INSIDE: 5 ESSENTIAL ANDROID SETTINGS

TECH ADVISOR

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THE BEST NEW TECH 2025-26

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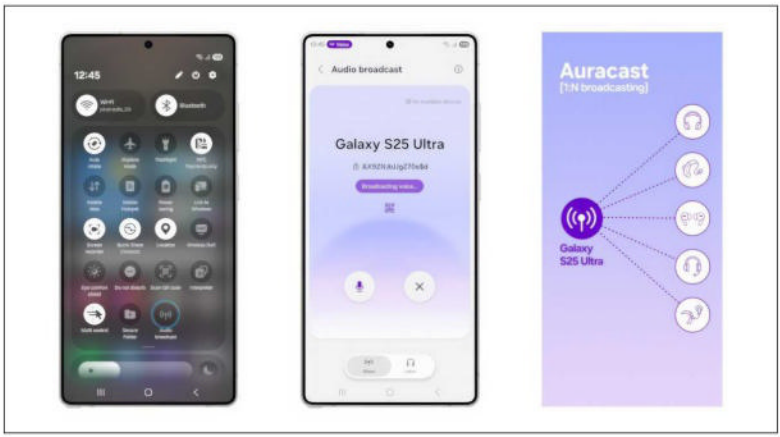
Samsung Galaxy S25 owners can already try One UI 8.5 right now

Beta available now. JON MUNDY reports

Samsung has announced a new beta program that will enable Samsung Galaxy S25 owners to use One UI 8.5 early.

We're expecting to see One UI 8.5 – which is promising to be a much bigger update than its 'X.5' designation suggests – make its full debut alongside the Galaxy S26 in January. However, thanks to the freshly announced One UI 8.5 beta program, Galaxy S25 users will be able to get a sneak peak.



Audio Broadcast allows Samsung users to communicate with multiple Bluetooth devices.

FEATURES

As we mentioned above, One UI 8.5 is much more than a modest bump over the existing One UI 8.

Samsung says it "fundamentally rethinks how users interact with their devices", moving away from the usual process of jumping between apps and menus on its smartphones.

Photo Assist 2.0, for example, will let you perform multiple types of photo edit in one session, without having to save your progress at every turn.

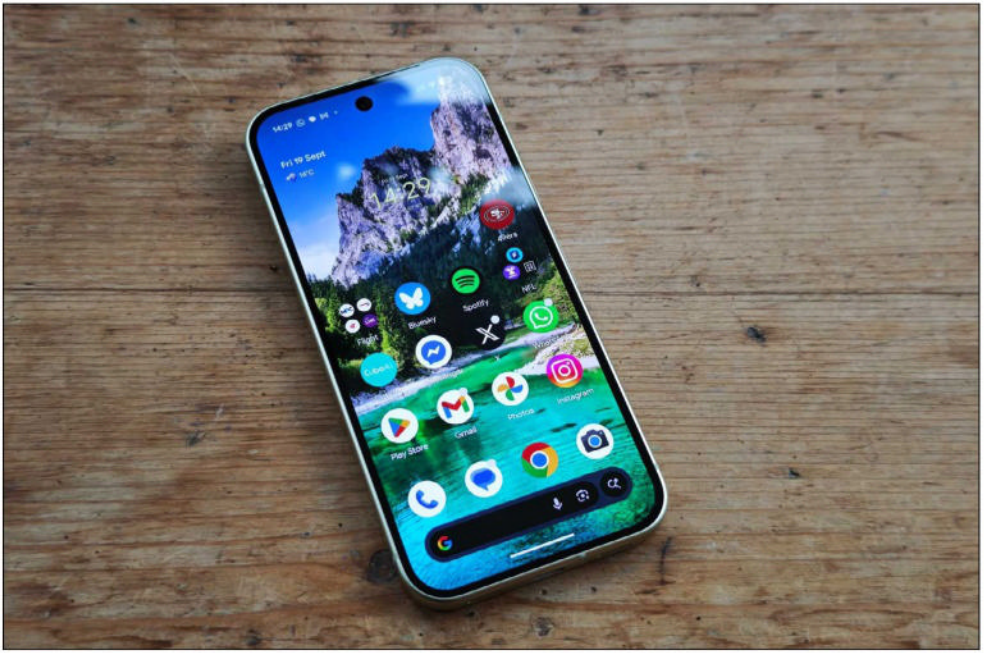
Quick Share will now recognise faces in images and will make sharing recommendations accordingly. Audio Broadcast will enable Samsung users to communicate with multiple Bluetooth devices simultaneously.

With Storage Share, there'll be a unified storage system that will enable you to access files from your tablets and PCs right there on your phone.

Throw in a more secure, granular more identity verification system, and you'll hopefully understand what a sweeping upgrade One UI 8.5 is promising to be.

AVAILABILITY

Access to this One UI 8.5 beta program opened on 8 December, so it's available now. All you need it a Samsung Galaxy S25-series phone in the UK, US, Germany, Korea, India and Poland. If you can tick off those requirements, you'll be able to access the One UI 8.5 beta through the Samsung Members app.



Pixel 10 users are finally getting a long-awaited free upgrade

Delayed Pixel Drop feature is here. JON MUNDY reports

Google is finally rolling out a major new power-saving feature to users of its Pixel 10 smartphone series.

The November Pixel drop brought a stack of new features to Pixel phone users, but one particular feature has proved to be a little tardy.

One of the neater-sounding additions was supposed to be the ability to press the power button while navigating in Google Maps, which

would then switch to a simplified layout showing only key information like your next turn. Thus, you could complete a vital route even when your phone was on its last legs.

That feature wasn't actually available when the November Pixel Drop started rolling out a couple of weeks ago. Now, however, it is.

POWER SAVING MODE ROLLING OUT NOW

As Android Authority points out, Google Pixel 10 owners are reporting receiving the aforementioned Power Saving Mode in Google Maps.

It utilises a new Android feature called AOD Min Mode, which capitalises on the Always-on Display to save energy, switching to a black-and-white output (which is particularly effective on OLED displays), dropping the screen brightness, and lowering the display's refresh rate.

Google reckons you'll be able to gain as much as four hours of navigation time by switching to this new Power Saving Mode.

It isn't perfect. Not only is it limited to the Pixel 10 range (for the moment at least), but it also only works in driving mode. For whatever reason, walkers and bikers can't capitalise on its energy-saving abilities.

Anyone who likes to navigate in landscape view (raises hand) is out of luck, too. It's portrait only.

HOW TO ACCESS POWER SAVING MODE IN GOOGLE MAPS

To access the feature automatically following the update, Pixel 10 users should head to the Google Maps Settings menu, head to the Navigation Driving options section, and locate Power Saving Mode to make sure it's active. Now, pressing the power button while in turn-by-turn driving navigation mode will activate the mode. Tapping the screen will exit.

There's no indication of when it'll come to older Pixel phones, but we can't see why it wouldn't.

Forget the iPhone 18… Apple Glasses could be this year's best new gadget

Another first-generation device that could make a new category mainstream. PETTER AHRNSTEDT reports

The last time Apple introduced a brand new category was Vision Pro. Now rumours suggest that Apple Glasses could be next.

According to Bloomberg (via 9to5Mac, tinyurl.com/54em3hs2), the glasses could be shown off as early as 2026 as a preview, although the actual launch will be delayed until 2027. That's in line with how Apple has unveiled new product categories in the past: both the Vision Pro and Apple Watch were shown off long before they went on sale.

Smart glasses are growing in popularity but remain a niche, with Ray-Ban Meta one of the few clear market leaders and Samsung is getting in on the game too, with help from Google. But history shows that Apple can make a difference: neither the iPod, iPad nor the Apple Watch were first in their categories, but they strongly contributed to shaping the market.

The Vision Pro was previewed long before it went on sale.

Apple Glasses could have the same effect, especially if the product is lighter, cheaper and marketed as an accessory to the iPhone. They could outshine the iPhone 18 series as well as the rumoured foldable iPhone, with Apple very late to that party.

While the outcome is not guaranteed – the Vision Pro has so far not reshaped the VR market as many thought – there are expectations that the glasses will have a wider impact.

The second reason Apple Glasses is likely to attract a lot of attention is that it will be Apple's first AI-centred product. Unlike today's iPhones, iPads and Macs, which are marketed as "built for Apple Intelligence", the glasses will be directly dependent on advanced Siri technology and new AI features.

The big question is: can all this attention turn into a real sales success? If anyone can do it, it's Apple.

Pebble's first smart ring is nothing like offerings from Oura or Samsung

Different in more ways than one. JON MUNDY reports

Back in January 2025, we reported on the news that the Pebble brand was set to return with wearables. Now we know that this is going to take the form of a new smart ring as well as the classic smartwatch form factor. The Pebble Index 01 has been announced as a different kind of smart ring altogether.

While the Oura Ring 4 and the Samsung Galaxy Ring and other rivals are focused on ultra-portable health insights, the Pebble Index 01 is more concerned with your memory.

A DIFFERENT APPROACH

Pebble has always done things differently from its rivals and that's certainly the case with the Index 01.

It's essentially a finger-mounted dictaphone, complete with a button and a microphone. You press the button, whisper your thoughts into your finger, and said memo is then sent to your smartphone, either as a note or a reminder.

It'll also work with Pebble and other smartwatches (via the Pebble app), where your thoughts will appear. You can also ask questions like 'What's the weather today?', and the answer will appear on your watch.

Indeed, the Pebble Index 01 is more than just a dumb memory tool. It can send messages for you, and even answer basic web queries. Configurable button presses let you control your music playback or smart home actions, too.

There's sufficient memory on the ring for up to five minutes of audio recording, which can then synced up later, so you don't need to take your phone out on that run with you if that's where you do your ruminating.

WHAT'S THE CATCH?

Intriguingly, the Pebble Index 01 never needs to be charged, which sounds great – initially at least. I'm more than a little dubious about the small print here, though…

Apparently, the battery lasts for "years", which sounds a little vague.

Scanning down to the FAQs, and it seems the ring's battery will last just two years of regular usage (10- to 20 times per day to record 3- to 6-second thoughts). What's more, when it finally runs out of juice, you can "send your ring back to us for recycling".

There's no mention of any kind of subsidised replacement service, which has me even more concerned.

Elsewhere, the Pebble Index 01 requires no internet connection, and you don't need to sign up for a subscription. That's quite a refreshing modern smart device, regardless of how it turns out.

It's said to be a lot smaller than your average smart ring, as well as being durable (it's predominantly made of stainless steel 316) and water resistant to 1m.

The Pebble Index 01 will be available in polished silver, polished gold, and matt black, across eight US ring sizes. There's an early bird pre-order price of $75 (about £56), while final pricing will be $99 (roughly £74).

Worldwide shipments are set to commence from March 2026.

Credit: NDAB Creativity/Shutterstock

The best new tech from the past 12 months

And the winners are... TECH ADVISOR STAFF report

At *Tech Advisor* we live and breathe gadgets and spend all our time testing them out to tell you which ones to buy.

Now it's that time of year when we look back at the past 12 months and decide which new models deserve to be crowned the best of the year in their respective categories. These are the crème de la crème, or in other words, the tech we love the most and use – or wish we were using – ourselves on a daily basis. We've deliberated long and hard about the winners and awarded titles in different categories. You'll also find honourable mentions for two runners-up.

BEST NEW PHONE

2025 has been another huge year for smartphones. Artificial intelligence has continued to dominate the

conversation, with almost every phone manufacturer launching new AI features. Meanwhile, the ultra-thin phone movement has gathered pace with the introduction of the iPhone Air, and we've seen genuine leaps in camera performance and battery technology.

But a truly great phone can't stop there. To be crowned the best, it also has to excel in the design, display, performance, battery life and software departments.

Winner:
Google Pixel 10 Pro XL

Google has done it. After almost a decade of Pixel phones, the company has finally risen to the top of the class. The Pixel 10 Pro XL might be Google's most expensive non-folding phone ever, but it's also undoubtedly its best.

What makes it so good? Where do we start! Gone are the days when you had to compromise on hardware by going for a Pixel – the 10 Pro XL offers terrific build quality, surprisingly good durability and a classy design. The 6.8-inch OLED screen might be even better, delivering a superb viewing experience, regardless of where you are.

And Google has put that pill-shaped camera module to very good use, offering a truly excellent camera experience. The hardware isn't the absolute best you'll find on any phone, but it makes taking great photos incredibly easy, which is arguably even more important. There are even some useful AI features to make taking and editing photos much easier. Not all of the AI photography features are a hit, but several offer compelling ways to fine-tune the end result.

Battery life is strong, charging is solid, and the new built-in Qi2 opens up the Pixel 10 Pro XL to a world of magnetic accessories – including many designed for Apple's MagSafe.

The 10 Pro XL also offers a top-tier software experience, with slick Android 16 software out of the box and a full seven years of updates.

Smartphones don't get any better than the Google Pixel 10 Pro XL right now.

It's an expensive phone, but one of the few flagships that fully justifies its price tag. Smartphones don't get any better than the Pixel 10 Pro XL right now.

First Runner-Up:
Oppo Find X9 Pro

The Find X9 Pro is the best phone Oppo has ever made, and it sets a new standard for camera phones and battery life.

Photos from all four lenses (50Mp main, 50Mp ultrawide, 200Mp telephoto, 50Mp selfie) are simply superb, and you can boost the telephoto lens dramatically by attaching the optional teleconverter kit, which gives you an unheard-of 9.8x optical zoom. Meanwhile, the huge 7,500mAh battery utilises silicon-carbon tech to deliver incredible battery life without the bulk.

With top-tier performance, intuitive software, a gorgeous 6.78-inch OLED screen and a premium yet durable design, the Find X9 Pro is an excellent smartphone and a very close second to the Pixel 10 Pro XL.

Second Runner-Up:
Samsung Galaxy S25 Ultra

The Galaxy S25 Ultra offers minimal upgrades compared to the S24 Ultra, which won this award last year. But it remains an excellent all-rounder that's up there with 2025's finest.

Highlights include superb performance, a stunning 6.9-inch display and excellent, versatile cameras, all within an attractive yet durable design. It has a key advantage compared to the other phones in this article: the built-in S Pen stylus. For digital art and handwritten notes, it's unmatched.

The S25 Ultra doesn't get everything right, and costs more than the Pixel 10 Pro XL and Find X9 Pro, but it remains a productivity powerhouse that is definitely worth considering.

BEST NEW MID-RANGE PHONE

When buying a new phone, it can be difficult to know how much to spend. The best budget phones offer a great everyday experience, but are often lacking in premium features that you might miss. At the other end of the scale, flagship handsets have it all, but unfortunately, with high price tags to match.

A mid-range phone could be the sweet spot. *Tech Advisor* defines this category as costing between £300 and £700, meaning there are lots of options. But only the very best deliver an all-round experience that's comparable to phones that are far more expensive. Here are our three favourites from 2025.

You can't get a better phone for under £700 than the Galaxy S25 FE.

Winner:
Samsung Galaxy S25 FE

Samsung's Fan Edition phones don't have a brilliant reputation, but the Galaxy S25 FE has emphatically changed that – at long last. Despite being much cheaper than the same size Galaxy S25+, the S25 FE doesn't feel like a significant downgrade.

Basically, the only real thing you'll notice is the reduced quality of supporting cameras, but the main and selfie lenses are good enough for you not to worry about that. With Snapdragon 8 Elite performance, a stunning 6.7-inch display and strong battery life from the 5,000mAh cell, the S25 FE has some of the best hardware we've ever seen from a mid-range phone.

It's arguably even better on the software side, where One UI 8 delivers a slick, intuitive user experience that doesn't miss out on any of the flagship Galaxy AI features. You also still get a full seven years of updates, which is up there with some of the very best support you'll find on any phone.

While the other options in this article are better value picks, you can't get a better phone for under £700 than the Galaxy S25 FE right now.

First Runner-Up:
Google Pixel 9a

For much of the year, the Pixel 9a was the best mid-range phone you could buy. And if you have a budget of £500, it remains the outstanding choice.

It takes the best of the Pixel experience – most notably a superb main rear camera, gorgeous display and superb software – and repackages it in a more affordable device. You also get seven years of updates here, plus solid battery life and strong everyday

performance. It's a phone that's very easy to recommend, especially if you can find it at a discount.

Second Runner-Up: Nothing Phone (3a)

The Nothing Phone (3a) is an incredible phone for the money. It's only just expensive enough to be considered a mid-range phone, with regular discounts dropping it into budget territory, yet it looks and performs like a device that's two or even three times the price.

A gorgeous design, slick, highly customisable software and strong battery life are the highlights, but there aren't any major weaknesses, either. The Nothing Phone (3a) is a lot of phone for not much money, making it an obvious inclusion in our top three.

BEST NEW BUDGET PHONE

In the not-too-distant past, buying a budget phone meant a long list of sacrifices. The downgrades compared to flagship and even mid-range phones were numerous, to the extent that you really needed to spend more for a device that you could rely on.

Those days are long gone. In 2025, the best budget phones deliver a solid experience across all the areas that matter, yet keep their prices firmly in affordable territory.

At *Tech Advisor*, we define a budget smartphone as any handset that costs less than £300 when bought outright. That means there are dozens of options, but only the very finest have made it into our top three.

Winner: CMF Phone 2 Pro

The CMF Phone 1 was our favourite budget phone of 2024, and its successor introduces some meaningful upgrades that allow the Nothing-owned brand to maintain that position. It's a rare feat in such a competitive market.

Significant camera upgrades mean the Phone 2 Pro (there wasn't a non-Pro model this year) can take very good photos for the price. There's even a 2x telephoto lens and ultrawide sensor, offering the versatility that few cheap phones can match.

The 6.5-inch display is another genuine highlight, while performance from the MediaTek Dimensity 7300 Pro chipset won't let you down. Battery life is solid, while Nothing's take on Android is slick and highly customisable, especially with a generous six years of security patches (three years of operating system upgrades).

But the phone's big selling point remains its design. It's one of the very few smartphones that allows you

The CMF Phone 2 Pro an all-round excellent phone that just so happens to offer a unique design.

to easily remove the back (though replacing the battery is still tricky), allowing you to easily experiment with colours and textures. There's also a dedicated connector for lanyards, wallets and other accessories, which is a nice touch.

Crucially, the CMF Phone 2 Pro isn't a case of style over substance. It's an all-round excellent phone that just so happens to offer a unique design, making it very easy to recommend.

