

Pick Your Winner: 2025 Smartphone Lineup

This is the 11th annual State Bar of Wisconsin summary of the top smartphones currently available. This year's focus is the inclusion of artificial intelligence in smartphones, overall battery life and performance, storage, price, and screen specifications.

BY JAMES PEARSON

While artificial intelligence (AI) has dominated the headlines for the past few years, not a single respondent to my informal survey of Wisconsin lawyers made AI a vital feature when selecting a phone. Nonetheless, because every phone manufacturer has included AI, it's important to discuss how manufacturers integrate AI and its security.¹ This analysis primarily focuses on this year's top manufacturers: Apple, Google, Samsung, and Motorola. These are the brands repeatedly identified as the most popular among the lawyers surveyed.

Performance & Battery Life

Do new models have better performance and longer battery life than what they replace? We've all experienced how technology tends to slow down as it ages. Most lawyers surveyed keep their phones for at least three years.

This year, Apple introduced an interesting comparison calculator on its website. Because many respondents tend to keep their phones for over three years, I used the iPhone 12 for comparison. Transitioning to the iPhone 16 or 16 Plus offers an additional five hours of video playback, potentially up to 10 hours more than the iPhone 12, highlighting a significant improvement in battery performance.

Additionally, Apple's tool allows users to assess performance enhancements, revealing that those currently on the iPhone 12 can expect an overall performance boost of up to 60% with the latest processors. The iPhone 16 and iPhone 16 Plus can operate at twice the speed of the iPhone 12, resulting in substantial improvements in efficiency and performance. These advancements lead to a significantly enhanced experience compared to the iPhone 12.

Although this tool is specific to Apple's products, users can typically expect similar advancements in performance and efficiency when upgrading from older models, especially those three to five years old, regardless of the manufacturer. These improvements suggest it might be worth upgrading.²

The Pixel 9 Pro stands out with its impressive battery life, lasting up to 100 hours with its extreme battery-saver mode. This feature, which conserves energy by disabling features such as 5G connectivity, is a unique selling point of the Pixel 9 Pro.

According to Samsung, the Z Flip 6's battery life is 66 hours for audio playback and 23



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hours for video playback, significantly less than that of the Z Fold 6, which boasts an impressive 77 hours of audio playback. Meanwhile, the S24, with its smaller screen, provides 72 hours of audio playback and 28 hours of video playback.

Storage Capacity

Storage capacities have mostly stayed the same in recent years. Most smartphones today offer standard storage ranging from 128 GB to 512 GB.

Google's Pixel 9 Pro stands out once again by offering an impressive one terabyte (TB). However, the rest of the phones in the Pixel 9 lineup max out at 512 gigabytes (GB). Samsung's latest offerings, including the Z Fold 6, Z Flip 6, and S24, vary in storage. The Z Fold 6 has 1 TB of storage, matching the Pixel 9 Pro, while the Z Flip 6 is limited to 512 GB. The S24 offers options for 128 GB and 256 GB.

Manufacturers likely will continue prioritizing cloud storage over enhancing device storage. For instance, even with Apple's push for video capabilities, its top storage option is 1 TB, exclusive to the 16 Pro model, while other models max out at 512 GB.

Screens

When I started selling computers about 35 years ago, I told a client, "This new model has everything you will ever need." Now, the devices we carry in our pockets have more power than a room full of those old PCs. Having a screen that fits your needs can make a difference in how much you use your phone and how long the battery lasts.

For the largest and best screens that provide a more expansive workspace for writing, browsing, watching videos, or even graphic design, consider the flip or fold models from Samsung or Google. For the ultimate screen size, the Google Pixel 9 Pro Fold features a massive 8-inch inner display, the largest in this year's list.

The Samsung Galaxy Z Flip 6 ranks second with a 6.7-inch unfolded display. In contrast, Apple's iPhone 16 Pro Max, with a 6.9-inch screen, is the largest nonfolding device available.

For more compact models, the Galaxy S24 and iPhone 16 are great options, featuring comfortable screen sizes of 6.2 and 6.1 inches. These choices cater to users who prefer a smaller screen without compromising functionality.

Artificial Intelligence

In a notable shift from previous years, Apple focused its marketing efforts on "AI for the rest of us" and how artificial intelligence will enhance its smartphones instead of its longstanding mantra of "Hollywood in your pocket." Apple is not alone in this focus: Integrating AI into phones is at the top of every manufacturer's list this year.

