

# Let's talk about phones



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*I've just upgraded my phone, so thoughts about phones have been in my mind, on a personal level as well as the research. I've had a fair few phones over the years but this article isn't about my historic ownership of phones so I won't go into the awesome BT fold up phones of the mid nineties (though they were superb for the time).*

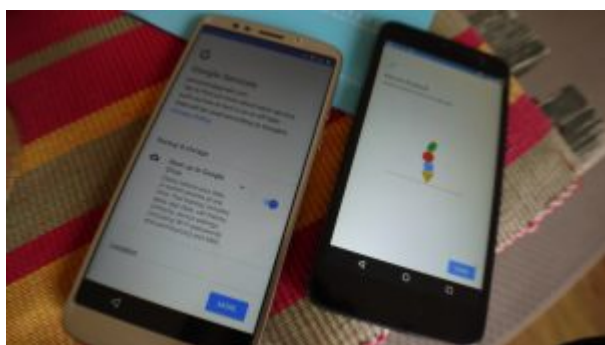
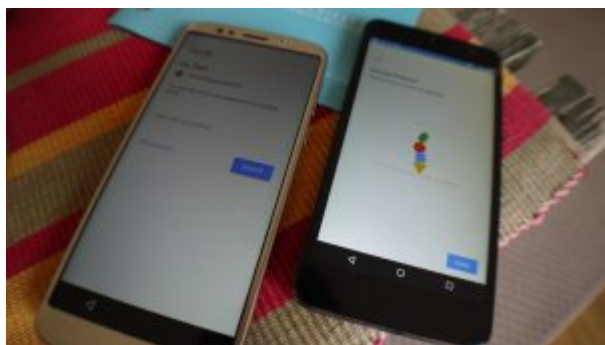
I have never used an iPhone, partially because of the cost of units, and partially because they are minority phones, as 80% of users have an Android. So, this is mainly about Android, but it isn't about platform snobbery or comparisons, it's about use and reasons for smartphones, the functions needed for normal life.

## My phone life

I run two phones, one for my UK phone and the other for my country of residence. I tried and hated dual SIM, it's just not convenient at all. It also doesn't fulfill my need to have more than one unit for technical testing of stuff I'm working on. They have different tech specs, and tend to swap role as a better and worse Android build, screen res and RAM spec etc, as one and then the other get upgraded over time. To date I have a Samsung A3 (2015 model) and had a WileyFox Swift 2016. The Samsung, after a factory reset, is going strong, I keep it for minimal use, EU country calls & txts, it's a beautifully designed phone. I needed to upgrade the WileyFox and did a reasonable amount of checking around for what to buy. My budget is self imposed as low, for an efficient robust unit that will be good to use and nice to have. My wants were:

- I decided to not spend more than £150 on the unit.
- I didn't want a massive handset.
- I wanted good CPU/RAM, and good battery life.
- I wanted good screen resolution and good camera. I didn't care particularly about front camera.
- I wanted good audio, and a normal headphone jack.
- Fast recharging was a bonus.

I opted for a *Moto 6 Play*. I've had an earlier generation Moto and it was exceptionally good, until it finally died, but I got very good use out of it. So after a bit of hesitation, I went for the Moto 6 Play. It's a great budget phone, and I think probably one of the best you can buy for less than £130. It's the single SIM version, so avoids the known issues around reliable functionality of SIM1 in the dual SIM model (so beware). But I didn't care, I only wanted to run single SIM. You can now get the G7 Play, with some improvement, but significantly a downgrade in battery capacity. The G6 (not play) is a better phone, but with worse battery and more expensive, so when considered against budget, the G6 play wins. It's a robust phone with a huge battery capacity (4k mah), 3gb ram and 32 gb storage. Holds charge forever. I charged the phone but didn't turn it on for about two weeks while I waited for my nano SIM replacement and when I finally turned the phone on with the SIM, it was fully charged. It is also fast. Resolution is great, 130mm screen so not too big. The handset is 150mm total. It's also gold, a bling bonus. That's my tech review. If you want more detail, go somewhere else, this blog post isn't about that.



## So, why are phones so great?

I really have no answer for why people pay more for 'better' phones, beyond social point scoring, or style choice. I suppose it's like cars. But in terms of why people use phones so much, any good functioning phone adds huge quality to your life. The argument for thinking that everything about phones is bad is simply ignorant.

I manage email better on a phone. I learn things through browsing my Facebook or Twitter feed during my resting time, I save links in various places that I use for various things, all done much easier via phone. I am able to share information really easily on a phone. I can take photos, save other images, make video, record audio notes, listen to endless music, all on my phone, so easily. I can also these days interact with AR via a phone, attach content to GPS coordinates via phone, find my way around, chat to others for free across VOIP apps, the list of what I can do is endless. I never do gaming (hate gaming), I never watch long form video, I don't tend to obsess on selfies. So all in all, a massive support system including fun and learning, in a small box.

Recently in a research interview, someone said that if people were going to be using their phones so much, then it's better they do things like smart learning journeys than live stream themselves drinking coffee. This is an enormously important thing, really. While we endlessly moan about screen time and people becoming zombies, we miss the opportunity of supporting digital skills and competence with new things to do that have actual value and meaning. This should be a major aim and challenge of education and learning. I learn Italian using Duolingo, I learn about medieval history via a Facebook group, I enjoy modern art, contribute to technical forums, read blog posts from experts, keep in contact with numerous friends around the globe, all via my phone. I create and keep note of ideas, image work, plans and thoughts so easily. All of this is a hugely beneficial and educational experience that adds rich quality to my life.

## Sustainable digital support systems

The real downside of smart devices is the environment, so we should be discouraging expensively made elitist devices, we should discourage endless upgrades for no reason, we should support recycled units and sustainable development. We should track the product history of every unit manufactured from before it's made to after it's made into something else. There is always a tension between server side and client side for processing and for storage. I believe that over time, server side processing will become almost non existent, placing all the processing stress on the client device (the phone). Cloud storage will become (is?) ubiquitous, but has its own challenges, specifically security, reliability and authenticity. This is the '4th Archivy' of Katz & Gandel (The Tower, the Cloud, and

Posterity, The Tower & The Cloud, 2008), though they did not yet fully foresee the problems around personalisation of content curation in a world of multiple personalisations and content interconnections. They did foretell of the problems of authentication, versioning etc, so that book and chapter are well worth a read.

*This post is part of my reflections on digital life, competences and skills. /TBC*