First Runner-Up: Samsung Galaxy A17 5G

The Galaxy A17 5G is extremely similar to its predecessor, the Galaxy A16 5G, which hampered its score a little. But it's still one of the best budget phones around despite the lack of innovation.

Surprisingly, the phone has a lot in common with more premium Samsung handsets, including an attractive 6.7-inch OLED display, premium and triple rear cameras, though the main 50Mp camera – now with stabilisation – is the only one that's really worth using.

Aside from the lack of Galaxy AI features, One UI 8 is here in all its glory, with the six years of OS and security updates a real perk over rivals at this price. With solid everyday performance, decent battery life and a sleek, durable design, there's a lot to like here.

Second Runner-Up: OnePlus Nord CE 5

With a £299 price tag at launch, the Nord CE 5 is only just cheap enough to be considered a budget phone. However, its combination of excellent build quality, an attractive display, solid performance and decent battery life makes it a real force. OnePlus also hasn't diluted its excellent OxygenOS

software experience, which benefits from six years of security updates.

If neither of the options above appeals to you and you're willing to spend a little more, the Nord CE 5 is a fine choice.

BEST NEW TABLET

The humble tablet has undergone quite a revolution during its decade and a half of popularity. What began as a simple entertainment device has become a mobile computing powerhouse, allowing many people to give up their laptops and PCs entirely.

However, for all that change, the fundamentals of a great tablet remain the same: a great display, reliable performance, solid battery life and intuitive software.

Plenty of impressive tablets have launched in 2025, including high-profile devices such as the iPad Pro M5 and Samsung Galaxy Tab S11 Ultra. But our three favourites have an extra ingredient – affordability – that makes them even easier to recommend.

Winner:
Apple iPad Air (M3)

Apple still has the slight upper hand when it comes to tablets, and the iPad Air is the jewel in its crown. This is the sweet spot for most people. Stunning performance from the M3 chipset combines with a top-quality 11- or 13-inch display – you really don't miss the lack of OLED or a high refresh rate.

Its design is every bit as premium as you'd expect from Apple, yet with a thickness of just 6.1mm and a weight starting at 460g, it's easy to take anywhere with you.

The iPad Air also impresses when it comes to battery life, closely matching Apple's 10-hour claim and ensuring a full day of work on a single charge is well within reach.

On the software side, iPadOS 26 is the best it's ever been, with useful multitasking features and an unrivalled selection of dedicated apps.

Apple still has the slight upper hand when it comes to tablets, and the iPad Air is the jewel in its crown.

The iPad Air isn't perfect, with the lack of Face ID a big miss and all accessories sold separately. But it offers everything most people are looking for in a tablet at a fraction of the price of premium slates.

First Runner-Up:
Xiaomi Pad 7

The Xiaomi Pad 7 is an incredible tablet for the money. Despite starting at just £369 (and regularly found discounted), it offers a complete Android tablet experience that will satisfy all but the most power-hungry users.

It offers an excellent 11-inch, 144Hz display and quad speakers, which combine for a top-tier setup for movies and gaming on the go. The Snapdragon 870 chipset might not seem like much, but it provides plenty of power for work and play.

Throw in a premium design, intuitive software and a wide range of top-notch optional accessories, and the Xiaomi Pad 7 is clearly the best-value tablet from 2025. A missing fingerprint scanner is the only real compromise here, which says a lot when you're paying so little.

Second Runner-Up:
OnePlus Pad 3

Completing the trio of mid-range devices is the OnePlus Pad 3, which helps to reimagine what an affordable tablet can do.

Plenty of its features are indistinguishable from flagship slates, including a vibrant 13.2-inch display, incredible Snapdragon 8 Elite performance and superb battery life from the massive 12,140mAh cell.

With a premium build, dedicated multitasking features and no fewer than eight speakers, the Pad 3 has a lot going for it.

Its accessories need work, and software support could be longer, but the device essentially grants you a flagship tablet experience at a fraction of the cost.

BEST NEW BUDGET TABLET

For the budget tablet category, it was a hard-fought battle to come out on top with the best value slate. Google doesn't even make a cheap enough tablet to be considered, leaving the door open for Samsung, Xiaomi, Lenovo, OnePlus and others to take the crown. Here we present *Tech Advisor*'s best new budget tablet award of 2025 along with the runners-up.

Winner:
Xiaomi Redmi Pad 2

Xiaomi is well known for making affordable but excellent tech and has

stolen the crown from Samsung with the Redmi Pad 2, but only narrowly. What a lot of people will be looking for in a cheap tablet is a more affordable version of the entry-level iPad and right now, the Redmi Pad 2 is as close as it gets.

For starters, it costs almost half the price – but you wouldn't know it thanks to its sleek design and high quality unibody build (which is available in a selection of colours.

Also surprising given the low cost is just how good the key elements are. You get a large 11-inch screen which is perfectly crisp and bright, along with a 90Hz refresh rate to keep everything smooth.

Performance is slick and the battery life is solid, plus the quad speakers are very impressive making it a great tablet for just about any task.

Xiaomi's Redmi Pad 2 is a great tablet for just about any task.

Sure, the charging is a little slow but no slower than rivals, cameras are basic and Xiaomi's software might take a bit of getting used to for some but these don't come close to stop it winning the best budget tablet of the year.

First Runner-Up: Samsung Galaxy Tab A11

Samsung has previously won this award with the Tab A9 and is now back with a new generation (there was no Tab A10). This only narrowly missed out but it's still a top option considering it comes in a smaller 8-inch size.

It's effectively a reboot of the Galaxy Tab A9, including an identical design and many matching specs. However, the screen is now 90Hz, the front facing camera is higher resolution and Samsung offers a flagship level seven years of software support.

Furthermore, the price has come down a little, now starting at £149 and we've already seen it reduced to just £99.

Second Runner-Up: Apple iPad (A16)

The latest entry-level iPad is a tiny bit over our price limit for budget tablets but it's the cheapest

model and readily available at under our cap so is worth including. For many the iPad is the best tablet and the A16 is another hit with great design, build, performance and battery life. All the things you need from Apple's most accessible tablet, and it now comes with double the storage.

The Google Pixel Watch 4 is as perfect as smartwatches got in 2025.

BEST NEW SMARTWATCH

It's been a huge year for smartwatch launches with plenty of new models from the likes of Apple, Google, Samsung, OnePlus and other brands. Some took a backstep and others really stepped up. As usual, we've been up close and personal with these devices, testing them for weeks and months to find out which ones you should buy. It's now time to crown the best new smartwatch of 2025, along with runners-up.

Winner:
Google Pixel Watch 4

Google came runner-up for this award last year with the Pixel Watch 3, and although the Pixel Watch 4 might look nearly identical at a glance, it hides a lot of significant upgrades.

There are some big updates to the design, including the fact that the screen and battery are now replaceable – and you can do it at home with relative ease thanks to no signs of glue.

That screen is now a unique domed display, which works really well and the Pixel Watch 4 has much faster charging and a handy new dock to boot. Add in the latest version of Wear OS with Material 3 Expressive user interface and Gemini baked in and you've got the best new smartwatch of 2025.

There's very little to dislike here, with only minor niggles in our 9/10 review. Fitbit Premium still costs extra to get things like your Morning Briefing and Gemini could do with a bit of work, but otherwise, this is as perfect as smartwatches got in 2025.

First Runner-Up:
OnePlus Watch 3

The Watch 2R won this award last year with its unbeatable value for money but there is no 3R to date. Still, the OnePlus Watch 3 is an excellent smartwatch, particularly now the firm has added a smaller 38mm model we'd long been requesting. As well as style and features, the main reason to buy this over rivals remains it's exceptionally long battery life in comparison.

There isn't really a smartwatch that's doing a significantly better job compared to Huawei.

Second Runner-Up:
Apple Watch Series 11

It's a case of yet more refinement from Apple's core flagship smartwatch but there's no denying that the Series 11 is yet another great smartwatch.

The obvious choice for most iPhone users, the wearable improves in various areas including sleep tracking, battery life, fitness features and durability. The only spanner in the works is that the SE 3 does much of this for a lot less.

BEST NEW BUDGET SMARTWATCH

Long gone are the days when you have to splash out hundreds to get a good smartwatch. The budget wearable market is stronger than ever with such good value that could buy smartwatches for the whole family for the cost of one flagship.

And you won't want to throw it in the bin after a month either. They offer seriously good design, include features not even premium models offer, and often have longer battery life to boot.

There have been plenty of great cheap smartwatches launched in 2025 and we've been testing them all year to see which is best. These are the three models which impressed us the most.

Winner:
Huawei Watch Fit 4

After taking a runner up spot last year, Huawei has taken the crown with the Watch Fit 4 for 2025 with a 9/10 review score. We've always been a fan of the Watch Fit series and the fourth-

generation takes it to new heights. It looks similar to before (still very much inspired by the Apple Watch) but comes with a lot of upgrades making it better value than the Pro model. These include the addition of free full colour maps, dual-band GPS support, new health and well-being monitoring smarts and new watch faces. Furthermore, it offers up to 10 days of battery life, a large punchy display and great waterproofing. We also love how comfortable it is and it's already widely available for around a third off, making it even better value.

Downsides are minimal, such as the NFC chip only being on one colourway and the core smartwatch features being a mixed bag. However, this wasn't enough to stop it from winning the award for best budget smartwatch of 2025.

First Runner-Up:
CMF Watch 3 Pro

CMF (Nothing's budget brand) won this award last year and although the Watch 3 Pro took a small backstep, it's still an excellent choice.

We wish the interchangeable bezel feature was still present and the device lacks NFC. There's still a lot to like and it stands out when it comes to design and software as well as being the best value on the market.

Second Runner-Up:
Amazfit Active 2

Amazfit's Active 2 is a worthy runner-up this year with a good all-round package including a clean, stylish design, plenty of fitness features, a good screen and solid battery life. It just lacks NFC on the regular model and doesn't have the most accurate heart rate sensor.

BEST NEW SMART RING

It's been a great year for wearables, smart rings included, even though we didn't get a Google Pixel Ring yet.

The category has gained popularity and it's easy to see why. The best smart rings do the same health and fitness tracking as most smartwatches in a smaller form factor, with longer battery life and less distraction.

It also frees up your wrist to wear a 'proper' watch or some work in conjunction with a smartwatch for better accuracy and battery life.

Smart rings are here to stay and here are the best three we tested at *Tech Advisor* this year.

Winner:
Oura Ring 4

Being the celebrity choice, Oura is 'the' name in smart rings. Although the Oura Ring 4 launched late in 2024, we didn't get it in for review in time for the end

The Oura 4 is the standout smart ring to beat.

of year awards. However, it's the newly launch Ceramic Edition we want to particularly highlight here as it brings a more beautiful and more durable option to the market. Even though a wider range of colours would be welcome.

It also launched alongside a new charging case which solves that problem, even though we haven't tested that accessory out.

Oura has continued to set the standard for smart rings, with the Ring 4 offering a supremely comfortable fit, longer battery life than its predecessor, and more accurate tracking via the class-leading app.

The downsides continue to be the subscription plan to make it worth using and the high price of the ring itself, depending on which model you choose. However, it's still the best new smart ring of 2025 at *Tech Advisor* towers.

First Runner-Up: RingConn Gen 2 Air

The RingConn Gen 2 won a runner-up spot last year and now the Air model has done the same in 2025.

It's more affordable than many rivals and doesn't have a subscription model either. Plus, it's slim, stylish, offers good core track and has a long battery life.

Second Runner-Up: Circular Ring 2

Early Circular models didn't cut the mustard, but the firm has made good strides with the Ring 2.

There are still niggles such as the sub-par app and certain features needing to be purchased with virtual currency, but it's comfortable, doesn't have a subscription and has a feature rivals don't offer – ECG.

BEST NEW FITNESS TRACKER

While devices like smart rings are the hot wearable right now, fitness trackers still serve a purpose, primarily giving users an affordable and easy way to track a range of health and fitness metrics. New Fitbits won't be coming until 2026 (after looking like we may never see any new models), but other bands have continued to launch fitness trackers, including the likes of Xiaomi,

Amazfit and plenty more. As always, we've been putting them to the test and can now announce the best new fitness tracker of 2025.

Winner:
Xiaomi Smart Band 10

Chinese tech giant Xiaomi has long been the company to beat in the fitness tracker space. Previous generations have won this award and the firm has retained its crown yet again with the Smart Band 10.

For such a low price you'd expect this fitness band to have flaws left, right and centre, but it just doesn't. It's not even got a flimsy plastic build and the display is a punch AMOLED panel that's larger and with a smaller bezel

Other improvements in this generation include a new nine-axis sensor that notably enhanced swim tracking, heart rate tracking is more accurate and can be broadcast to other devices like cycle computers and sleep tracking is also richer.

Battery life is still as solid as ever so there's very little to dislike. The app isn't the best around and the Ceramic model costs more but these are minor niggles for an incredible fitness tracker.

First Runner-Up:
Huawei Watch Fit 4

The tall band style of the Xiaomi is diminishing these days and there's more crossover with smartwatches than ever as brands manage to fit the features of each category into one device. So while the Watch Fit 4 won our budget smartwatch award, it's also a notable fitness tracker if you're looking for an affordable, well-rounded wearable that looks rather like the Apple Watch.

Second Runner-Up:
Amazfit Bip 4

Similar to the Watch Fit 4, the Amazfit Bip 6 offers an affordable fitness tracker experience in a smartwatch design and includes plenty of smartwatch features.

These include a larger AMOLED screen, Bluetooth calls, offline maps, transport cards and more. Plus it comes in well under £100.

Xiaomi still reigns as the cheap fitness tracker champ.

OnePlus 15

Price when reviewed: From £849 ★★★★½

Outside of the company's native China, it's been less than a year since we were introduced to the mighty OnePlus 13, and it's proven to be an extremely capable entry against this year's competition. So much so, in fact, that I'd go so far as to say it's the best-value Android flagship of 2025.

In spite of the 13 having plenty of life left in it, however, OnePlus is a company that, you guessed it… "Never Settles", and as such, its successor is already here, in the OnePlus 15.

Long-time OnePlus fans will understand the company's aversion to the number 4, but the company is also framing the numerical jump between generations here as representative of the technical strides its new flagship embodies.

The OnePlus 15 does, indeed, boast a few world-firsts and unique takes

in both the hardware and software departments. But to understand whether the collective effect makes it a worthwhile buy, I've spent the last few weeks testing and living with the phone to see what it's all about.

DESIGN

As I mentioned in my 'OnePlus 15 biggest upgrades' feature, I didn't particularly love the look of the OnePlus 13. It was an undeniably premium smartphone, with top-tier fit, but the aesthetic choices OnePlus made – with regard to the phone's geometry and surface finishes – lacked cohesion. It was convoluted and overcomplicated, fussy and inconsistent, especially in its signature Ocean Blue colourway.

That couldn't be further from the truth with the OnePlus 15. The design language the company debuted on the OnePlus 13's has now migrated up to its newest flagship. That means flat sides, flat glass front and back, far more heavily rounded corners and a completely reworked rear camera surround.

It's a decidedly cleaner, more minimalist look, with an air of understated confidence, not least because of the surface finishes OnePlus has opted for, which might be the best out there.

The use of LIPO (Low-Injection Pressure Over-moulding) to house the display means a thinner bezel than we've ever seen, all the way around the 15, measuring just 1.15mm thick (the last two generations of Apple's iPhone Pro Max feature 1.36mm bezels).

The eagle-eyed amongst you might notice that the 15 also sports a similar look to Oppo's new Find X9 and Find X9 Pro, but where these phones are only available in a bland silver or white in most regions, OnePlus's new flagship sports a trio of colourways with the power to turn heads.

Ultra Violet is the most vibrant finish, with a lavender hue across the frame and back glass, the latter of which colour-shifts against the light thanks to

OnePlus 15 in Infinity Black, Ultra Violet and Sand Storm.

an iridescent coating. Next, you have what OnePlus speculates is the "darkest black ever on a phone," in Infinity Black, which features a super-matt finish, including an etched AG glass back, that sets it apart from even other all-black phones.

The most technically impressive and signature colour from this year's line-up, however, is Sand Storm. Like Infinity Black, it sports a super-matt look across the back, frame and camera surround, but in order to achieve this warm grey tone, OnePlus is the first in the smartphone space to employ a process called micro-arc oxidation (or MAO) across the exterior metalwork.

The result is a material that OnePlus claims is 1.3x tougher than titanium and 3.4x tougher than aluminium. The metalwork is cooler to the touch as a result, and this colourway swaps glass for a fibreglass back too.

Despite OnePlus's claims, I was worried about the durability of this new finish, but after three weeks of constant use, it looks like MAO is also more resilient to the nicks and bumps of everyday use than I expected, not to mention fingerprints don't linger as badly either.

For a brand that once abstained from getting its phones IP-certified, the OnePlus 15 has been tested against more of the standard's various categories than any other phone on the market; boasting IP66, IP68, IP69 and IP69K certification (that K means it's rated to withstand high-pressure, high-temperature water jets). What's more, it's been tested to withstand full submersion in fresh water to a lower depth for up to 30 minutes (2 metres, instead of 1.5m), compared to its predecessor.

Ultra Violet is the most vibrant finish, with a lavender hue across the frame and back glass.

If you're still concerned about keeping your OnePlus 15 looking pristine, OnePlus has also launched a trio of cases and an anti-reflective glass screen protector

The Hole Pattern Magnetic Case (pictured) doesn't accurately match its official product imagery.

alongside the phone. As with the OnePlus 13, the cases also allow for compatibility with magnetic MagSafe/Pixelsnap accessories (with OnePlus forgoing Qi2 compatibility in order to maintain this phone's faster 50-watt AirVOOC wireless charging).

All I would say is skip the Hole Pattern Magnetic Case (pictured) as, in person, it doesn't accurately match its official product imagery, and despite the included silicone pips for a degree of personalisation, it just looks bad (not to mention the sandy colour of the thin plastic actually clashes with the Sand Storm finish).

DISPLAY

The OnePlus 15's new, more rounded silhouette technically plays host to a smaller (6.78-inch, down from 6.82), lower resolution (sporting a pixel density of around 450ppi, versus 510ppi) panel, compared to last year's OnePlus 13, but make no mistake, this is still a large phone with a pleasingly sharp flagship-class screen.

The move isn't OnePlus trying to surreptitiously cut back on quality hardware – hoping fans won't notice – instead, you're getting a new 1.5K ProXDR OLED panel that builds on the gaming prowess of previous entries, with two relevant upgrades.

