

Complete Cell Phone Survey results

I went through so many cell phones trying to find the one that fit my needs. It wasn't until Apple came out with the first **iPhone** that I felt like my needs had been at least half way met. I have been with the iPhone since the first one and now they are on the fourth iPhone and I can tell you that things have only gotten better. I currently have the iPhone 3GS but will soon invest in the newest one but until then I will enjoy features like: being able to zoom in and out of the screen by using my finger to pinch out to increase the size/ pinch in to decrease it, under the setting buttons I can choose the Font size that I want which will increase the font size on everything in my phone, when taking a picture I can zoom in and out and also do the same thing while shooting a video. I am very happy with Apple and they are only making my life easier. It is definitely a phone for the visually impaired.

*Thank you for your time,
Debra N Onyekonwu*

I have found my **LG LX370** to be very accessible for the visually impaired. The keypad is pretty large for a cell phone and each number is squared off with a tactile dot on each side of the number 5. When the voice commands are turned on it is like a talking caller ID. It announces the number of the caller. If the caller is in your contact list it announces the name of the caller. I personally have the Voice commands turned off and use ring tones for my contacts.

When the Voice commands are turned on, it allows you to add contacts easily, check the statue of your phone, ask for missed alerts and even check history. You can scroll through the menus and change the settings on your phone to whatever you want. It also has a Voice SMS message. This allows you to send a voice text message in return if you like. I haven't tried texting yet but I have been very satisfied with this pone. It does read text messages I receive. There is also a full keyboard version of this phone but I don't know the model number for it.

I have noticed the most accessible cell phones are made by L G. However, I have also found that the individuals who are employed at the stores, have NO IDEA about the voice features on any of the phones they sell. My son went and checked out the options on several phones for me.

All I have to do is hold the talk button down and it tell me to "say a command". At this point I can say call, phone status, missed alerts, voice guide, and a few others. If I turn the voice guide

reader on, this function allows me to arrow through the menus and change the settings. It changes the phone to speaker and also allows you to add your contacts.

This is my input. I do hope this information helps other individuals like me.

Have a Great Day,
Mary Alice Gary

Hi...I must tell you I tried several cell phones. Voice recognition did not work if you were outside because of background noise. I finally heard of the **Jitterbug** and have been very happy with it. You do not have to see. The buttons are great and there is always someone at customer service to help you when needed. I keep it in my bathroom when I am at home, as I a most of the time, for emergency purposes which usually happen to people during the night. Allows me to be independent and I carry it when I walk outside. No emergency button can do that. I have recommended the Jitterbug to many people at The Senior Center Without Walls...and they echo my satisfaction with the Jitterbug.

Anne Allen

I am visually impaired as a result of ocular histoplasmosis. I have lots of tools that help me. I have a Jordy and use a Beecher for Bioptic Driving. I use Zoom Text set at 5X.

My favorite phone is the **Voyager**, purchased through Verizon. This phone gives me the ability to use voice commands to dial numbers. It also gives me the ability to look up contacts with voice commands. If my contacts have more than one number, it asks me if I would like to dial the home, mobile, or work number. Commands that I give the phone are verified by voice. The icons on the phone are large enough for me to distinguish what I need and fonts can be made a little larger. One of the coolest features of the phone is that it reads my text messages to me. The phone has a QWERTY keyboard, which I have memorized, so it makes texting easier for m.

Sharon Daniel

I would like to respond to the question "which cell phone is best for the visually impaired"!

My name is Karen Murry and I was born with Optic Atrophy, an Optic Nerve disease. I found that when shopping for a new phone last year that the customer reps at the AT & T store were not very knowledgeable about this issue! However the sales rep was willing to play around with several different phones and we came up with the **Blackberry** being the best option as far as increasing font size for texting. I have a 15 year old son and a 13 year old daughter so this feature was obviously a high priority for me! ☺ I am able to increase to size 14 and put it on BOLD. This feature doesn't work on email or internet access for the phone so I don't use those. I am very curious to see what everyone else has to say about this question! Also, I changed the desktop to be a black background so the icons are easier for me to see and you can move the icons to any location.

Thanks for everything you guys do to make things easier for those of us with visual impairments!!!

Have a great day!

Take care,
Karen

Hi. I am using the **Nokia N86** with TALKS Premium 5 and the KNFB Reader. This is a slide phone and being my first slide phone, it took a bit of getting used to but it was not much of a problem. The buttons on the face of the phone are all raised which makes it really easy to use. The buttons on the numeric pad are also pretty big and easy to identify, which makes it easier to text etc. Texting becomes much easier if you are able to make use of predictive text! The phone boasts an 8 mp camera with zoom function, which I sometimes use to see indoors when the light is poor or I would like to have a better look at something. The phone also has a 3.5 mm jack which makes it really nice because now I only have to carry around one set of headphones. There is also a TV out function which I have used along with the camera to enlarge objects. Once the object is displayed on the TV screen, I am able to zoom in and out with the camera's zoom function. I have even been able to read using the phone / camera in this way. I am sure that you would be able to do this through a TV card on your PC but have not yet tried it. The phone has a fairly good pair of speakers, they lack a bit of bass but in general they are pretty good. They are loud enough to be able to listen to even if you are in the next room. (I have not

yet tried it yet but I am sure that you could plug in a pair of iPod speakers or the like). There is a built in FM radio on which you are able to store multiple stations. You change the preset channels using the left and right selection keys. It looks like TALKS 5 still needs to be muted when the radio is playing though. There is also a built in GPS with support from Nokia Maps. The older version is more accessible than the new release though. You are also supposed to be able to download walking voice guides but I just use the Drive voice guides for now. The phone has a few gig built in memory and space for a mini SD card, I think up to 16 GB, so there is plenty of space available for music and books. I usually use the phone in conjunction with D2Go, TALKS daisy player, to listen to daisy and audio books and then another piece of software called BRead, (There is a podcast of it on Blind Cool Tech website), to read text files. Besides the KNFB reader, I am not sure of any other software that is available to do this. The phone has Bluetooth as well as a usb cable which makes it easy to upload files to the phone. (Once you are able to get the driver installed on your pc). There is also wireless LAN which makes web browsing easy. I also have Fring installed which enables me to make voice and video calls and the wireless LAN makes this really nice. There is also a voice recorder but I have not tested its range.

The only really downside to the phone is that the screen is not really visible in sunlight. Other than that, I would definitely recommend this phone.

Nokia has started to make use of automatic updates which the N86 supports.

Could I recommend a topic for the next competition?? What software do you use on your phone to make it more accessible?

Regards,
David Jones

Hi,

I am a tech trainer at the Lighthouse for the Blind in Duluth Minnesota.

So many people call about this issue. It's my job to keep up with technology. As a blind user I can say the **iPhone** with VoiceOver is the best choice for me. VoiceOver comes built in to the iPhone's operating system. You don't need to spend hundreds of dollars to have your device totally accessible. I have used many other devices with other screen readers. The latest firmware update makes it a great choice for text entry as well. Their touch typing works great for me. The iPhone also has screen magnification as well. You can't use magnification and VoiceOver at the same time. However you can switch between the two easily.

I am one of the co-hosts for a podcast called "accessible devices". On podcast 7 and 8 we talk with users of the iPhone. We also demonstrate the iPhone in action. There is so much to cover we had to put it in to two podcasts. The podcast doesn't reflect the changes implemented with the latest firmware update to version IOS4.0. However it will give the user the means to listen to the iPhone in action. The prospective buyer can decide if it is a good choice for them. We talk about the shortcomings of the device as well. There is a phone for everyone these days. I commend all screen readers for their great work to bring an accessible device for everyone.

Our podcast can be found at:

<http://www.accessible-devices.com/Podcasts.html>

Thanks for your attention.

Randy R Rusnak.

LightHouse for the blind Duluth MN.

The **iPhone** has a pretty nice voice function among the touch phones where it reads everything on the screen that you run over with your fingers.

The AT&T **Motorola Razr** has been faithful to me for years it can be dropped millions of times even on concrete and it won't break (no guarantee for the knockoffs) It's got a nice bright screen and the buttons are clear to make out their larger than most phones and they are tactical so you can tell what number your pressing and it also divides the numbers too. The numbers and the dividers light up on my phone they light up blue. It has many useful short cuts to phone numbers etc. The only complaint I have is there are a huge amount of ways to get on the internet which if you have to pay for internet it's not too enjoyable, but other than that its really nice it was very helpful when I lost my vision.(those I described were just the regular settings equipped with it I'm still trying to find the accessibility settings but that's because I'm too lazy to call someone about it (I like to play around with it to find things for myself).

I've heard good reviews on the **Jitterbug** as well.

As for texting I have no clue I've never had texting.

Also here's some tips for if you drop your phone in water or get it wet in some way:

-place it on top of the TV or computer
-place it in sand

I hope you find what I've said useful. I hope you find your contest winner

Lindsay Reddick

Hello,

Hope this helps.

Verizon has a phone designed by a survey to the elderly who wanted a larger screen, buttons, and simple features.

"**The Knack**" is just that. It has the largest keys that I have ever used, a good size screen with large fonts, it works well for text too, but does not have video or camera features.

Hope that helps.

