

You don't have to spend \$1,000 on a phone anymore

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iPhone SE. Credit: Apple

Thanks Apple, Samsung, Motorola and Google, you've convinced me.

The \$1,000 smartphone era for the mass market is over.

Last week, Apple debuted its revived SE model, which has pretty much every feature you'd want in a [phone](#), with exception of a super fancy camera, slicker screen and higher resolution.

But we're talking about a price difference of \$600. The SE is \$399, while the iPhone 11 Pro starts at \$999. (And if you want to throw in extras, like more storage, Apple Care and a case, the bill comes to \$1,917.)

Samsung just introduced a new line of budget smartphones starting at a record low \$110, while Google has slashed the prices of its flagship Pixel smartphones, with the most expensive model, the Pixel 4 XL, now at \$599 (or just a little bit over half the price of the iPhone 11 Pro), down from \$899, through May 9th.

And Motorola released two [new phones](#) that certainly don't scream budget, despite price tags of \$249 for the Moto G Stylus and \$299 for the Moto G Power.

There simply isn't any need to reach for the \$1,000 to bring a shiny phone home.

Let's begin by critically comparing the SE to the 11 Pro.

Remember the (now discontinued) iPhone 8 from 2017? The new SE is basically the iPhone 8, except with new guts inside. It has the same 4.7 inch screen, but a more powerful A13 processing chip, like on the top of the line 11 Pro. It can shoot video in 4K resolution and use Apple's popular Portrait Mode to pretty up photos.

Sure, the resolution is lower—1334x750 vs. 1792x828, but do you care? I always thought the 8 looked pretty good, and would argue that the bulk of Apple customers wouldn't notice the difference.

The 11 Pro gives you three cameras—ultra wide angle, regular wide angle and portrait. I like having them, and would pay for them, but would you? If you're on a budget and need to get closer to a subject, use the most economical zoom method there is—your feet. Just take a few steps nearer to the action.

I also like the bigger screen. But for the many folks out of work due to the coronavirus, who are trying to find new ways to save money and pay the rent, the smaller display would probably be just fine. The phone still makes [phone calls](#), sends and receives texts and emails, connects to Netflix and Zoom, hails an Uber and all the other things we expect from a modern smartphone.

Motorola's G Stylus pours on the features, even at under \$299, offering three cameras and 128 GB of storage, or twice as much as Apple's SE. You don't get the ability to do wireless charging with the phone, but so what?

Samsung has the most expensive smartphone available today, the Galaxy S20 Ultra 5G, starting at \$1,399, with a whopping 6.9 inch screen, 128 GB of storage and three cameras that boast of greater zoom capability than any other [smartphone](#). Compare that to the new Samsung A51, which still has a hefty 6.5 inch screen, half the amount of storage (64 GB) and four cameras. And it sells for just \$399. Which one sounds better to you?

What happened? How did these manufacturers that were so happy to jack up the prices of phones suddenly in 2020 start inching them way down to affordable pricing?

"The money on phones is being spent on the low end, not the high," says Gene Munster, an analyst and investor with Lpup Ventures. "This is what consumers want."

He says that some 80% of phone sales come from the lower end, while the top of the line models get attention, press acclaim and early adopters.

He adds that companies like Apple and Google realize that it's not just the sale of the phone that makes them money anymore, but software add-ons like extra storage, music subscriptions and the like.

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