

Samsung Galaxy Fold is back: Is it ready for primetime this time

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Gently. That's how Samsung apparently wants you to treat its nearly \$2,000 Galaxy Fold smartphone, which finally goes on sale in the U.S. on Friday.

And that's got to make potential buyers a bit nervous, especially after the long delay that kept it out of their hands in the first place. After all, the very first thing you see when you unbox the freshly minted, and "newly-fixed" second version of Samsung's pricey "foldable" hybrid smartphone/mini-sized tablet is a "Care Instruction" sheet.

You're warned in advance, for example, "not to press the screen with a hard or sharp object, such as a pen or fingernail, or apply excessive pressure." And not to attach adhesives to the main screen "or remove the top protective layer."

Oh, and if you miss the warnings, they show up again when you set up the Fold.

No doubt Samsung wants to reshape the narrative for the Fold, which has a 4.6-inch display when

folded like a candy bar and a 7.3-inch screen when you unfold it like a book.

The backstory is that Samsung was forced back to the drawing board after version No. 1 of the Fold never launched as planned in April after some early reviewers reported broken screens and other damage issues. Samsung quickly retrieved all of the review units it had sent out.

At the time, some of those reviewers did unpeel the [protective layer](#) because Samsung hadn't made it clear that doing so was a no-no.

The redesign of the Fold, fortunately, makes it harder to make that mistake since the protective film extends under the bezels on the edge of the screen, one of the overall improvements to the integrity of the design. Samsung also added plastic caps to the top and bottom and of the phone to prevent debris from getting in. Unfortunately, the phone still isn't water- or dust-resistant, which, frankly, is difficult to fathom on a device that costs this much.

Being in the Fold gets you special support

At \$1,980, the price alone obviously limits its appeal; Samsung wants you to think of it more as a Rolex than a Timex.

Even so, the company says the units that went on sale in South Korea and Europe ahead of the U.S. sold out, though it's unclear what the supply was.

To help justify the cost and the Fold's "luxury" status, Samsung is offering buyers premium support at no extra charge. You'll be able to call trained "experts" 24/7 through a dedicated phone number or reach out to them via video chat. Samsung says the experts will even come see you for free—in your office, at home or a [coffee shop](#).

As an added inducement, Samsung is providing

buyers with a one-time, one-year out-of-warranty screen replacement order of \$149 plus taxes, as long as you buy the Fold by year-end. And the company is throwing in the Galaxy Bud wireless Bluetooth earbuds that cost \$129 when bought separately.

While the Fold's ultimate durability must stand the test of time—and a lengthier review period—the good news is that it doesn't feel fragile. I opened and shut the Fold numerous times to test its modified hinge; each time you hear a satisfying smack sound. No signs of breakage.

However hard it is to ignore the problems that surfaced with its ill-fated predecessor, you still can't help being impressed with a flexible screen that bends this way, even with a visible crease on the internal folded-out display that, depending on what's on the screen and the angle in which you are viewing it, is a tad distracting.

As with the first device, you can run three apps simultaneously, by swiping left from the edge of the main screen. You can also continue to use apps on the main screen that you start on the smaller external display.

My first impression of the internal unfolded display—even with the crease—is positive. However, given its dimensions, the external display is narrow, difficult to maneuver and not usable horizontally.

Samsung is promising all-day battery life with the two independent batteries that are supposed to work in tandem inside the Fold. That remains to be seen as I put this replacement Fold through its paces. Like other Galaxy phones, the device is also capable of reverse wireless charging, meaning you can place Galaxy Buds on top of the Fold to charge them up.

Samsung still must convince customers, even those with who have the small ransom to pay for such a device, that a foldable phone like the Fold, isn't just a solution looking for a problem.

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