or 'Face'. Whichever you choose, you'll be prompted to enter your lock screen PIN first. Follow the on-screen instructions to complete setup.



7.

On a Samsung Galaxy phone, head to Settings > Lock screen and AOD > Screen lock and biometrics, then enter your lock screen



8.

PIN. To set up face unlock, choose 'Face recognition', then 'Register face'. For a fingerprint, choose 'Fingerprints' and then 'Add fingerprint'.

9. SIGN IN TO ALL NECESSARY APPS

This is the worst step of the lot, and it's one I always dread. While all your apps have been transferred from your old phone, almost none of them have kept you signed in. First-party Google ones are pretty much the only exception.

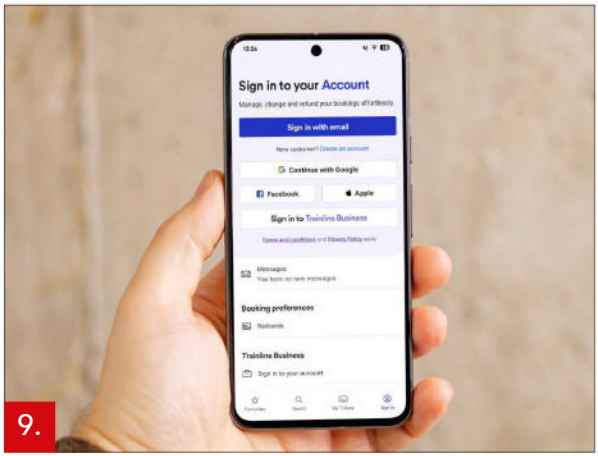
It might seem unnecessary to sign into every app as soon as you've set up a new phone. But it's the only way to guarantee you avoid being signed out when you really need to use an app now.

Running late and need a quick taxi? Being logged out of Uber will slow you down a lot. Approaching the ticket barrier, then realise you're logged out of your tickets? Stress. Want to quickly check how much money is in your bank account? A 10-minute reviews process becomes a nightmare.

Trust me, I've been there. The extra few minutes of hassle while you're sitting on the sofa will undoubtedly pay off when you need to access an app urgently. It's just not worth the risk.

10. CUSTOMISE THE HOME SCREEN

For me, the lock screen isn't something I spend too much time thinking about.



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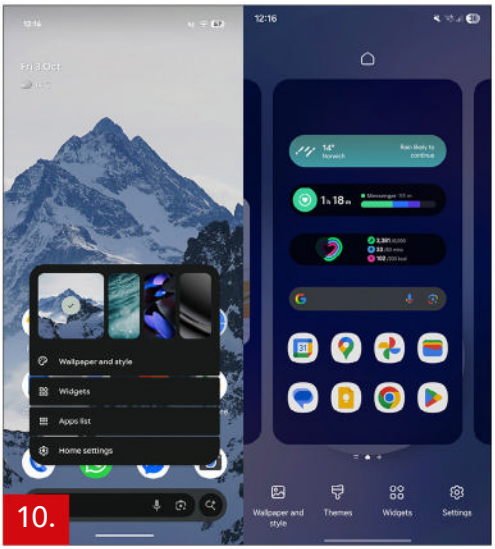


I rarely spend more than a few seconds looking at it, so I'm generally happy to stick with most of the defaults.

But the home screen? Now that's a different story. I have to get everything looking just right, or I'll end up frustrated every single time I open my phone. Unless you're moving between phones of the same brand, your layout will never be saved.

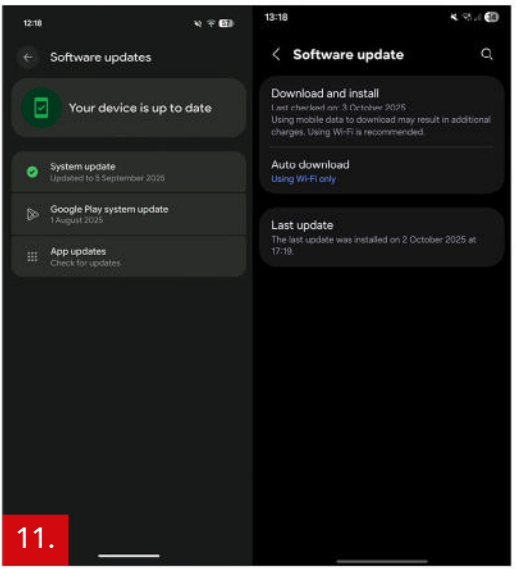
On Google Pixel or Samsung Galaxy phones, long-press any empty space on the home screen. From there, you'll find options to change the wallpaper, adjust themes, add widgets and dive into more in-depth settings. That's before you get to the extensive customisation options offered by a new launcher, of which there are lots on the Play Store.