Joe Elias

I would have to say for someone who has some vision like myself I believe the Apple **iPhone 3Gs** is awesome with its built in zoom and voice over. Shame they can't work together. Nokia is just far too behind I tried N70 N73 N95 N96 and none are as easy to navigate as the iPhone. I think they are doing even more work for the iPhone 4. However it is NOT good for someone who has NO vision

Ben Young

I loved **LG Fusic** from Sprint because it had a good voice guide that covered the basic feature of the phone. But I couldn't have access to internet, email, texting, etc. Never tried phone w/screen reader/magnifier; it's too pricy to buy the phone AND the software. I am very interested in iPhone and want to give it a shot!

Nikki Yoshino Warren Scott

Nikki if you can, go to an Apple store to try the **iPhone** out as long as you like. I didn't get pressured like AT&T with trying the phone out. Also some Best Buys have a working model on display. According to Apples website, the 3 GS price is down since the iPhone 4 is coming out next week on the 23.

Chris Smith

If cost is an issue - I like the **Samsung M300** (which is a standard phone from Sprint). The keypad lights-up and the numbers are already larger- which makes it easier to see. And even though the display is small - you can adjust the text to make what you type appear much larger.

Mike Lascelle

Believe it or not I'm still using my **Nokia 6600** with the Talks software. I got it when they were merging with another company and offered the software for free to anyone with a visual disability. I want to upgrade but I don't want internet and texting and all that, nor the monthly price that goes along with it. I need to check out the iPhone. Anyone know what's the big difference with the new iPhone?

Glen Rivara

The question is "what's the best cell phone for people with vision losses?"

The answer is: I don't really know!

For the past two years I used a **Blackberry Curve 8330** and was perfectly happy. I was able to increase the font size on emails, texts and web pages, plus make the font bold for easier reading.

Last month, my cell phone contract was up. I didn't even think about upgrading my phone, until I began having problems with dropped calls, and a couple of other things. I very reluctantly upgraded to the Blackberry Curve 8530. While there are new features I like, I'm not happy with the quality of fonts on the web pages. The most I can do is

zoom in, and 95% of the time that doesn't give me enough strength to read the pages.

So why stick with Blackberry? Because it is one of two phones (the other is a Palm) offered by my provider with the highest rating for people who use hearing aids or cochlear implants. To me, that is another important factor that has to be weighed. As much as the sound quality is excellent for me on the 8530, there are drawbacks I didn't have on the 8330. I have to manually activate the headset each time I make a call (I use an audio cable for my cochlear implant); the headset was automatically activated on the 8330.

I know this doesn't answer the question you asked -- but I needed to vent. Think I will send a copy of this to Research in Motion (makers of Blackberry) and some of the organizations for the blind and visually impaired.

Diane Gross

I think one of the best phones out there is the **Nokia N86**. Very good keys and great phone. Even if the iPhone is a very nice phone I don't think you can write that fast on any touch device. N86 also have a very good camera to be use with OCR apps like KNFB reader, Magnilink GO! or Textscout.

Cheers from Sweden,
Claudio

I really like my **Sanyo Katana** cell phone with Sprint. I chose it specifically because it had the largest font I could find for texting and general use. The buttons are good sized but the phone is small.

Debbie Carle

This has been a quest for me as technology continues to change. It appears that the **iPhone** has impressive features for people who are visually impaired. But, they are too expensive for some retirees on a monthly basis.

Thomas Bryant Jr.

Hi Becca,

I wrote a long article about this issue just for ZoomNews. I've been wanting to summarize many things in one easy to read article for a long time as I realized there isn't any clear answer on this question. It's a quite long article and you can feel free to shorten it or let me know and I will summarize it into 500 words or less.

What's the best cell phone for someone who is visually impaired?

Cell phones are becoming more and more useful in our daily lives. Unlike 10 years ago that cell phones were primarily used just for voice, today we use our phones more like a mini computer. These phones with capabilities of internet browsing, music playback, and picture taking are called smart phones.

Smartphones took a while until they were available for visually impaired users. Companies back in 2004 and 2005 did not notice their visually impaired customers. Instead of phone makers, other companies like Nuance and Code Factory started developing screen readers for these phones. The first phone I was able to fully take advantage of as a visually impaired user was the Nokia 6670 with Nuance Talks installed on it. Soon after I noticed that Code Factory has created another useful product that could run on my phone called Mobile speak. However it was more of a habit that I was more comfortable with Talks.

Let's come forward 4 more years. In 2010, visually impaired users of mobile phones have many different phones to choose from. I will categorize these options in four sections and finally explain which phone is the most accessible while being more reasonably priced.

First I will explain the Symbian based phones. Symbian is an operating system that until recently Nokia owned. As a result, Nokia has many handsets working on the Symbian system. The most recent phones running this operating system has many features such as Free GPS navigation, picture and video, music playback, large storage, and so on. There are many other applications that the user can install on these phones that can help them in their day-to-day activities. The possibilities are limitless. One of the best phones I owned on this operating system was the **Nokia N82**. With a 5 Megapixels camera, this phone was the only phone until recently that could have the KNFB reader installed on it. If you are not familiar with the KNFB reader, it is a new system that is like a portable Kurzweil and a scanner. This phone also had a built-in GPS. The keys on this phone were well spread apart and texting was extremely fast using the T9 system. Other than the Nokia N82, I've also experienced the **Nokia N97** which is quite more powerful. Running a newer version of Symbian, this phone has a touch screen along with a slide out keyboard. Organization on this phone is easier and it is also faster. Nuance Talks and Mobile speak both run on this phone and these products have created new and innovative ways for a visually impaired user to access the touch screens. The user can now use various applications and get many information such as battery levels and signals read back to them.

Next, I will describe Windows Mobile operating system phones. Windows Mobile is made by Microsoft. Many phones currently use this operating system such as some of the HTC and

Motorola phones. Most of these phones are useful for those who want to use Microsoft services and programs such as office, mail exchange, and others. Mobile speak has led the way for accessibility for these phones. Recently however, Nuance Talks have also created a compatible version of their product to work on **Windows mobile**. So today, most of these phones are accessible for visually impaired users.

Next I will describe Apple **iPhone** and **Blackberries** in regards to accessibility. Thanks to Apple, almost all iPhones are ready to use by visually impaired users out of the box. The program is called Voice Over which reads almost all applications on the iPhone out loud. Typing on touch screen phones used to be impossible for blind individuals, however the iPhone has a feature called the split tap typing, which allows the blind person easily to type by using one finger to find the right letter, and to use the other finger to select it. An iPhone is one of the best choices for a visually impaired user. Blackberries on the other hand have no screen readers pre-installed. There is one application called the Orator which only works on one of the older versions of blackberries. This program is also unreasonably expensive. Blackberries however has a feature that allows enlarging icons and texts for easier seeing. This feature may only be useful for those who have a better vision.

Last but not least are the Android based phones. This operating system has been developed by Google and thanks to them also includes a built-in screen reader called Talk Back. Although Talk Back is still new compared to Talks and Mobile speak for Symbian phones, they have achieved plenty in a short time. Almost all features in Android phones are fully accessible except for the web browser and the typing method. I have tried a **Google Nexus one** phone and with a bit of tweaking it can be mostly accessible. Although this phone does not have a keyboard, typing on it is not too difficult. Google has a feature called Voice Input which you can speak, and the phone types your words into a text message or any text box. There is also another program called Voice to Text which does the same. These programs are a great solution for keyboard less android phones until Talkback develops a new typing feature. Nexus one and most other Android phones have Google maps with free navigation installed. This program is also mostly accessible. Android phones have many other accessible features such as twitter, facebook, YouTube, easy contact management, and so on. As a result Android phones have a great future and they add to the choice that visually impaired or blind individuals have when buying a phone. One of the most accessible phones with a physical keyboard is the **Motorola Milestone** known as the **Droid**. This phone is similar to the Nexus one however it has a physical keyboard which solves the input issue for the Nexus.

Now for the big question. Which phone is the best for the visually impaired? This is not an easy question and depends on many factors such as the person's visual abilities, their budget, their network providers and finally their use of the phones. If someone only uses his/her phone for calling others, a \$50 phone with easy-to-touch keys can be a great solution. It also depends on the network provider that the person is subscribed to. There are two main networks in North America and to make it short, T-mobile 3G phones will not work on AT&T even if they are unlocked phones. Also in Canada Wind Mobile phones will not work on Rogers or Bell, or the other way around. Choosing a phone also depends on the person's budget and use of their phones. Buying a phone in addition to an accessibility solution can be very expensive. For

example buying a Blackberry with Orator without a contract can be as expensive as \$800 without a contract. On top of the phone itself the user will have to pay an additional \$400 for the program. Or if the user would like to purchase a phone like the upcoming Nokia N8 with Nuance Talks, they will have to pay as much as \$900 without a contract. However those with less budgets should not be worried. They can now use the Motorola milestone or the iPhone without having to purchase a screen reader and this can save them a lot of money. In addition, these phones are both fully accessible except for the milestone which will need a bit of tweaking. Both of these phones have been used by many visually impaired individuals and they are very satisfied. For the best accessibility for texting, I will recommend the Motorola Milestone AKA Droid as it has a full QWERTY keyboard. For someone who wants to have almost all applications accessible for them, I recommend the iPhone. But for someone who is with T-mobile in USA or Wind mobile and mobility in Canada, I recommend the Google nexus one which with some tweaking can turn out into a very powerful companion. For those traditional Nokia users who are more comfortable with Talks and Mobile speak, I recommend the Nokia N97 which has a great keyboard for texting, and it also contains many other powerful features.