Being an LTPO panel, the phone still dynamically ramps its refresh rate up and down between 1 and 120Hz, with most of the UI running at that 120Hz peak as you swipe around, providing a pleasingly snappy user experience, while still offering better power efficiency compared to non-LTPO screens. What's different is that, when applicable, it can shift up to 165Hz, for even more responsive visuals that are tailored for competitive gaming.

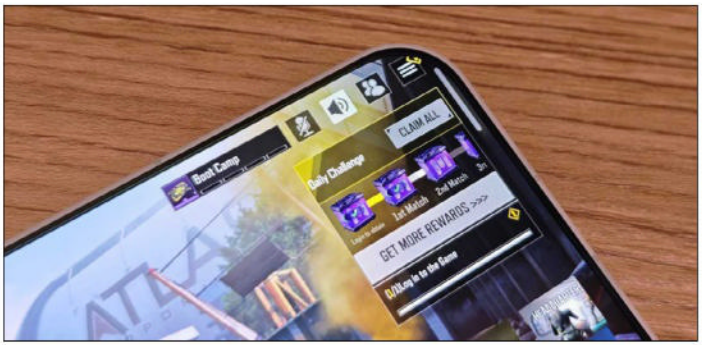
Importantly, this 165Hz peak only unlocks with select titles, such as PUBG via frame interpolation, and natively

The LTPO panel has a panel-wide brightness threshold of 1,800 nits, meaning brighter content and easier outdoor viewing.

with the likes of COD Mobile, Clash of Clans, Real Racing 3 and a handful more. It's unclear whether 165Hz support has to be implemented on OnePlus's side or by developers, but here's hoping the list of titles grows now that the phone is on sale.

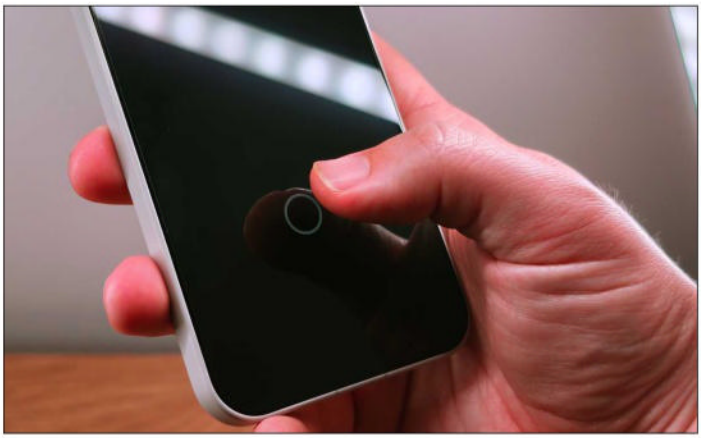
Based on the uncharacteristic winning streak I enjoyed when hopping into Call of Duty on the OnePlus 15 for the first time, I have to assume that this new higher frame rate ceiling was the very thing that gave me a competitive edge. Not to mention, the phone's display also promises an incredible 3200Hz touch sampling rate (the rate at which the display registers your touch inputs), which is significantly higher than anything I've used before; even trumping the fresh-faced Redmagic 11 Pro (which tops out at 3,000Hz).

One small gripe I only really encountered while gaming is that OnePlus's decision to give the 15's rounded corners larger radii means some UI elements (like those on the – admittedly cluttered – main menu of COD Mobile) come dangerously close to being cut off, or at the very least, tricky to tap on with confidence.



The phone's rounded corners means some UI elements (like those on the main menu of COD Mobile) come close to being cut off.

On the flip side, this new panel also boasts a higher panel-wide brightness threshold of 1,800 nits (the OnePlus 13 and the likes of the latest iPhone 17 Pro Max share a 1,600-nit HBM ceiling), meaning brighter content and easier outdoor viewing. As a frequent user of Android's native Extra Dim feature, the ability to pair that with the phone's already-impressive 1-nit lowest brightness output, to achieve an output of just 0.5 nits, is a nice inclusion too.



The display conceals an impeccably fast and reliable ultrasonic fingerprint sensor.

The OnePlus 15's display also conceals an impeccably fast and reliable ultrasonic fingerprint sensor that works even when the screen is off, and seemed reassuringly unaffected by water on the display or on my thumb during testing.

The phone's unique display set-up is paired with a reworked audio system, punctuated by symmetrical speaker grilles on the top and bottom of the phone's frame (when held in portrait). In a side-by-side comparison, you can expect louder output than the OnePlus 13 at equivalent volume levels, with minimal distortion, even at 100 percent.

The caveat is that, despite the new speaker grille placement, you're still getting true stereo output, with the down-firing speaker offering far better low-frequency output. While less balanced and a fraction quieter, I preferred the OnePlus 13's audio performance, with the phone serving up a richer, fuller sound and better bass response, compared to the flatter, more balanced speakers inside the OnePlus 15.

Rumour has it, OnePlus has also opted for a smaller, lesser linear motor inside the OnePlus 15, compared to its predecessor, but when comparing both phones' haptic performance (the O Haptics demo within each

phone's Settings menu made for easy comparison), I genuinely didn't think they felt any different. Either way, expect a premium, well-tuned, rich haptic experience here.

PERFORMANCE

Just as the OnePlus 13 was among the first phones internationally to arrive with Qualcomm's then-new Snapdragon 8 Elite, the OnePlus 15 will likely be the first phone those outside of China come into contact with using the chip maker's latest top-tier mobile silicon: the Snapdragon 8 Elite Gen 5.

Even before I had hands on the OnePlus 15, we'd witnessed just how much of a lead the Gen 5 lorded over the likes of even Apple's latest A19 Pro chipset, but benchmarks reflect the lead it has on other flagship chips right now.

Geekbench 6 (multi-core)

OnePlus 15: 11,134
Oppo Find X9 Pro: 8,875
Google Pixel 10 Pro XL: 5,123
Samsung Galaxy S25 Ultra: 9,413
Honor Magic 7 Pro: 9,180
Apple iPhone 17 Pro Max: 9,450
OnePlus 13: 9,482

GFX Manhattan 3.1

OnePlus 15: 60fps
Oppo Find X9 Pro: 60fps
Google Pixel 10 Pro XL: 111fps
Samsung Galaxy S25 Ultra: 120fps
Honor Magic 7 Pro: 120fps
Apple iPhone 17 Pro Max: 60fps (Metal)
OnePlus 13: 119fps

Battery life

OnePlus 15: 26 hours, 26 minutes
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, 37 minutes
OnePlus 13: 15 hours, 27 minutes

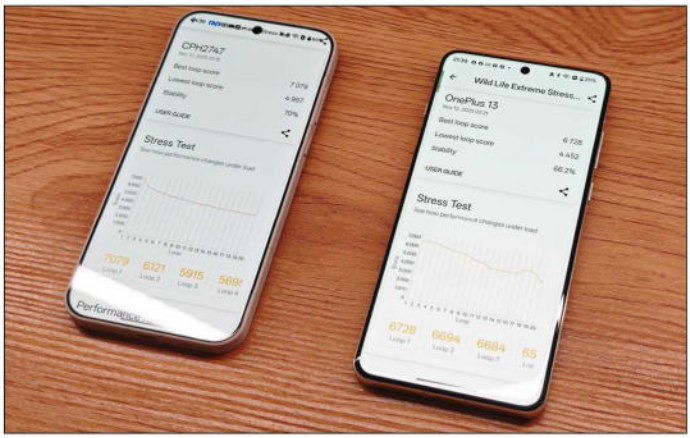
Charge in 30 minutes

OnePlus 15: 75%
Oppo Find X9 Pro: 50%
Google Pixel 10 Pro XL: 38%
Samsung Galaxy S25 Ultra: 70%
Honor Magic 7 Pro: 94%
Apple iPhone 17 Pro Max: 71%
OnePlus 13: 95%

Geekbench 6 multi-core scores highlight around 20 percent better CPU performance, compared to Snapdragon 8 Elite-powered (like the OnePlus 13), Dimensity 9500-powered (like the Oppo Find X9 Pro), and A19 Pro-powered (like the iPhone 17 Pro) phones. The company also claims the CPU is 35

percent more power efficient, too.

OnePlus isn't relying solely on Qualcomm's hard work to render the 15 a powerhouse, though. Beyond existing RAM expansion – where you can reallocate storage as extra memory within the phone's settings – those that stump up for the top-tier 16GB RAM model don't just get regular LPDDR5X RAM, but LPDDR5X 'Ultra+' RAM.



In 'Balanced' mode, using 3DMark's Wild Life Extreme stress test, the OnePlus 15's performance score dropped by approximately 30 percent over the course of the 20 minutes of successive runs.

OnePlus says it's the "fastest RAM available in the mobile industry right now," and with a data transfer speed of around 10,667Mbps, that's approximately double what's possible with RAM inside last-gen's Snapdragon 8 Elite-powered phones, which support RAM at up to 5,600Mbps.

There are a number of other underlying technologies designed to help further the OnePlus 15's performance lead, which were hard to empirically test, but feel worth mentioning, if only to convey how deep the company has gone on optimisation for this generation of flagship.

OnePlus's own CPU scheduler replaces Android's native CFS (Completely Fair Scheduler) by prioritising certain processes depending on the task at hand. The company claims its solution results in almost 23 percent fewer instructions needing to be sent to the CPU for a given task, which means faster processing and less power drain.

As well as a faster display and a dedicated chip to support the phone's outlandish touch response rate, OnePlus has also added its own G2 Wi-Fi chip, made to enhance network performance when dealing with weak connectivity and generally improve connection stability.

While the Snapdragon's Adreno GPU promises 23 percent better graphical performance, with 20 percent better power efficiency, OnePlus's HyperRendering tech promises 80 percent more efficient frame generation on top. Meanwhile, custom code that forms part of the company's OP Gaming Core means the phone is equipped to deliver sustained, stable 120fps gameplay for up to an hour.

With all these impressive-sounding technologies, claims and that COD Mobile winning streak still bouncing around in my mind, I was curious how the OnePlus 15 would handle sustained performance. Unlike Redmagic's latest offerings, OnePlus's newest lacks any sort of active cooling solution, and actually packs a vapour chamber (VC) that's over 40 percent smaller than the one inside the OnePlus 13, so I had my concerns.

In 'Balanced' mode, using 3DMark's Wild Life Extreme stress test, the OnePlus 15's performance score dropped by approximately 30 percent over the course of the 20 minutes of successive runs.

By comparison, the OnePlus 13's performance dropped by 34 percent under the same conditions, suggesting that despite its larger vapour chamber, the use of cutting-edge materials inside the 15's VC – like white graphite and aerogel – paired with the more efficient chipset and the various technologies under the new OP Gaming Core, still grants it an edge where sustained performance is concerned.

Popular titles like Zenless Zone Zero default to 'High' graphical settings on the 15, while Call of Duty Mobile launches with 'Very High' graphics enabled, on top of that 165fps peak possible frame rate.

CAMERAS

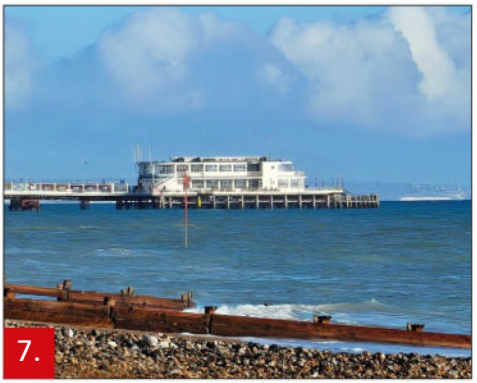
One cloud that's been hanging over the OnePlus 15's head in the run-up to launch has been concerns over camera performance. While it's true that, similarly to their vapour chambers, the 15 uses smaller 50Mp sensors compared to the OnePlus 13 – all with smaller apertures to boot – the resultant images are actually just as good, and depending on your tastes, better in some cases.

You could argue that the OnePlus 13 delivered a more honest photographic experience than most of the best camera phones around its launch. In my OnePlus 13 camera review, I attributed this to the company's Hasselblad partnership and the more subtle and authentically intended image processing that came as part of that.

With the OnePlus 15, that partnership is no more, and in its place, OnePlus has pivoted to fully embrace in-house imaging technologies, which it collectively calls the DetailMax Engine.

While the differences will generally come down to personal taste, rather than which offers the superior image, I prefer the processing decisions the OnePlus 15 makes over its predecessor. Photos appear more processed on the company's latest phone, and in low light, fine detail might appear a little softer, but the trade-off is less noise, better dynamic range and nicer colour reproduction.

We'll start off our series of test photos of the same scene taken with the 0.6x zoom (**1.**), 1x zoom (**2.**) and 2x zoom (**3.**): continued overleaf…



…5x zoom (**4.**), 7x zoom (**5.**)10x zoom (**6.**), 20x zoom (**7.**), 30x zoom (**8.**) and 60x zoom (**9.**).

Next up we have the same scene with 120x zoom with AI off…

…and 120x zoom with AI on.

Photos appear more processed, and in low light, fine detail might appear a little softer, but the trade-off is less noise, better dynamic range and nicer colour reproduction.

Shots appear more vibrant than what you'd expect from the OnePlus 13.

The Clear Burst feature has been improved, moving from six to 10 shots per second between generations, while also delivering better dynamic range than Classic Burst can render.

An example of the phone's Classic Burst feature.

The new Custom 32Mp IMX709 selfie snapper uses a new RGBW ('W' for white) pixel array, for 60 percent better light sensitivity compared to the OnePlus 13. Here's an example of a OnePlus 15 selfie…

…and here's a selfie taken on the OnePlus 13.

Shots appear more vibrant than what you'd expect from the OnePlus 13, and portrait capture demonstrates better edge detection and subject separation; even if that heavier processing means more pronounced brightening in the shadows and gentler contrast.

Just as Apple did a few years back, and Oppo has done with its latest Find X9 series, the OnePlus 15 can now capture higher resolution stills as standard, at 26Mp, instead of 12Mp, meaning more detail in every shot (but larger file sizes) too.

The Clear Burst feature has been improved as well, moving from six to 10 shots per second between generations, while also delivering better dynamic range than Classic Burst can render (which shoots more photos per second, but has less data to process with each shot, as a result).

Not only does the new Custom 32Mp IMX709 selfie snapper boast autofocus, but it also uses a new RGBW ('W' for white) pixel array, for 60 percent better light sensitivity compared to the OnePlus 13. The most tangible benefit I found here was better colour reproduction, especially with green tones; something the OnePlus 13's camera system struggled with.

Despite a different sensor set-up, the 15 also gains from the same impressive new 4K 120fps Dolby Vision video capture as the Find X9 and Realme GT 8 Pro, too. Image quality within video capture is generally excellent, although the dynamic range appears a little narrower compared to still photography, and image stabilisation can sometimes be a little 'sticky', something OnePlus could likely iron out with a software update.

While OnePlus wouldn't be my go-to brand for top-tier videography, the trickle of new, more high-end video features, such as LOG recording with LUT-monitoring (i.e. it's not baked in), helps its case in this department.

BATTERY LIFE & CHARGING

For a perfectly reasonably proportioned and weighted flagship, the fact that the OnePlus 15 plays host to a 7,300mAh battery seems almost laughable. Strides in battery density and silicon carbon (Si-C) tech, however, have meant larger capacities have started to appear in newer phones without adding bulk.

The OnePlus 13 already delivered superb longevity, but the 15 takes things up a notch, only really outdone but the even larger 7,500mAh offering inside the Find X9 Pro.

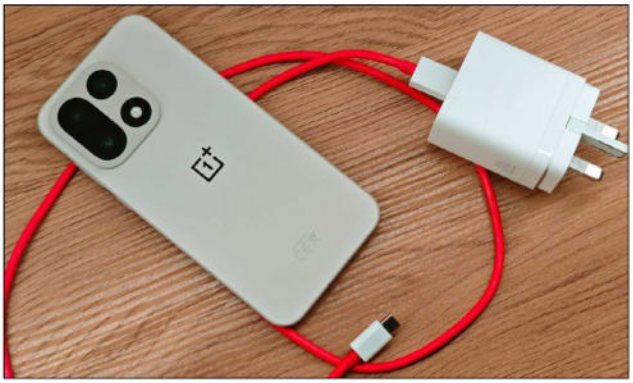
Pair such a big power pack with the phone's advanced performance, cooling, fast display and the option of

bypass charging, and it seems OnePlus was dead-set on making the most competitive flagship phone for gaming on the market, without designing an outright gaming phone.

As you might expect, in artificial tests, the OnePlus 15's Work 3.0 battery score of 26 hours and 26 minutes is head and shoulders above almost every other phone out there (the Find X9 Pro notwithstanding), and while real-world testing cuts that figure down, it's still easily the longest-lasting flagship I've ever reviewed.

The fact that it surpassed 16.5 hours of screen-on time per charge as I lived with it was, frankly, mind-blowing, and while the Oppo has the potential to last a fraction longer, you have what could potentially operate as a three-day phone with considerate use. It can comfortably run for two days per charge, even with downloading large files, hours of streaming video and some high-intensity gaming.

OnePlus being OnePlus, you also get rapid 120-watt wired charging that, provided you have a compatible SuperVOOC charger (there isn't one in the box), promises to refill the phone's huge tank to 100 percent in just 39 minutes. I never quite hit that particular number, but with Smart Rapid Charging enabled, despite some noticeable warmth, the phone still charged fully in only 45 minutes (47 with SRC turned off). Unreal for such a large capacity battery.



OnePlus being OnePlus, you also get rapid 120-watt wired charging that, provided you have a compatible SuperVOOC charger (there isn't one in the box), promises to refill the phone's huge tank to 100 percent in just 39 minutes.

Fifty-watt AirVOOC wireless charging promises 50 percent charge in that same time frame, and OnePlus isn't gate-keeping fast charging improvements behind its own power solutions, with improved support for PD charging too, now up to 36 watts.

If you're worried about degradation, even with faster charging than its predecessor, OnePlus also says it will retain 80 percent

of its original charge after four years of use, and that the battery has been tested to function in temperatures as low as -20°C, for added peace of mind.

Flux Themes, which were introduced with OxygenOS 15, appear here in their new 2.0 incarnation.

SOFTWARE & AI

According to OnePlus, OxygenOS 16 – which the OnePlus 15 runs out of the box – is one of the biggest upgrades to the company's mobile user experience in years.