Key innovations include Siri's improved capabilities, allowing it to manage multiple commands and better understand language. Users can now dictate messages with a single click, record voice notes, and even capture phone calls for transcription within native applications. There's also new functionality for creating art. Siri will provide personalized assistance based on its understanding of individual contexts, making interactions more tailored and efficient.

Apple maintains a strong commitment to data privacy. Notably, even Apple cannot access user data, reinforcing its privacy stance. Information is not stored permanently but is processed in a secure environment using Apple's Private Cloud Compute. Users can also choose whether to integrate ChatGPT tools within Siri, which ensures prior consent must be obtained before users' personal information is shared.³

Pixel smartphones prominently feature manufacturer Google's AI, Gemini, which is intended to operate seamlessly across apps such as Gmail and Google Maps. Gemini can create images and enables quick searches; if a user snaps a photo and circles an item, the AI will find relevant information. As with Apple's AI, users can easily adjust photos on the spot, altering backgrounds.

Gemini also includes a built-in chat feature, Gemini Live, offering familiar chatbot functionalities.⁴ The Pixel 9 Pro boasts strong security features, including the Titan M2 coprocessor, machine-learning capabilities, face unlock, and a built-in VPN.⁵

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Samsung's Galaxy models are equipped with Galaxy AI, which can interpret phone calls and conversations in real-time. This feature is mainly beneficial with the Z Flip 6, enabling simultaneous translation on both sides of the screen. A phone user can set the Z Flip 6 on a surface with the inner and outer screens facing each person, providing an instant, real-time translator. In addition to conversation translation, these models offer photo-editing tools and note-taking capabilities to enhance communication.⁶

For enhanced security, Samsung incorporates a comprehensive platform known as Knox, which provides robust protection from boot up and beyond. This platform offers end-to-end encryption for data syncing and cloud backup. It includes features like Knox Vault and Knox Matrix, which enhance data protection.⁷

Key Survey Findings

As mentioned, I request informal feedback from Wisconsin's legal community each year regarding smartphone usage and habits. It's a revelation as to how responding lawyers use technology. This year, I published the survey to show the raw results.⁸

Interestingly, the results stay consistent year over year. For example, iPhones have dominated Android. Further, only a few people change carriers more than once or twice in their lifetime.

Here are some additional survey statistics:

- 72% of respondents use Apple iOS, while 28% use Android. Samsung ranks first among Android brands, followed by Google and Motorola. Motorola usage has declined each year.

- Most respondents rated overall satisfaction with their current phone at 4.3 (out of 5). About 68% keep their phones for more than three years, while 28% switch within that timeframe.

Verizon and AT&T are the top providers, and many rate their providers below a 4 out of 5.

- Coverage, data plans, and speeds are the top priorities when choosing providers. Only 16% have never changed providers, with 32% changing once, 24% twice, and 28% switching three times or more.

Top Picks

In conclusion, the 2025 smartphone lineup showcases remarkable advancements in battery life, performance, storage capacity, and display quality, reflecting the evolving needs of users. Although artificial intelligence integration might not be a deciding factor for many, it is now an integrated aspect of the latest models. Whether looking for improved performance and battery life, a low-cost replacement, or the phone with the most storage space, you can find something new in this year's lineup.

Artificial Intelligence

Surprisingly, I found few reviews on smartphone AI implementation, and it's hard to rate a feature without information about users' personal experience with the feature. Because most users switch operating systems infrequently, I suggest not considering it now. From my experience, Apple protects data better than other manufacturers but at the expense of adopting new technology more slowly.

Battery Life

The **Google Pixel 9 Pro** is notable for its impressive battery life, lasting up to 100 hours when using its extreme battery-saver mode.

Budget Conscious

The most affordable smartphone on the list is the **Motorola Edge (2024)**, priced at \$599.

