

Once again, iPhones top tech seller of the year, but AirPods the hit

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Once again, the Apple iPhone ended the year as the best-selling tech product, with sales of some 185 million units, according to Wedbush Securities.

That's down from previous years, which had topped 200 million, says Wedbush analyst Daniel Ives, who compiled the chart for U.S. TODAY of the best sellers for 2019.

Apple released three editions of the iPhone, the entry-level iPhone 11, which starts at \$699, the iPhone 11 Pro at \$999 and 11 Pro Max at \$1,099. However, they weren't released until September, so the decline in sales happened for the first three quarters of the year, says Ives.

For much of the year, Apple's iPhone engine was driven by the XR, a 2018 model that has the lowest list price of current models, starting at \$599. According to Counterpoint Research, the iPhone XR has been the top-selling phone globally since its initial release, and contributed to over one-quarter of total Apple sales during the recent sales quarter.

The rest of the top 6:

No. 2 Apple AirPods

With estimated sales of 65 million units, the pint-sized Bluetooth earbuds were the unsung hero for Apple this year, rising greatly over the previous year, when it sold just under 30 million units. "We believe it will be 90 million next year," says Ives, crediting the success to working within the 900 million members of the Apple iPhone ecosystem and selling accessories to owners of iPhones.

The AirPods are designed to work seamlessly with Apple products, and in fact, are not compatible with other phones, like the Samsung Galaxy line. The AirPods line got a boost in the fall with the release of the new AirPods Pro, which sell for \$249, and sport a different design, with noise-canceling and improved audio. They are sold out through Jan. 29, according to Apple.

No. 3 Amazon Echo speakers

With sales of 60 million speakers, no company pushed the connected smart speaker harder than Amazon, and it paid off, says Ives. The lineup starts with the Echo Dot speaker, which sells for between \$25 and \$50, depending upon the time of the year and promotions, and goes up to \$200 for the high-end Echo Studio, which sports the best music reproduction for Echo speakers. It's sold out through Jan. 6.

Amazon has been battling Google for [market share](#), but Amazon grew its base, while Google was flat, says Bret Kinsella, the editor of the Voicebot.AI website, which tracks voice computing. "Google isn't as focused on smart speakers as it is on the Google Assistant for Android," he says, "While Amazon is all in." Market share is Amazon with 61.9% by the third quarter of 2019, to 23.9% for Google, Kinsella says.

No. 4 Apple iPad

Another veteran product from Apple, with sales of 45 million units, in a year that didn't see Apple pushing the envelope for the category. But the entry level tablet now starts at \$329, and many parents find it an acceptable alternative to buying their kids a smartphone, while still bringing them the world of apps.

No. 5 Galaxy S phones

With sales of 30 million for the premium Galaxy S line, Samsung had a "so-so" year that's down somewhat from previous years, which were just over 30 million, Ives said. This comes despite having several innovations (like three lenses in the Galaxy S10 phones) that Apple copied for the iPhone 11 Pro. Samsung got a black eye mid-year with a "disastrous" launch for the Fold phone, a nearly \$2,000 device that was found to fall

apart when critics first checked it out and then saw its release delayed.

No. 6 Apple Watch

Yes, sales of the iPhone took a hit, but Apple made it up with increased sales for the AirPods and AppleWatch. Ives said Apple sold some 25 million watches, which were helped by lower price tags (\$199 on the entry level series 3 edition) and health aspects like tracking sleep and steps, and notifications if you fall down.

Missing from the chart?

Amazon's Fire TV Stick is one of the two best-selling products for the E-tailer, but with an install base of 34 million, Ives said sales were under 10 million units, ditto for Roku and the gaming consoles from Sony, Microsoft and Nintendo.

One of the most popular sellers for the holidays was the Oculus Quest virtual reality headset, if you could get it. Facebook, the company that makes it, was caught by more demand than it could handle. The unit is sold out through February.

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