

Edward C. Baig: Galaxy Fold review: 5 things to consider as Samsung's second-try \$2,000 phone goes on sale

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Samsung's back in the fold.

And now that the company is finally selling the newly repaired \$1,980 folding screen Galaxy Fold smartphone in the U.S., the decision to buy this hybrid device is back where it should have been all these months—with the affluent consumer who would (or actually wouldn't) have to justify paying the small ransom.

Samsung was forced into a do-over after version No. 1 of the Fold never launched as planned in April when some early reviewers reported broken screens and other damage issues.

Even had such problems never surfaced, the lofty price should have been enough to leave those of you who might otherwise have considered the Fold bent out of shape. Alas, that hasn't changed.

Early adopters are certainly tempted by the seductive promise of something fresh combined with the privilege of being among the first to have it. Even with its flaws and risks, the Fold represents a bonafide technological breakthrough.

Most everyone I show the Fold to is at minimum curious and at best wowed by an [innovative design](#) that transforms a hefty (at more than 9 ounces) and chunky candy-bar shaped smartphone with a 4.6-inch display into a tablet with a 7.3-inch screen that unfolds like a paperback.

However cool they think it is, though, none was ready to rush out and buy. And I can't blame them.

I've had several days to test the second try Fold in the real world. My chief observations:

Using the Fold as a tablet

Even in an age in which relatively ginormous smartphone screens are

common, I appreciated the extra real estate of the unfurled AMOLED display, especially as I browsed and watched video while commuting. I considered it a plus that, a moment earlier, the folded Fold was stashed in my jacket pocket like any other smartphone, hard to do even with an iPad mini.

You can open up to three active apps on this screen simultaneously, the Chrome browser, say, to choose a restaurant, your calendar to pick a date, and the Messages app to text the friend who'll join you for dinner.

The display is bright even as it looks and feels a bit plasticky. For the most part, I wasn't bothered by the "crease" that's smack in the middle where the thing folds, even as it becomes more pronounced depending on your viewing angle.

Out in New York's Bryant Park, the screen was readily visible as I browsed and watched video in direct sun. More distracting than the aforementioned crease was the reflection of my own face and the buildings behind me.

Worth noting: Samsung has wisely split the keyboard that appears on the internal screen in two, which makes it easier when you're banging out a text.

Judging the outer display

You may be spoiled by the wider possibilities brought on by the larger screen, but the front screen isn't nearly as inviting. You can make it out fine outdoors, but it's small and narrow, and typing isn't easy. It's adequate for when you're walking holding the device in one hand, and the apps you launch from this external display are there for you to embrace when you unfold the Fold to use the bigger screen.

The camera: Good pics, awkward shooting

Turning the internal display into a huge viewfinder can be extremely helpful. But unless you're going to take a moment to properly frame your shots, it's far simpler, at least for a selfie or those quick pics on the go, to shoot when the phone is closed. Shooting in tablet mode looks and feels weird.

The Fold has six lenses: three on the back (16 MP ultra-wide, 12MP wide, and 12MP telephoto), a front dual camera and an additional cover camera. I was generally pleased with and didn't detect major differences on the pictures and videos I shot when the Fold was open or closed.

Is the Fold durable?

I'd say Samsung is off to a promising start since nothing has broken so far on my watch.

But if the "Care Instruction" sheet in the box isn't enough to give you pause—you're told, among other warnings, not to apply excessive pressure to the screen—a reviewer at TechCrunch reported the appearance of a "brightly colored amorphous blob," a day into his own testing.

(Without directly responding to the TechCrunch complaint, Samsung sent a statement that read in part: "The Galaxy Fold is a first-of-its-kind device, made with new materials and technologies that allow it to open and close just like a book. We encourage Galaxy Fold owners to read the care instructions included in the box and in the product manual available online.)

In its closed position, the Fold feels solid and substantial, and while you

don't get the same level of confidence when you open it up, Samsung insists it has fixed the earlier issues that led to the delayed launch. The internal display is protected with what Samsung refers to as tissue-thin bonded layers with an innovative polymer. Plastic caps on the top and bottom of the device are meant to prevent debris from getting in. I repeatedly opened and snapped shut the Fold testing its redesigned dual-axis hinge. I can report it's no worse for the wear.

Samsung is promising premium support to Fold buyers, in which you'll be able to call or chat with "trained experts" or even have the person come to your home or office. (This service was not made available to reviewers in advance.)

Observing the battery and more

I didn't conduct a formal battery test, but the two batteries (of different capacities) on each side of the Fold are meant to work in tandem to deliver all-day juice, which was borne out during my mixed usage.

I was able to take advantage of the Samsung Wireless PowerShare feature that let me charge up the Galaxy Bud earbuds that come in the box by placing them on the back of the Fold. Apple's AirPods charged up, too.

Unlocking with the Fold using both facial recognition or via the fingerprint scanner on the side of the phone proved reliable.

I'm still put off that a phone that costs nearly \$2,000 isn't water- or dust-resistant.

Though I can't recommend that consumers fold at this price, Samsung deserves kudos for proving smartphone innovation is alive and well. I'm looking forward to the next foldable phone from Samsung, and, for that

matter, from other phone makers, which, hopefully, ups the phone's capabilities and reduces sticker shock.

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