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By Andrew Mishlove & James Nesci

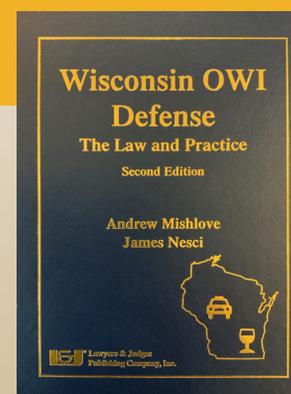
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Phone	Release Date	Size (mm)	Weight (g)	Resolution (pixels)	Display Size (in)	Display Type	Processor	Storage (GB)
Apple iPhone 16	9/20/24	147.6 x 71.6 x 7.8	170	2556 x 1179	6.1	Super Retina XDR OLED	Apple A18 Bionic	128, 256, 512
Apple iPhone 16 Plus	9/20/24	160.9 x 77.8 x 7.8	199	2796 x 1290	6.7	Super Retina XDR OLED	Apple A18 chip	128, 256, 512
Apple iPhone 16 Pro	9/20/24	147.6 x 71.6 x 7.8	188	2556 x 1179	6.3	Super Retina XDR OLED with ProMotion	Apple A18 Pro chip	128, 256, 512, 1TB
Apple iPhone 16 Pro Max	9/20/24	160.9 x 77.8 x 7.8	221	2796 x 1290	6.9	Super Retina XDR OLED with ProMotion	Apple A18 Pro chip	128, 256, 512, 1TB
Samsung Galaxy S24 FE	10/3/24	162.5 x 75.6 x 7.8	190	2340 x 1080	6.7	Dynamic AMOLED 2X	Samsung Exynos 2400e	128, 256
Samsung Galaxy S24	Jan. 2024	147.0 x 70.6 x 7.6	168	2340 x 1080	6.2	Dynamic AMOLED 2X	Qualcomm Snapdragon 8 Gen 3	128, 256
Samsung Galaxy S24+	Jan. 2024	158.5 x 75.9 x 7.7	197	3120 x 1440	6.7	Dynamic AMOLED 2X	Qualcomm Snapdragon 8 Gen 3	256, 512
Samsung Galaxy S24 Ultra	Jan. 2024	162.6 x 79.0 x 8.6	233	3120 x 1440	6.8	Dynamic AMOLED 2X	Qualcomm Snapdragon 8 Gen 3	256, 512, 1TB
Samsung Galaxy Z Flip 6	7/24/24	Unfolded: 165.2 x 71.9 x 6.9 Folded: 85.1 x 71.9 x 15.4	187	2640 x 1080	Main: 6.7 Cover: 3.4	Foldable Dynamic LTPO AMOLED 2X	Qualcomm Snapdragon 8 Gen 3	256, 512
Samsung Galaxy Z Fold 6	7/24/24	Unfolded: 135.5 x 132.6 x 5.6 Folded: 153.5 x 68.1 x 12.1	239	Main: 2160 x 1856 Cover: 2376 x 968	Main: 7.6 Cover: 6.3	Dynamic AMOLED 2X with 120 Hz adaptive refresh rate	Qualcomm Snapdragon 8 Gen 3	256, 512, 1TB
Google Pixel 9	8/13/24	155.6 x 73.2 x 8.7	193	2400 x 1080	6.3	Actua OLED	Google Tensor G4	128, 256
Google Pixel 9 Pro	8/13/24	162.6 x 76.5 x 8.8	210	1344 x 2992	6.7	Super Actua LTPO OLED	Google Tensor G4	128, 256, 512, 1TB
Google Pixel 9 Pro XL	8/13/24	165.1 x 77.6 x 8.9	220	1344 x 2992	6.8	Super Actua LTPO OLED	Google Tensor G4	128, 256, 512, 1TB
Google Pixel 9 Pro Fold	8/13/24	Unfolded: 161.4 x 73.5 x 6.3 Folded: 161.4 x 73.5 x 12.1	283	Inner display: 2076 x 2152	Inner: 8 Cover: 6.2	Super Actua Flex LTPO OLED	Google Tensor G4	256, 512
Motorola Edge (2024)	June 2024	159.9 x 74.2 x 8.5	178	2400 x 1080	6.6	P-OLED	Qualcomm Snapdragon 7s Gen 2	256
Motorola Razr (2024)	June 2024	Unfolded: 170.8 x 74 x 7.1 Folded: 88.4 x 74 x 15.1	192	2640 x 1080	Main: 6.9 Cover: 3.6	Foldable P-OLED	MediaTek Dimensity 7300	256
Motorola Moto G 5G (2024)	March 2024	164.39 x 74.96 x 8.23	194	1612 x 720	6.6	LCD, 120Hz refresh rate	Qualcomm Snapdragon 4 Gen 1	128