To summarize, visually impaired individuals have many choices in choosing a phone. Google and Apple have made accessibility very easy by incorporating it in their handsets. As a result, today the best option for a visually impaired person is a phone with one of these two systems.

Mo Shahrokni

Hi Becca,

For a visually impaired person, I think the **LG enV2** or **enV3** would be a good choice. They are a flip phone with a standard telephone keypad on the face and a QWERTY keyboard inside when you flip the lid open. A basic screen-reader is built-in so you can access basic information such as time and date, phone status, i.e., signal strength, battery level, missed calls, messages, etc. You can add, modify, delete, and have contacts read out, as well as, access voice mails. You can also change ring tones and assign ring tones to different contacts. For texting, they will speak each character you type (although they will not read out the actual message back to you) and will read out in-coming text messages. If you don't want to spend \$200.00-\$300.00 for a Mobile Speak or a Talks screen-reader, which will enable you to e-mail, browse the web, and access the full features of a Smart phone or a pocket PC phone, I would recommend the LG enV2 or the enV3.

Sincerely,

Ron

Actually, my answer has to do with being cheap and also not wanting to be tied to a cell phone. I use a **NOKIA** and buy a year's worth of minutes and only use it in emergencies or "have tos". Being visually impaired and living on a fixed income I find a land line is the most economical way to go. Also I value my private time and find a cell phone too invasive. Therefore, using the NOKIA only when absolutely necessary is my answer to the question.

Janet Schmidt

Becca,

My opinion for the cell phone that is best for visually impaired people is **Samsung phones**. I am visually impaired but I have an ATT **quick fire**, it has a big touch screen, the numbers show up big on the screen along with all the other symbols and emoticons, or you can use the slide keyboard. I really can't see the letters but once you learn where they are it is easy. The Samsung flip phones have large print on the key pad. I have not used or seen a Samsung slider, but my guess if they made a slider with keyboard it would be great for visually impaired people to be able to text. I prefer the slider for texting rather than the flip. I don't like having to find the letter/number I want and with a slider there is a key for every letter and number, but for symbols you have to do push the function key along with the symbol key. The Att phone is the only slider I have used, and I have used many flip phones, and I love the slider so much more even though I have a harder time seeing what I am pressing. Once it is on the screen I see it.

Sonya Serrano-Purdy

There are 3 to consider. The **Jitterbug** is a basic phone that doesn't allow surfing the web etc. However it's screen is big, and so are the buttons. It's pretty easy to use

Verizon has two phones to consider: The **Droid incredible** and the **LG Ally** both have zoom and voice over features. Then of course, there is the AT&T **iPhone**, which also has both.

Michael Abelson

Cell phones are all too small to be good for the visually impaired. Their writing is small and even the iPhone relies on visual symbols.

Andrea

I've been a long-time user of both the **Blackberry** and **iPhone**. Have switched to the iPhone at this point since the full screen zoom is so useful but have to admit that largely text-based activities such as SMS and email were easier on the BB which enlarged all text with one global setting and didn't require the constant scrolling around my iPhone does while zoomed in.

ANCDan

Good evening Ms. Proskin!

The cell phone that I use is the **Motorola W385**. While the numbers on the keypad are a little bit on the small side, the screen shows the numbers quite largely. (It's like if you have ZoomText set at 3x magnification.) One of the other nice features that this phone has is that it has the voice command feature, so you can tell it to call a contact and it will do it for you. Also, since this is a Verizon phone, it comes with the VZ Navigator, which gives directions orally to people who need them. (The cost for the service is something like \$3 for the day, or \$10 for the month.) One of the downsides to this phone is that it is not suitable for people who just want to be able to text other people all day. (I don't know of a cell phone that is good for that.)

For people who just want to make phone calls, I've heard that **Jitterbug** is really good, and that their phones have a really good display on them.

Thank you!

-Greta Johnston

iPhone's Zoom looks just like my Zoomtext. Can't beat it! It zooms EVERYTHING

~Dem Rainek

The **LG enV's** are good for offering some speech output but anything written on the screen is pretty teeny tiny. The **Blackberry** offers a nice amount of enlargement for most features of the phone although, unfortunately it doesn't enlarge things on the web and doesn't offer any speech output unless of course you buy Orator.

RM

I think the best cell phone for someone who is VI is an **iPhone** because you don't have to purchase software for it. It is accessible right out of the box.

-Angie

After trying several mobile phones the best one I have found is the Apple **iPhone** 3G (s).

The features that I use frequently, like sending and receiving text messages, finding a contact phone number and the GPS, did take a little while to get the hang of, but now it is all very easy to access. Once I became fluent with the iPhone, finding applications was and is very quick and simple. I would not change my iPhone for anything else.

The features it offers did take a little while to get the hang of them all, but now it is all very easy to access all my applications.

Cheers,
Ms. Judy-Gaye Streit

I love the **iPhone**. Having some usable vision, it is great to be able to switch between screen enlargement and VoiceOver. VoiceOver can read email, articles, pdfs-almost everything- out loud. It has been a life changer (as has ZoomText).

Nora Nagle

I work with several people with visual impairments and I see a lot using the **iPhone**.

Kevin

I think the **iPhone** is the best phone for the visually impaired.

Gordon Dunn

I vote for the **iPhone**. The keys for dialing are quite large and because they are on a flat screen with lots of contrast, they are very easy to see. The number you are dialing is quite large on the screen display so easy to check if it is correct. The favorites allows for auto dialing which I find very convenient. Plus the other apps are handy and I love this device. I looked for a suitable phone for quite some time and this was the best I found.

Re Apple products, I hope ZT is working on a compatible product with Apple as their tools are great and I can't wait to get an iPad to replace the heavy laptop I drag around.

Linda

The new **HTC EVO 4G** from Sprint is a great phone for visual impaired people to use for texting. I am legally blind and just got the phone. I have never been able to text until now. It has a voice to text feature that works fairly well if you speak clearly. I spoke with an HTC rep who said they would work on an app to make the phone have a large print, or possible the pinch to zoom feature work on the texting screen. In my opinion the HTC EVO 4G is the best phone for low vision users.

Luke Armstrong

The best cell phone that a visually impaired person can use is one that is free. It's bad enough that most visually impaired people are visually impaired but that's not the worst of it.

The worst of it.

Having to walk everywhere. Not that walking is bad for you but breathing in exhaust fumes is awful. We live in a society that frowns on smoking and pedestrians have to breathe in much worse.

Not being able to pollute the air like everyone else. Not a bad thing or is it? People spend a lot of time in their cars but if you rely on public transportation, you spend up to 4 or 5 times more time in transit. What's worse? It's basically wasted time. We could listen to an audio book but then we might not hear our stop. That's if the driver remembers to announce it. Turn the volume down? It's hard to hear over all the noise.

Very few visually impaired people make a lot of money. It happens but I bet that the number is somewhere around 0.02%. So we are the working poor. There are services out there but they are overworked. Most are lucky to get help that is needed. Software and other visual aids are outrageously expensive.

What does it all add up to? A free cell phone would be the best.

Robert

I have been using a Cell Phone since they came into the market place. Bag phone, brick phone and many others to current day. I like the **LG 8350** flip phone. The keyboard is spaced well and the voice is understandable. I like the feature of vibration and then it alternates to let me know who is calling. It has also been very durable with the job I have. I have been totally blind for 35 years. I'm not a person who text's so that is N/A to me.

Thank you
John Borelli

My best one to date is the **iPhone** where you can easily see the alphabet and numbers/punctuation marks etc.

Adrienne Horrigan

Oricom Ezy 100

- Has large number pad and numbers which illuminate
- Easy to see if phone is on and you have hung up
- Large font size to easily see who you are calling and easy to scroll
- Cost \$199

John Dragovich

What's the best cell phone for someone who is visually impaired?

I have to say that the best cell phone for someone who is visually impaired is the newly announced Apple **iPhone 4**. No doubt. It will probably be the best cell phone for everyone.

Fred Key

iPhone best for texting.

Jitterbug J best for visually impaired.

I use iPod touch with wifi for texting and I prepay for outbound calls when out and about town without adding to my phone bill. I use Skype on computer or iPod touch when at home over wifi for video calls.

Julie

Becca,

The best cell phone through att is the **surge** with the mobile speak. Use it with an ear bud and no one hears your texting or conversations.

Tina Van Tassell

I think the best cell phone for someone is visually impaired is **iPhone**.

It has built-in Voice Over -TTS engine in many languages and 5 x magnification. Big display, new version has improved resolution which is important for crisp text and images. I am visually impaired. I was thinking about other phones, but price of buying software designed for Symbian, Windows 7, Android OS was too high. Those phones don't have built in TTS or magnification, if you want it you must pay, after that those phones cost more than iPhone.

