

Review: AirPods were great, and AirPods Pro are better

January 29 2020, by Jim Rossman, The Dallas Morning News



Credit: Apple

Who knew AirPods would become so popular?

Apple, I suppose.

I have to admit, though, that my first impression was that they had great sound and silly looks. The original AirPods have a stem that hangs down a bit from the ear, and I thought they made me look like I was wearing earrings.

I've always enjoyed the sound from my AirPods. And now that they're everywhere, I'm over the whole earring thing.

But enough about me.

Apple introduced AirPods Pro (\$249) last October. They have a new design and a higher price.

AirPods Pro look familiar, but the stem is a bit smaller and the earpieces are now silicone-tipped.

The original AirPods sit in your ears and just kind of hang there. The sound is good, but since they don't seal in your ear canal, you can still hear what's going on around you.

AirPods Pro are designed to seal in your ears. Apple includes three sizes of silicone tips so you can customize the fit.

The Pros have Active Noise Cancellation, which uses two microphones on each Pod to listen to what's going on around you, along with software and sound processors to produce "anti-noise" to minimize the sounds of the outside world. AirPods Pro make 200 anti-noise reductions per second.

If you've ever worn noise-canceling headphones, you know that they quiet the sounds around you. They don't eliminate them, but it is magic.

Apple also takes the microphones used for noise canceling and uses

them to create another listening mode called Transparency, which lets in the sound around you so you can keep the AirPods Pro in your ears and still hear someone who's talking to you.

There are small touch pads on the stem of each Pod called Force Sensors.

You pinch the stem over the pad to control music and calls and pinch and hold to switch modes between Active Noise Cancellation and Transparency modes or to call up Siri.

You can't control the volume from the AirPods Pro, but you can call up Siri and ask her to turn the sound up or down.

Easy to use

Apple has really perfected how AirPods interact with your iPhone (and your Mac, if you use one).

To set them up, you just wake your iPhone, bring the AirPods case next to the phone and open the case (with the AirPods inside). You'll see a small dialog. Tap the Connect button.

Then take the Pods out and put them in your ears.

You can also use the AirPods Pro with non-Apple phones or computers. They can work with any Bluetooth device. Simply push the button on the back of the case to put them in pairing mode.

I use them on my Windows PC at work, and they connect every time, just like on my Mac at home.

Original AirPods came in one size. If they didn't fit your ears, you were

out of luck.

The AirPods Pro come with three sizes of tips so you can get a good fit in your ears. Removing the tips is a bit daunting the first time. Just pinch them and pull them straight off, and they'll come off with a snap.

They go on easier. Press them in place until you hear a click.

Once you find the tip size that feels good, you can check the fit with your iPhone.

The AirPods settings page will play a little tune through the Pods and use the microphone to listen to the resulting tones. If the fit is good, you'll see a green light on the settings page and you'll know you have the right size tips.

The AirPods Pro could not be easier to use.

Once you've paired them to your iPhone, you just have to put them in your ears. You'll hear a chime in your ear when they are seated. You can also choose to use just one, if you like.

If you use a Mac, sign in with the same Apple ID as your iPhone, and the AirPods will be paired and ready for use.

Wireless charging case

Like the AirPods 2, the Pros come in a [battery case](#) that can be charged with a Lightning cable or wirelessly with a Qi-compatible charger.

The Pros can play for up to 4.5 hours on a charge. They recharge when you put them back in the case. The battery case can charge the Pros enough to keep the music playing for 24 hours before the the case needs

charging.

If you exhaust the batteries in the AirPods Pro, you can put them back in the case for five minutes and get enough power for an hour of listening.

The AirPods Pro (and other AirPods and even some Beats headphones) can share audio when used with an iPhone or iPad with iOS 13.

This means the iOS device can send audio to two pairs of wireless headphones.

I have to admit I've never had occasion to try this before this review, but it does work well. I suppose watching a movie on an airplane or in a car would be a good use for audio sharing.

Join the crowd

We all see people wearing earbuds and AirPods.

I used to have a coworker who wore earbuds all day every day. He said it kept the interruptions to a minimum. Some people are just comfortable wearing them all the time.

I'm not one of those people.

I keep my AirPods Pro in my front pants pocket and only use them when I'm on the phone or listening to music or a podcast. I don't keep them in my [ears](#) if they are not in use.

When my phone rings, I can take them out of my pocket and put one in to answer the phone before it stops ringing.

I liked my AirPods, and the AirPods Pro sound even better. The silicone

tips make them quite comfortable to wear for extended conference calls or podcasts.

The AirPods Pro are an improvement over the old AirPods in every way for me.

I like the fit, and they sound great.

Pros: Smaller, better fit options, great [sound](#), good battery life.

Cons: Expensive.

Bottom line: AirPods were great, and AirPods Pro are better.

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