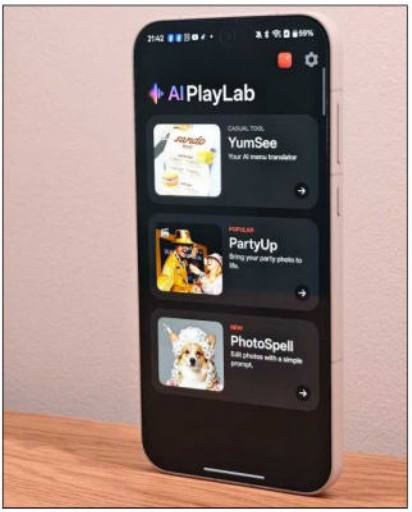
Visually, while everything looks familiar to OxygenOS 15, there are a number of visual tweaks and layout changes which elevate OnePlus's already polished user experience.

New Illuminance Animations (read: fancier UI animations) are apparent when swiping around; there are some decidedly Liquid Glass-inspired elements (such as the lock screen PIN entry), and the experimental new Predictive Back Gesture does a better job of telegraphing where you'll end up when you swipe back out of a particular screen than standard Android.

Flux Themes, which were introduced with OxygenOS 15, appear here in their new 2.0 incarnation, which offers more customisation and better effects on your lock screen (with motion wallpapers and depth-aware UI elements, like the clock).

The Plus Mind-powered Mind Space – introduced earlier in 2025 – acts as a store for screenshots and voice memos, which OnePlus's AI processing can then summarise, extract key information from, and even proactively suggest things like calendar entries, based on things like an event poster you might have just captured.

The main upgrade with OxygenOS 16 is Google Gemini integration, meaning you can now ask Google's assistant to interpret and reference data stored within Mind Space, all with your voice.



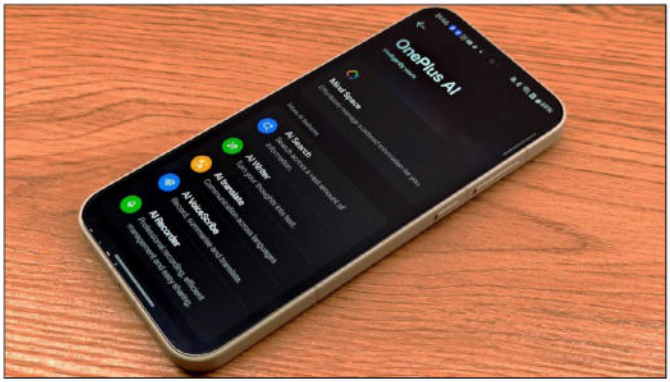
PlayLab's PhotoSpell proved great at turning my semantic instructions into edits on a chosen image.

It's a nice upgrade to a burgeoning part of OnePlus's AI feature set, and while I'm waiting for a way to easily transfer content saved within Mind Space to at least other OnePlus devices before embracing the feature wholeheartedly, it has the potential to be a real boon when it comes to planning and productivity.

I already think OnePlus's approach to AI-powered tools on mobile is one of the most mindful and genuinely helpful out there. Tools surface dynamically relative to what you're doing on-screen, and the focus on assistive features only continues to grow.

As well as summarising notes and rewording copy, AI Writer can now generate charts and even mind maps based on input data. The AI Scan app can detect presentation slides via the camera (even when viewed off-angle) and arrange them in a PDF, while AI PlayLab is a new dedicated app that lets users trial some of the company's more experimental AI features.

Similar to the Pixel 10 Pro series (in the US at least), PlayLab's PhotoSpell proved great at turning my semantic instructions into edits on a chosen image, while YumSee adds Google Lens-like translation and currency



OnePlus's approach to AI-powered tools on mobile is one of the most mindful and genuinely helpful out there.

AI Portrait Glow: 0 percent (left), 100 percent (right).

conversion for foreign language restaurant menus (genuinely handy, especially if you travel a lot).

PartyUp is the most unusual of PlayLab's features, essentially letting you create live photos and videos from stills, animating people in-frame to suddenly cheer or wave. The already-impressive AI toolset within OxygenOS's native Photos app gains a feature called AI Portrait Glow, which adds adjustable virtual lighting to portrait shots, so you can reimagine an image, with varying degrees of believability, in testing.

Baked-in video editing controls are also now part of the equation, furthering the OnePlus 15's potential as a creative tool, letting you add text, music, trim clips and more.

The company's ongoing promise of four years of OS updates and six years of security updates still lags behind the likes of Apple, Google and Samsung (who all offer 6 to 7 years of both), but should be long enough for most users, and feels fair for the price.

VERDICT

There seemed to be some concern amongst the OnePlus die-hards in the run-up to launch about the smaller camera sensors and haptic motor, a loss of identity within OxygenOS, and inferior hardware compared to sister brand Oppo's Find X9 Pro, but the reality is a broadly predictable but welcome new entry to the flagship phone space.

The OnePlus 15 is the fastest phone out there right now.

International OnePlus 13 owners might feel a little jilted with the sub-year release turnaround, but while the data highlights the OnePlus 15's advantages over its predecessor, it's not a clean sweep (think better bass from the loudspeakers, retention of the physical alert slider, a larger display, and so on).

If it's power you want, this is the phone for you. The OnePlus 15 was, quite literally, designed in a lab to deliver the fastest performance of any OnePlus phone ever, and likely the best performance of any phone on the market right now. From the 8 Elite Gen 5 chip, new vapour chamber tech, to that rapid Ultra+ RAM and the display's new 165Hz peak, speed is at the heart of the OnePlus 15.

OxygenOS 16 continues to draw a lot of inspiration from iOS, but nothing feels tacked on. The implementation of new features – especially AI-backed tools – is considered and genuinely helpful, while the look and feel has become even more premium.

As I said before, despite the hardware change, the photographic experience on the OnePlus 15 isn't outright better or worse than its predecessor; it's just different, although new shooting and editing options do render it a more powerful creative tool, and I'm a fan of the look of shots coming out of the phone's new DetailMax Engine.

For most, this is a no-holds-barred all-rounder in the current flagship space that'll likely impress anyone, but especially gamers. If you have concerns over its camera prowess, Oppo's latest Find X9 Pro delivers an otherwise similar user experience, with beefier optics.

The usual suspects from Apple, Google and Samsung are all there too, but what they offer in more robust product support, their latest phones come with compromises in one area or another that might be too big to

ignore. That's especially true for battery longevity and charging performance, where OnePlus remains among the best in the business. Alex Walker-Todd

SPECIFICATIONS

- 6.78-inch (2,772x1,272; 450ppi) LTPO AMOLED, 1B colours, 165Hz, PWM, Dolby Vision, HDR10+, HDR Vivid, 800 nits (typ), 1,800 nits (HBM) display
- Android 16, OxygenOS 16
- Qualcomm SM8850-AC Snapdragon 8 Elite Gen 5 (3nm)
- Octa-core (2 x4.6GHz Oryon V3 Phoenix L, 6x 3.62GHz Oryon V3 Phoenix M) CPU
- Adreno 840 GPU
- No card slot
- 12GB/16GB RAM
- 256GB/512GB/1TB storage
- Three rear-facing cameras: 50Mp, f/1.8, 24mm (wide), 1/1.56-inch, 1.0µm, multi-directional PDAF, OIS; 50Mp, f/2.8, 80mm (periscope telephoto), 1/2.76-inch, 0.64µm, 3.5x optical zoom, PDAF, OIS; 50Mp, f/2.0, 16mm, 116-degree (ultrawide), 1/2.88-inch, 0.61µm, PDAF
- Selfie camera: 32Mp, f/2.4, 21mm (wide), 1/2.74-inch, 0.8µm, AF
- Stereo speakers
- No 3.5mm audio jack
- Wi-Fi 802.11 a/b/g/n/ac/6/7, dual or tri-band, Wi-Fi Direct
- Bluetooth 6.0, A2DP, LE, aptX HD, aptX Adaptive, LHDC 5
- GPS (L1+L5), GLONASS (G1), BDS (B1I+B1c+B2a), GALILEO (E1+E5a), QZSS (L1+L5), NavIC (L5)
- NFC
- USB Type-C 3.2, OTG
- Fingerprint (under display, ultrasonic)
- Non-removable 7,300mAh battery
- 161.4x76.7x8.1mm
- 211g (Sand Storm), 215g (Ultra Violet, Infinity Black)

Motorola Edge 70

Price when reviewed: From £699 ★★★½☆

2025 has been the year of the ultra-slim phone. While Samsung, Honor and Oppo have been battling it out to make the world's thinnest foldable, a new category of regular devices has also emerged.

Samsung was first to the party in May, yet its Galaxy S25 Edge came with major camera and battery life trade-offs, despite retaining a premium price tag.

September's iPhone Air was a little more affordable, but suffered from the same hardware compromises, making it feel like a foolish buy when compared to the regular iPhone 17.

Could it be third time lucky in the form of the Motorola Edge 70? Despite its name, the phone is dramatically different to its predecessor, yet retains a distinctive design, and crucially,

a decent-sized battery. My first day or so of use did little to dampen my enthusiasm, but what about nearly two weeks? Here are my in-depth thoughts on the Motorola Edge 70.

DESIGN

I love the Edge 70's design. It manages to be impressively thin and light, without sacrificing Motorola's signature aesthetic and great build quality.

At 5.99mm, it's significantly thicker than both the iPhone Air (5.6mm) and Galaxy S25 Edge (5.8mm). Having tested both of those devices, it's something I noticed instantly, though it's still a different species to most phones, which regularly exceed 8mm.

Of course, the rear camera bump protrudes significantly further, but Motorola has made the transition seamless. Rather than a separate module, it's more integrated with the back of the phone than Apple or Samsung's designs.

However, what impresses me the most is its weight – or lack thereof. The Edge 70 clocks in at just 159g, making it one of the lightest phones on the market. It's a refreshing change when coming from phones in excess of 200g, and one that you'll instantly notice.

The unique textured design is another selling point. Instead of the glass that's most common on flagships, Motorola has opted for silicone, adding a finish that it claims is inspired by nylon. I don't know about that, but it does feel very pleasant to use.

And crucially, it adds lots of grip to what would otherwise be a slippery phone, negating the need for a case. Motorola supplies one in the box, but it makes the Edge 70 look ten times uglier. Unless you really want its Qi2 magnets (there aren't any built into the phone), I'd highly recommend going case-free.

I'd go as far as to say that the Edge 70 is one of the best-looking phones you can buy right now, and the Pantone-inspired colour choices

At 5.99mm, the Edge 70 is significantly thicker than both the iPhone Air (5.6mm) and Galaxy S25 Edge (5.8mm).

play a big role in that. I particularly like the earthy green tones of my 'Bronze Green' model, but you can opt for a lighter green 'Lily Pad' or darker 'Gadget Grey'. Ridiculous naming aside, it's a fun selection, with each option having a corresponding accent colour that extends around the camera lenses and the dedicated AI button.

Aside from that, there's nothing much to report around the aluminium frame. The power and volume controls are in their usual position on the right side when in portrait orientation, while the USB-C port (it's just about thick enough for one) is joined by the speaker grille and SIM tray on the bottom.

However, these elements all play a role in the Edge 70's superb durability credentials. The tough build is enough for it to receive military-grade MIL-STD-810H compliance, verifying its ability to withstand harsh environmental conditions. A mild UK autumn isn't exactly what I'd call 'harsh', but it survived a few bumps and drops without any signs of damage.

The phone also boasts both IP68 and IP69 ratings, meaning it can handle both submersion in up to 1.5m of freshwater and exposure to high-pressure and -temperature water jets. That's on top of full dust protection, making for a very impressive combination.

DISPLAY

I'm a big fan of the Edge 70's display. It's something most mid-range and flagship phones get right these days, but undoubtedly still a key strength of Motorola's phone.

A 6.7-inch screen, it offers a fairly typical 2,712x1,220 resolution (446 pixels per inch), which ensures that clarity and detail remain excellent. It's a pOLED panel, allowing for a thinner and more durable design while retaining all the benefits of regular OLED, including those rich, vibrant colours and deep blacks.

Motorola claims that the Edge

We're big fans of the Edge 70's display.

70 can hit a peak brightness of 4500 nits, which surpasses both the iPhone Air (3,000 nits) and Galaxy S25 Edge (2,600 nits). While the maximum figure I recorded at home of 493 nits isn't particularly impressive, outdoor visibility (including bright sunlight) is excellent, which is the most important thing.

However, there are two small compromises compared to the very best displays in the business. Firstly, there's no LTPO tech, meaning the auto-adjusting refresh rate is limited to a range of 60-120Hz. You still get the benefits of the silky-smooth scrolling and transitions, just without the option to drop down to 1Hz when not required and conserve battery life.

The under-display fingerprint scanner is also optical rather than ultrasonic, although I can't say I noticed. It was fast and reliable throughout my testing, and secure enough to be used to log into sensitive apps and authenticate payments.

Audio quality is a pleasant surprise. The Edge 70 uses the common combination of a single downward-firing speaker and earpiece for a stereo set-up, but it produces impressively punchy sound.

Equally adept at music, podcasts or social media videos, it offers strong clarity and a nice depth to the sound, making it ideal for casual listening. It also gets far louder than most phones, though the tinny sound and distortion at high volumes mean it's not worth going that far.

PERFORMANCE

Before testing the Edge 70, performance was the area I was most concerned about. While the iPhone Air and Galaxy S25 have compromises in many areas, performance isn't one of them. How would the Edge 70's decidedly mid-range Snapdragon 7 Gen 4 hold up?

Very well, as it turns out. I'm not going to pretend that the phone's performance blew me away, but it was fast enough to handle all everyday tasks with relative ease. The 12GB of on-board RAM certainly helped.

During my time with the phone, my typical usage involved plenty of web browsing, social media and YouTube videos, plus messaging apps, photography and navigation. Ninety nine percent of the time, it was a smooth and reliable experience, even when multitasking or quickly switching between apps.

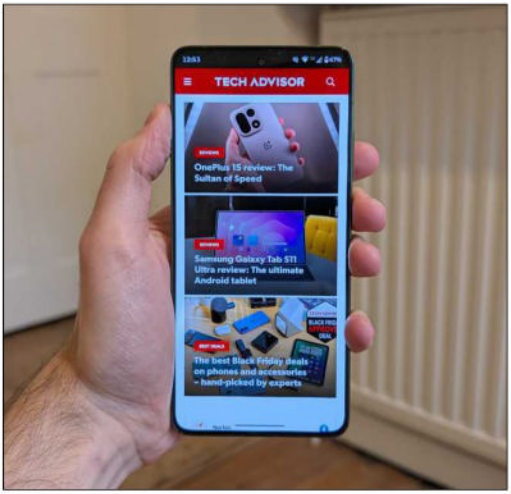
However, there were occasional hesitations and stutters from time to time. They didn't affect the usability of the Edge 70 in any significant way, but

it means I'd guard against using the phone for demanding workloads such as complex apps or serious gaming.

I doubt you're buying a super-thin handset for that anyway, though. The bottom line is that performance on the Edge 70 shouldn't be a concern, even if it isn't absolutely top tier.

The only model available in the UK offers a generous 512GB of storage. That's good news, because there's no option to expand via a microSD card.

There are also no dual physical SIM card slots, so if you want two numbers on the Edge 70, you'll have to opt for an eSIM. And while Wi-Fi 6e and Bluetooth 5.4 aren't quite at the cutting edge of connectivity, they're plenty good enough for years to come.



During testing, we found using the phone was a smooth and reliable experience, even when multitasking or quickly switching between apps.

Geekbench 6 (multi-core)

Motorola Edge 70: 4,028
Apple iPhone Air: 9,492
Samsung Galaxy S25 Edge: 9,338
Xiaomi 15T Pro: 7,996
OnePlus 13R: 6,850
Honor 400 Pro: 6,445
Google Pixel 10: 5,809

GFX Manhattan 3.1

Motorola Edge 70: 80fps
Apple iPhone Air: 60fps (Metal)
Samsung Galaxy S25 Edge: 120fps
Xiaomi 15T Pro: 112fps
OnePlus 13R: 120fps
Honor 400 Pro: 121fps
Google Pixel 10: 117fps

Battery life

Motorola Edge 70: 11 hours, 2 minutes
Samsung Galaxy S25 Edge: 12 hours, 18 minutes
Xiaomi 15T Pro: 16 hours, 39 minutes
OnePlus 13R: 18 hours, 17 minutes
Honor 400 Pro: 14 hours, 53 minutes
Google Pixel 10: 14 hours, 55 minutes

Charge in 30 minutes

Motorola Edge 70: 39%
Apple iPhone Air: 51%

Samsung Galaxy S25 Edge: 53%
Xiaomi 15T Pro: 80%
OnePlus 13R: 73%
Honor 400 Pro: 85%
Google Pixel 10: 56%

CAMERAS

Just like the other ultra-slim phones, the Edge 70 has made clear compromises when it comes to the cameras.

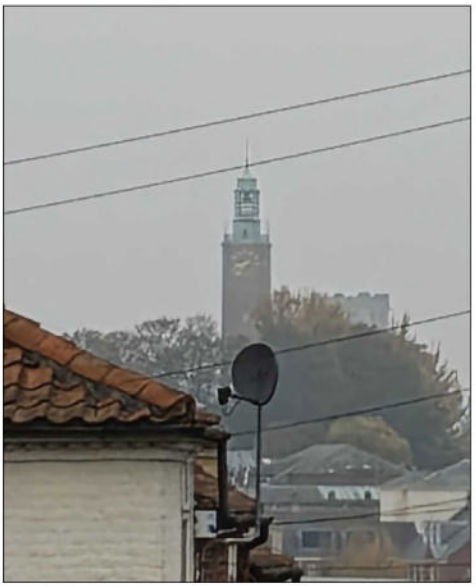
The most obvious one is the lack of a telephoto lens, meaning there's no possibility of optical zoom photography. The digital equivalent is predictably underwhelming, with a sharp decline in detail and dynamic range once you go beyond 2x, which is simply a cropped version of the 1x photo. It speaks volumes that Motorola limits digital zoom to 20x, at which point the image has become a blurry mess.

At the other end of the scale, ultrawide photos benefit from a dedicated 50Mp sensor, which enables a 120-degree field of view. Results are much more in keeping with the main lens, so you can safely switch between the lenses without worrying too much.

Overall, the 50Mp main camera is a very decent mid-range lens, even if it can't compete with the best camera phones around.