I believe the best cell phone is Verizon Wireless **LG brand**. I'm currently using one and it's totally voice activated. You can tell it to call whoever is on your contact list. The only minor problem with the particular phone is when you're in a very crowded space and people are talking loud, the voice recognition won't hear you very well. You would have to find a quiet place to tell it to call. Otherwise, I love it and with the right phone plan that you can afford, you're all set to use it. I also love Verizon because the people working there are willing and able to help you with any questions you may have. For those who are vision impaired, on my phone the font can be bigger for you and they can adjust it to where you can be able to see it. Of course there are other cell phone carriers out there, be sure to do your homework. I wouldn't get an AT&T one because it didn't work for me at all.

Do your homework and find the right one for you.

Deana Blake
cell phone & Zoomtext user

I have an **LG WINE**. It speaks to me. The keys are black with white lettering. Voice enabled allows me to speak and get the number.

Sincerely
Julie Morris

The best phone is the **Blackberry Bold 9700** for ease of use.

The number of Icons on the home screen can be set up to as many or few as you need.
The Colour of the screen can be reversed.

Font size can be adjusted.

Has Built in Voice Dial via quick button on the side.

Best phone for texting as it has a regular QWERTY keyboard built in and if that is a bit too small you can get a bluetooth keyboard that works with the Blackberry

<http://www.cpdcanada.com/bluetooth-keyboards.aspx>

<http://www.blackberrycool.com/2005/06/01/bluetooth-blackberry-keyboard-is-finally-here/>

Jim Willis

I like my **iPhone**, although I don't have one right now. I dropped and broke it and have to save the money to buy another. But, it has the largest screen of all I've seen and the virtual keyboard can be larger if you turn the phone sideways. As you press the key, a larger version of it jumps out. My version didn't have the voice dialing service, but I'm looking forward to that. Also, anything on the screen can be made bigger by putting two fingers on the part you want bigger and spreading your fingers out. I use this feature a lot. I would like to see a screen reading program, as the kindle and web applications are way too small to read, and difficult to navigate when enlarged. I was able to pay bills online by remembering where the links were on the page (when my computer died) but new web pages are almost impossible.

While I have you, I have some questions:

I've been thinking about an iPad now that I found out that you can use it as a phone, but then I have to carry it in my purse. The Kindle and other e-readers do only books and newspapers and many books I want to read are not available. What's the difference between the formats?

I'm waiting for a light computer with a roll-up display like on the Mars movie (the one with Val Kilmer).

Well, I digress quite a bit. Here's my two cents worth. Hope it helps your product development decisions.

Thanks
Carolyn Almennigen

I am legally blind and currently have a Verizon cell phone. The only thing good about it is that certain numbers can be assigned certain frequently called phone numbers. However, the keypad is so close together that I hit wrong keys often. I cannot see the screen or keypad well enough to text or do much of anything more. I have discussed this with Verizon over the phone and with associates at one of their stores. They cannot and (will not) accommodate me at this time.

I have heard that **Jitterbug** is a good phone for visually impaired people. I'd love to try it, but cannot afford an additional monthly payment to another phone company while the rest of my family is using Verizon.

I'm not sure how to enter your contest, but please consider this my entry if you can.

Thanks,
Thomas Comeans

For both, deaf and blind, it is the inexpensive cellular **phone distributed by AARP for Consumer Cellular!** Please enter me into your contest which I could not do from my computer and unconfigured Outlook Express.

Thank you lovely Rebecca, yours forever

Dr. Heinz-Guenther Pink

Here goes some ideas...

This phone for a person with a visual handicap must have: a large visor and large print; the messages must be written with black letters on white background and must be spoken as well; the caller ID, address book, and all other categories must be also spoken; the letters on the keys must sound accordingly when pressed. It is very important to have a "How to Operate this Phone" written brochure in large print and also a spoken message.

I have low vision and need ZoomText on my computer and a CCTV to read text. I do not use text messaging, nor take or view pictures on my phone. Given that, I needed a simple, user friendly phone.

My new cell phone is an **LG Accolade** from Verizon. I like it because:

1. It has keys that are straight across rather than curved upward. This way I can find keys better by using a tactile, straight grid pattern with my thumb when placing a call. I would get lost on the curved keypads.
2. The #5 key has a single raised dot. Some phones have two dots on the upper corners of the #5 key and I can get lost with two dots.
3. The bottom row is comprised of the *, 0, # keys so I can find them easily. Some phones have an additional row at the bottom for other functions and it adds a complexity to finding the keys I need most.
4. The phone has a voice command button on the side. Unfortunately, the voice command defaults to speaker phone. Once the command is executed, the phone goes out of speaker. This is unfortunate because at times it becomes a privacy issue where other people can hear the voice commands. Turning down the volume helps. You can also quickly hit the speaker phone button on the keypad, which takes you out of speaker mode but the interruption causes the command voice to ask you to repeat your requested command. Not the end of the world but it's a bit of a pain
5. The button pattern at the top of the keypad is simple. There is a Send, End, spkr, and Clr buttons in logical grid pattern.
6. The phone flips open to protect the keypad. It is adequately slim and light weight. Finding the bottom of the phone to flip it open was hard at first because the phone is symmetrical in shape and smooth in feel. I solved the problem by sticking on a raised dot on the front bottom of the flip pad. Now I have no trouble finding where I need to place my thumb to flip it open.
7. The phone supposedly has a long battery life and so far this has proven to be true.
8. There is no antennae sticking up out of the top.
9. There is no built in GPS

When I need to set up the phone functions, I use the Menu button and do so under my CCTV.

This is an excellent phone for an old timer who doesn't text or need the internet to get emails on my phone. I could care less about taking or receiving photos by phone. I'll do all that on my computer at home.

Chris Quinn

I currently own a **Nokia N82** and it does an alright job. I have Talks installed on it and I believe this slows down the phone a great deal. I still love the phone and can text, change settings, ascertain the time and battery life and do basically anything a sighted person can do on their phone. Aside from the phone occasionally freezing up (which may be a Talks issue) I have

really enjoyed the phone. This phone is also compatible with the KNFB reader and comes with an 8mp camera (also has a flash). The camera has been great for taking and sending REALLY good pictures and I don't have to worry about whether they are too dark.

ZoomText Rocks!
Cali Sandel

Hi,

I am writing in about what is the best phone for a visually impaired person.

I have a phone that I love...it is the most accessible phone I have ever owned. I have the **HTC Ozone** from Verizon Wireless with Mobile Speak Smartphone on it. I am able to access almost every feature in every application with it. There are some applications that are not very accessible, like the options in the video camera or camera applications, but the ones that count are 100% accessible. I can surf the internet, check and write emails from the phone, add/edit contacts, use the calendar fully and use Word Mobile to make lists or write important things down. The memo program is also accessible for taking quick voice notes.

From the factory the phone came with some pretty great voice activated functions. Holding down the talk key until you are prompted with a beep will allow you to dial a number or contact. Check signal strength, battery, time or date. It will also allow you to open up an application on the phone such as E-mail, calendar, contacts, internet, etc. with your voice.

The mobile speak software also announces Caller ID when you are getting a call and calendar reminders when they pop up. You can also access things like the calendar while on the phone to look at dates when talking to a person. The voice comes over the ear piece, so if you have the person on the other end of the phone hold on a second you can check your calendar while on the phone and they do not hear it.

I have found very few limitations with this phone, in fact for quick stuff online I will go grab the phone and look it up rather than wait for the computer to start up.

The phone is also wonderful for text and e-mail. It has a full QWERTY keyboard that took a little getting used to, but it works fantastic. Also, all of the keys have symbols (like \$, %, _, -, ., etc.) on them by pressing a function key and then a key on the keyboard. Previous phones I have owned have allowed me to only use the comma and period when texting because there is a list that you have to navigate to on the phone menu and select from to get other symbols - I have never been able to access these on other phones.

Thanks for taking the time to read my opinion of this phone. If you have any questions you can e-mail me back or give me a call at (562) 965-9230.

Thanks,
Trevor Treloar

Hi Becca,

This is Jennifer Castellano emailing you from my yahoo account. I saw the ZoomNews Contest reminder on twitter. I like to participate in contests so I thought I would give it a go:-)

In my opinion I have a very good cell phone for visually as well as hearing impaired users.

I currently use a Sprint **Sanyo 3810**. Here is a link that provides an overview.
http://reviews.cnet.com/cell-phones/sanyo-scp-3810-red/4505-6454_7-33827300.html

This telephone has the option to increase the font size and the numbers on the key pad are pretty large as well. There is a dot on the number 5 in case you are not in good lighting or just generally have difficulty reading seeing where you are on the number pad. It also has voice activated dialing where you say of the name of the person you want to call. This feature is a bit tricky as you have to make sure you are speaking very clearly into the telephone.

The telephone is rated M4 (microphone) and T4 (telecoil) which is a very good rating if you wear hearing aids like I do.

Hope that helps anyone who is looking for a cell phone!

Jennifer

I've been doing some research on this.

If all you need/want is a basic phone (cell); it looks like the best one is the **Jitterbug**. It has big well-defined buttons, displays the number you are dialing in large text on the display--and most importantly--has a 24 hour operator service that will dial and connect you to your call if you are having trouble dialing it yourself. The operator is also able to help you update the phone numbers stored in the address book. You have to use the Jitterbug plan, but it's contract free and reasonably priced with a few different calling plans.