However, my tastes are quite basic. Just one main home screen, with a few widgets and my most-used apps, and I'm very happy.

11. CHECK FOR SOFTWARE UPDATES

The software that your phone runs out of the box isn't necessarily the latest version. It might've been packaged up weeks before, or you might've had it sitting in your home for a while.

After I've spent nearly an hour on the steps above, waiting for a software update is the last thing I



want to be doing, but there's nothing like the feeling of running the very latest version. Assuming it's not brand new, this gives you the best chance of avoiding bugs and other vulnerabilities while being able to enjoy all of the very latest features.

On Google Pixel phones, head to Settings > System > Software updates. On Samsung Galaxy phones, head to Settings > Software update.

Your phone will probably tell you if an update is available, as it regularly checks automatically in the background, but you can tap 'System update' (Google) or 'Download and install' (Samsung) to do this manually.

Credit: Nicoleta Ionescu/Shutterstock

Got a broken phone screen? Here's how to recover your data

It's difficult but not impossible. THOMAS JOOS reports

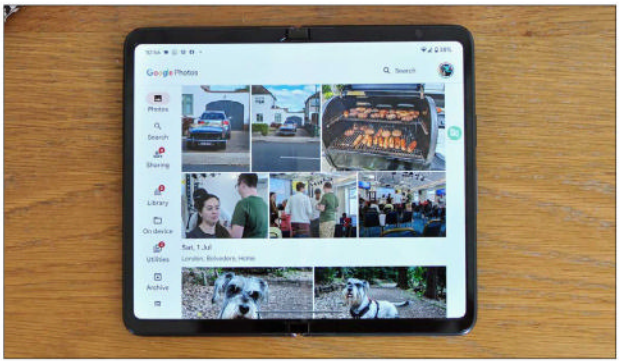
Even if the display of your phone or tablet with iOS/iPadOS or Android is damaged and operation is impossible, there are various ways to recover your data. However, there is no guarantee of success.

The first step to recovering the data should always be to connect your normal charging cable to the smartphone and connect it to the PC or Mac. In many cases, this will allow you to access the data on the device and synchronise it with the PC or Mac.

With a bit of luck, you will be able to save the data on your iPhone and Android smartphone if you

have not already set up synchronisation with iCloud or Google Drive. Unfortunately, the mobile phone can sometimes be seen on the PC or Mac, but the content cannot be accessed. The following tips can help here.

If nothing really works, it is best to go to a repair centre. Advise them not to delete the data or install any firmware updates. This will give you a chance to access your personal data. In this article, we also show you how you can operate the smartphone with a computer mouse if only the touch function is defective but you can still recognise something on the display.



In Android, contacts, appointments, photos and videos can be easily synchronised in Google One.

Extra tip: Check whether you have insurance for your smartphone that you took out when you bought it. This won't save your data, but you can at least use the insurance to cover the repair.

AVOID DATA LOSS THROUGH BACKUP AND SYNCHRONISATION

Always be prepared for the worst-case scenario and regularly back up your data either in the cloud, transfer it to your PC or export it to other programmes. In Android and iOS, contacts, appointments, photos and videos can be easily synchronised with cloud storage solutions such as iCloud and Google One. As Apple or Google accounts are required to access the smartphones anyway, you only need to set up this synchronisation accordingly.

Everything you need to do this is available completely free of charge up to certain data limits.

PREPARE FOR RECOVERY AND TAKE INITIAL MEASURES

In some cases, you will need to enter the SIM card PIN when restarting your smartphone. This depends on the settings you have made on your device. To avoid this hurdle, it may make sense to remove the SIM card. In most cases, you will still have to enter the password

for the device itself, but you will not have to enter the SIM card PIN.