In good lighting, the vibrant colour scheme and accurate exposure come

We'll start of our test shots of the same scene taken using the 0.5x (**1.**) and 1x zoom (**2.**)…



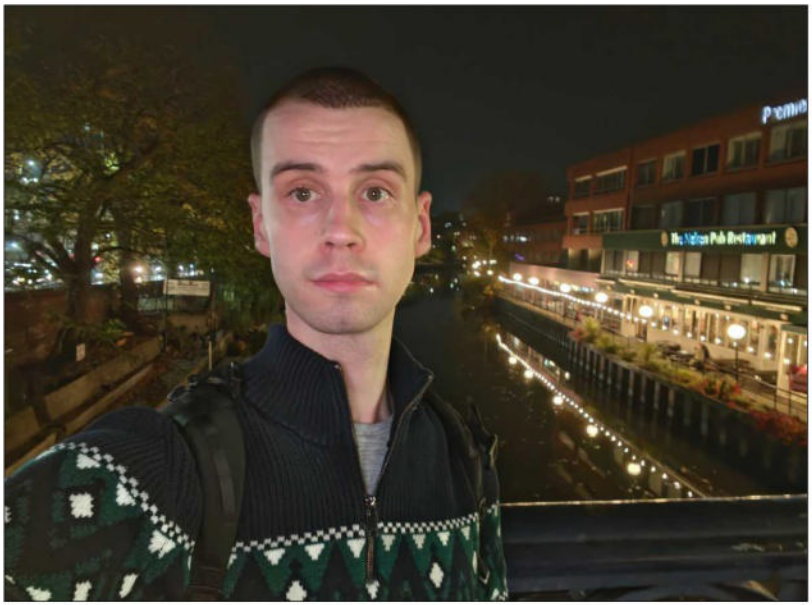
…2x (**3.**) and 20x zoom (**4.**).

The Edge 70 struggles a lot more in low-light conditions.

Dynamic range is generally good, making it equally adept at street photography and landscapes.

The Edge 70 is very adept at portrait photography, delivering an attractive background blur and generally accurate edge detection.

In low-light conditions, images are far better than the usual night-time selfies.



to the fore, producing an image which is pleasing to the eye, if a little unrealistic. Dynamic range is generally good, making it equally adept at street photography and landscapes. Minimal shutter lag allows you to quickly snap a well-exposed photo that's in focus most of the time, which can't be said for all phones.

It's also very adept at portrait photography, delivering an attractive background blur and generally accurate edge detection. Most phones use the telephoto lens for portraits, so the results without it here are impressive.

The Edge 70 struggles a lot more in low-light conditions, though, especially where there are elements of light and dark in the same photo. Individual leaves on trees become a homogenous blob, while the brightening of shadows can often look artificial.

However, the front-facing 50Mp camera has a trick to combat this. Whenever you go to take a selfie in low-light conditions, a ring around your face automatically lights up as if you had an external light source. The resulting images are far better than the usual night-time selfies, so I can see other companies copying Motorola's approach.

During the day, it's a bit more hit-and-miss, with backgrounds often ending up over- or underexposed. You can get really good selfies, but it requires more patience.

The Edge 70 offers video at up to 4K 60fps, though the default 1080p at 30fps is the sweet spot between quality and storage space for most people. Optical image stabilisation (OIS) on the main lens ensures footage remains steady, though it lacks the colour accuracy and detail of photos. If you want a great ultra-slim phone for video, the iPhone Air is your best bet.

BATTERY LIFE & CHARGING

Motorola has defied expectations by equipping the Edge 70 with a very competitive 4,800mAh battery.

How? By opting for a silicon-carbon (Si/C) cell, which offers a greater energy density, allowing for the same capacity within a smaller total area.

We've seen phones with a similar-sized battery disappoint when it comes to battery life, so that's no guarantee of good stamina, but Motorola has undoubtedly delivered.

Rather than struggle to make it through a whole day, the Edge 70 consistently made it to the end of my day with charge to spare. While working from home, I could extend that to two full days, equating to around seven hours of screen-on time. Not bad at all.

However, our usual PCMark battery test, which simulates real-world tasks at around 200 nits of brightness, doesn't reflect that. The Edge 70's score of 11 hours and 2 minutes is worse than the Galaxy S25 Edge (12 hours and 18 minutes), but that doesn't tally with my experience at all.

Ultimately, battery life is undoubtedly a strength of the Edge 70, which is more than can be said for the iPhone Air or Galaxy S25 Edge.

Charging speeds are also very competitive, with support for 68-watt wired speeds. As usual, no charger is included in the box, and the 67-watt charger I usually test phones with wouldn't power it up for some reason. With a 65-watt laptop one, the phone went from 0- to 39 percent in 30 minutes, with a full charge taking just over an hour and a half, but I know the Edge 70 can do much better than that.

During testing, the Edge 70 consistently made it to the end of the day with charge to spare.

There's also 15-watt Qi wireless charging, while attaching the included case enables compatibility with MagSafe and Pixelsnap magnetic accessories.

SOFTWARE & AI

Historically, the company's approach to Android has been a very light touch, deviating only slightly from the experience on Pixel phones. As a result, it's been a key strength of Motorola's phones over the years.

However, what began as a gradual creep of bloatware has become a full-blown invasion. After setting up the phone, I was staggered by the volume and variety of extra pre-installed apps that I had no say over.

Motorola's own selection of apps is bad enough. I counted over a dozen, plus the Perplexity AI assistant that it uses for generative AI tools. I have no practical use for any of these.

Then there are the apps that you'd rather not have pre-installed but might be interested in using. I'm talking about the likes of Facebook, TikTok, Pinterest and LinkedIn – I'd prefer to choose myself whether they're installed, but they're not the most egregious.

Software used to be one of the key strengths of Motorola's phones. On the Edge 70, it's the device's most high-profile weakness.

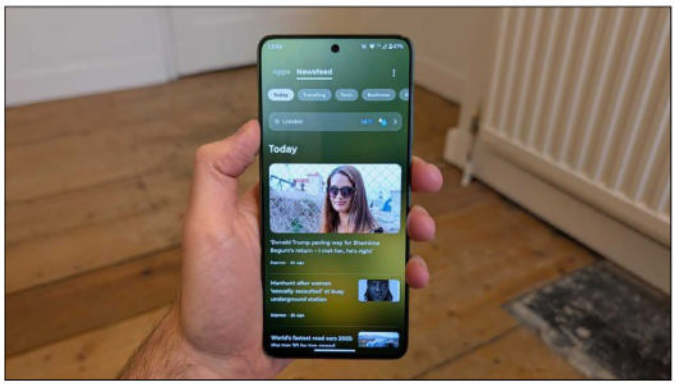
It's a different story when it comes to the avalanche of annoying games, though. I seriously can't think of anyone who would want Toon Blast, Tile Explorer, Solitaire and Vita Mahjong on their phones. If you do, simply download it yourself – that's the whole point of the Play Store!

By default, the 'Google' and 'Moto' folders in the app drawer are joined by a 'Games' one, which houses the titles mentioned, but also acts as a storefront for yet more bloatware. There's even the option to play '2048' games without downloading anything – thanks so much for your generosity, Motorola.

The app drawer is home to yet more baffling decisions. I enjoy the row of suggested apps at the top on most phones, but here, the fourth slot is used to advertise yet more apps I have no use for.

Next to it is a 'Newsfeed', which seems to almost exclusively surface articles from the tabloid press documenting the worst of humanity.

Then there's the Live Lock Screen, which tries to fix a feature which wasn't broken at all. Who wants to see the



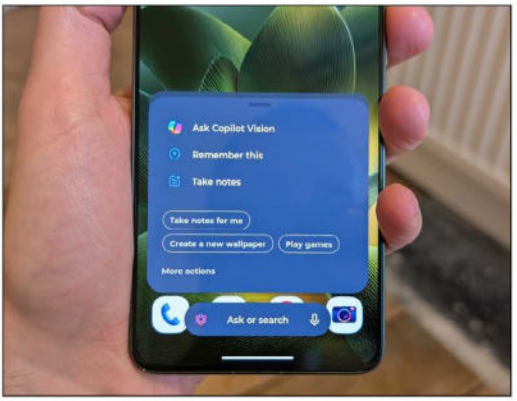
A 'Newsfeed', which seems to almost exclusively surface articles from the tabloid press documenting the worst of humanity.

time and your notifications when you can scroll between meaningless articles and overt adverts? It beggars belief. Thankfully, all the bloatware can be uninstalled and the annoying features turned off. But it shouldn't have to be this way, and it adds lots of extra time onto my usual one-hour set-up process.

Motorola's AI efforts aren't extensive and include variations of features we've seen many times before. Alongside the fun but ultimately limited generated images and playlists, there are three main tools: 'Take notes' (record, transcribe and summarise audio), 'Remember this' (save 'memories' for recall later), and 'Update me' (notification summaries). All three seem to work well and could be useful, but to call them game-changing would be a massive exaggeration.

By default, Moto AI uses its integration with Perplexity for its AI virtual assistant, then Copilot Live for real-time conversations. Both work pretty well, but you can also access Gemini and Gemini Live via a long-press of the home button, and that's still my personal preference.

The general software experience is strong, with interesting widgets and themes, an intuitive quick settings panel and slick multitasking features. But it's



Moto AI uses its integration with Perplexity for its AI virtual assistant, then Copilot Live for real-time conversations.

totally undermined by all the bloatware and ads being shoved in your face.

Software used to be one of the key strengths of Motorola's phones. On the Edge 70, it's the device's most high-profile weakness.

In terms of support, Motorola has committed to four years of OS updates and six years of security patches. That's fairly typical for a mid-range phone in 2025, though it's worth noting that the cheaper Pixel 9a and Galaxy S25 FE offer seven years of both.

VERDICT

Probably not, though it is the best example of an ultra-slim phone so far. The Edge 70 combines that thin and light chassis with strong battery life,

immediately raising it above the iPhone Air and Galaxy S25 FE. Its design is one of the best on any phone, with great aesthetics and top-tier durability.

While the cameras aren't quite top tier, you can get some excellent results from both the main and selfie lenses. However, the lack of a telephoto lens means zoom photography is awful.

But the big surprise is the poor software experience. Motorola's once-slick take on Android has become a bloated mess that's full of useless pre-installed apps and ads. Meanwhile, the commitment to only four years of OS upgrades falls behind the likes of Apple, Samsung and Google.

The Edge 70 gets a lot right, including a more affordable price tag than rivals, but it's a phone I simply can't recommend. Anyron Copeman

SPECIFICATIONS

- 6.7-inch (2,712x1,220; 446ppi) P-OLED, 1B colours, 120Hz, PWM, HDR10+, 4,500 nits (peak) display
- Android 16, up to 4 major Android upgrades
- Qualcomm SM7750-AB Snapdragon 7 Gen 4 (4nm) processor
- Octa-core (1x 2.8GHz Cortex-720, 4x 2.4GHz Cortex-720, 3x 1.8GHz Cortex-520) CPU
- Adreno 722 GPU
- No card slot
- 12GB RAM
- 256GB/512GB storage
- Two rear-facing cameras: 50Mp, f/1.8, 24mm (wide), 1/1.56-inch, 1.0µm, multi-directional PDAF, OIS; 50Mp, f/2.0, 12mm, 120-degree (ultrawide), 1/2.76-inch, 0.64µm, PDAF
- Selfie camera: 50Mp, f/2.0, (wide), 0.64µm
- Stereo speakers
- No 3.5mm audio jack
- Wi-Fi 802.11 a/b/g/n/ac/6e, dual-band or tri-band
- Bluetooth 5.4, A2DP, LE
- GPS, GALILEO, GLONASS, BDS, QZSS
- NFC
- USB Type-C 2.0, OTG
- Fingerprint (under display, optical)
- Non-removable 4,800mAh battery
- 159.9x74x6mm
- 159g

Samsung Galaxy Tab A11

Price when reviewed: From £149 ★★★★½

While so much tech is refreshed every year, Samsung waited a little longer to launch a new generation of budget Android tablet. The Galaxy Tab A11 is here at last though, aiming to be the best value tablet money can buy.

It's worth pointing out that Samsung decided to skip the Tab A10 name, perhaps because of the two-year gap since the A9 series launched. The Galaxy Tab A9 was one of our favourite cheap tablets of all time, so the Tab A11 has big shoes to fill.

While the Galaxy Tab A11 – kindly provided for review by AO – might be impossible to tell apart from the Tab A9 by simply looking at it, it does come with some upgrades and even a lower price.

When you put this all together, along with the fact that small budget tablets are hard to come by these days, the Tab A11 is a winner.

DESIGN

There's oddly little to say about the Galaxy Tab A11 design and that's because Samsung has literally used the A9's chassis. It's identical down to every millimetre, button, port and bezel.

We tested the Navy Blue Tab A11.

You name it, it's visually the same. This new model is a tiny bit heavier, but we're talking 3- to 4g, depending on whether you choose Wi-Fi or LTE, so not an amount you'd notice.

The only other difference I can see here is that the Tab A9 came in a nice Navy Blue colour – which I tested – but that's not available in the Tab 11. There are only two colourways on sale.

I've been testing the Grey option (previously called Graphite) but there's also Silver if you prefer.

The repurposed design makes it feel a tad dated but it's still a stylish little tablet and at this price, style isn't often high up the priority list for manufacturers.

I'd say the best thing about the Galaxy Tab A11's design is how compact it is. At just 8mm and 335g, this thing will go everywhere with you without being a hindrance. In fact, I can even fit it in some of my (men's) trouser pockets.

If you're looking for a cheap, compact, portable Android tablet, then this is it.

There's no IP rating for dust or water resistance, but we wouldn't expect that in a budget tablet. Fortunately, the

The best thing about the design is how compact it is.

device feels rather more premium than the price suggests, with a mostly metal build, though not unibody.

Like one of the classics of small tablets, the Google Nexus 7, it's designed to be used in portrait mode like your phone, but stereo speakers are placed so they're on either side when held in landscape.

All in all, it's an impossible game of spot the difference from its predecessor, but 'if it ain't broke'…

DISPLAY

Just by looking, it seems as though the screen and speakers are identical to the Galaxy Tab A9, but this is where the A11's biggest upgrades are hiding.

The screen has remained the same size, which for me is an excellent balance of 'bigger than your phone but small enough to be highly portable', and uses LCD tech, but Samsung has increased the refresh rate to 90Hz – this was previously only available on the Tab A9+.

If this means nothing to you, it helps the experience look and feel smoother, especially when scrolling through content. As the screen is refreshing more times per second, it's less jerky.

Note: Any banding you can see in the images of the screen here is only a result of taking photos of it and not seen by the human eye.

Although things like an AMOLED panel would be nice, it's too much to expect at this price. I could pick holes in the display performance, mentioning viewing angles and inconsistent lighting, but it's all acceptable.

The screen is an excellent balance of 'bigger than your phone but small enough to be highly portable'.

For less money than a lot of earbuds, you get a perfectly colourful and crisp image and there's good peak brightness, too. I measured it at 528 nits (in the middle), which is a little better than the Tab A9.

If you need a larger screen than 8.7-inch, the Galaxy Tab A11+ provides an 11-inch display. As does the Xiaomi Redmi Pad 2.

The speakers are positioned just as before.

Moving on to the speakers; they're positioned just as before. If you hold the tablet in landscape mode, they're on either side and towards the top, so you won't cover them up.

It's a clever system for when you're watching video content and there's Dolby Atmos support now, too. It's not a massive improvement, but it does create a more spacious feel to the sound.

You still get a headphone port, so there's no need to connect Bluetooth headphones if you don't want to.

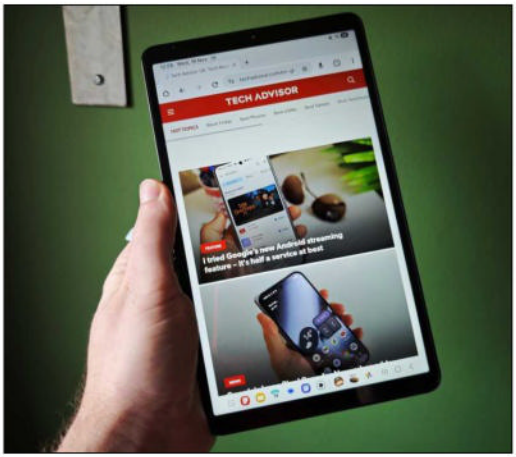
PERFORMANCE

In terms of performance, everything is the same as the Tab A9, starting with the Helio G99 processor, which is now three years old.

The entry-level model comes with a basic 4GB of RAM and 64GB of storage but you can double both to 8/128GB if you splash an extra £40, which may be a very wise investment.

Not only will that extra storage mean you can download more apps etc, but the memory will help with performance – especially in the long term. Samsung still offers a MicroSDXC card slot so it's possible to add storage (up to 2TB) to either model should you run out (bear in mind the OS, plus other pre-installed bits take up around 20GB).

Once again, I've been testing the cheaper and more basic spec model and while it's not snappy like a hungry crocodile, it's certainly not painfully



The Galaxy Tab A11 is a versatile all-rounder as long as you don't push its limits.

slow and something that should be avoided like some budget tablets.

Of course, a newer processor would be welcome and there's a chance the tablet might struggle by the time it gets its final software update but that's partly because Samsung offers long support (more on that later).

You can browse the web, use social media, take a video call and do a bit of light gaming without major hiccups.

The bottom line is the Galaxy Tab A11 is a versatile all-rounder as long as you don't push its limits with tasks that should be reserved for more expensive and powerful tablets. You can browse the web, use social media, take a video call and do a bit of light gaming without major hiccups.

Geekbench 6 (multi-core)

Samsung Galaxy Tab A11: 2,026
Xiaomi Redmi Pad 2: 1,946
Samsung Galaxy Tab A9: 2,000

GFX Manhattan 3.1

Samsung Galaxy Tab A11: 47fps
Xiaomi Redmi Pad 2: 12fps
Xiaomi Redmi Pad SE: 14fps
Nokia T21: 8fps
Oppo Pad Air: 13fps
Samsung Galaxy Tab A9: 50fps

Battery life

Samsung Galaxy Tab A11: 12 hours, 59 minutes
Xiaomi Redmi Pad 2: 10 hours, 2 minutes
Xiaomi Redmi Pad SE: 13 hours, 11 minutes
Samsung Galaxy Tab A9: 12 hours, 18 minutes

Charge in 30 minutes

Samsung Galaxy Tab A11: 14%
Xiaomi Redmi Pad 2: 21%
Xiaomi Redmi Pad SE: 16%
Nokia T21: 14%
Oppo Pad Air: 23%
Samsung Galaxy Tab A9: 15%

I find it slightly odd that you can once again opt for a Wi-Fi only model

or an LTE (4G) version of the Tab A11, but consumer choice is welcome and if you need 4G data on the go on your cheap tablet, you can have it if you're happy to pay extra.