If you want some features, then the **Motorola EM330** is may be the way to go. It has fair size raised buttons and a clear display. Unlike the Jitterbug, it has some of the perks modern cells boast--playing MP3s, Bluetooth capability, camera, speakerphone, FM Radio capability etc (not sure about texting). It's also offered through a smaller carrier.

Both the EM330 and the most recent Jitterbug are flip phones (as far as I can tell the old, non-flip-phone Jitterbug has been discontinued).

If you don't like flip phones, the **Kyocera Domino** (which has a flip phone version...the Laylo, I think) has some modern cell features, including texting. It has nicely separated raised buttons and a decent display. If you pay for the premium plan, it has operator assistance similar to the Jitterbug. Not sure which carrier offers this, but I think it's a smaller one.

If you want to go with one of the big cell carriers--the **Motorola Tundra** has larger raised buttons and on the **Nokia 6350** the middle row of buttons are a different color, raised and surrounded by a rim--so you can easily tell which column of numbers you are touching. Both phones are flip phones and you can get them from AT&T. I didn't see any really good possibilities as far as non-flip phones from AT&T.

Other resources:

I initially found out about the EM330 & the Domino from mainstreet.com; they did a review of their top 7 phones for seniors (the article also reviews the Jitterbug, which I was already aware of from TV ads). Mainstreet's requirements included ease of use and hearing aid compatibility as well as eyesight challenges.

AT&T will let prospective customers do web searches on available phones--often showing multiple views and giving dimensions to compare between phones. I think Verizon has something similar on their website.

A quick Google search will turn up pages about any of the above phones to get further details.

Karen Post

What is the best cell phone for the visually impaired?

I believe the **HTC EVO** is currently the best cell phone for the visually impaired. To start with calling it a cell phone is a great injustice. This device is more than a phone, it's like a small iPad, you can do everything a laptop can do and more! There are so many voice features I hardly type anymore. My old smart phone I used Google Maps and Google Search a lot. I was always typing in a small wallet size space. Now with Google Voice I click the microphone and speak what I want and it get it. It couldn't be simpler. Like Captain Kirk I now have my Star Trek Communicator I tap it and say what I want and it comes up on the screen. We have reached Singularity.

Thank You

Brian Higgins

The best phone for someone who is visually impaired is definitely the **JITTERBUG!!!!** My husband is visually impaired and if this phone were not available, he would not be able to use a phone. We checked out many different ones that are on the market by Sprint, Verizon, etc. and none compared to the JITTERBUG nor had the features that the JITTERBUG has. The JITTERBUG has 2 phone type options. For someone who has severe visual impairment like my husband, the phone that he has that only has a few main buttons helps even more. It gives him at least a little of the sense of independence even though he depends on me for so many other things in his life. This phone has really been a blessing!

Penny Renfro

Best cell for low vision = **iPhone**.

Best cell for texting = iPhone.

Best phone ever = iPhone!

Thanks.

Eric Morris

I think that the **enV3** by **LG** is the best phone for texting and for the visually impaired. It has an inside keypad and screen that is bigger than the external screen. You can use an option to enlarge the font on both the internal and external screens and the phone isn't hard to use.

--

Angela Randall

Hi,

According to me, the best phone for the visually impaired is the **iPhone** from Apple. The Viavoice software is really accessible even if there is a touchpad technology.

Igor Lara

My vote is for the **iPhone 3 GS**. The contrast can be inverted in the settings, and it can be set up to zoom in using certain finger taps. The virtual keys also expand as you type to make it easier to read what you are typing.

Jeff Koenig

My vote is for the **iPhone**, which is accessible out-of-the-box, there might be stronger screen reader programs, but it is a great advantage not to have to deal with extra licensing and upgrade costs - I think Apple made a significant contribution to the blind community with their accessibility initiatives in their latest product line. And with the new OS supporting Braille displays, it's a no brainer for me.

Carlos Alonso

For me, the **Jitterbug** is the best cell phone. All it does is make and receive phone calls – doesn't take pictures or text, but I can read the numbers better than any other phone.

Amy

As a visually impaired person with some useful vision, I can recommend **BlackBerry**.

It has a larger screen and the font size and style is easy to adjust. The personal font settings also can be used in emails, texts and applications. The full QWERTY keyboard is good for texting and emailing and there is a bump on key D/5 for helping find one's way round the keyboard.

There is a zoom facility on the browser. It's not perfect but it does help.

I've tried all kinds of phones but I would not change from BlackBerry now.

Anne Marsh

With my low vision, I have found that the **iPhone** 3GS is the best I found to be visually friendly. With Apples accessibility settings you can zoom in by tapping the screen with 3 fingers to view the apps on your phone or within an app to be able to use it like anyone else. The iPhone 3GS also has a voice option, so it talks to you, but I tried this function and it worked well but it wasn't something I needed. I also think this phone is best for texting as well because of the zoom settings to be able to read your text when and where ever you are.

Glenn Goodeaux

Hello.

I think the **iPhone** is in fact the best cell phone for visually impaired people!
The VoiceOver feature is clear and extremely responsive. And the zoom feature is very intuitive.

Unfortunately, it's not the best cell for texting. For this particular feature, I think the **Motorola Droid** is better, though I currently use my **Nokia E66** for texting and think it's far better.

Best regards

--

Pedro Velhinho

The 2 best ones are:

- Microsoft Windows Mobile** based devices which you can use CodeFactory's Mobile Speak Pocket PC Edition or Mobile Speak Smartphone Edition
- Apple **iPhone** with VoiceOver

The 3rd best would be:

- Google **Android** Phones with TalkBack

David Waybright

Hey Becca,

This is Ty Thompson and I wanted to share some of my insight into my cell phone research. Each year I spend a couple of weeks going to all of the cell phone vendors in my area (Sprint, AT&T, Verizon, etc.) and explain my needs. So far, each year, I've found Verizon to have the best phones for the visually impaired and specifically, the off-the shelf phones made by **LG**. Each year they get a little better and more capable. In the past there was only a single LG model that recognized voice commands and also read back some of the menus. Today, there are several models which do many things including voice commands that will take you to any menu or sub menu, key echo, menu reading, sub menu reading and even text messaging reading and echo. I can do any type of voice dialing, by name or number and navigation within my cell using only voice commands. For sending text messages, I have to type the keys, but with echo capabilities, I know if I am typing the correct letters. When I receive a text it automatically reads it aloud to me without having to hit any keys at all. It announces any caller by name (if they are in my phonebook). About the only downside is that some of the sub menus haven't been encoded yet for echo, but it's still a long way from even two years ago. Currently the model I have is the **env3** by **LG** through Verizon. It is about a year old and I've already been searching for the next generation phone. I've been through the AT&T iPhone and am initially very impressed compared to last year when even their tech support couldn't find capabilities for the vision impaired. Like the iPad, the iPhone has a subset of the voiceover capabilities of its Leopard Operating System in the iMac. I've found it to be very good and can even read the deepest sub menu that I've tried. The voice analyzer is different so both LG and Apple phones do misinterpret your commands, so be patient and learn how to pronounce certain words so that it will understand. Unless, the Droid by Verizon comes up with an application that does a better job than voiceover, the iPhone will be my next phone. The biggest downside to the iPhone is that there is no way to "feel" you way around the QWERTY keyboard since it is a touch screen. The LG has nice raised keys that allow to easily find your "feel" and location on the keyboard. I've got friends that have gotten the LG, after my recommendation and been very pleased. I've heard of some totally blind people that use the iPhone with some special applications but I haven't found out about the people or applications, yet! Good luck in your search.

Ty Thompson

I have heard that phones with the Talks or Mobile Speak software loaded will allow texting with speech output. I have not tried one of these yet. Verizon offers a phone with Talks pre-installed for a very low price. I have not upgraded my phone in 3 years so I qualify for an upgrade at no cost. The phone with Talks is listed on their website with all of the regular phones which surprised me.

It seems that **LG** makes the most accessible phones without the addition of the extra software. I have been using an LG model from Verizon for almost 4 years now. I have really enjoyed the speech output features that it has. Nearly all of the LG models come with a "driving mode" that makes key features speak. I can hear my caller ID, missed calls, contacts, time/date, and battery status. I can also enter a contact with voice guidance. It doesn't read text messages aloud or give voice output when typing a text message. This is definitely a feature that I would like to have.

Regards,
David Cleveland

Humanware has a software program for the **Blackberry curve**. Would love to have it so I can text and annoy my sons since they never seem to answer my emails haha.

I have an **LG** phone through Verizon and I cannot use the text or email feature at all. I guess too it depends on your visual acuity. My phone does have voice command which makes it easy for calling numbers either stored in my contacts or by calling out the digits.

Kathy Kalaluhi

The **Nokia N82** is the most accessible cell phone I've ever had, for text messaging, surfing the net, managing my music on, etc.

There have been other Nokia models which work equally as well, but that this was the first to run the KNFB Reader Mobile made the N82 that much more than just a phone, but a true accessibility tool.

--

Ron Graham

Hello,

I just want to share my personal experience with you on the subject of cell phones. I currently own an **iPhone** which undoubtedly is the most cutting edge and by far the easiest to use. However, for some users they may find the touch screen a little challenging to text with. I have found a get around for that and it is, the dictation app created by Nuance. I can't tell you how much the iPhone has changed my life. I have access to news, entertainment, weather, stocks, and much much more. The iPhone coupled with a couple popular apps such as eye Blink radio, provides you with unlimited resources such as, newspapers, magazines, and radio shows operated by the blind. I must say, that in all my years of using accessible phones, the iPhone has trumped all others without a doubt. I will say, for someone that is not interested in a touch screen phone, that HTC makes some very nice phones. The **HTC 742** is a very nice phone, has a slide out keyboard, and it works with mobile speak 4. I hope this helps.

