

Samsung Galaxy A Series: New lineup starts at \$110 and two models have 5G

The cheapest phone starts at \$110, while the most expensive 5G device costs \$600. And they all have headphone jacks.

As the global economy crashes and more than a million people have been diagnosed with the novel coronavirus, Samsung's betting we'll still need new phones -- even if we're not willing to pay as much for them. Starting at just \$110, Samsung's low-priced Galaxy A series phones for the US, unveiled Wednesday, are more wallet-friendly for shoppers on a budget. And they come as consumers wait for Apple to introduce its own cheaper smartphone, likely a successor to the 2016's iPhone SE.

Samsung on Wednesday said six smartphones in its A Series lineup -- some new and some previously announced -- will be coming to the US. The lineup, which has been popular in recent months, is known for being inexpensive compared with the company's flashy Galaxy S and Galaxy Note devices. The four 4G LTE phones range from \$110 for the Galaxy A10 to \$400 for the Galaxy A51. Samsung even introduced two 5G models, the \$500 Galaxy A51 5G and the \$600 Galaxy A71 5G, giving Samsung two of the cheapest 5G phones in the US.



The devices all sport Samsung's curved displays and fast charging capabilities. The higher-end models have more -- and better -- camera lenses than the cheaper phones and come with other improvements like bigger batteries and more internal storage. And notably, they all come with 3.5mm headphone jacks.

The Galaxy A01 and A51 will hit the market Thursday first at Verizon, while the others, including the 5G models, will arrive this summer. Samsung previously unveiled the A01, A11 and A51 phones for other markets, but Wednesday is the first time it talked up its 5G models and its new Galaxy A21.

"What's great is the midtier consumer doesn't have to choose between great technology and great value," Caleb Slavin, senior manager of smartphone product strategy at Samsung Electronics America, said Tuesday in a call with journalists. He noted the A Series is aimed at consumers who care about the "essentials" like big displays and batteries.

Samsung's phone news comes as the globe battles the novel coronavirus outbreak. The virus, which causes an illness called COVID-19, was first detected in the Chinese city of Wuhan late last year. The World Health Organization in March labeled COVID-19 a pandemic, and the virus since then has changed the way we live. Cities and entire countries around the globe have issued lockdowns, shuttering stores, canceling events and ordering citizens to stay at home to help contain the coronavirus. Millions of people have lost their jobs amid one of the worst economic downturns in decades.

A phone slowdown

Smartphone makers, led by Samsung and Apple, have been jacking up prices over the last few years. But people watching their budgets are unlikely to spend \$1,000 on a new phone right now. Even before the pandemic, people were pushing back by waiting longer to upgrade their phones or opting for less expensive devices. But the coronavirus is hurting both production and sales, as well as slowing the expansion of 5G wireless technology.

Smartphone shipments saw their biggest ever drop in February -- down 38% to 61.8 million units, according to Strategy Analytics -- as COVID-19 ravaged China, one of the world's largest markets and a vital manufacturing hub. For this whole year, phone sales should hit a 10-year low. Shipments of mobile phones, which include flip phones, likely will drop 13% to 1.57 billion units in 2020, while smartphone shipments should tumble about 11% to 1.26 billion units, according to CCS Insights.

Samsung on Monday became one of the first tech companies to show how COVID-19 is impacting business. The company said its sales for the March quarter will rise from the previous year but won't be quite as strong as Wall Street anticipated. It didn't elaborate on its preliminary results but will give more information later this month. It likely benefited from strong memory chip sales but saw a decline in its smartphone business.

Still, smartphones have long been viewed as essential, even for people who can't afford the latest pricey gadgets. Some purchases that would normally take place early in 2020 will be delayed to later in the year, predicted Counterpoint Research analyst Neil Shah. "The US should recover fast in the second half from a rollout perspective," he said.

Cheaper 5G devices

There's an opportunity for companies making cheaper phones, particularly when it comes to 5G. The first 5G devices accessing the super-fast network have been expensive. Samsung's Galaxy S10 5G from last year cost \$1,299, while its regular 4G-enabled S10 started at \$900. This year's lineup of Galaxy S20 phones all come with 5G and start at \$1,000.

Samsung's Galaxy A90, its first 5G phone in the A Series, retailed for 749 euros (about \$827) when it went on sale in Europe in October. The company's new A51 and A71 5G phones are even cheaper and are closer to the level touted by companies like Chinese giant TCL.

TCL, best known for its TVs, on Monday said it will sell its first TCL-branded 5G phone in the US for \$399 (£399, approximately AU\$800) later this year. The company hopes that pricing will help it immediately attract buyers as it tries to build its brand outside its BlackBerry and Alcatel labels.