Battery (mAh)	Battery Life (hours)	Price (retail)	Connectivity	Rear Camera (MP)	Features
3,561	Up to 22 video playback	\$799	5G, Wi-Fi 7 Bluetooth 5.3	Dual 48 (wide), 12 (ultra-wide)	Dynamic Island, ceramic shield front. Emergency SOS via satellite
4,325	Up to 27 video playback	\$899	5G, Wi-Fi 7 Bluetooth 5.3	Dual 48 (wide), 12 (ultra-wide)	Dynamic Island, ceramic shield front. Emergency SOS via satellite
3,650	Up to 23 video playback	\$999	5G, Wi-Fi 7 Bluetooth 5.3	Triple setup: 48 (wide), 12 (ultra-wide), 12 (telephoto)	Dynamic Island, ProMotion technology, Always-On display, ceramic shield front. Emergency SOS via satellite
4,400	Up to 29 video playback	\$1,199	5G, Wi-Fi 7 Bluetooth 5.3	Triple 48 (wide), 12 (ultra-wide), 12 (telephoto)	Dynamic Island, ProMotion technology, Always-On display, ceramic shield front. Emergency SOS via satellite
4,700	Up to 24	\$649.99/ \$709.99	5G, Wi-Fi 6E Bluetooth 5.3	Triple setup: 50 (wide), 8 (telephoto), 12 (ultra-wide)	IP68 water resistance, 120Hz refresh rate
4,000	Up to 20 video playback	\$799	5G, Wi-Fi 6E Bluetooth 5.3	Triple setup: 50 (wide), 12 (ultra-wide), 10 (telephoto)	IP68 water and dust resistance, 120Hz adaptive refresh rate, Corning Gorilla Glass Victus 2, Samsung Knox security
4,900	Up to 31 video playback	\$999	5G, Wi-Fi 6E Bluetooth 5.3	Triple setup: 50 (wide), 12 (ultra-wide), 10 (telephoto)	IP68 water and dust resistance, 120Hz adaptive refresh rate, Corning Gorilla Glass Victus 2, Samsung Knox security
5,000	Up to 33 video playback	\$1,199	5G, Wi-Fi 7 Bluetooth 5.3	Quad setup: 200 (wide), 12 (ultra-wide), 10 (telephoto), 10 (periscope telephoto)	IP68 water and dust resistance, 120Hz adaptive refresh rate, Corning Gorilla Glass Victus 2, Samsung Knox security, S Pen support
4,000	Up to 24 mixed use	\$1,099.99	5G, Wi-Fi 6E Bluetooth 5.3	Dual setup: 50 (wide), 12 (ultra-wide)	Flex Mode, IP48 water resistance, AI-powered camera enhancements, Armor Aluminum fram, Corning Gorilla Glass Victus 2
4,400	About 11.5 (as tested)	\$1,899.99	5G, Wi-Fi 6E Bluetooth 5.3	50 (wide, f/1.8), 12 (ultra-wide, f/2.2), 10 (telephoto, f/2.4) with 3x optical zoom	IP48 water resistance, Armor Aluminum frame, Corning Gorilla Glass Victus 2, AI-powered camera enhancements, S Pen support (sold separately)
4.7	Up to 24	\$799	5G, Wi-Fi 6E Bluetooth 5.3	Dual setup: 50 (wide), 12 (ultra-wide)	Face unlock, IP68 water resistance
5,060	Up to 24	\$999	5G, Wi-Fi 7 Bluetooth 5.3	Triple setup: 50 (wide), 48 (ultra-wide), 48 (telephoto)	Face unlock, IP68 water resistance, battery share
5,100	Up to 24	\$1,099	5G, Wi-Fi 7 Bluetooth 5.3	Triple setup: 50 (wide), 48 (ultra-wide), 48 (telephoto)	Face unlock, IP68 water resistance, battery share
4,821	Up to 24	\$1,799	5G, Wi-Fi 7 Bluetooth 5.3	Triple setup: 48 (wide), 10.8 (ultra-wide), 10.8 (telephoto)	Face unlock, IP68 water resistance, battery share
5,000	Up to 2 days	\$599	5G, Wi-Fi 6E Bluetooth 5.3	Triple setup: 50 (main), 13 (ultra-wide), 2 (depth)	IP68 water resistance, 144Hz refresh rate
4,200	Up to 30	About \$999	5G, Wi-Fi 6E Bluetooth 5.3	Dual setup: 64 (main), 13 (ultra-wide)	Water-repellent design, 144Hz refresh rate
5,000	Up to 2 days	About \$199	5G, Wi-Fi 6 Bluetooth 5.1	Dual setup: 50 (main), 2 (macro)	Water-repellent design, expandable storage up to 1TB

Camera

The **Apple iPhone 16** is still “Hollywood in your pocket.” It features a dual-camera system with a 48MP wide lens and a 12MP ultra-wide lens.