Best Regards,
Quintin Williams

Hi,

My name is Syed Hassan, I think as far as accessibility is concern; Apple has done so much in a short period of time. Their products from mac book to **iPhone** 3gs, and iPad. It will not be fair to say that, what iPhone have brought for blind consumers; it's like a dream come true. I have used about 15 different kinds of phones over the 30 years of my life. The one thing I have noticed is not even a single phone was fully and completely accessible. If someone can tell me a single phone that is fully functional and accessible without sighted help. I'm not under estimating the point that those phones weren't grate. They were fine until the Apple's innovation and focus towards portability and accessibility for every individual. If you think in today's world the idea of accessibility and portability, then there is only one name apple and iPhone. Also, coming up is the new and improve features of 30 kinds of Braille display support with improve 5x magnification of the screen. I think iPhone 4g will blow the world and specially blinds and visually impaired consumers what they can do will be beyond imagination.

thanks,
syed

Hi Becca

Here is my response regarding cell phones for VI users.

I'd say that there are two real options at the moment. The most current and chic is the **iPhone**. The new model should be announced shortly so I am not aware of accessibility improvements which may be included, so I'm basing this from the 3GS model running OS 4.0. Apple has a built in feature called voiceover, which dictates well and works with most apps. However, for texting I found the iPhone to be difficult due to the lack of tactile keys. For those with better vision, I would say it is the best option. There are also apps for blind users, one called Shaker comes to mind (you shake the phone x times to perform a certain function).

For those who prefer a keyboard, there are two options. The first is the **Blackberry**. It has decent font magnification. However, if this is not an option, then what I would suggest is a Symbian OS based phone. **Nokia** makes several models (I have been using the **6620** for a number of years. More recent models have QWERTY keyboards like the E71). Symbian is a very versatile OS which has been doing apps long before the iPhone was around. Nuance makes one called "Talks" which is a basic screen reader/magnifier. I have found that it is quite versatile and works with most Symbian apps.

So in sum, if you want a tactile keyboard, it's Blackberry or a Symbian OS phone running "Talks." If not, then go with the iPhone.

Thanks

Best,
Rob Baldeo

Hi,

I recommend any of the **Nokia** phones with Mobile Speak. It makes texting, email, contact management, calendar functions, and settings navigation really easy to do without sight. I also found Mobile Speak fairly easy to teach myself.

One disadvantage is that the internet is only moderately accessible. Or at least that's been my experience. Also Mobile Speak is rather expensive and doesn't have the best tech support.

HTH,
Allison

I do have a **Sony Ericsson** that actually has 2 theme's that work in a kind of high dark contrast which becomes helpful to write messages. 1 of them is called spinnin' and the other one strobe. I do also know that there is a software for Nokia's that is a screen reader. I'm not sure if it is only for Nokia's or if it is also for other brands. Well, that's what I know so, see you guys later.

Douglas Hernandez

Hi Becca,

Well, though it would probably be highly unlikely to be chosen as a winner of a contest following one where my question was used, as this is one of my areas of expertise, I thought I'd better try anyway.

My website contains a good article on choosing a mobile phone called "Which Smartphone is smart for me?" <http://blog.blindmind.net/2009/12/10/feature--which-smartphone-is-smart-for-me.aspx>

I cover much of exactly this sort of topic on my blog, and invite users to visit <http://blog.blindmind.net> to find out much more.

But to quickly summarize, and answer specifically what the user is asking, here are some important things to note:

1. Android phones and Blackberry's are very limited in their accessibility, and many key features are not yet supported.
2. **Windows Mobile** devices are going through a complete redesign of the operating system at present, so past models, which are accessible via Code Factory's "MobileSpeak" or Nuance's "Talks & Zooms" are fast becoming hard to come by, and it will probably be some time before the soon to be released Windows Phone 7 OS has 3rd party accessibility packages available for them. (There is no accessibility built into MS handsets)
3. **Nokia series 60** devices running the Symbian operating system, and **iPhone's** are your best bet for both long-term accessibility support, as well as nearly complete support for phone features, functions, and applications. Whether or not a purely touch-interface is easy to pick up for a visually impaired person depends on the user.
4. iPhone's accessibility support is built in. The plus is that you don't have to buy 3rd party software. The minus is that it's not as fully featured or powerful as running a professional accessibility package.
5. Especially for someone who does lots of texting and/or email, I recommend a device with a QWERTY keyboard. These come in two varieties. The first is the replacement of the dialpad at the bottom of a phone, with about 40 little tiny keyboard buttons, including the **Nokia E71, E72**, etc. Those without nimble or narrow fingers beware. The other type is a slide-out QWERTY keyboard such as the **Nokia N97** or **N97-Mini**. The keyboard is

laid out almost exactly as a standard keyboard, and is much easier in my opinion, to handle heavy texting or document creation.

6. Most importantly, the standard things a fully sighted person would look for in a mobile phone should not be ignored. Good reviews, well spaced keys, quality of audio, responsiveness of device, battery life (especially battery, as it will be more heavily taxed with constant use of accessibility features), and the like all still apply when looking for a good accessible phone.
7. If a friend has a phone you're interested in, see if you can borrow it for a day or two. Free trials can be obtained for both Nuance Talks and Code Factory's MobileSpeak. And as for iPhone, since the accessibility software is built-in, you should be able to visit any Apple dealer and ask them to turn on the accessibility on a handset so you can play with it for a bit.
8. Your local low-vision/blindness organization should be able to offer some suggestion, too. And while I wouldn't always take their recommendation above all others, they may well also have handsets in-house already configured with accessibility software, so you can put them in your hands and try them out before making a purchase or committing to a contract.

The final answer is not to do some of these things. Do them all! Make lots of lists from different perspectives. A list of what devices you'd like if accessibility was not a factor. What devices appear to have the best accessibility, what devices have the best reviews, what devices have the features you want, what devices your blindness organization recommended. By the time you're done making such lists, and trying as many of them as possible in your hands, you will probably be left with only one or two devices that appear on almost every list, and your choice should become fairly simple at that point.

Enjoy!

Best regards,
Ted

Hi,

So far, I think the Apple **iPhone** is the best cell phone for the visually impaired. There are not additional costs required with the phone, no additional charges or things to purchase, works out of the e box. Once the learning is done, it gets much easier to use, just like any phone.

Ken Rodgers

Hi,

The phone I think is the best is the **HTC Ozone** from Verizon Wireless. It has a keyboard style keyboard and the letters is easy to find because it's pretty much is laid out like a computer keyboard. You have a quick way of entering in words by using the predictive text which suggests words that you're trying to type in. If you can type on a computer keyboard then this phone wouldn't be any problem. When I'm texting finding the keys is no problem. All I have to do is just count the roles and figure out where the letter I'm looking for are. Once you get use to the keyboard then texting will be a breeze. The HTC Ozone is one of the popular phones that most of the visually impaired choose if they're on the Verizon Wireless network. So this is my favorite cell phone choice.

Otis Blue

Hello,

I have been using cell phones for over 16 years. In my opinion the best cell phone I have used is the **Nokia N86** in conjunction with Talks. Although the iPhone has gained great popularity among the visually impaired community, in my opinion the Symbian based phones are the best alternative due to the great features that the user can find in Talks. For example, I must read emails in different languages. With Talks I can simply press a couple of keys and I switch to the corresponding language synthesizer. By contrasts, if you want to do that using the VoiceOver application on the iPhone you must change the phone language and reboot the handset.

Another advantage of the Nokia N86 is that it is much easier to operate for those people like me who have motor coordination problems. Although the use of the iPhone seems very intuitive even for visually impaired individuals, performing certain functions on this handset is very difficult, especially when you need to type a text message or an email.

Another advantage of the Nokia n86 is its great camera. This makes it fully compatible with the KNFB Reader. Although this software is expensive, there is no such an application on the iPhone.

A final consideration to prefer the Nokia N86 over the iPhone is the wide variety of languages available on the Talks application. Not only you can select different voices for different languages, but you can also select among different synthesizers. And if you are a Jaws user and you are happy with Eloquence, you find that on the Talks application, so you feel as if you were using Jaws on your handset. This is particularly useful for new users who are already accustomed to this synthesizer. At least in my case this reduced greatly the learning curve that is involved in learning to use a cell phone with Talks.

I forgot to mention that with the N86 handset you even have the possibility of choosing among two screen readers, Talks, my favorite, and Mobile Speak, which is also a very fine piece of software.

In spite of my preference for the N86, one cannot overlook the great impact that the iPhone has had in the visually impaired community, especially because it is accessible out of the box. This reduces significantly the cost of accessibility when this is an issue for the user. In spite of my preference for the N86 handset, Apple should be commended for making accessibility a priority. If Talks didn't exist I certainly would go for an iPhone.

Kind regards,
Luis Eduardo Peña

I think the **LG enV2** from Verizon is a good phone for a blind user. It lets you text, and it does all I need it to do as a blind user.

