

Every iPhone 17 model compared: Should you buy the base model, Air, Pro, or Max?

The iPhone 17 series brings some of the biggest changes that Apple's mobile devices have ever seen. Use this guide to help decide which model is best for you.

Written by Cesar Cadenas, Staff Writer
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Apple's iPhone 17 lineup is officially here, bringing four new devices to the table. As expected, the series consists of upgrades to past models such as the iPhone 17, iPhone 17 Pro, and iPhone 17 Pro Max. But this generation is shaking things up by introducing the iPhone Air -- a new addition that Apple says is "the thinnest iPhone ever made." And for the first time in several generations, there will not be a "Plus" model.

Also: [How to clear your iPhone cache \(and why you should do it before upgrading to iPhone 17\)](#)

Beyond the iPhone Air, the series also brings in sweeping upgrades across the board. The iPhone 17 series will have higher-quality displays, greater overall performance, and refined camera systems for better photography and video capture. Each of the four smartphones shares many of these improvements; however, each one offers its own distinctive features that allow it to stand out from the others.

Interested buyers have plenty of options. This raises the question: which iPhone 17 model is right for you? The answer isn't straightforward since each device offers something unique. So to cut through all the noise, I've broken down the major features of every iPhone 17 option, highlighting the advantages they offer and explaining why you might want to pick one over the others.

Features	iPhone 17	iPhone 17 Air	iPhone 17 Pro	iPhone 17 Pro Max
Prices	\$799	\$999	\$1,099	\$1,199
Display	6.3-inch Super Retina XDR with ProMotion	6.5-inch Super Retina XDR with ProMotion	6.3-inch Super Retina XDR with ProMotion	6.9-inch Super Retina XDR with ProMotion
Battery	30 hours of video playback	27 hours of video playback	39 hours of video playback	39 hours of video playback
Finishes	Lavender, Sage, Mist Blue, White, Black	Sky Blue, Black, White, Light Gold	Cosmic Orange, Deep Blue, Silver	Cosmic Orange, Deep Blue, Silver
Processor	A19	A19 Pro	A19 Pro	A19 Pro
Frame	Aluminum frame	Titanium frame	Aluminum unibody	Aluminum unibody
Storage	256GB, 512GB	256GB, 512GB, 1TB	256GB, 512GB, 1TB	256GB, 512GB, 1TB, 2TB
Camera	18MP Center Stage selfie / 48MP Fusion Main, 48MP Fusion Ultra Wide	18MP Center Stage selfie / 48MP Fusion Main	18MP Center Stage / 48MP Fusion Main, 48MP Fusion Ultra Wide, 48MP Fusion Telephoto	18MP Center Stage / 48MP Fusion Main, 48MP Fusion Ultra Wide, 48MP Fusion Telephoto

You should buy the iPhone 17 if...



1. You want a ProMotion display without paying Pro model prices.

For the first time, Apple is bringing its ProMotion display technology to a base iPhone. This will allow the [iPhone 17](#) to house a notably vibrant screen with an adaptive refresh rate of up to 120Hz. A feature like this enables "supersmooth scrolling, immersive gaming, improved efficiency." Its glass is protected by Ceramic Shield 2, a new feature that provides better resistance to damage

and reduced glare. Another benefit of ProMotion is that it has an adaptive refresh rate of up to 120Hz.

Up until now, ProMotion was reserved for higher-end models. With this upgrade, the iPhone 17 is a great choice for people who want a premium viewing experience without needing to pay a premium price.

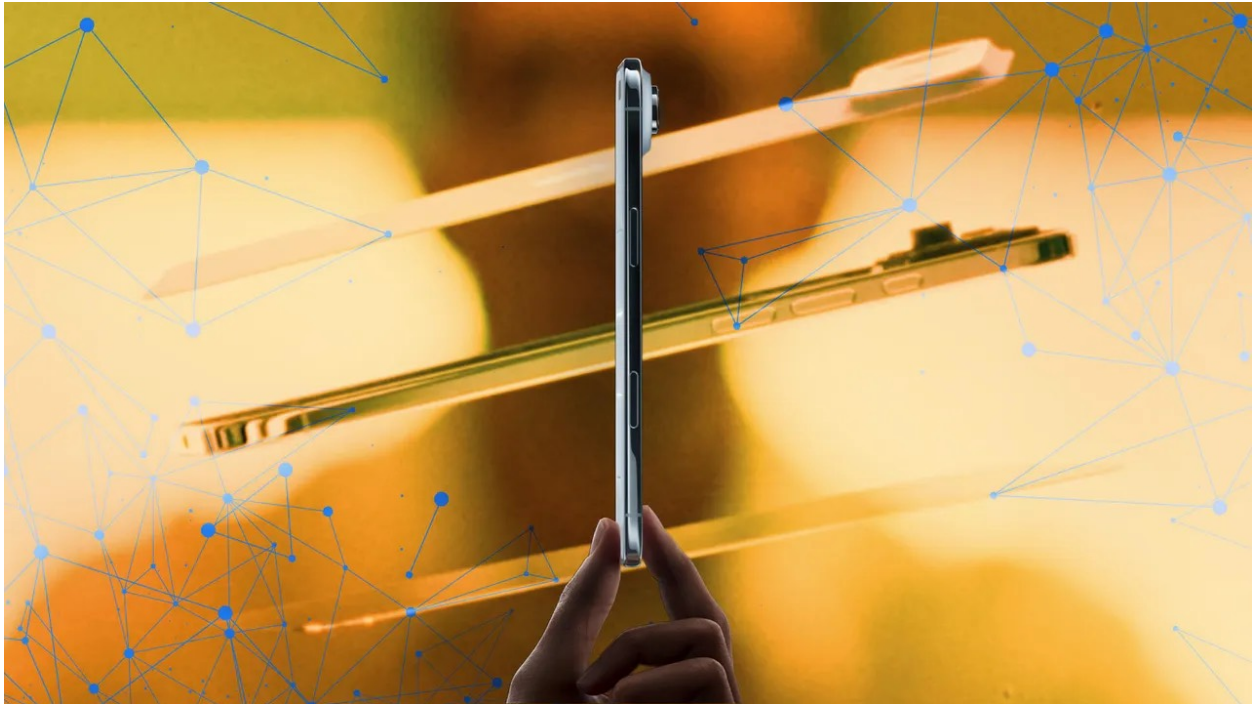
Also: Apple iPhone 17 Pro vs. iPhone 16 Pro: I compared both models, and here are the differences