The **Motorola Moto G 5G (2024)** features a dual-camera setup with a 50MP main lens and a 2MP macro lens.

Security

Apple’s iOS is well known for its robust security features. Its rigorous vetting process for apps, detailed privacy policies, and the App Sandbox – which limits what each app can access – make any of the **Apple iPhone 16** series an excellent choice for security-conscious users.

I suggest the **Google Pixel 9** series for Android users. It provides direct and timely security updates from Google, features a built-in Titan M security chip, and includes regular patches that enhance secure boot and storage.

Screen Size

Largest screen: The **Google Pixel 9 Pro Fold** features an impressive 8-inch inner display.

Smallest screen: The **Apple iPhone 16** screen is the smallest, at 6.1 inches, unless you count the cover display on

the **Samsung Galaxy Z Fold 6**, which measures only 3.4 inches.

Storage Capacity

The **Google Pixel 9 Pro** and the **Samsung Galaxy Z Fold 6** are top choices for storage capacity, each offering up to 1 TB of storage. If you prefer Apple, the **Apple iPhone Pro** and **Pro Max** offer 1 TB of storage for movies and other video and audio.

Where to Get Product Specifications

All the websites below were last visited on Dec. 8, 2024.

- Apple iPhone 16, iPhone 16 Plus, iPhone 16 Pro, and iPhone 16 Pro Max: <https://www.apple.com/iphone-16/specs/>

- Samsung Galaxy S24 FE, Galaxy S24, Galaxy S24+, and Galaxy S24 Ultra: <https://www.samsung.com/us/smartphones/galaxy-s24/>

- Samsung Galaxy Z Flip 6: <https://www.samsung.com/us/smartphones/galaxy-z-flip6/>

- Samsung Galaxy Z Fold 6: <https://www.samsung.com/us/smartphones/galaxy-z-fold6>

- Google Pixel 9: https://store.google.com/product/pixel_9

- Google Pixel 9 Pro and Pixel 9 Pro XL: https://store.google.com/us/product/pixel_9_pro_specs?hl=en-US

- Google Pixel 9 Pro Fold: https://store.google.com/us/product/pixel_9_pro_fold?hl=en-US

- Motorola Edge (2024): <https://www.motorola.com/us/smartphones-motorola-edge-family>

- Motorola Razr (2024): <https://www.motorola.com/us/smartphones-motorola-razr-2024-all>

- Motorola Moto G 5G (2024): <https://www.motorola.com/us/smartphones-moto-g-family-wl>

ENDNOTES

¹*The Lawyer’s Geek*, <https://www.thelawyersgeek.com/smartphonesurvey>.

²Apple iPhone 16 and iPhone 16 Plus, <https://www.apple.com/iphone-16/> (last visited Dec. 8, 2024).

³*Android vs. iOS: Security Comparison 2024*, NordVPN; <https://nordvpn.com/blog/ios-vs-android-security/> (last visited Dec. 3, 2024).

⁴Google, *Gemini + Gemini Advanced on Pixel: Everything You Need to Know*, <https://store.google.com/intl/en/ideas/articles/gemini-advanced-features/> (last visited Dec. 8, 2024).

⁵Google Safety Ctr., *Google Pixel Privacy & Security Features*, <https://safety.google/pixel/> (last visited Dec. 8, 2024).

⁶Samsung Business Insights, *How Galaxy AI Secures Privacy and Data: A Guide for IT Leaders*, <https://insights.samsung.com/2024/07/16/how-galaxy-ai-secures-privacy-and-data-a-guide-for-it-leaders/> (last visited Dec. 8, 2024).

⁷Samsung, Knox, *This Is Protection*, <https://www.samsung.com/us/business/solutions/samsung-knox/?cid=com-btb-sky-blg-us-other-na-100219-112001-na-na-na&attributioncampaignid=701Hp0000026fwHIAQ> (last visited Dec. 8, 2024).

⁸To view the survey (all data is anonymous), download a copy at <https://www.thelawyersgeek.com/smartphonesurvey>.

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