Troy Sullivan

The **iPhone** is the best phone on the market for the visually impaired for the following reasons:

- It comes right out of the box having a voice over command so there is no extra cost for a talking program.
- Voice commands so you don't have to dial numbers.
- There are many downloads that are accessible for the blind such as the MLB At Bat 2010 app.

The screen has 2 modes, portrait or landscape so when typing a person can choose from 2 different sizes of keyboard layout.

In summary, for the first time the iPhone puts a blind person on an even playing field with their sighted peers when it comes to a cell phone purchase and available apps.

Sincerely,
Rebecca Welz

Shopping for a new cell phone when one is visually impaired or totally blind can be like searching for a needle in a haystack! There are many facets to consider:

The first thing that comes to mind is which carrier offers the best monthly plan for your budget. This thought can be misleading however, as while a specific wireless company may provide the best rates, they may not offer a variety of accessible devices from which one can choose, to accommodate his or her needs.

The next step is deciding on what type of cell phone fits one's lifestyle, a unit with all the bells and whistles, 'Known in today's world as a Smart Phone,' or a mobile gadget which offers simple functions - calling, contacts, calendar, clock and alarm - a basic no-frills phone. With a 'Smart Phone' comes higher monthly rates, along with putting out more money up front.

Once all this has been decided, then there are the questions of which carrier offers what speech programs such as Mobile Speak or Talks, the cost of your chosen speech program, and how that speech works with different phones; something which is very frustrating, quite confusing, especially if you're not savvy when it comes to cell phone technology.

While a little overwhelming, there is an answer on the market for everyone!

Now your shopping endeavor begins! Upon entering the store to have a look/see at the various phones, don't be afraid to ask questions, explore the buttons on the phone, (making sure they are to your liking), inquire about features, ease of operation, etc. Remember, the only stupid question is the one not asked. The more information you acquire will aid in your choice of phones, resulting in a happier customer!

For those not wishing to spend money on expensive speech programs, some phones offer limited text to speech. If this type of set-up enables you to perform the desired functions, then shelling out extra money for speech isn't necessary. It's up to you and your needs.

Choosing a rate plan is next. There are packages offering unlimited minutes, data usage, and texting. All this may sound exciting, but take into consideration whether you'll use the unlimited minutes on a monthly basis. Perhaps a less expensive plan with fewer minutes would be more feasible.

Most companies require one to commit to a 2-year contract after the phone and plan have been chosen, thus be certain the phone will work for you, the monthly charges within your budget.

Remember, various phones are offered to provide freedom of choice. What might be good for a friend or family member who is also visually challenged, might not work for

you. When shopping for a phone, if you feel intimidated by a particular unit, ask to see something else, even go to a different carrier if need be.

There are companies who charge to import contacts from your old phone to the new one, but if you explain your visual impairment or blindness, usually the charge will be waved.

No matter your choice, play with your new phone as much as possible. The more you familiarize yourself with it, the better off you'll be, whether making calls, storing contacts, texting, web browsing, emailing etc. The possibilities are endless!

At first, new technology is a little challenging. Relax, have fun, enjoy your new cell phone, and spend many pleasurable hours talking with friends and/or loved-ones.

--

Christine J Diller

Hi There,

I'm responding to the "Best cell phone" survey.

My answer is that the best cell phone isn't available yet!

I'm on my third accessible cell phone, and so far, this one, the **N82** with TALKS is the best one yet; the interface is intuitive and the phone let's me do a whole lot!

What I miss is having a QWERTY keyboard; my last phone, a Blackjack, was more cumbersome to use, but I loved having the QWERTY keyboard right on the phone.

Contrary to a commonly raised concern that the keys on such keyboards are too small for blind users to use successfully, I've found that having been a Braille reader all my life, and relying on my sense of touch for a lot of things has made navigating small keyboards relatively easy to do, and maybe even easier for me than for many sighted folks.

I realize there are other phones out there with QWERTY keyboards, but I love having the KNFB reader on my phone, and so far, the option of having the KNFB Reader, TALKS and a QWERTY keyboard isn't available.

Finally, I'll add that I think the trend toward touch screens represents a step back for the visually impaired. I own a iPod Touch, and while I love the way in which the touch screen is accessible, and while I think it's fantastic that accessible software designers have been designing for touch screens, I've found that in general, even with experience using a touch screen, it takes me much

longer than a sighted colleague to manipulate my iPod touch. My N82 cell phone with TALKS gets me much closer to parody with a sighted user, in terms of time to task ratios.

Thanks!

~ Lisa Larges ~

Hello,

My name is Charlie Kobermann. I use the **LG enV3** as my phone. It came accessible out of the box. With a bit of a learning curve you can text. There are some things on this phone that are not accessible but not bad for not having to add anything else. I am thinking about getting an Apple I phone if the next edition is more accessible.

Charlie Kobermann

Hello Becca,

My vote is for the **iPhone** 3 GS over the Android for visual impairment. The Android system from what I have found out when I was shopping for a new cell phone to fit my visual impairment didn't have preinstalled software and what apps were available at the time was more for individuals who were blind. I prefer to use what vision I had left and shopped AT&T, Sprint, Verizon, and T-Mobile. All had phones that used the same basic software that was only on Smartphones that had to be specially ordered from the company website and were not available in store to check out along with sales personnel not knowing of the special software. One company even told me that they had a location that had the phone with the visual software at a location near me. When I went there, they did not and had no idea what I was talking about even when I brought the webpage and emails in from their parent company. So I tried out the cell phones from each cell provider without the visual software and found out that each of these smartphones were hard to use due to the small keys and screen. I then found out that the iPhone had the capabilities preinstalled on all phones shipped that would help someone with visual impairment and other apps that can be downloaded such as a cctv app that can magnify up to 16x and take a picture of the item I am magnifying with a touch of the screen. The phone comes with speech to text, text to speech, zoom capabilities, high contrast feature, text size selection depending on function that was far superior to the other phones offered. The only difference is that the iPhone does not get

the persons with disability discount since the software comes on all phones, but the extra price to me is worth the added ease of functionality for a person with visual impairment. There is even an app that can be downloaded that turns the screen into a LED flashlight that can help in low lighting conditions such as a restaurant. There are other apps that can be downloaded that help people with visual impairment that can be functioned just by a person voice, apps that the Android system just does not have yet. I enjoy showing my phone to other people who have visual impairment who are not aware of what the iPhone can do while they are using old technology phones from the 1990's or nothing at all when I go to my eye doctors or low vision center for meetings.

Chris Smith

Good evening,

I'm writing to respond to the question about what cell phones are best for the blind and visually impaired. I have experience with a few, and will share my thoughts. I'm writing from the perspective of someone with no usable vision, especially for cell phone use.

LG enV Products

I have used the **LG enV**, the **LG enV2**, and the **LG enV3**. These phones may be a good option for someone with some amount of usable vision who needs to be on the Verizon network. They are affordable options, and do contain some speech output. They read caller ID, contacts list (Names only, does not read once you get into the contact information window), date and time, missed calls, (will not recently dialed or received), received text messages, (though it will not read the sender except for when the message is initially received), network and battery status, and basic menu navigation.

It can be frustrating to use these phones as a blind person for a few reasons. Firstly, the phone reads just enough to get you by, but then stops. Setting up speed dials is impossible because it will read just enough to get you to the last few steps, then the menus cease to be accessible. You can completely count out web browsing or accessing the store to get ringtones from the phone. The call log isn't accessible, (besides the missed calls), and the phone speaks really really loudly, (particularly on the more recent ENV models). Everyone can hear what you're doing, and it is impossible to turn the speech down much at all.

Nokia N82

I recently acquired Talks for my N82 with the KNFB Reader which I've had around for a few years. I've never had a really accessible phone before, and finally got fed up with Verizon's lack of choice in this area. So far, I love it. Nokia seems to have reliable products with excellent features in an easy to understand User Interface. The N82 is an older phone, and does have a few bugs that can be frustrating. It freezes sometimes and I have to remove the battery to get it to restart properly. Overall though, it is a nice product. Talks is a flexible screen reader, and while a drawback is having to pay for accessibility, it is nice to be able to use every feature on my phone. It even reads the menus in the camera application.

iPhone 3GS

I am a Mac user, and have considerable experience with the Voiceover screen reader. I do not own an iPhone, but I have used one a lot, (as well as an iPod touch which has a similar interface). The only aspects of the iPhone I didn't like had nothing to do with the accessibility features. The built in accessibility can't be beat, not to mention Apple is a very responsive and user friendly company. Typing on the touch screen takes some getting used to, but it is doable. I don't know if I'd recommend this to someone who uses their phone for everything business related because of this issue, (writing Emails would be faster on something like a Nokia), but with the addition of bluetooth support in iPhone 4, this may change. The gestures are simple to learn, and finding accessible apps is very simple. It is nice to not have to pay more because I'm blind. I love taking something out of the box and having a robust screen reader available to me from the word go.

These are just some thoughts. If you would like more specific information, please contact me.

Briley Pollard

Hello,

The **Nokia N86** is my choice.

Of course I haven't tried a lot of phones, but I am happy with the phone I have, and use for writing text messages.

