

iPhone 12 and 12 Pro first impressions: It's zippier, with an amazing camera

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The first thing you notice about the new iPhone 12 and 12 Pro is the different feel.

The phone has been redesigned, with a square, boxy body, minus the round edge of the previous edition, the iPhone 11.

And that's a good thing, as the device feels less slippery in your hands, minus a case. Apple sells the new phones as having more durable glass, which makes it four times less likely to break than the iPhone 11 models, but we didn't have the heart to do a break test, shortly after the new phones arrived. We'll leave it to a YouTuber.

We got our hands on two of the four new Apple iPhones Tuesday, and this is a first impression. We'll have a more detailed review later in the week.

Let's start with logistics. The iPhone 12 (starts at \$799) and 12 Pro (starts at \$999) go on sale Friday, but pre-orders are already backed up, with the 12 being shipped as late as Nov. 5, and the 12 Pro as late as Nov. 17. But you can always check Apple retail stores, Best Buy, wireless outlets and others on Friday to see if they have stock. (Two other iPhone 12 models, the Mini and the Pro Max, will be available Nov. 13.)

The big difference between the 12 and 12 Pro? There are two cameras on the 12 vs. 3 for the Pro, ultra-wide, wide and a portrait lens. Otherwise, they are practically identical.

So besides the feel, what else jumps out initially? (I used a 12 Pro for the first impressions.)

The difference in the photo quality touted by Apple isn't an exaggeration. The phone itself is awfully zippy, but not night and day compared to the previous model. The larger screen size, 6.1 inches on the 12 Pro vs. 5.8 inches on the 11 Pro, is barely noticeable because Apple removed some of the bezels to make room for more screen, so it doesn't seem that much bigger.

Two of Apple's biggest selling points for the upgrade is that it now

connects to the faster 5G wireless service being offered by Verizon, AT&T and T-Mobile, and that it uses an A14 "Bionic" processing chip, which Apple calls "the fastest chip ever in a smartphone."

On 5G, you can start looking forward to the faster speed down the line, perhaps by mid- to late 2021, since now, the carriers either have spotty service that isn't fully national (Verizon) or a different variety of 5G that's slower, and thus more reliable (AT&T and T-Mobile.)

On the A14 chip, you see the speed in little things. I subscribe to Sling TV, the cable alternative service, and it's one of the slower opening apps I have. On the iPhone 11 Pro, it took five seconds to kick in, versus two seconds on iPhone 12 Pro. Instagram was one second to load on iPhone 12, vs. two seconds on the previous model.

But it's in photos and videos where you really see the upgrade. If you like to shoot in low light, you'll really be wowed. Apple says it lets in 87% more light on the third, ultra-wide angle lens. As someone who loves photographing early in the morning, before the sun comes up, my experience on the 11 Pro was that the third lens was always tough to use on those occasions, ditto for post sunset.

For my tests Tuesday, I stepped into the closet and closed the door most of the way, letting in just a peek of light. Both were shot on the third, ultra-wide angle lens. While the closet is nothing to write home about, it looks like we had a full lighting kit in there for the 12 Pro shot, versus nothing on the 11 Pro, when in fact, nothing was different, just a way better lens that lets in more light on the 12 Pro.

For the image of my beloved, vintage Gibson ES-125, I shot her in the garage, with the overhead lights off and the shades drawn. You don't need any words to tell you how different the two shots are.

Finally, Apple is making a big deal out of how its videos can now be shot with Dolby Vision, a production enhancer that brings more clarity and color to films viewed on your smart TV. The twist is that Apple can do the Dolby encoding on the fly, within the phone.

The videos I looked at in my quick tests looked nice, but nothing radically different. And note to readers: your Dolby videos are in a different file format. If you want to share them on social media, they won't be seen in the DV format that Apple is touting. (They still look great though.)

I tested with a quick DV video to Facebook, where the file was transcoded into another format. On Apple's website, it suggests sharing the Dolby videos by playing them on your TV, via the AirPlay feature that works in conjunction with the Apple TV set-top box for TV viewing.

The big question I picked up on [social media](#) Tuesday. Do people really need to rush right out and trade in their old phones? For most people, they'll be happy with what they have, because beyond the camera, you get a slightly zippier phone that might crack less. But if you use your iPhone to explore low light photography, you'll want to consider this 12 Pro model, and tune in later in the week for a more in-depth review.

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