



Apple Releases iPhone 4S

Apple consumers began lining up Friday morning for a chance to purchase the technology giant's latest innovation, the iPhone 4S. While the device closely resembles the iPhone 4, which Apple released last year, it features many intriguing specifics, and Apple reported that its sales topped four million units over the weekend in the United States, Canada, France, Germany, Japan, and the United Kingdom. Last year more than 1.7 million units of the iPhone 4 were sold in its first weekend.



The release coincides with the end of Apple's era under founder Steve Jobs, who died this month after an eight-year battle with cancer. The iPhone 4S has received mostly positive reviews for its voice-recognition software, speedier processor, and improved camera. The device also provides Apple with fresh ammunition in its fight against Google Inc.'s Android software, which will appear on a host of new smart phones in the year-end holiday season.

[Charlie Wolf](#), an analyst at Needham & Co. in New York, had predicted that it would "easily outpace any previous launch," adding that it helps that the iPhone is available on the three largest U.S. carriers for the first time, which will bring in new buyers.

Depending on features, the iPhone 4S ranges in price from \$199 to \$399. Apple also has released an update to its iOS mobile operating system, which customers can download to their existing devices. The software comes with 200 new features and a Web storage service for synchronizing photos, documents, music, and other files across different Apple gadgets. The new phone touts a faster processor than its predecessor (a custom chip Apple designed called the A5) and a new cell radio that can work on both CDMA and GSM networks, so the Verizon and Sprint models will be able to function overseas.

The device has an eight-megapixel camera with improved optics and, as a result, the 4S takes some of the cleanest photos seen in any mobile device. Apple has done a similarly excellent job with video. The iPhone 4S captures 1080-pixel content, and does so with the same crispness and polish that it lends to its still photos, meaning the phone could easily stand in for a dedicated point-and-shoot camera.

The iPhone 4S has an improved antenna design as well. The company claims the phone can "intelligently" switch between its two antennas. In one test, the user did seem to be getting more bars more consistently, though it was difficult to say if it made any notable difference in terms of call quality.

Apple also boasted of faster download speeds over certain 3G networks, though some observers see little improvement compared with the older iPhone, and the speeds paled in comparison to the 4G LTE service that Verizon offers.

Siri Software

The iPhone 4S ushers in the world of iOS 5 — which introduces a slew of improvements and enhancements, some minor and some rather more major. However, it does not promise a visual



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overhaul. While there are some visual changes, such as rounded switches which were previously square, and a little less shadow around message bubbles, the general iOS aesthetic remains in tact. Significant work has gone into replacing core components of the operating system, however. Notifications have been redesigned from the ground up. Gone are the workflow-breaking modal alerts that users have endured since 1.0, replaced by something Apple calls the Notification Center. Instead of interrupting the front-most task, incoming alerts now present themselves with an unobtrusive banner that cube-flips from the top of the device. Functionally, notifications still work the same way, meaning the user has two options for interacting with them: either address or ignore them, which will either whisk the user into the appropriate app or relegate those alerts to an off-screen notification drawer.

Most notable, however, is the [Siri](#) feature on the iPhone 4S. Siri — the personal assistant application for iOS, Apple's mobile operating system — uses natural language processing to answer questions, make recommendations, and perform actions by delegating requests to an expanding set of web services. Siri adapts to the user's individual preferences over time and personalizes results — for example, with such highly personal tasks as making taxi reservations and dinner plans. Siri's functionality, however, is limited outside the United States, to the chagrin of fans of the innovative, voice-activated intelligent assistant. Utilizing a combination of voice recognition, logic, and text-to-speech, the software can interpret casual requests and follow conversations. With Siri, the user can ask for directions, send text messages, schedule reminders or appointments, get suggestions on where to eat, and lots more. Siri can even answer not-so-basic questions such as, "Who wrote *Jane Eyre*?"

Competition with Android

The iPhone 4S is facing competition from the slew of [Android](#)-powered devices on the market. However, research demonstrates that the Apple iPhone 4S outperforms Android technology on multiple dimensions. Compared to the latest and greatest Android devices, the iPhone 4S is still tops for Web browsing. It scored significantly better than the Motorola Droid Bionic on Verizon, the Motorola Photon on Sprint, and the Samsung Galaxy S II on AT&T. However, Android phones have a comparative advantage over iPhones in terms of their precedence. The iPhone 4S catches up — or comes close to catching up — in several areas where Android phones have long excelled. It also gains an advantage with its high-quality camera and improved voice command system. Apple's iPhone still lacks many features Android handsets provide. It has no support for external storage, no real file access, and a very limited, locked-down approach to customization.

While the iPhone is the best-selling single smart phone, all of the devices running Google's Android operating system account for more of the industry's sales. HTC Corp., Samsung Electronics Co., Motorola Mobility Holdings, Inc., and other manufacturers have adopted the software. Google offers Android for free and then makes money on mobile advertising and services. That revenue now accounts for \$2.5 billion a year, the company said last Friday when it released quarterly results.

In addition, many of the features which [distinguish](#) the iPhone 4S from Android, such as the Siri voice recognition technology, a Cards app for sending paper greetings in the mail, a Reminders app, and a Find my Friends app, can easily be remedied for those already owning Droids. Siri software, for instance, can be replicated on Android by downloading the free app Vilingo. Android users often opine that newer iterations of iOS simply play catch-up to a cache of features that already exist in their phones. Vlingo Virtual Assistant for Android is a testament to that ethos, and it's the closest thing to Apple's new Siri voice control.

Likewise, Astrid Tasks provides a comparable alternative to the Reminders app; Astrid Tasks is the most



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popular to-do list for Android, and its best add-on feature is Astrid Locale. The app contains powerful organization tools to begin with — reminders, list organization, deadlines, sorting, and audio or vibration alerts — but Astrid Locale throws the last essential — location-based tasks — into the mix, and is available for a mere \$1.49 upgrade on the Android Market. Google Latitude provides a reasonable alternative to Find My Friends; it has for several months allowed users to check into different locations, share their location with family and friends, and even unlock offers when they become available.

Nonetheless, the Apple iPhone 4S marks a significant phase in the development of smart phone technology and promises to lead toward even greater innovation.



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