

My wish list for the next iPhone

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A new iPhone is imminent! Man the ramparts! Sound the trumpets! A new coronation is upon us!

OK, that's a *tad* hyperbolic, but the [prospect](#) [1] of a new iPhone has me a little giddy — especially since the iPhone 5 was a huge disappointment and reinforced my decision to snag an early 4S (and not hold out for the inevitable sequel).

I'm not enthralled in the cult of Apple — I detest Macs — but I am comfortable (read: *addicted*) with the iOS mobile interface, and I'd eagerly surrender my hard-earned dollars (300-400 of them) for some major and minor improvements over the iPhone 5.

So, without further ado — or more fanboy gushing — here's what I'd like to see from the next iPhone (scheduled to arrive this summer).

An intelligent intelligent software assistant

When I input a command to [Siri](#) [2] — the iOS intelligent software agent — the robotic "assistant" usually assumes I'm speaking Chinese (no offense to the Chinese speakers in the audience). This is what I've gathered from its success rate at translating questions and commands into useful actions. If I tell it to "Text Melissa", it assumes I want to order Dominos. If I ask Siri to "Call home," it redirects me to the public library. I exaggerate, of course, but for an "intelligent" assistant, Siri seems rather dense.

Siri is great at idle banter — complement her and she'll respond cheerfully; insult her and she'll reprimand you. In other words, the iOS intelligent software assistant is a cute gimmick but not very practical.

Speech recognition systems are still in their infancy, and the technology will almost

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certainly become ubiquitous at some point in the future. But the success rate needs to improve. In [one test](#) [3] — encompassing a busy Minneapolis street and a quiet room — Siri was successful (meaning she comprehended the query and provided the correct answer) 62% of the time on the street and 68% in the room. That's pretty low.

Undo the vertical growth spurt

With the iPhone 5, Apple decided that what consumers really needed was an extra row of apps. Why? Because bigger! Also, when you turn it sideways to landscape orientation, the screen is 16:9, which eliminates the black bars for movies and TV shows and generally makes for a more pleasant entertainment experience. But for everyday usage, the vertical growth spurt is annoying.



The iPhone 5 sports a height of 123.8 mm (4.87 in) vs. 115.2 mm (4.54 in) for its predecessor, the 4S. This translates to a 14% boost for the diagonal display, from 3.5" to 4". Apple used this increased space for a fifth row of apps.

The super-sized iPhone feels unwieldy, clunky, and the extra space is superfluous. I have small fingers, and my thumbs can't track across the entire iPhone 5 screen. I'm forced to use two hands to reach both the home button and top level of icons. This is annoying.

According to early reports, the new iPhone will maintain the 5's lanky height, with Apple assuming — correctly, I'd wager — that its legion of cultists won't care. But

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hey, a little kvetching never hurt anyone.

The ability to access voice and data simultaneously (for Verizon and Sprint users)

AKA, the ability to talk to your significant other and check your email at the same time. It's worth noting that AT&T iPhones already have this feature. But AT&T's reduced coverage area and inferior reception (compared to Verizon) renders this a moot point.

Most Verizon/Sprint phones can multitask but not the iPhone. CNET [explains](#) [4] this discrepancy — many of these other phones use a two-antenna system for LTE/voice (voice doesn't run over LTE yet), while the iPhone 5 only uses one.

The ability to do both may sound insignificant, but I can't tell you how many times I've been engrossed in conversation and wanted to check my email, browse the 'Net, or load an App that requires a data connection.

I need more power (insert obligatory reference to Star Trek's Scotty)

Battery life — or lack thereof — has always been a problem for Apple's beloved smartphone. I've never done a formal test with my iPhone 4S, but anecdotally, if I unplug the device at 8 AM, it usually runs dry — on moderate usage — by early to mid afternoon. If I use my phone for multimedia purposes — to watch a movie, listen to music, play a game — forget about it; it won't last half the day.

Here's where I remind you that I don't have an iPhone 5, and the 5 apparently sports a much improved battery life. In one test, conducted by [Laptop Mag](#) [5], the device lasted 7 hours and 13 minutes. The current champ — the Motorola Droid RAZR Maxx — chugs along for nearly 8.5 hours. So the iPhone is getting there, but it still has room for improvement.

Personally, I'd like to be able to watch a movie (or two) on a cross-country flight and not worry about finding the next outlet. Wishful thinking? Perhaps.

Harder, better, faster, stronger

Like everyone else, I want to fling birds, slice fruit, and load apps as quickly as possible. But this one's kinda a given: With every new iPhone iteration, Apple ups the speed and horsepower. So I'm not too concerned about this one.

But more power, dual antennas, a smaller screen size, and a smarter Siri? Those might just compel me to drop some shekels on an upgrade.

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[1] http://online.wsj.com/article_email/SB10001424127887323611604578398663619783622-1MyQjAxMTAzMDAwMjEwNDIyWj.html

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[2] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siri_%28software%29

[3] <http://tech.fortune.cnn.com/2012/06/29/minneapolis-street-test-google-gets-a-b-apples-siri-gets-a-d/>

[4] <http://www.cnet.com/iphone-5/>

[5] <http://www.laptopmag.com/review/smartphones/apple-iphone5.aspx>