In other wireless specs, there's not much to write home about, with a basic set-up consisting of Bluetooth 5.3 and Wi-Fi 5. Keeping costs down is the name of the game, so you get old specs with no frills – there's no NFC or a fingerprint scanner – but you probably won't notice.

CAMERAS

While the Galaxy Tab A11 has the same 8Mp camera as its predecessor, it's great to see a tech company prioritise the front camera for an upgrade.

On a tablet, we feel this one is far more important as you're more likely to use the device for tasks such as video calls. Taking photos with the rear camera is awkward, even on a compact device like this and, if you need high-quality results, you should be able to use your phone instead.

Personally, I'd rather there wasn't a rear camera at all. This would save money and stop the tablet wobbling on a flat surface due to the lens sticking out. Once again, the rear camera should only be used if you absolutely have to. The quality is basic and fuzzy, with problems getting the white balance right, among other things – and that's when using it in daylight.

The front-facing camera is now far more usable, with reasonable quality if the lighting is good. There's a wider shot mode if you prefer, which I would use since the framing isn't great otherwise – holding the tablet normally puts you at the bottom of the frame.

The portrait mode isn't too bad either and I've also found the upgraded camera helped the face unlock feature work better, as well.

BATTERY LIFE & CHARGING

We're back to a section where nothing has been changed since the Tab A9, so

The rear camera should only be used if you absolutely have to.

Things aren't at all cheery when it comes to charging.

the Tab A11 has a battery no larger (or smaller even) than many phones.

Fortunately, the low-power chip running things here does a reasonable job of keeping things efficient. In our usual PCMark for Android Work 3.0 battery test, the tablet managed 12 hours and 59 minutes.

That's 48 minutes better than its predecessor and you'll once again see an hour of streaming consume a little over 10 percent of the battery power. That's not bad and should get you through most journeys. However, things aren't at all cheery when it comes to charging.

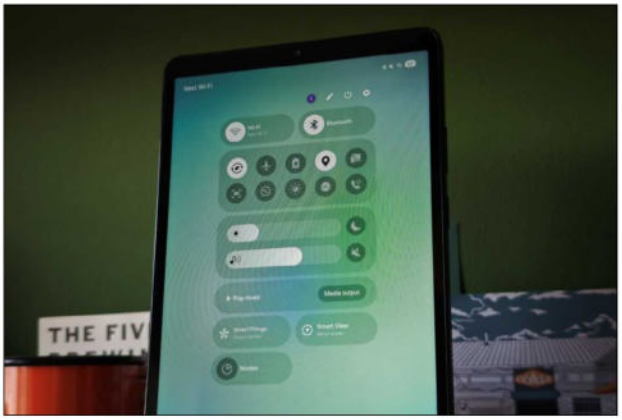
Samsung doesn't provide an adapter in the box and charging is painfully slow at just 15-watt maximum.

I tried various chargers I have to hand and the best I saw was 7 percent in 15 minutes and 14 percent in 30 minutes, just like the Tab A9. You'll need to plan in advance when taking the Tab A11 out and about because a full charge takes a few hours.

SOFTWARE & APPS

As you might expect from a budget tablet, the Galaxy Tab A11 doesn't come with the latest versions of software, so you get Android 15 with Samsung's own One UI 7 interface.

There's an update to Android 16 and One UI 8 rolling out at the time of writing, but I haven't seen it pop up on my sample yet. As such, I've tested it on the software you get out of the box, but you may be able to upgrade



You get Android 15 with Samsung's own One UI 7 interface.

it straight away – though One UI 8 is a subtle update anyway.

Despite being two years newer than the Galaxy Tab A9, the experience feels very similar, meaning that overall, it's clean, stylish and easy to navigate.

You can swipe in from the side where there's an almost hidden grey tab to get quick access to a selection of apps you choose.

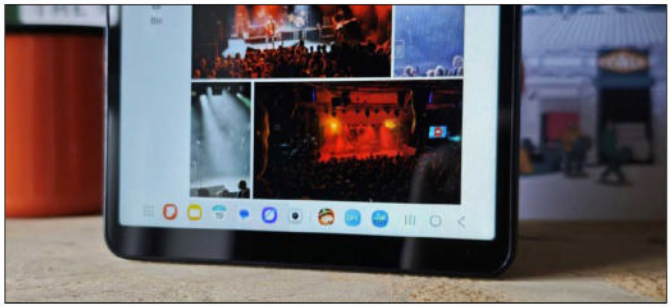
Samsung adds some features you don't see on its phones due to the larger screen, such as the edge panel. Here you can swipe in from the side where there's an almost hidden grey tab to get quick access to a selection of apps you choose.

That's the default, but you can also switch on other panels in the settings, such as People, Tasks, Weather and more, which you can then scroll through. It's worth messing around with, as some could really be handy and time-saving.

When you have an app open full screen, you get a little taskbar at the bottom like a desktop PC. Here you can access the navigation buttons, app icons and a shortcut to all your apps.

It's a little small and looks dated to me, but you can customise it a little or switch it off if you don't like it.

More useful in my experience is being able to run two apps at once and adjust how much of the screen each takes up. I don't bother doing this on a phone screen, but it's far more advantageous on this larger size.



When you have an app open full screen, you get a little taskbar at the bottom like a desktop PC.

As is typical for a Samsung Galaxy, there are a lot of pre-installed apps, including the company's own.

As is typical for a Samsung Galaxy, there are a lot of pre-installed apps, including the company's own, which are almost all just duplicates of better Google ones. There's also a selection of Microsoft apps and the likes of Netflix, Spotify, Temu, TikTok and Monopoly Go.

While these might help keep the cost of the tablet down and can almost all be uninstalled, it's still quite bloated. You don't get any Galaxy AI features at this price, but Google Gemini is built in to help you with various things, though you can't use Circle to Search, which is a shame.

There's a big hidden upgrade when it comes to software because Samsung now promises a whopping seven years of support. That's up from four years on the Tab A9 and matches its flagship devices, including Samsung's Galaxy Tab S11 Ultra.

Many rivals don't even make a promise of how long you'll get new OS versions and security patches, so this adds a lot of value. One of the main questions which can't be answered is how the processor will handle the latest software and apps in seven years' time, but Samsung clearly believes it will be able to.

VERDICT

While the Galaxy Tab A11 looks identical to its two-year-old predecessor, that doesn't matter all that much.

It's a stylish tablet that's a rare breed these days. Truly compact, but

The Galaxy Tab A11 is an exceptionally good value tablet.

big enough when compared to most phones to make it worthwhile.

Samsung has added some important upgrades here as well as reducing the price. The limitations of the Tab A11 are perfectly reasonable considering the value on offer.

Most importantly, you now get a 90Hz refresh rate on the screen, making the experience smoother, plus there's a whopping seven years of software support, eclipsing rivals.

Furthermore, the front camera has been upgraded, making it far more useful for video calls and selfies.

You'll need to limit your expectations where performance is concerned, but the Galaxy Tab A11 is an exceptionally good value tablet. If you want a compact, portable Android tablet at a very affordable price, then you needn't look any further. Chris Martin

SPECIFICATIONS

- 8.7-inch (1,340x800; 179ppi) TFT LCD, 90Hz display
- Android 15, upgradable to Android 16, One UI 8, up to 7 major Android upgrades
- Mediatek Helio G99 (6nm) processor
- Octa-core (2x 2.2GHz Cortex-A76, 6x 2GHz Cortex-A55) CPU
- Mali-G57 MC2 GPU
- microSDXC (dedicated slot)
- 4GB/8GB RAM
- 64GB/128GB storage
- Rear-facing camera: 8Mp, AF
- Selfie camera: 5Mp
- Stereo speakers
- 3.5mm audio jack
- Wi-Fi 802.11 a/b/g/n/ac, dual-band, Wi-Fi Direct
- Bluetooth 5.3, A2DP, LE
- GPS, GLONASS, BDS, GALILEO, QZSS – cellular model only
- No NFC
- USB Type-C 2.0
- Non-removable 5,100mAh battery
- 211x124.7x8mm
- 335g

Samsung Galaxy Tab S11 Ultra

Price when reviewed: From £1,299 ★★★★☆

Samsung has been one of the most consistent producers of Android tablets over the past years, staying true to the segment while other brands dropped out – and more recently, rejoined the fun.

It's no surprise, then, that Galaxy Tab models are amongst the best-selling Android tablets, following behind Apple's dominance with the iPad. To challenge Apple's top tablet, the iPad Pro, Samsung went big, throwing everything it could into this device. In 2025, that's resulted in the Galaxy Tab S11 Ultra.

I'm going to put it out there: it's very much an iterative update of the model that came before. If you were expecting a surprisingly new novelty here, you might be out of luck. The question surrounding the Galaxy Tab S11 Ultra is as much about whether you should buy this tablet as whether it makes any sense at all.

DESIGN

The physical footprint of the Galaxy Tab S11 Ultra remains much the same as it was previously, the biggest notable difference being a slimming down to 5.1mm. Why 5.1mm? Probably because that's what the 13-inch iPad Pro offers. Remember Apple's ill-conceived "Crush!" advert destroying all manner of art, music and other creative menagerie? That's why.

The Galaxy Tab S11 Ultra is just too darn big to practically use without some sort of stand.

That also follows the trend in devices that we're seeing again, where slim is in. Certainly, it lends a premium feel to things, and with an IP68 rating and luscious metal finish, there's no questioning the Ultra quality here.

There's also no avoiding the sheer size of this tablet. While the reduction in the waistline has led to a slight drop in weight, we're no closer to practical handholdability here. The Tab S11 Ultra is just too darn big to practically use without some sort of stand.

Sure, it's usable in a rest-on-your-knees sort of way, but compared to a 10-inch tablet, it's hard to use. That's why the range of accessories is important. In the box comes the S Pen, which has lost the BLE (Bluetooth Low Energy) connection it once offered, so it's now just a pointy stick.

Yes, the writing experience is great and the feel of the S Pen is great, lending itself to artists and creatives who value that input, but it's slightly less useful than it was.

That shouldn't come as a surprise: Samsung pulled the same move with the Galaxy S25 Ultra earlier in the year. Personally, I don't find it any great loss, and before you ask, no, you can't just use an old S Pen.

The Book Cover Keyboard Slim costs an extra £199, but is almost essential for the Tab S11 Ultra to realise its potential. You might baulk at that price, but it's a bargain compared to the £349 Apple Magic Keyboard for iPad.

It's a neat case offering lots of

The Book Cover Keyboard Slim costs an extra £199, but is almost essential for the Tab S11 Ultra to realise its potential.

keyboard space, but there's no trackpad, leaving you to use touch instead, though it's easy enough to add a Bluetooth mouse if you want one. The keys have a nice action, while it is compact enough not to bulk the tablet too much, providing protection all the way around and keeping your tablet free from scratches on the rear.

It also holds the screen nicely at an angle for using it as a laptop replacement, and perhaps more importantly, so you can use it to watch movies. Is this what the Tab S11 Ultra boils down to, a giant mobile device for consuming media? Pretty much.

DISPLAY

That 14.6-inch display gets a peak brightness boost over the previous iteration, but sticks to the same sharp resolution. It's a premium AMOLED display, something that Samsung does so well and ultimately, the display is the reason to buy the Galaxy Tab S11 Ultra. Premium OLED displays come at a high cost, and even more so in larger sizes.

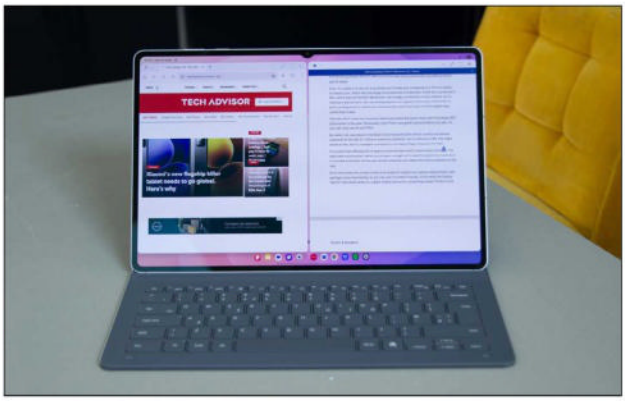
The 120Hz refresh rate keeps things nice and smooth with scrolling, and as you'd predict, there's no shortage of punch from this screen. Colours are great, blacks are dark, and it's just delightful to look at.

I settled down to watch downloaded movies on a 12-hour flight using the Galaxy Tab S11 Ultra and felt very smug with the first-class experience. Plenty of people use the iPad for exactly the same thing, but seriously, when you're making up for the low quality and poor execution of an airline's in-flight entertainment system, the Galaxy Tab S11 Ultra is a spectacular performer.

There's an anti-reflective coating on the Galaxy Tab S11 Ultra, which makes reflection take on a bit of a blue tinge, but it's otherwise fairly effective in making sure that the worst of the reflections are kept under control.

There are four speakers around

the chassis of the Tab S11 Ultra, aiming to give you immersive virtualised Dolby Atmos surround sound. The sound from the Tab S11 Ultra is pretty rich and full-bodied, making it ideal for video calls and ad hoc video watching. It's great for watching Netflix while in a hotel room, or belting out some Spotify tracks at max volume, which ensures room-filling audio without the distortion.



The display is the reason to buy the Galaxy Tab S11 Ultra.

You can connect a speaker or headphones, of course, but this is one of the few mobile devices where it's really not necessary.

PERFORMANCE

As Samsung's flagship tablet, I'm glad to see that the Tab S11 Ultra has a chipset to match. This time, it's MediaTek's top-of-the-line Dimensity 9400+. It's a clear upgrade compared to the Dimensity 9300+ in the Tab S10 Ultra, with a slightly higher clock speed and a move to 3nm architecture, so it's notionally more power efficient as a result.

This MediaTek hardware has proved itself to be a dependable rival to the Snapdragon 8 Elite, making for a slick and fast tablet experience. Everything happens with effortless ease: opening apps, running multiple apps simultaneously, and rapidly switching between them. Again, it's a pleasure to use, much as the previous device was.

There are plenty of options for storage, including microSD card expansion up to 2TB, so you can seriously expand the size of files you're carrying around with you. That might seem like an outdated thing to think about, but considering the cost that Apple levies for increasing storage, it has genuine appeal.

I've found the performance to be excellent, but while there's some appeal in big-screen gaming, I struggle with moving mobile games to a screen so large.

High-performance games optimised for touch are almost impossible to play on a tablet this huge, and I can't help

feeling that casual gamers will enjoy the experience much more. I did find that the tablet stayed cool while gaming, though, which is another tick in the performance box.

Geekbench 6 (multi-core)

Samsung Galaxy Tab S11 Ultra: 8,488
Samsung Galaxy Tab S11: 9,070
OnePlus Pad 3: 9,004
Apple iPad (A16): 6,176
Samsung Galaxy Tab S10 Ultra: 7,010

GFX Manhattan 3.1

Samsung Galaxy Tab S11 Ultra: 113fps
Samsung Galaxy Tab S11: 120fps
OnePlus Pad 3: 50fps
Samsung Galaxy Tab S10 Ultra: 94fps

Charge in 30 minutes

Samsung Galaxy Tab S11 Ultra: 30%
Samsung Galaxy Tab S11: 49%
OnePlus Pad 3: 15%
Apple iPad (A16): 22%
Samsung Galaxy Tab S10 Ultra: 41%

CAMERAS

Cameras on tablets don't need to offer the same sort of experience that you get from a smartphone: you'd have to be a psychopath to pull out the Tab S11 Ultra's expanse and start shooting your holiday snaps.

It happens, though, so the 13Mp camera, backed by an 8Mp ultrawide, has something to offer. In reality, these cameras get used for a wide range of business functions, from my local estate agent snapping room photos while form-filling, to scanning documents for annotation.

The performance of the rear cameras is average at best. You'll get a sharp shot with decent colours, but any sort of complex shooting situation will show limitations – indoors, harsh bright lights, HDR scenes. Basically, use your phone. There's support for 4K 60fps video, but again, with limitations to the cameras, the results are underwhelming.

The front cameras on the tablet, however, are more significant. From an ease-of-use perspective, face unlocking makes things easier than reaching for the fingerprint scanner (in my opinion, this is the biggest upgrade that iPad Pro offers over the iPad Air), while those front cameras also offer great quality for video calling – and we're all still doing plenty of that.

The front camera has a neat trick, offering a regular view and then an ultrawide view that you can pinch to. The latter is really wide, meaning you can fit a lot more into the scene, making it ideal if you have multiple people on a video call. It looks great, and it all comes from one lens, rather than having

As you can see in our test shots, the performance of the rear cameras is average at best.

two separate cameras like the Galaxy Tab S10 Ultra.

It's also true that these cameras are generally better than you'd get from a laptop's webcam, which perhaps says more about the poor quality of laptop cameras than it does about those on this tablet.

BATTERY LIFE & CHARGING

Despite slimming down the frame, there's now a slightly larger battery – 11,600mAh. Let's be fair, it's colossal, with 45-watt wired charging also supported, although there's no charger in the box. That's par for the course these days, with regulations driving to cut down on e-waste. It's likely that you'll already have a charger that will power the Tab S11 Ultra, anyway, even if it can't hit the maximum speeds.

Samsung's official figure for battery life runs up to 23 hours of video playback. That's a bit of a push based on my own testing, but that performance will very much depend on what else the tablet is doing and how bright the screen is. But in mixed usage, getting over 12 hours of screen-on time from the tablet was not a problem.

That included lots of web browsing and emails, plus some light productivity tasks such as web browsing. Having the peace of mind of a battery that's almost guaranteed to last the full working day with charge to spare is a great feeling. While we're not quite at the stage where an Android tablet will replace a laptop for anyone with serious demands, battery life isn't a limiting factor.

SOFTWARE & APPS

Of all the tablet manufacturers, Samsung has done the most to take on Android's deficiencies and search for a more useful solution. That's been something of an ongoing mission, and in recent years, Google has started adopting some of the things that Samsung put into place to make Android on tablets more usable.

The positioning of the Galaxy Tab S11 Ultra is very much as a laptop replacement, with Samsung's DeX (desktop experience) software allowing a window-based system to expand the multi-tasking opportunities via an external display. DeX will fire up as soon as you start dragging apps to use them in split screen, while the dock gets smaller. It's slightly less well optimised for touch use when in that state and better suited to using with a mouse, I feel.

