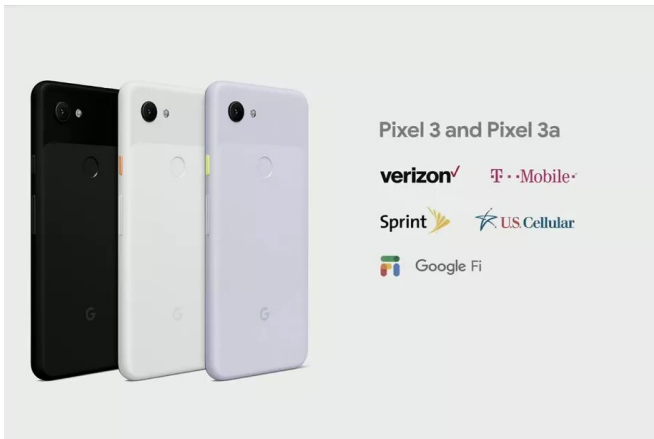


Pixel 3a vs. Pixel 3: Great camera for the price makes Google's \$399 phone the better buy

9 May 2019, by Edward C. Baig, Usa Today



Google's launch Tuesday of the \$399 Pixel 3a and \$479 Pixel 3a XL smartphones only seven months after the release of the pricier Pixel 3 and Pixel 3 XL handsets likely has you asking: "Why would I want to spend at least \$400 more for Google's premium flagships, when these latest mid-priced devices offer so many overlapping features?"

The answer, at least for most of you, is you wouldn't.

What the rather steep climb up to \$799 (for the Pixel 3) or \$899 (for the 3 XL) buys you is a [device](#) with a better build quality and, yes, some nice extra [features](#), though given the price differential features you can probably live without.

Here's a deeper dive into Pixel 3 models versus Pixel the 3a devices:

The basics

There's a whole lot of sameness here, even down to the choice of three colors. The Pixel 3s, as well as the newbie devices, come in what Google's marketers refer to as Just Black and Clearly White.

OK, there's a slight departure on the third option: the Pixel 3a also comes in Purple-ish, the Pixel 3 in Not Pink.

All the phones have 4GB of RAM memory and start at 64GB of storage. On the Pixel 3 and 3 XL, you can spend more for a 128GB storage option that is not available on the [new phones](#).

For sure, with the more robust Qualcomm Snapdragon 845 on the Pixel 3s compared to the Snapdragon 670 on the 3a models, the new phones aren't as snappy. But again, the step up for the average consumer may not justify the expenditure.

There isn't a huge variation in weight or size either. And for better or worse-Pixel designs won't win any beauty contests—they look much the same, too.

Both rely on fingerprint sensors; there is no facial recognition.

On all the devices, you can squeeze the sides to summon the Google Assistant.

And, of course, both currently run the Android Pie flavor of Google's mobile operating system; eventually (unless you choose to try the beta software in the interim) they'll run the upcoming Android Q.

Build quality

The body of the latest phones are made of a lightweight durable polycarbonate unibody design

versus the Pixel 3's premium metal frame and glass most frequently back, so there is something of a trade-off there.

The glass on the front—Corning's Gorilla Glass on the Pixel 3 models versus something called Dragontrail from Asahi on the 3a—may be less superior, though I'm not sure your average buyer will notice. And only time will tell if any meaningful problems surface.

The screen has certainly held up fine on the few days I've had with the devices.

Cameras

The Pixel 3s earned high marks from reviewers, me included, for its excellent camera. And if the camera is what attracted you to the Pixel 3s in the first place, the good news is these latest devices pretty much match the quality.

Features that debuted on the Pixel 3 such as the machine learning driven Top Shot are found here, too. That's where the phone, at least on some pictures, does its best to surface the best pic among a burst of images automatically captured—in theory, one where everyone's smiling or otherwise properly posing

And yes, there's Night Sight, which as the name suggests is all about capturing images in dim light without a flash.

It also has Portrait mode on the front and rear cameras.

There are a few photo tradeoffs. On the Pixel 3a, you don't get the second wide-angle selfie camera that is on the Pixel 3.

And while the 3s and 3as let you upload images for free to Google Photos, you can do so at the original (better) quality on the earlier models.

Battery

Google says the battery on the new phones will deliver up to seven hours of use on a 15-minute charge and last 30 hours on a full charge with a battery system that is said to learn your favorite apps and prioritize power for the ones you use

In fact, specs-wise, the new phones have batteries rated a bit higher. (I haven't conducted any formal tests.)

Call Screen

One of the features that generated the most attention on the Pixel 3 is called Call Screen, which is meant to turn the table on all those telemarketer calls.

When a call comes in from a number you don't recognize, you can tap a screen call button that gives an automated response to the caller that tells them "you are using a screening service from Google."

Wireless charging

Put this in the "you've got to give up something to get something" category. The Pixel 3a and 3a XL lack the feature that the Pixel 3 and 3 XL have. Yes, wireless charging is convenient. So if it is important to you, this one of those considerations that will make you pay more.

Water resistance

See above because this is another feature that requires the step up in premium. You're not going to swim with any of these devices. So while you'd rather have the feature than not, this may be a trade-off that, well, isn't that much of a trade-off.

Headphone jack

Score one for the new phones.

Google, even on its mid-priced devices brought back the standard 3.55mm headphone jack that disappeared on its more expensive Pixels (not to mention rival phones like the iPhone).

For those of us who still use corded headphones, at least some of the time, this is a welcome, and even somewhat unexpected, development.

Bottom line

In a side by side tale of the tape comparison, the Pixel 3 is a better [phone](#) than the Pixel 3a. But the 3a represents the far better value.

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