In preparation, you should keep the PIN in a safe place so that you have it to hand in an emergency. In Android and iOS, you can deactivate the PIN request at start-up in the phone settings. As the device is additionally protected by the device PIN anyway, the SIM PIN can normally be deactivated.

Many owners of Android smartphones also use memory cards in their smartphone on which they have stored some data such as large photos or videos. You can save this data relatively easily by simply removing the card from the mobile phone and reading the data via a PC. If your PC or laptop does not have a built-in card reader, you can use an adapter or an external card reader.

SCENARIO 1: NO LOCK SCREEN SET UP – LUCKY YOU

If no screen lock is set up on your mobile phone, you're in luck (although this is rarely the case). So if you don't have a lock, start your smartphone as usual, connect it to your computer and back up the desired data via Windows Explorer or on Linux and macOS by accessing your mobile phone's memory.

If you do not know exactly which directory the data is located in, it is best to use the software provided by the manufacturer for your smartphone, which, in most cases, offers a backup mode for the mobile phone data. In most cases, the smartphone's data carriers are mounted as a drive in Windows Explorer.

With Samsung, for example, this is Samsung Smart Switch (tinyurl.com/3cnsd335). Test the new software in good time so that you know how to perform data recovery in an emergency. Wondershare Recoverit (tinyurl.com/4xdhmmj2) is also frequently used. Another tool that can be used to recover data from Android smartphones or iPhones from a PC or Mac is FoneLab (tinyurl.com/yfv8637f).

SCENARIO 2A: LOCK SCREEN PRESENT, NO USB DEBUGGING ACTIVATED – ACCESS VIA USB HUB, MOUSE AND KEYBOARD

One of the most difficult cases occurs when the lock screen is activated and you have not activated USB debugging. This prevents direct access to your mobile phone. You can still overcome the lock if your smartphone has a USB On-the-Go (OTG) interface.

This can be determined using a search engine and 'OTG', for example 'Samsung Galaxy S25 OTG'. Test access if you cannot find any

information about your smartphone. If you connect a mouse to the OTG adapter, which you can also use on PCs and Macs, you can often operate your Android smartphone with the mouse if, for example, the entire screen is not broken, but only the touch function.

In this case, it is possible to connect a mouse or keyboard using an OTG adapter and enter the pattern or PIN code. The smartphone is then unlocked and you can back up the data as in 'Scenario 1'. Many OTG adapters even have an HDMI connection so that you can also connect a screen and possibly even see the information on the smartphone.

This often also works with iPhones and definitely with many Android smartphones. A TV set can also be used as a monitor. All you need is a device that has an HDMI connection. In some cases, it is sufficient to simply enter the SIM PIN or unlock the device using the OTG adapter. If you then connect the smartphone to a PC or Mac, you can already access the data.

SCENARIO 2B: LOCK SCREEN PRESENT, NO USB DEBUGGING ACTIVATED

However, there is a special solution for Samsung devices in this case if they support the 'SmartThings Find' service and you have registered there. Go to the service's website (tinyurl.com/4vkyymvf) and enter your email address and the password with which you are registered with Samsung.

Select the registered device with the defective screen, deactivate the lock screen and then back up your data using Samsung Smart Switch (tinyurl.com/3cnsd335). If you are using a different smartphone, the manufacturer sometimes offers its own backup and restore programme, which you can find

You can overcome the lock if your smartphone has a USB On-the-Go (OTG) interface.

on the manufacturer's website. It is best to search for the mobile phone type and the term 'data recovery' in a search engine.

SCENARIO 3: LOCK SCREEN PRESENT, USB DEBUGGING ACTIVATED

The following tip does not work on all devices, but is worth a try. Your smartphone does not necessarily have to be rooted in this scenario. However, it increases the chances of success, as in our test alone.

You need the Android Debugging Bridge (ADB) files for this action. You can find these via the Android SDK (tinyurl.com/2vbartkz). After installing ADB, connect your smartphone to your computer and call up the command prompt using the Run command (Win R) and the cmd application. Use the cd command to navigate to the installation directory of the ADB drivers and check whether your smartphone has been recognised as a device. Entering adb devices should display a list of all connected Android devices.