DeX is great, but there's still an element of fiddliness to the whole thing compared to using a Windows PC. I'd extend that to the iPad too

– and while opening Office 365 and syncing documents is perfectly fine, allowing you to be creative, I'd still say that tablet use was something of a "computing lite" experience.

It's still true that the app experience on Android isn't as good as it is on iPad, with notable "professional" apps missing (Affinity Photo 2, for example), but that argument remains about whether using an expensive tablet over a laptop makes any sense.

Samsung's DeX software allows a window-based system to expand the multi-tasking opportunities via an external display.

For those using the Tab S11 keyboards, there's also an AI button which can be set to trigger Gemini or Bixby – yes, the Samsung assistant still exists. While Samsung spends a lot of time talking about Galaxy AI and the features it offers, Gemini from Google is still the most interesting and useful part.

One of the problems that Galaxy AI faces is that it's centred around Samsung's apps. If you stick to native Google apps or third-party apps, you'll never encounter Galaxy AI.

While we're talking about Samsung's apps, there's no avoiding that there's some duplication here, with Galaxy Store alongside the Play Store, Samsung's own browser and gallery, and other apps you might see as totally superfluous. This is a Samsung tablet after all, so that's to be expected, but at least you can delete almost all of them.

One area where the Galaxy Tab S11 Ultra excels is software support. Samsung has committed to a full seven years of both OS and security patches, which is up there with the best you'll find on any tablet.

VERDICT

There's no doubting that the Galaxy Tab S11 Ultra is a very capable tablet. It offers an excellent display, making for a fantastic content consumption platform, while it's large enough for all manner of light work tasks too. I've been happy to browse, write and work through emails

on the Tab S11 Ultra, but streaming video steals the show. As a travel companion, I've absolutely loved it.

But separate it from the keyboard and it's really hard to get on with. The reduction in thickness and weight is welcomed, but it's still too big to hold one-handed, and propping it up is tricky. Where you'll casually hold a 10-inch tablet, at 14.6 inches, it's just too big to use like that.

In that sense, nothing much has changed with Samsung's Ultra tablet. I love using it, really enjoy the performance, and can't fault the quality of the display.

But at this price, you can buy a laptop that's just as large and a lot easier to use. For all the good points of the Galaxy Tab S11 Ultra, it's only really going to appeal to someone who wants a massive screen, come hell or high water. Chris Hall

SPECIFICATIONS

- 14.6-inch (2,960x1,848; 239ppi) 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/16GB RAM
- 128GB/256GB/512GB storage
- Two rear-facing cameras: 13Mp, f/2.0, 26mm (wide), 1/3.4-inch, 1.0µm, AF; 8Mp, f/2.2, (ultrawide)
- 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/7, tri-band, Wi-Fi Direct
- Bluetooth 5.4, A2DP, LE
- GPS , GLONASS, BDS, GALILEO
- No NFC
- USB Type-C 3.2, magnetic connector
- Non-removable 11,600mAh battery
- 326.3x208.5x5.1mm
- 692g

Apple Watch Series 11

Price when reviewed: £369 ★★★★½

Even though it's more of a refined version of its predecessor than a major generational leap, there's still plenty to like about the Apple Watch Series 11.

I don't much envy the position that Apple finds itself in with its line-up of wearables in 2025. The range finally got a major processing bump with the Apple Watch Series 9 and then a big hardware revamp that slimmed everything down for the Apple Watch Series 10, while also broadening the display.

With those features in tow, there's a case to be made that the Apple Watch has 'peaked', and anything beyond this point will only involve iterative updates.

Well, having used the Apple Watch Series 11 for over a week now, I can definitely say that Apple is nowhere near as withheld with its updates compared to the Samsung Galaxy Watch 8, but

whether or not the Series 11 is an essential upgrade depends entirely on the smartwatch you currently use.

There are a few users who could probably go without, but if you do have the money to upgrade, then you will absolutely find the best Apple Watch experience to date in the Series 11.

DESIGN

When it comes to the design, it's very much business as usual, but this isn't too surprising given that the Apple Watch Series 10 brought a fairly major overhaul to the table.

Being 10 percent thinner than the Series 9, the Series 10 felt far more comfortable on the wrist, making it easier to wear for longer periods of time, especially during the night.

The Series 11 holds onto this concept and it's right up there with Garmin Venu X1 as being one of the most comfortable watches I've ever had the pleasure of wearing.

It is worth mentioning that, likely as a result of the larger battery found within the Series 11, the watch is ever so slightly bigger than the Series 10, but not by much. For example, the equivalent 46mm Cellular model I've been wearing weighs in at 36.9g, but the same model of the Series 10 weighs 35.3g.

It's a minimal difference but worth mentioning for anyone currently using last year's watch who might be tempted to upgrade.

The biggest design upgrade on the Series 11 is hidden in plain sight, and it's the addition of the all-new Ion-X glass display, which Apple says is 2x more scratch resistant. As you can imagine, a feature like this is tricky to test but I will say that in the time that I've been using the watch, it has been accidentally knocked into a couple of doorways and during a swim, incurred a fairly full-on collision with one of the lane barriers which I was convinced would leave a mark, but to my surprise the screen still looks as if it's just come out of the box.

Just like before, the Watch Series 11 is fully waterproof up to 50m, so if

Being 10 percent thinner than the Series 9, the Series 10 felt far more comfortable on the wrist.

you're like me and you enjoy an occasional trip to the local swimming pool then you won't have to worry about taking off the Apple Watch before you get in the water. Similarly, any lesser encounters like a splash from the sink or a bit of rain won't be cause for concern either.

The biggest design upgrade on the Series 11 is hidden in plain sight, and it's the addition of the all-new Ion-X glass display.

There is one more colour available over 2024 with the introduction of Space Grey Aluminium, but to my eye, it looks almost identical to the Silver Aluminium option, and it makes me wish that Apple would go back to the options you could get with the Series 7 and the Series 6.

The Apple Watch felt right at home with Green and Blue colourways, and as someone who likes to swap out the standard rubber Sport Band for something a bit more eye-catching, I would love to see Apple embrace colour again in next year's Watch.

This is a minor gripe, however, as the Apple Watch remains one of the best-looking smartwatches out there if you're ok with a square design, and it's no wonder that a ton of companies try to emulate the company's style here (just look at the Huawei Watch Fit 4 if you don't believe me).

DISPLAY

Unlike the design where there was at least a shift forward in durability, the screen on the Apple Watch Series 11 is identical to what came last year, and while that might be an excuse to groan for some, I think that Apple made the right call here.

I always want to see innovation in areas that make sense instead of having upgrades just for the sake of needing something new to talk about on a specs sheet, and in its current form, the display on the Apple Watch Series 11 gives me no cause for concern.

With 2,000 nits of peak brightness (originally brought in on the Series 9), the Series 11's display is incredibly easy to read outdoors and more importantly, I haven't struggled when it comes to glancing at the more subdued always-

on display. Even when the colour of a watch face has been drained away, I can still see what the time is, which isn't always a given as I recently had this exact issue when reviewing the more budget-friendly CMF Watch 3 Pro.

Throw on top of that the introduction of a wider viewing angle and LTPO3 technology on the Series 10, and there really isn't anything here to leave you wanting. What's strange is that, even though the Samsung Galaxy Watch 8 (which I also reviewed) has a higher 3,000 nits peak brightness, I can't honestly say that the visual experience on the latest Apple Watch feels like a step back.

Part of what works in the Apple Watch's favour is the vibrant colour palette that its OLED display is able to conjure up. It didn't matter if I was looking at one of the many watch faces that Apple has designed for its wearable ecosystem, or simply scrolling through the collection of installed apps, there was always something there to catch my attention because of how it all pops.

Last year, Apple made a big deal about the ability to listen to music and podcasts via the built-in speaker on the Series 10, and I'd be lying if I said I didn't scoff at the very concept of it.

Given just how much hatred there is for those who decide to blast music from their phones on public transport with no concern for the rest of the general public, the absolute last thing I'd ever want to do is become such a pariah by listening to The Rest is Entertainment via my wrist.

However, when giving the feature a spin from the comfort of my own home, I can now admit that Apple is on to something here. Taking CKY's 96 Quite Bitter Beings for a spin (my go-to song for testing wearable speakers), I was impressed by the clarity of the cymbals and how well the vocals carried through, even if – as you can imagine – there was some detail missing on the guitar riff.

The Apple Watch Series 11 has the best sounding speaker of any smartwatch I've tested so far.

Swapping over to the Kinda Funny Games Daily podcast, I found myself settling in rather quickly and enjoying the playback as a means of consuming the latest episode.

Not only does the Series 11 have the best sounding speaker of any smartwatch I've tested so far, but it also has me convinced that, at times when my AirPods and iPhone are out of reach, I may just use it for a bit of entertainment if the mood strikes, which isn't something I thought I'd admit to before I began writing this review.

Arriving alongside the Series 11 are the Flow and Exactograph watch faces.

SOFTWARE

Here's where we start getting into some of the meat of the big changes this year, but before doing so, I will attempt to strip away a band-aid early by letting you know that in terms of raw performance, nothing has changed in the Series 11 as it uses the exact same S10 chipset as before.

Given that big strides are starting to be made on the Wear OS front with faster chipsets that allow for access to Google Gemini on your wrist, it would have been nice to see Apple leapfrog the competition somewhere, but the core day-to-day performance here is still rock solid.

With days that included listening to Spotify offline at the gym, using the watch for NFC payments and Apple Maps to navigate my way through London for an event, the Series 11 did it all without any moments of stuttering or slowdown. It's exactly the kind of top-tier experience that you buy an Apple Watch for, and even with the more powerful Apple Watch Ultra 3 on the market, I never found myself wanting more.

If you opt for the cellular version of the Apple Watch Series 11, you'll be able to connect to 5G networks, which is a huge win for using the wearable away from your iPhone.

For example, if you decide to leave your iPhone at home as you go out for

a lunchtime walk, you can take calls on the watch just like before, but now you'll enjoy a much better connection that's less likely to incur a problem if there's a 5G signal available. As someone who likes to use their Apple Watch in this way, particularly as I'm far less likely to be distracted by my watch, it's great to see this addition.

Arriving alongside the Series 11 (although also available on other Apple Watches) are the Flow and Exactograph watch faces.

The former takes a leaf out of Apple's Liquid Glass aesthetic, which permeates iOS 26 and has glass-like numbers sitting above a swirling blob of colour. It looks very Apple and it might be perfect for some, but I'm a bigger fan of the Exactograph option.

Much like GMT or Metropolitan, you can have four complications surrounding the core watch face, which shows dials for the seconds, minutes and hours of the day.

Tap on the centre of the watch face and it'll send all of those complications away and expand those dials like measuring tape to give you a close look at the seconds and minutes as they slip away. It's quite fun to play around with, and there are some great colour options that have each dial taking on different shades.

These two new watch faces sit on top of what is already one of the best collections available in the smartwatch space. Only Samsung comes close to matching Apple on this front, but I still believe that watch faces are a crucial part of what makes a great wearable as it's what you're going to be looking at most of the time, and to have a good mix of fashionable and functional picks is a huge win, and I feel more inclined to swap between them depending on my mood.

As a side note, this is the first time I've had a chance to use the Apple Watch's double-tap feature, which lets you interact with certain apps just by pinching your thumb and forefinger

The Exactograph watch face on the Series 11.

together, and while (much like the onboard speaker) I initially scoffed at the idea, I've come to rely on it quite a bit.

For stopping cooking timers while I'm stirring a pot, or cycling through the Smart Stack, it's come to be part of how I use the Apple Watch from day to day, and the same goes for the new wrist flick feature, which takes you back a step quickly.

FITNESS & HEALTH TRACKING

Fitness tracking has always been a key selling point of the Apple Watch and now the company's extensive software has become even more capable thanks to a handful of new additions, with potentially the most important being alerts for hypertension (high blood pressure).

Thankfully, I haven't had to witness any hypertension alerts pop up over the course of this review, but given just how important it is to stay on top of high blood pressure with healthy eating and regular exercise, I think it's a great feature to have, especially if it's able to encourage some people to lead a more active lifestyle.

Giving credit where it's due, the feature did make an appearance before on the Huawei Watch D and its follow-up, but it's good to see Apple embrace the technology and broaden the scope of what its health tech can do. It could be life-saving.

If there was one area where I wished that Apple had matched some rivals, it's in the realm of sleep tracking. The Series 11 and all compatible Apple Watches now present users with a sleep score each morning, giving them a rough idea of how well rested their body is.

The score, which is presented as a number out of 100, is compiled of three key metrics: the duration of your sleep, the time you went to bed and any interruptions throughout the night.

Having the Sleep Score is a nicety as it helps somewhat to break down all of the sleep data that otherwise doesn't mean that much to the average person. I just wish that it went one step further to emulate many others, like Huawei, which can provide personalised advice on what all the data means and how to improve your circadian rhythm.

The Apple Health app does offer up general advice on what you can do to get a better night's sleep, but it doesn't take into account your sleep data, which feels like a missed opportunity and an obvious area where Apple Intelligence could be put to use.

On the workout side of things, the Apple Watch is still one of the

The watch's Sleep Score helps break down your sleep data.

frontrunners in this sector. Tons of workouts can be tracked, and with heart rate zones available mid-workout, you can see in real-time how much of a sweat you're building up and whether or not you can take things further. If you're stuck for inspiration, then Apple Fitness+ can serve as a very helpful tool, especially for those starting out, but it's the accuracy of the data collected that always makes me feel comfortable with using the Apple Watch at the gym.

When used alongside a chest-worn Garmin HRM 600 heart rate tracker, the Apple Watch Series 11 was spot on each time when it came to registering the average heart rate of a workout, and there was only ever a discrepancy of 1BPM when it came to measuring the low end, which is negligible.

There was one instance during an elliptical workout where the Apple Watch picked up a peak that was 3BPM higher than that of the HRM 600, but this seemed like more of an anomaly after further testing, so I'd argue that you can safely rely on the data from the Series 11 to give you a good look at your cardiovascular performance.

GPS tracking is similarly spot on and very quick to establish a connection. When trying my hand at a 6k run through my local park, the Series 11 did a great job of recognising where I was in relation to the documented path, and I always appreciate being able to analyse the data thereafter to see which sections ended up being the toughest.

It is worth noting that it's still not dual-band GPS, which you'll find on many rivals. Apple still reserves this more accurate tech for the Ultra.

If you're just starting out on your running journey, then you may appreciate the introduction of the Workout Buddy. This Apple Intelligence feature gives you personalised Siri-like words of encouragement as you go, and that's a great thing to have in those moments where you might be

Workout Buddy offers personalised words of encouragement.

struggling and the last kilometre seems like a stretch too far.

The problem is that this feature only works if you have an iPhone with you that's connected to the internet, and as someone who purposefully leaves their phone at home when they work out to avoid distraction, this feels like an unnecessary hurdle.

It may be to preserve the battery life of the watch and there's plenty of promise here if Apple can develop a version of Workout Buddy that works entirely on an Apple Watch then I can definitely see myself using it regularly.

BATTERY LIFE & CHARGING

At this point, Apple's unwavering commitment to an 18-hour battery life on the Apple Watch had become so commonplace that I genuinely never expected to see any type of battery upgrade for the Series 11, particularly as it serves as a key reason to splurge out for the more expensive Apple Watch Ultra 3, which can run for up to 42-hours at a time.

When Apple finally announced that the Series 11 would be getting a 24-hour battery life, I almost couldn't believe what I was hearing – the one feature that I, and many others, have been clamouring for is finally here.

Of course, it has to be pointed out that with the five days of use that you can get from the OnePlus Watch 3, not to mention the more than week-long duration that Garmin watches can reach, having 24-hours of use isn't moving the needle as far as the wider industry is concerned, but for Apple Watch users it's a massive deal.

The 24-hour claim is actually more on the conservative side of what can be achieved here. When using the watch for notifications only, I managed to get from 10am one morning to midnight the following day with 7 percent left in the tank. If you go away for a night and forget to bring a charger, then you may not have to worry, and you can always

If you go away for a night and forget a charger, you can turn on low power mode.

toggle the low power mode if things do get a little dicey.

When adding a workout into the mix and interacting with the watch a bit more, I was able to get from 10:35am to 9am the following day with 57 percent remaining, which feels leagues ahead of when I would have to immediately charge my Apple Watch SE after waking up to make sure it had enough juice left for the day.

Speaking of charging, the Series 11 boasts some of the fastest speeds I've come across on any smartwatch. Charging the Watch from 0 percent, I managed to claw back 74 percent (more than enough for a day of use) after just 30 minutes, and it only took a total of roughly 61 minutes before the battery was full.

Compared to the occasional two-hour wait time I've had with some smartwatches, being able to get this done quickly on the Apple Watch Series 11 is amazing, and I think it'll be hard to go back to anything else after the fact.

By having a longer battery life and fast-charging, the Series 11 works brilliantly as a back-up for your iPhone if its battery ever gets depleted. On a rare day when my iPhone's battery has

The Apple Watch Series 11's charging puck.

dipped into the red, it's been a great bit of reassurance knowing that I can use my Apple Watch for payments and messaging if needed.

Apple supplies the watch with the usual round charger and although this isn't Qi wireless charging technology, there are countless compatible wireless chargers from third-parties which are compatible.

VERDICT

Instead of being a massive overhaul on the Apple Watch Series 10, the new Apple Watch Series 11 feels like a refined version of its predecessor with a longer battery life and more durable display, but that's perfectly fine with me.

The extended battery life alone is something that I've been wanting on an Apple Watch for years, so to know that I no longer have to worry about it during a night out is a major win. Even though you can easily find the Series 10 for a discounted price now that it's been superseded, I would argue that anyone looking to upgrade should simply plump for the Series 11 as it's a better experience overall.

