

# Gadgets



## Is the Motorola Moto Z a contender? It depends.

Back in the day (in the 1990s, cough!), your choice of mobile phone was Nokia, Ericsson or Motorola. I was in the Nokia camp, but was always envious of the Motorola flip-top vibe.

Fast forward two decades and, to figure out if there really is an alternative to Apple iPhone and Samsung Galaxy at the top-end of the smartphone market, it was fun to get my hands on the latest incarnation of the Motorola: the Moto Z.

Launched in South Africa in November 2016, this is the flagship of the range, positioned against the iPhone 7 and Galaxy S8. So, is it a contender? And what is it like moving from the iOS to the Android ecosystem?

In reverse order: moving to Android was not as painful as I expected it to be, with one fairly significant exception, the calendar. My attitude is that this sort of thing should be intuitive. I might Google something once if I get stuck. So I am sure that there is a fix to the calendar migration issue, but it needed more work than I think is reasonable.

As for adjusting to working in an Android environment, some things are a bit different, but nothing you won't figure out pretty quickly.

What about the Moto Z itself? Supposedly, at 5.2mm, it's the thinnest smartphone in the world. This means there isn't a headphone jack – you get supplied a USB adaptor or can use Bluetooth earbuds.

The significance of the thinness is pretty cool, though. There are a range of accessories – speakers, battery extenders, zoom lenses and projectors – that magnetically clip onto the back of the phone, extending its functionality without affecting day-to-day use.

The Moto Z is pretty much on par with its peers specs-wise. It scores points for battery life and memory, and where you lose out in places, you make up in others. But for me, the single massive letdown was the camera. It's really not great for close-ups, low light situations or action shots.

The verdict: I do think it's horses for courses. On paper, the high-end smartphones are so similar that it comes down to what you prefer. For me, the Moto Z's camera is a deal breaker, but someone else might not care, and love the accessories more.

By Vanessa Clark



## Explainer: Chatbots

### The buzz about bots?

Chatbots. Ugh. As if call centres and live chat on websites aren't bad enough, here's another way for me to have frustrating conversations with a brand. Maybe, but hopefully not.

### Why are they having a moment?

While chatbots have been around since the 1960s, they've been in the spotlight again since Facebook opened its Messenger API to chatbots in 2016. And when Facebook speaks, I guess we pay attention.

### What are they?

Backing up a second, a chatbot is a piece of software that carries out one side of a conversation. In Facebook-land, this takes place on the Messenger app, used by 1.2 billion users monthly. Start a chat with a brand to order a takeaway, pay for and check in for a flight, get medical advice or read the news. The bot figures out what to reply either using rules-based logic or artificial intelligence, and answers using natural language.

### How many are there?

Although there are apparently 100 000 active chatbots on Messenger, you wouldn't be alone in thinking chatbots are not really a thing yet. Facebook is hoping this will change. It announced earlier this year that you can include bots in a group chat. It can also be used in its Messenger Codes, allowing brands to publicise their chatbots.

### What can you do with it?

In the US, you can order and pay for a Domino's pizza delivery via Messenger, but in South Africa, probably the most exciting thing I've seen is booking a Mercedes Benz test drive via a bot. Nevertheless, app developers and owners should take note, as this is encroaching on your territory.

### Is it for you?

Brands, use bots wisely to improve customer service across the board, and you're onto a winner.



Price: starts at R12 999