2. You prefer a traditional design

I'll get into this in detail later, but every other iPhone 17 model has seen drastic changes to its design. The iPhone Air, for example, is incredibly thin, while the iPhone Pro models introduce a "plateau" that houses important components.

If you want the traditional iPhone design of raised camera rings on the back and sleek, contoured edges, stick with the base iPhone 17. It keeps the old style that people have grown to love over the years. Also, it's the same size as the iPhone 16 Pro. So if you're used to the old Pro model, the transition to the iPhone 17 will be seamless.

You should buy the iPhone Air if...



1. You want the thinnest iPhone ever made

The [iPhone Air](#) is Apple's boldest design move in years. It has an ultrathin smartphone, measuring just 5.6 millimeters thick -- roughly a third thinner than the iPhone 16 Pro. It is Apple's slimmest iPhone ever made and perfect for anyone who values ultraportable devices. Despite its slim frame, the iPhone Air doesn't skimp on the hardware because the device comes with, not one, not two, but three chips inside.

Also: [The best iPhone 17, iPhone 17 Air, and iPhone 17 Pro cases you can buy](#)

You have the A19 Pro, a fast-performing 6-core processor. Then there's the N1, which is a "new Apple-designed wireless chip" enabling support for Wi-Fi 7, Bluetooth 6, and the smart home standard Thread. Finally, the iPhone Air has the C1X, a "new cellular modem designed" to be twice as fast as the C1 and more energy efficient.

2. You don't mind trading in some features.

To achieve such a thin form factor, Apple had to gut some key iPhone features. The iPhone Air only comes with a single rear camera, a 48 Fusion lens. This single camera lets users take photographs in both 28mm and 35mm focal lengths, as well as shoot high-quality macro photos. It also relies solely on eSIM for cellular connection. You won't be able to insert your old SIM card in the Air model. If you can live with these sacrifices, the iPhone 17 Air provides a good balance of style and performance that the others can't provide.

You should buy the iPhone 17 Pro if...



1. You want advanced camera upgrades.

Every single model under the iPhone 17 umbrella has received substantial camera upgrades. For instance, all four have a new Center Stage selfie camera. This upgraded lens houses a "square front camera sensor," delivering a "wider field of view and higher resolution" images. It even lets you take landscape selfies without needing to rotate the smartphone horizontally.

Also: Apple iPhone 17 Pro vs. iPhone 16 Pro: I compared both models, and here are the differences

But the iPhone 17 Pro takes things even further by housing three 48MP Fusion cameras for taking sharper photos and highly detailed images. This is thanks in part to the "updated Photonic Engine," which uses artificial intelligence to "preserve natural detail, reduce noise, and provide" better color accuracy. Additionally, Apple's smartphone houses a "new 48MP Telephoto camera" with a larger sensor for improving low-light photography.

2. You want a fresh design

Apart from a few design tweaks over the years, iPhone Pro models have effectively looked identical since the iPhone 12 Pro. But for the iPhone 17 Pro duo, Apple has seen fit to introduce more significant changes. Both the 17 Pro and Pro Max have a "brushed aluminum unibody," allowing the smartphones to be lightweight and deliver better thermal performance. Inside this frame is a vapor chamber carrying de-ionized water to move heat away from its A19 Pro processor.

Around the back is a raised plateau providing extra space for key components, including a bigger battery. Apple says the iPhone 17 Pro can last up to 39 hours of video playback on a single charge.

You should buy the iPhone 17 Pro Max if...



1. You want the best possible performance

Like the iPhone 17 Pro, the iPhone 17 Pro Max runs on the A19 Pro chipset, a powerful piece of hardware consisting of a 6-core CPU and a 6-core GPU with "Neural Accelerators built into each GPU core." Alongside these components is Apple's new 16-core Neural Engine for powering AI models, delivering stunning graphical fidelity, and ensuring high frames. A chip like this will undoubtedly run hot. Luckily, the iPhone 17 Pro Max has the same vapor chamber as the 17 Pro to keep it cool.

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Similar to the iPhone Air, Apple's flagship device houses the N1 networking chip to enable support for Wi-Fi 7, Bluetooth 6, and Thread. Something that I didn't mention earlier is that the N1 improves the reliability of features like AirDrop.

2. You want the best iPhone display

Out of the entire series, the iPhone 17 Pro Max has the best screen, boasting a massive 6.9-inch Super Retina XDR display. Support for Apple's ProMotion tech provides a velvety-smooth refresh rate of up to 120Hz. Plus, the iPhone 17 Pro Max is much brighter than the iPhone 16 Pro as it now hits a brightness level of 3,000 nits, "as well as 2x better outdoor contrast." And again, just like the iPhone Air, the high-end smartphone has a screen protected by Ceramic Shield 2 for exceptional toughness.

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