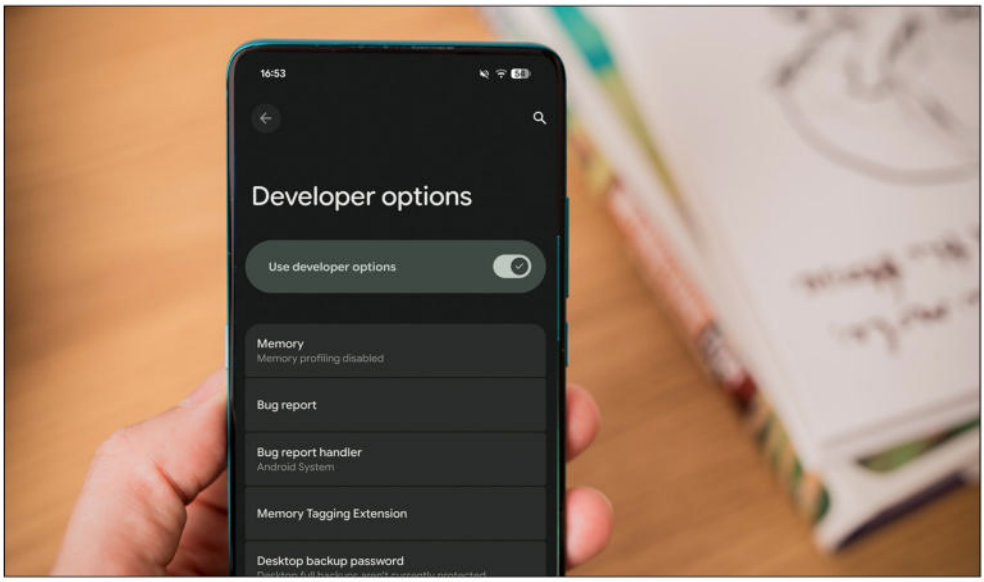
There is still room for improvement, as I don't think that Apple's new Sleep Score feature goes far enough in helping users to truly understand what can cause a good/bad night's sleep and how to improve the quality of their rest in the long run.

Similarly, I would like to see a version of Workout Buddy that can operate without the need for an iPhone to be connected at all times, but neither of these issues detract from what is easily the most feature-packed and well-refined Apple Watch to date.

Thomas Deehan

SPECIFICATIONS

- 1.96-inch (496x416; 330ppi) Retina LTPO3 OLED, 2,000 nits (peak) display
- watchOS 26
- Apple S10 processor
- Dual-core CPU
- PowerVR GPU
- 64GB storage
- Loud speaker
- No 3.5mm audio jack
- Wi-Fi 802.11 b/g/n, dual-band
- Bluetooth 5.3, A2DP, LE
- GPS, GLONASS, GALILEO, QZSS, BDS
- NFC
- Sensors: Accelerometer, gyro, heart rate, barometer, always-on altimeter, compass, SpO2, VO2max, temperature (body), temperature (water)
- Non-removable Li-ion battery
- 46x39x9.7mm
- 34.6g (42mm), 43.1g (46mm)



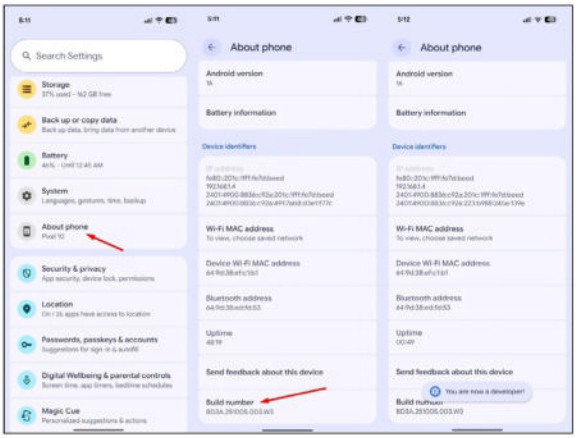
5 secret Android settings that will make your smartphone fun again

Unlock a whole new world of options. AMAN KUMAR reports

Think you've explored everything your Android smartphone's Settings app has to offer? Think again. Deep within Settings, you'll find a hidden Developer menu with an extensive list of settings you can tweak to improve your overall smartphone experience. Here are some developer settings I highly recommend that every Android user enable on their device.

HOW TO ENABLE THE DEVELOPER MENU ON YOUR ANDROID PHONE

Since the developer settings are primarily intended for Android



Open the Settings app, go to About Phone, and tap the Build Number seven times.

developers, Google keeps them hidden from general users.

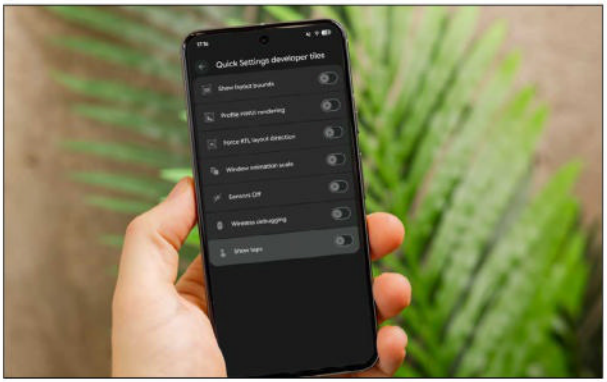
To access them, you first need to unlock the Developer menu, which contains all these options. The process may vary slightly across different Android smartphones, but the general rule of thumb is to open the Settings app, go to About Phone, and tap the Build Number seven times. You'll then see a "You're now a developer" message confirming that the Developer menu has been unlocked on your smartphone.

The location of the Developer menu may vary across different Android smartphones. On my Pixel 10, it's found under the System option in the Settings app. On Samsung Galaxy phones, it appears near the bottom of the Settings app. You can also use the search function in the Settings app to look for the Developer menu if you're unable to find it manually.

1. SHOW TAPS

If you create video tutorials on your Android smartphone, you should enable the Show Taps toggle in the Developer menu. As the name suggests, this option displays a small translucent circle wherever you touch the screen.

Enabling this option eliminates the need to add an external pointer



Enable Show Taps to display a small translucent circle wherever you touch the screen.

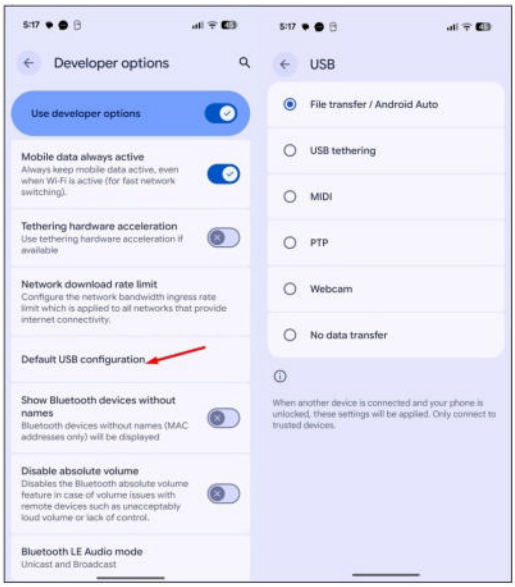
to your video during editing when you want to highlight exactly where the user needs to tap to access something you're showcasing. You will find the Show Taps toggle under the Input section.

2. DEFAULT USB CONFIGURATION

Whenever you connect your smartphone to a Windows PC, you'll see a pop-up on your phone asking what action you want to perform. You'll get options like File transfer, which lets you transfer data between your smartphone and the connected PC; Webcam, which allows your smartphone to function as the connected PC's webcam; or No data transfer, which you can select if you only want to charge your smartphone through the connected PC.

While all these options let you perform a variety of tasks, choosing one each time can become an extra step, especially if you always connect your smartphone to the PC for a single specific purpose, such as transferring data.

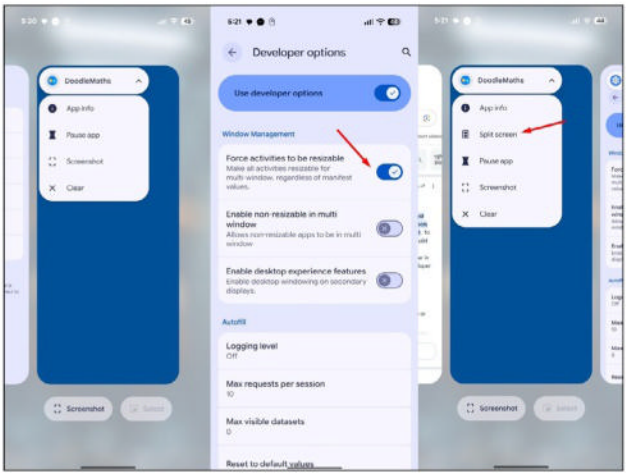
In that case, you should select the Default USB configuration option in the Developer menu and choose the default action you want to perform whenever your smartphone is connected to a PC. The Default USB configuration option can be found under the Networking section.



The Default USB configuration option can be found under the Networking section.

3. USE EVERY APP IN SPLIT SCREEN

The split-screen functionality on your Android smartphone allows you to work on two apps simultaneously. However, there's still a long list of apps, such as DoodleMaths, that don't support this feature. When you open the app drawer on your smartphone and tap the name of one of these apps, you won't see the Split Screen option



The split-screen functionality on your Android smartphone allows you to work on two apps simultaneously.

that appears for apps supporting this functionality.

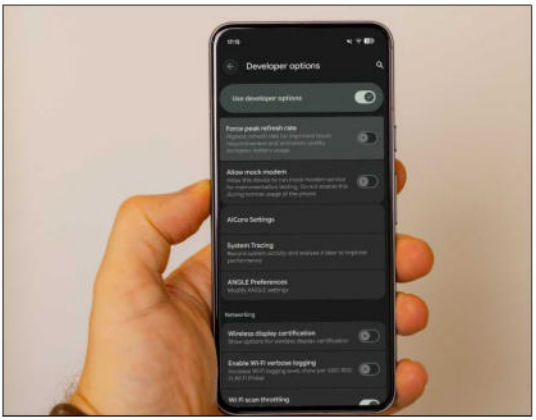
Fortunately, there's a developer setting called Force activities to be resizable that brings the split-screen feature to all the apps installed on your device, even if they don't support it by default. The option is located under the Window Management section, and once you enable it, you'll see the Split Screen option when you tap any app name in the app drawer.

4. ALWAYS ENJOY PEAK REFRESH RATE

While LTPO displays have become increasingly common in modern smartphones, there is still a long list of devices that don't include them – the Pixel 10, for example. The availability of an LTPO display allows your smartphone to adjust its refresh rate from the peak all the way down to as low as 1Hz.

On a device like the Pixel 10, which features a non-LTPO 120Hz display, you'll get a refresh rate of either 120Hz or 60Hz, depending on the task you're performing.

While you wouldn't face a major issue due to this fluctuation during day-to-day smartphone tasks, it can



Force peak refresh rate configures your device to always use the highest refresh rate it supports.

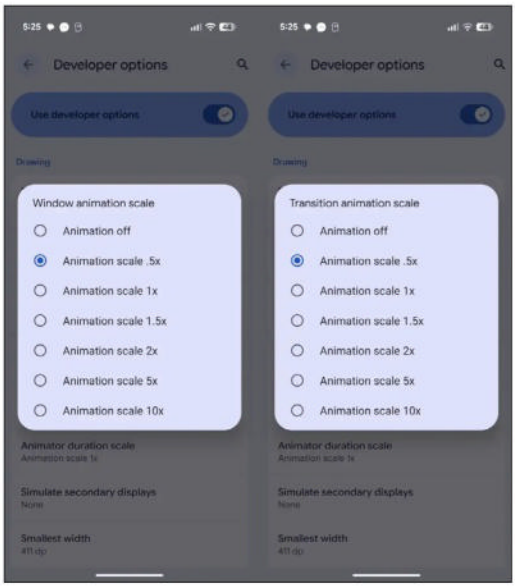
significantly affect your gaming performance. Imagine you're in the middle of a fight in a battle royale game like PUBG, and the refresh rate suddenly drops to 60Hz. You would experience sudden lag on your device, which could eventually cost you the game.

You can prevent such situations by enabling a developer setting called Force peak refresh rate. As the name suggests, this setting configures your device to always use the highest refresh rate it supports. Enabling this on my Pixel 10 makes it consistently run at 120Hz. However, it's worth noting that since your device will always operate at its peak refresh rate, you may experience slightly reduced battery life as a result.

5. IMPROVE YOUR PHONE'S SPEED AND FEEL

If you have a very old smartphone, I highly recommend changing the animation speed to make it noticeably faster. There are two developer settings you need to adjust for this – Window Animation Scale and Transition Animation Scale.

You will find both of these options under the Drawing section, and you need to select 0.5x for both of them. In case you want to better observe the animation of an app, you should choose 5x for both options, which will slow down all the animations. This way, you will be able to clearly observe how an app opens and closes on your smartphone and how all its transitions are performed.



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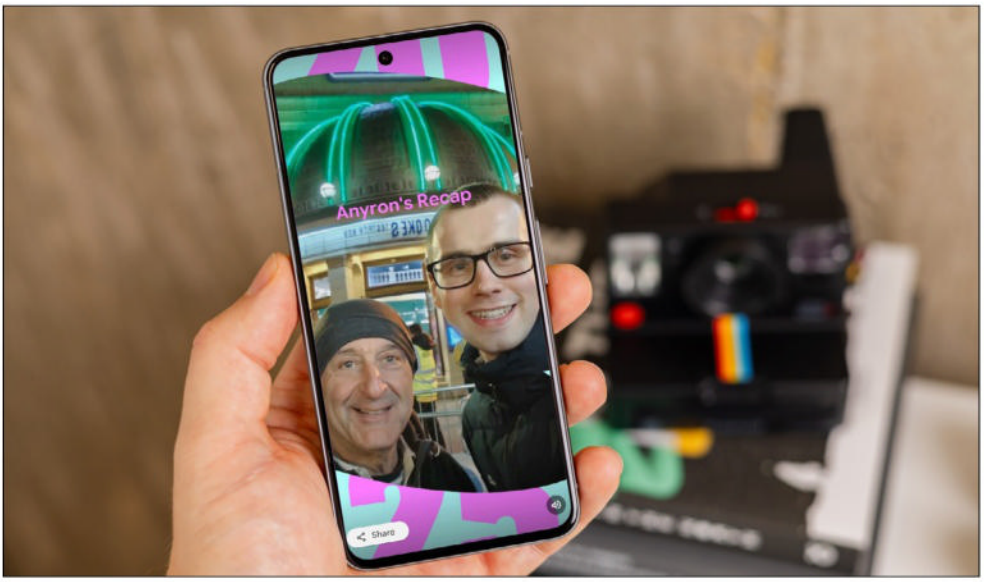


I watched my Google Photos ‘Recap’ – and wish I hadn’t bothered

I couldn’t be more disappointed. ANYRON COPEMAN reports

Forget Christmas. Early December is officially recap season. What began with Spotify Wrapped a decade ago is now an industry-wide trend, with almost every brand trying to cash in on some of that free publicity. Some of the more bizarre examples include online bank Monzo telling you how many times you’ve logged into the app, or Nectar updating you on where you sit in the satsuma buying rankings at your local Sainsbury’s.

However, there was one that I was particularly excited for when it popped up last week: Google Photos Recap. As someone who takes thousands of

photos and videos every year and relies on Google Photos to sync them across all my devices, I couldn't wait to see what fun insights it had in store for me.

Sadly, I was met with a useless 90-second clip that didn't reflect my year in any meaningful way. Come on, Google, you can do better than that.

IMPRESSIVELY BAD PHOTOS AND VIDEOS

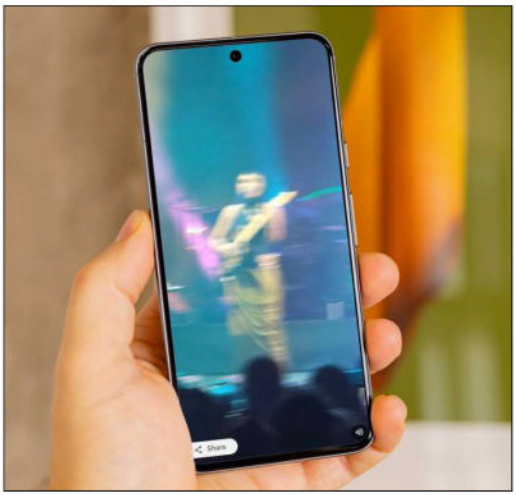
Throughout 2025, I've taken more than my fair share of bad photos and videos and never deleted them. I'm also aware that there isn't someone at Google whose role it is to hand-pick only the finest takes from my camera roll. But despite these caveats, some of the choices for my Google Photos Recap are mind-boggling. Surely even the dumbest AI should be able to recognise when a photo is out of focus?

To help illustrate this, let me take you through a sequence of images that it decided to highlight:

- An AI-generated image I was sent on WhatsApp.
- A blurry picture of my laptop screen.
- The outside of an event venue (zoomed in so you can barely make out what it says).
- A blurry image of the headline act at the same gig.
- Brochure download instructions for a tourist attraction.
- A picture of earbuds from a keynote presentation.
- A glass of cider at a gig.
- My dad (not blurry, but not properly in focus, either).

I don't expect the algorithm Google uses to be perfect – it won't always know which photos mean the most to me – but this haphazard selection is diabolical. Surely even the dumbest AI should be able to recognise when a photo is out of focus?!

The theme continues throughout



I took dozens of nice photos at this gig, but this was what Google chose.

the video. Aside from a few exceptions, Google managed to either include an irrelevant 'memory' or pick one of the worst photos I took of that situation. Impressive.

The algorithm isn't totally useless. I took hundreds of photos of smartphones for my Tech Advisor reviews, yet it was able to ignore every single one. Unfortunately, it seems as though photos of signs and blurry images are Google's kryptonite.

WHERE'S EVERYONE ELSE?

At their core, photographs are digital memories. And most of the time, it's the people we've spent time with that make it so memorable. However, for some reason, there was barely any focus on the people I shared photos with in 2025. After highlighting my 387 selfies (for camera testing, of course…), it brought up only me and my mum's dog as my 'faves'.

Okay, so they probably appear more in my camera roll than anyone, but what about everyone else? Even off the top of my head, there are several great photos with family and friends that I'd love to see included.

Bizarrely, the algorithm seems to prioritise inanimate objects over humans and other animals, making the recap feel functional and boring.

My chief portrait model was always likely to make an appearance.

A DISTINCT LACK OF SUBSTANCE

The lack of other people in my Recap is symptomatic of the video as a whole. It's missing almost anything that would make me look back on the year fondly, despite there being literally hundreds of suitable photos.

Its current structure, throwing in a couple of stats, a few people and a random assortment of photos and featured locations, makes it a total mess.

Recap appears to be slightly more interesting in the US, where customers with Gemini features

A stunning view from my hotel room

enabled can also highlight "standout hobbies" and "top highlights", but I doubt that'd deliver the scale of improvements that I'm craving.

Google Photos Recap has massive potential, and it's one of the few Spotify Wrapped imitators that I'd like to see continue. But in its current form, the feature is woefully undercooked and more frustrating than fun.

Apparently, you can "Relive your Recap all month long". No thanks, Google, once was already too much.


FOUNDRY