I have a Nokia n86, and did not purchase it in order to use the KNFB reader. I bought it because it has a great number pad with very distinct buttons, so texting with T9 enable works really well. My previous phone, a Nokia 6620 had a really annoying

keypad that made texting too difficult for me to become efficient with it. Many phones I've seen have the same problem, the buttons are too small, or too close together.

Of course another phone would be best if a person wants a tiny QWERTY keyboard, but I find them annoying, because I'm not all thumbs. :-)

Sarah Van Oosterwijck

Hi There-

My suggestion for the best phone is the **N97 Mini**, together with Talks from Nuance this device is the best all-rounder device for today's needs. It boasts excellent specifications for all round uses, great multimedia capabilities, simple and accessible email and text messaging application and much much more.

A visually impaired with this device will hold all their gadgets in one device, no more needing to carry a Batman style utility belt of electronic gadgets, this device covers all music, audio book, daisy player, laptop functionality, podcasts etc all in one device.... Oh, and it can make phone calls too!!

The N97 Mini is a Hybrid device too so it covers both hardware input keys with a full qwerty keyboard but also has touch screen functionality, so quick easy typing can be possible but at the same time the user is given the opportunity to get into the world of touch screen phones if they wish.....

But if they don't then the physical keys are there too!

Cheers
Pete Sheppard

Hi,

The **iPhone** is hands down the most powerful and most accessible cell phone available. The best part of all is that Apple chooses to include universal access at no additional charge!

Matthew Janusauskas

Hi;

I have used both the **Nokia N82** and the **Motorola Q** and think both phones are great to use. I do have Mobile Speak installed on my phone and love it!

Everette Bacon M.A.

Hi what a coincidence. I very recently got an upgrade to my cell phone from Rogers. I asked them if they had a phone for the visually impaired. It just so happened it was my lucky day for they had just added a new cell phone to their roster the **Nokia 6682**. It is a very user friendly cell phone for visually impaired. It came with both printed and cd's manuals and French and English formats.

This is a talking phone. Every button you push is verbal. Even to send text and receive text is verbal as well. To place a call, all you do is hold down the button on the right side of the phone and it will say "Say a command" you tell it who you want it to call in your address book and it will call it for you.

What I also like about the phone is the battery is rechargeable at any time and it even verbally tells you when it needs charging and then will verbally tell you when it is charged. Because the battery doesn't have a memory chip you can charge at any time and it won't over charge.

I really lucked out because the phone was free to me because I am a member of the CNIB and a customer of Rogers. However, I imagine Nokia likely supplies their phones to multiple companies.

I hope this helps other fellow V.I.P.'s

Linda Ouellette

I wish there could be a good magnifier option installed or downloaded. I can't even read my Samsung with a magnifier. SO I only have which one not to buy. Sorry.

Pam Kero

I use an **iPhone**. I like it because I can customize the font sizes and even zoom in on anything I want. From text messaging to using facebook to the internet. It also has a voice reading built in but it is not very good and cannot be used at the same time as the zoom in feature. Maybe the next iPhone will have more support.

I'd be interested in a ZoomText iPhone app when one is able to run multiple apps in future iPhone versions.

Jason Wallenstein

The best cell phone for someone who is visually impaired is going to depend on what they plan to use the phone for. If they want a great GPS, then they should get a windows based cell phone and use mobile geo. If they want a cell phone that is usable out of the box, then the **iPhone** should be their choice. Typing on the iPhone can be a challenge, but many people I know have figured out how to adapt to not having a keyboard.

Alena

This is nice, because years ago, we did not have choices. Things are changing every day. There is a knfb reader which is expensive and does a lot. Its primary feature is a portable scanner. This works with the GSM network, like at and t and t-mobile. I personally like the Verizon network and I see most in ca, have this. They have some simple basic phones like the **LG 8360, enV3** which is good for texting and **HTC Ozone** which works with talks software. Ozone would allow you to go on the internet. Talks is similar to the mobile speak software. They are screen reading software to adapt your phone, for an advanced user. They cost about \$100 through Verizon and at and t. Sprint Nextel have a few options, that aren't so great.

The final one is the **iPhone** with at and t for now, rumored for Verizon in the future. This is a very nice option to where the accessibility software is built in. It is a flat panel screen that totally blind can use. Many Americans and blind people think it is great.

I will cover another like talks and mobile speak software. There is now orator from humanware that will adapt your **blackberry**.

There are other options and new options, yet this is a highlight and sum up.
Hope this helps
Tom Evans

Hello,

This is a great survey question although it is quite difficult to answer. The perfect cell phone for someone who is visually impaired or blind truly depends on the person's needs, wants, and skill level.

I have presented a number of seminars on accessible cell phones and hope to share a little bit of what I learned.

When looking at accessible cell phones, there are two types of phones to look at. Those that are accessible out of the box and those that require a third party piece of software to make them accessible. Most carriers have a few phones with some accessibility built in. **LG** makes a number of phones, such as the **enV III**, that are rather accessible out of the box. You can hear who is calling, check your battery status, have text message read to you, and a few other voice options.

Although these phones are not 100% accessible, for those looking for a basic phone, it can be a great option.

Also, the **iPhone** from Apple has a full screen reader and screen magnifier built right into the iPhone OS. The screen reader, VoiceOver, gives the user access to every application that ships on the iPhone. Also, voiceover works with a large amount of third party applications that increase the functionality of the phone. Although the iPhone is 100% accessible, it does utilize a touch screen that does have a learning curve attached to it. For those looking for a simple phone, the iPhone may not be the right choice.

There are also a number of phones that run third party screen readers and screen magnifying solutions. When these third party applications are installed, the user has access to almost 100% of the phones features. The two main screen readers on the market are Talks and Mobile Speak. Both solutions work on phones like the **Nokia N82** or **Nokia N86** that have traditional phone keypads. They also work with touch based phones like the **Nokia N97**. Although there is a small learning curve to utilize these solutions, they are great for people who may be looking to do a little bit more with their cell phones.

Hope this email helps your readers better decide what cell phone is best for them.

Thanks,

Cory Ballard

I HIGHLY recommend **iPhone**. It has a high-contrast design, the screen is large enough for those with most impairments to see, and the interface is very responsive. Plus, with most web-based applications (such as email and Safari, their web browser), you can use a "pincher touch" to enlarge the screen as much as needed and then scroll with your finger (similar to mouse-scrolling with ZoomText). There are thousands and thousands of applications to download for any and all interests, and many are free (who can say "free" in most cases of assistive technology?). For texting, the keys are large to read and even larger when the phone's rotated to landscape mode. There are also apps in the App Store (such as "Speak It! Text to Speech" by Future Apps, Inc. that easily convert text to speech. The settings are easy to adjust a fair number of the iPhone's basic functions.

I've been using iPhone for a few months now, and I wish I'd gotten it sooner. It is definitely the one I'd recommend for visually-impaired users.

Melissa D. McGinnis

Hello,

I saw the survey question in this month's Ai Squared newsletter and thought I'd respond. Any smartphone that can run MobileSpeak or Talk is probably a good phone for people who are visually impaired, if you can afford the expensive software to make it accessible. I personally prefer something that works fairly well on its own. The **LG enV2** and **enV3** are the only phones that can be set to read text messages aloud out of the box. Other LG and Samsung phones have acceptable talking menus, but the enV line of phones is the first to add spoken text messages. These phones do not have full accessibility, most noteworthy being that the web browser does not speak, but the fact that you won't pay any more than anyone else was a major factor for me.

Best Regards,
Justin Ekis

I have tried several cell phones with the Mobile Speak software. I found that the **Nokia N95** suits my needs the best. It is a slider, smart phone that will work with email, texting, internet, and many other functions. The N95 doesn't have a full keyboard which makes it easier to use. The buttons are raised on the number pad, MP3 pad, and all the function keys. The fonts can be enlarged if needed. It also has blue tooth capabilities. I enjoy using my N95. It keeps me up to speed with the ever-changing electronic world.

Sincerely,
Donna Grahmann

Hi,

The bad:

I had a major issue with the G1 Google Phone. Supposedly there is software that makes it talk (free in the android market), however, after messing around with the phone for 4 hours, I found it didn't work well. You had to touch a very specific part of the screen. When I wrote to T-Mobile about it, they simply said there are other phones. Well, none of them works very well for the blind either, so I found their answer highly unsatisfactory.

Here's a blog post I wrote about it:

<http://www.profitablestorytelling.com/business-and-management/accessibility/rondas-rant-the-great-not-so-great-cell-phone-adventure-or-why-is-it-so-hard-to-make-a-cell-phone-talk/>

The good

I am a Verizon customer and while I don't have this phone yet, I have excellent reports from other blind people. It's their Verizon Talks software, which is currently on the **HTC Ozone** phone. It deals with texts, email and Internet very well. One person had issues making it work with his hearing aid, but after some trial and error with Verizon's help, he got the issue resolved.

Ronda

Hi Becca,

I think the best mobile phone for the visually impaired is the **iPhone 3Gs** which has a built-in zoom and screen reader, there is no need for any extra software, this can be used by Blind or Visually Impaired.

Thanks
Mark.

There is not a truly good cell phone for the visually impaired. Needed: bigger keys and display and to be part of one of the major networks. This will probably require a phone the size of an iPad that folds like a laptop. Perhaps Apple would take it on as a task with outside capital.

John Godbold