

So you want a new iPhone? Apple's got 7. How to choose the right one for you

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With two new iPhones going on sale Friday, Apple now offers seven of them, from the entry-level \$399 SE to the top of the line \$1,099 iPhone 12 Pro Max.

In-between are the iPhone 12, 12 Pro, 12 Mini and two older models, 2019's iPhone 11 and 2018's iPhone XR.

The Mini (\$699) and Max are the new offerings on sale Friday after a week of presales saw the Max back-ordered for online orders through as early as Dec. 7, and the Mini back-ordered to as early as Nov. 24.

What's the difference between the phones? In a nutshell:

Size

The SE and Mini are both compact iPhones, the way Apple used to make them before they started growing up with the iPhone 6. The SE has a 4.7-inch screen to the Mini's 5.4 inches. But both seem identical in size because the Mini removed the Bezels so there's more screen in a small body.

Cameras

The Max is touted as the state of the art, ultimate iPhone, with bigger pixels for low light performance. However, in our back-to-back tests with the 12 Pro and the Max, it was hard to see much of a difference. Where the Max does trump all the other iPhone cameras is with its zoom lens, which comes in tighter, thanks to its 65mm focal length, an increase over the 52mm on the 12 Pro.

Screen strength

This year Apple is using a new, stronger glass that it says is "4X" less likely to crack on the Mini, 12, 12 Pro and Max.

Performance

Apple loves to tout the speed of its processing chip that it makes for the phone, which most people wouldn't notice unless they were hardcore gamers or fans of augmented reality. The 12 series has the A14 chip, the latest, while the SE and 11 have last year's A13, and the XR goes back to the A12.

5G

The 12 series of iPhones all connect to what is touted as the faster new wireless 5G standard. As consumers have already discovered, however, current 5G isn't much faster, if at all, than the current 4G. But that's supposed to change in 2021. So don't make immediate access to 5G one of your decision points.

Another determining factor is what your budget is. There's an iPhone for a variety of price ranges.

\$400

The iPhone SE is still Apple's most economical phone, starting at \$399 and is a classic, compact iPhone that harkens to another era. You can still

use Touch ID instead of Face ID, and there's a Home button for navigation. But if you have the extra \$300, you get a lot more phone with the Mini. The Mini has two camera lenses—a wide and ultrawide—compared to just one for the SE, the faster A14 Apple processor, higher-resolution screen (2340x1080 versus 1334x750) and more importantly, that new and improved glass. A consideration: How often do you crack your screen?

\$500

The XR was first introduced in 2018 as a sequel to the X, which ushered in a new design era for Apple that saw the Home button go away. You get a 6.1-inch screen, which is the same size as the new 12 and 12 Pro phones, the older A12 chip, 64 GB of storage and way more resolution than the SE, 1792 x 828. At \$500, it's economical but worth remembering that Apple sunsets older models yearly when it updates the iOS mobile operating system, so you might be better off buying something newer, like the iPhone 11.

\$600

The 11 is just a year old, with a generous 6.1-inch screen, the A13 chip, the same resolution as the XR and it's less likely to be expired by Apple for the latest iOS for several years.

\$700

The iPhone 12 Mini. But why buy last year's technology when an extra \$100 would get you the Mini? It's a little smaller, sure, but has the stronger glass, faster chip and latest cameras.

\$800

The iPhone 12 is larger than the Mini, with a 6.1-inch screen, the newer glass that's less likely to break, and it has a way higher resolution than the lower end models, at 2532 x 1170.

\$1,000

So what do you get for a grand with the iPhone 12 Pro? Besides the faster chip and tougher glass, you

get the same resolution and screen size (6.1 inches) as the regular 12. But you do get three camera lenses instead of two—with an ultrawide, wide and portrait lens that will get you a little closer to the action—plus, a more generous amount of storage, 128 GB versus 64GB on the standard iPhone 12.

\$1,099

The 12 Pro Max is the biggest iPhone ever, with a hefty 6.7-inch screen that will take some getting used to. It's hard to fit in one hand, but once you do get master it, it's a joy to look at, like carrying an iPad Mini in your pocket and actually having it fit. With the best resolution of any iPhone (2778 x 1284) and the best cameras (love that bigger zoom lens), the Max is for the person who lusts for the ultimate iPhone. But your decision on this should really factor on the screen size (do you crave it?) and whether it's worth it spring for the extra zoom focal length.

And like all iPhones, throwing in the extras will cost you, big time. Added storage (a must with all those high-resolution photos and videos) will cost you \$1,199 with 256 GB or \$1,399 with 512 GB. Throw in Apple Care and the new MagSafe case and charger, and you're at \$1,119 before tax, with everything.

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