Apple, for its part, is expected to introduce its new, less expensive iPhone any day. That device is believed to build on 2016's beloved iPhone SE, but it's not expected to have 5G connectivity. The 2020 iPhone SE may cost \$399 (likely £399 or AU\$699), the same amount as its predecessor from four years ago.

Samsung's A Series specs

As for Samsung, its two new 5G phones will be a hard level for many companies to match in the US. The A51 5G will cost \$500 when it goes on sale this summer. It features a 6.5-inch FHD+ Super AMOLED Infinity-O display, a quad-camera array with a 48-megapixel main lens, and 15-watt fast charging support.

The A71 5G will retail for \$600. It sports a 6.7-inch FHD+ Super AMOLED Plus Infinity-O display, quad-camera array with a 64-megapixel main lens, and 25-watt fast charging. Both have 128 GB of internal storage, 6GB of RAM, 4,500-mAh batteries and on-screen optical fingerprint sensors. They also come with microSD slots, letting you add up to 1TB of additional memory.

2020 U.S. Samsung Galaxy A Series



Galaxy A01 5.7" HD+ Infinity-V Display Dual-Lens Camera: 13MP Main, 2MP Depth 5MP Selfie Cam 3,000mAh Battery with Fast Charging 16GB Storage / 2GB RAM Expandable storage up to 512GB Starting at \$109.99	Galaxy A11 6.4" HD+ Infinity-O Display Triple-Lens Camera: 13MP Wide, 5MP Ultra Wide, 2MP Depth 8MP Selfie Cam 4,000mAh Battery with Fast Charging 32GB Storage / 2GB RAM Expandable storage up to 512GB Starting at \$179.99	Galaxy A21 6.5" HD+ Infinity-O Display Quad-Lens Camera: 16MP Main, 8MP Ultra Wide, 2MP Macro, 2MP Depth 13MP Selfie Cam 4,000 mAh Battery with Fast Charging 32GB Storage / 3GB RAM Expandable storage up to 512GB Starting at \$249.99	Galaxy A51 6.5" Full HD+ Infinity-O Super AMOLED Display Quad-Lens Camera: 48MP Main, 12MP Ultra Wide, 5MP Macro, 5MP Depth 32MP Selfie Cam 4,000mAh Battery with Fast Charging On-Display Fingerprint Sensor 128GB Storage / 4GB RAM Expandable storage up to 512GB Starting at \$399.99
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All screens measured diagonally. Actual viewable area is less due to the rounded corners and camera lens. microSD storage sold separately. All functionality, features, specifications and other product information provided including, but not limited to, the benefits, design, pricing, components, performance, availability, and capabilities of the product are subject to change without notice. Typical value tested under third party laboratory condition. Typical value is the estimated average value considering the deviation in battery capacity among the battery samples tested under IEC 61950 standard.

The LTE version of the Galaxy A51 features many of the same specs as its 5G sibling but comes with a smaller, 4,000-mAh battery; only 4GB of RAM instead of 6; and expandable memory up to 512GB. It costs \$400 and goes on sale at Verizon on Thursday before arriving at Sprint on Friday. It will arrive at other carriers and retailers later on.

The other phone going on sale at Verizon on Thursday is the low-end Galaxy A01. It costs \$110 and features a 5.7-inch HD+ Infinity-V display. It has two rear cameras, a 13-megapixel main camera and a 2-megapixel depth lens. The front-facing selfie camera is 5 megapixels. The Galaxy A01 has a 3,000-mAh battery with fast charging and comes with 16GB of internal memory and 2GB of RAM. The memory can be expanded to 512GB through a microSD card. It will arrive at other carriers in the coming weeks.

Two other phones will hit the market this summer: the \$180 Galaxy A11 and the \$250 Galaxy A21. The A11 features a 6.4-inch HD+ Infinity-O display, a 4,000-mAh battery, 32GB of internal storage and 2GB of RAM. It comes with three rear-facing lenses -- a 13-megapixel wide angle, 5-megapixel ultra-wide and 2-megapixel depth -- and an 8-megapixel front-facing selfie camera.

The A21 sports a 6.5-inch HD+ Infinity-O display, 4,000-mAh battery, 15 watt fast charge support, 32GB of internal storage and 3GB of RAM. The device has a 13-megapixel front-face camera and four camera lenses on the back: a 16-megapixel main camera, 8-megapixel ultra-wide, 2-megapixel macro and 2-megapixel depth camera. Both the A11 and A21 can be expanded to 512GB memory through a microSD card.

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