

Looking to buy a new iPhone 12? Here are 6 questions to ask before you pre-order one

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With pre-orders opening Friday at 5 a.m. PT for the new crop of iPhones, you're probably wondering should I upgrade?

Before you fork over money, we've got some questions to ask that may help you make a decision.

First, know that the iPhone 12 and iPhone 12 Pro models that you can preorder Friday and buy in store next week on Oct. 23, are touted as more powerful, faster and sleeker than last year's editions, with improved camera for photos and videos. The iPhone 12 and iPhone 11 are pretty similar. (The two other iPhones, the Mini and the iPhone 12 Pro Max, will be released in November.)

How are the iPhone 11 and 12 different?

The 12 is actually slightly smaller with the same size 6.1-inch screen. The 12 does have higher screen resolution tougher glass, a faster processing chip and a higher starting price tag: \$799 versus \$599.

Apple's sales pitch for the 12 touts better battery performance, improved gaming and the ability to make videos using Dolby Vision.

Dolby Vision? Wait a minute. What's that?

Dolby Vision is a mastering process used to bring out richer colors and detail in videos, for playing back on 4K TVs. Netflix says the process provides the "Best-looking image regardless of TV capabilities."

But on the iPhone 12 Pro (and 12 Pro Max), Dolby Vision will be woven into the video creation process. Users can opt in for the higher resolution videos. But there's a problem. Apple's Dolby Vision files will be in a different format and not recognized on social media. At launch, filmmakers won't even be able to import the files into Apple's Final Cut Pro video editor to work with the files. The best you'll be able to do is either show them off from your phone or use Apple's AirPlay to beam them wirelessly to your TV, if you have a smart TV that works with AirPlay.

What about 5G? I could really use the extra speed.

This is Apple's biggest selling point, a phone that connects to the supposedly ultra-fast new 5G networks. On 5G, per Apple, "you can download movies on the fly. Stream higher-quality video. Or FaceTime in HD over cellular. With lots less lag."

Good luck, consumers. In our tests, 5G, as it stands today, is spotty, in terms of Verizon, and when it's available from AT&T and T-Mobile, barely any faster than the current 4G. Analysts expect 5G to start making an impact within the next two years. So if you're buying the phone for 5G nirvana, you could easily wait for the next edition and not have missed anything.

OK, then, I just want to go bionic A14. What can

I do with that baby?

Apple says you'll get more detail in your photos and videos. And obviously games and Netflix and YouTube programs will load quicker. But does your current iPhone have an issue with loading? Do your photos and videos lack detail?

That new Ceramic Shield—an iPhone that won't crack? Really?

Not exactly. Apple says it's using new glass made by Corning, the folks who make the Gorilla Glass that so many people have cracked on smartphones through the years. And this time around, the company says it's "4X" less likely to crack than vs. the iPhone 11. You know us reviewers can't wait to test this one out.

OK, can I ditch my DSLR now? The new iPhone camera sounds so cool.

Indeed, it does. Specifically on the iPhone 12 Pro Max edition. And if you're a serious photography buff, these features will probably really appeal to you. For the rest of the world, they'll probably be happy with their current iPhone.

The iPhone 12 Pro Max touts a larger image sensor and pixels that let in more light, and improved quality particularly on the extra wide-angle lens, which didn't have the same low-light punch as the medium wide lens on the 11 Pro.

Apple claims an 87% improvement in low-light performance for the new Pro Max, which sounds amazing. For the [real world](#), how bad are your low-light images now?

If you ever wished you had a better telephoto lens on an iPhone, there's a slight increase for the 12 Pro Max, going from 52mm to 65mm. That will get you a little closer to the action, but you certainly won't get close-ups of a touchdown from the stadium seats or get to zoom in on the face of a lead singer at a concert.

Ditch the DSLR? I wouldn't. As great as the iPhone camera is—and it's a stunner—with a camera, you get better low-light performance, manual controls,

and the ability to use different lens. For real zoom effects.

But still, the 12 Pro Max is the iPhone I'd select. But then, I'm a photographer.

For the rest of you, weigh cost versus features and you should be able to come up with a wise decision. Others may just be happy with the phone they have now. As photographer Rob Greer noted on Facebook this week: "More than ever I think it's an issue of need versus want. If someone gave me an iPhone 12 or an amazing trade-in value on my 11, then I would get it. It's just at the point where good enough is good enough."

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