

## **Is Apple's iPhone really a must-have this Christmas?**

Is it a phone? Is it an MP3 player? Is it a web browser? And is it worth the money?

By Annie Shaw

The iPhone is coming to a store near you, just in time for Christmas. With only a month to go before Apple's venture into the mobile-phone market hits the high street, shoppers want to know if it is worth its hefty £269 price tag. The iPhone, which goes on sale on 9 November, is three gadgets in one: a widescreen iPod with touch controls; a revolutionary internet device with browser and e-mail, and, of course, a mobile phone.

The problem is that the bill doesn't stop with the price you pay for the phone in the shop; to use the iPhone as a mobile rather than as a fancy music player and internet browser, you will need a mobile phone contract. Another downside is that while the iPhone gives you all the features in one convenient device, if you lose it or it goes wrong and needs repair, you have lost all the features too, simultaneously.

The phone network concession has been awarded exclusively to O2, and on top of the price of the phone you will need to sign up for an 18-month deal costing a not-so-cheap minimum of £35 for just 200 minutes a month. The deal offers unlimited data transfer and free Wi-Fi access to more than 7,000 hotspots around the UK.

And, if keeping your existing number is important, you can port it to your new contract, whether you are already on O2 or with another provider. There is no doubt that the phone is the ultimate gadget. More than a million have been sold in the US since the phone was launched on 29 July.

And already, rival manufacturers are trying to muscle in on the "object of desire" section of the market. Later this month, the South Korean firm LG launches the £300 Viewty in the UK; while the Nokia N95 has been around since early this year.

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