Then enter the command adb shell rm /data/system/gesture.key and wait for the response. If you do not receive an error message due to insufficient authorisations, the action has been successful. You can reboot your mobile phone and back up the data.

SCENARIO 4: LOCK SCREEN PRESENT, BOOTLOADER ACTIVE, USB DEBUGGING DEACTIVATED

The next description works for smartphones that have an active bootloader such as CWM (Clock Work Mod). This is the case if you have installed a custom ROM. Then boot into recovery mode first. From here you can pull the required data onto your computer using ADB commands.

To boot into recovery mode, it is best to use the buttons on your smartphone. To do this, switch it off completely. Press and hold the

Establish a connection to the PC using a USB cable.

three Volume Up and Power buttons simultaneously and wait until the recovery menu appears. That's all you need to do on your smartphone.

Establish a connection to the PC using the USB cable. Even if you have not activated USB debugging, the smartphone will be recognised by your computer in this state. Call up the command prompt again using Win R, enter the command cmd and call up the directory with adb.exe.

Navigate with the command cd. .. command to navigate up one level from the current directory and into a directory with cd . Before you start copying, check the connection to the smartphone with the adb devices command. If it appears in the list, you have access to it.

Now drag all the data from the smartphone to the PC. This may take a little while, but you can then analyse it at your leisure. The adb backup command is available for this purpose: .adb backup -all -f :backup.ab

With the first parameter '-all' you make an almost complete backup of your smartphone. Use the second parameter to change the path in which you save the data. Replace accordingly with the desired path:

File paths for ADB

Data: Path

SMS: /data/data/com.android.providers.telephony/databases/mmssms.db

Contacts: /data/data/com.android.providers.contacts/databases/contacts2.db

Calendar: /data/data/com.android.providers.calendar/databases/calendar.db

Memo: /data/data/com.sec.android.app.memo/databases/Memo.db

WhatsApp: /data/data/com.whatsapp/databases/wa.db; /data/data/com.whatsapp/databases/msgstore.db

RECOVERING DATA FROM A DEFECTIVE iPHONE – EVEN WITHOUT AN EXISTING BACKUP

Many of the procedures mentioned here also work for iPhones. In general, it is highly recommended to set Settings > Apple ID > iCloud > iCloud backup to On in the iPhone's options before losing data. This ensures that your most important data is regularly backed up in your iCloud. You can access the data with a browser via icloud.com and, of course, transfer the data back after repairing the display or buying a new smartphone.

Another option for restoring data

is the iMazing software (tinyurl.com/yyr6vf6p). It can back up even more data than iTunes and restore it in an emergency. SMS, iMessages and file attachments can also be backed up and restored.

You can also recover data from iPhones with Phone Rescue from iMobie (tinyurl.com/cn4rhfxe). The software is available for free testing so that you can first check whether the data can be recovered at all. The tool works with iTunes and can also restore data via iTunes. For Android smartphones, iMobie also provides the DroidKit tool, which can be tested free of charge.

But data can also be restored without iTunes. You don't need to be an IT professional to do this. A wizard guides you through the recovery process. You can choose what type of data you want to restore, for example photos, videos, music, messages, voicemails, call history, contacts, notes, Safari history and bookmarks.

Another tool that can help you recover data from an iPhone is Fondedog (tinyurl.com/tuvzfbrx). The procedure is the same as for the other programmes. You install the tool in Windows or macOS and connect your iPhone to the computer. The tool attempts to establish a connection and can then download and back up the data. An easy-to-use wizard also helps here. On the manufacturer's website (tinyurl.com/4zsvxj8t), you will also find comprehensive instructions on how to restore the data.

Dr.fone (tinyurl.com/m3swp8mp) is another tool that can recover data from iPhones.

CONCLUSION

Backing up data without access to the display can be very difficult. You should therefore back up important data continuously. The manufacturers' synchronisation programs are suitable for standard data. Everything else can be easily backed up using the adb command with USB debugging switched on.

INSIDE: SNAP'S NEW AR GLASSES SOFTWARE

TECH ADVISOR

DECEMBER 2025

EXPERT TIPS: HOW TO MAKE GOOGLE'S PIXEL 10 EVEN BETTER

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