

Apple's new iPhone SE is just \$399—What's to lose? Here's what you need to know.

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iPhone SE. Credit: Apple

If Apple's new iPhone is just \$399, why not just buy that one, instead of forking over \$699, \$999 or \$1,099 for the bigger iPhone versions?

What's to lose? How bad could be?

That's the question many consumers have been posing to me recently, in the wake of Apple's release of its revamped SE model.

The answer is not bad at all, in fact, there's very little not to like.

I've been using the SE for a few days, and can highly recommend it. Fine print: If you don't mind a smaller screen than on other iPhones, having just one [camera lens](#) instead of 2 or 3, and less battery time, the new SE is for you.

You're also looking at a lower quality screen than those on the more expensive iPhones, with 1334 by 750 for the SE, compared to say, 1792 by 828 for the iPhone 11. (I can hear the budget crowd out there saying "So what?")

If you're sitting on an older iPhone 6 or 6S, 7 or 8 model phones, it's time to upgrade. You'll get a faster phone that works in more situations, with a better camera and software and, undoubtedly, a way better battery.

Plus, the SE is smaller than any of the newer iPhones that been released since the iPhone 8 in 2018. The SE is basically the iPhone 8 (same size, same form) with heftier insides. It's iPhone Classic for those of us who have fond memories of smaller iPhones with Home buttons and Touch ID instead of FaceID.

The SE model was Apple's original budget phone and last sold for \$349, before it got retired in 2019. The 2020 version has more storage (starting at 64 GB vs. starting at 32 GB) the larger screen (4.7 inches vs. 4 inches) up-to-date software and most importantly, the same A13 processing chip used on the new 11 series of iPhones.

What's missing are those extra camera lenses. The 11 has two, ultra-wide and [wide angle](#), while the 11 Pro series has three. The addition is the portrait [lens](#) to bring you closer to the action. The original SE didn't have Apple's "Portrait" mode to add background blur to a portrait; the new SE does.

Is it worth an extra \$300 in a pandemic to get one extra lens, or \$600 to get two? If you want to save money and get closer, you can always use the more economical zoom of your feet. Just step in closer. Ditto for the ultra-wide lens. Step backwards.

Or, you could spring for an accessory lens from companies like Moment and OlloClip, which are way more economical. Moment's higher-quality lenses sell for just over \$100, while OlloClip, which has ceased operations during the COVID crisis, has a three-in-one lens (fisheye, ultra-wide and macro) available on Amazon and eBay for around \$100.

The other iPhone still in the lineup is the XR from 2018, which sells for \$599. It has the same 6.1 inch screen of the iPhone 11, but with a less powerful A12 chip, and one camera lens instead of the 2 on the 11.

Samsung recently a new lineup of budget phones, the Galaxy A series, that takes dead aim at people who think spending \$1,000 for a phone is out of whack. The entry level phone, the A01, starts at \$109. The top of the line in the A series, the A51, sells for \$399, like the SE, but has a larger 6.5 inch screen and four lenses. Samsung is scheduled to send in a unit for review, so we'll fill you in shortly after it arrives.

Kudos to Apple for doubling the amount of storage in the new SE, as 32 GBs wouldn't get you very far these days. But then, neither would 64 GBs. Apps are getting bigger and bigger, and as photos and videos get higher resolution, it gets tougher to find room for all this on your phone. Especially since Apple doesn't offer expandable storage, like Samsung and other Android manufacturers.

An extra \$50 would double the amount of room on your SE, and bring you to \$450. You did just save at least \$400 by buying the model just under the iPhone 11. Live it and give yourself a little room to breathe, storage wise.

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