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\$79.99



## Samsung Exhibit 4G Review

by Sherri L. Smith on July 8, 2011



**Pros:** Runs Android 2.3 Gingerbread Fast 4G download speeds; Wi-Fi Calling Camera takes clear vivid pictures ; Long battery life

**Cons:** Small keyboard makes typing difficult ; Design a bit bland

**The Verdict:** The Samsung Exhibit 4G is a very good Android smartphone for T-Mobile customers who want 4G speed on a budget.

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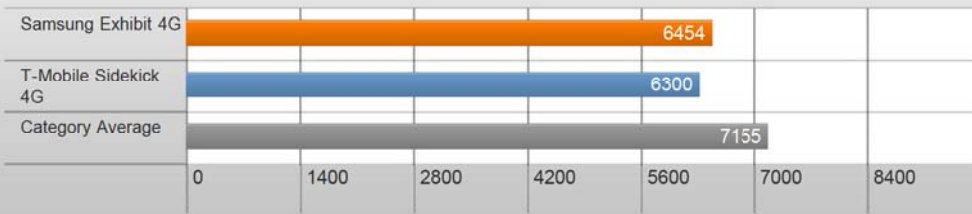


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Review

Specifications

The Samsung Exhibit 4G is an Android phone designed for shoppers who crave 4G speeds but who aren't willing to pay extra for other bells and whistles. This \$79 handset doesn't have a dual-core processor or HDMI, but you do get the latest Android 2.3 Gingerbread operating system, a sharp (but somewhat small) display, and a front-facing camera for video chats. Read on to find out how much you get for your money.

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**Design**

Like most touchscreen phones, the Samsung Exhibit 4G is basically a black slab, but offers a little flair with rounded corners at the top, and more angled edges at the bottom. Its smooth, soft-touch back made the Exhibit comfortable to hold.

While our review unit came in black, the Exhibit 4G is also available in violet, which makes for a more interesting look. Instead of the almost-standard four capacitive touch buttons, the Exhibit only has three (settings, menu, search). A large black Home button, wrapped in chrome, sits below these buttons. We think a lot of users will appreciate this design, because you won't have to hunt for the home button.

Measuring 4.6 x 2.3 x 0.4 inches and weighing 4.3 ounces, the Exhibit 4G can fit in just about any pocket with ease. This lightweight candy bar is lighter than the [T-Mobile SideKick 4G](#) (5.7 ounces) but not the [T-Mobile Galaxy S 4G](#) (4.2 ounces). The top of the Exhibit 4G houses the micro-USB port hidden behind a flap cover and a headphone jack, while the power/lock button is located on the right. A microSD slot and the volume buttons are on the left.



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**Display and Audio**

The Exhibit 4G features a 3.5-inch TFT display with a resolution of 800 x 400 pixels. Even though this LCD is smaller than the 4.3-inch screens you'll find on the [EVO 4G](#) and [HTC Thunderbolt](#) (both 800 x 480 pixels), you're getting almost as much detail. The Exhibit 4G's display is bright with vivid colors, and we had an easy time making out menus and websites in direct sunlight. When we saw the three small speaker slits located on the back of the Exhibit 4G, we weren't expecting to be blown away by the audio quality. While the handset provided clear audio on most tracks, it didn't get very loud. We also noticed distortion in bass heavy songs such as Kanye West's "Love Lockdown," which forced us to turn down the volume.



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**Keyboard**

Typing on the Exhibit 4G was a slow and deliberate process. The headset's tiny keys made typing a chore in both portrait and landscape modes. Swype made typing a little more bearable, which lets you trace a line from letter to letter to make words, especially after we turned off predictive text. Users can also switch to the Samsung Keypad input method, making the keyboard resemble an old-school cell phone.

**User Interface**

The Exhibit 4G runs Android 2.3 Gingerbread with Samsung's TouchWiz interface. There are five customizable home screens where users can add widgets and apps. We were able to add two more screens using the Edit tab in the menu screen. Icons for Phone, Contacts, Messaging, and Applications occupy the bar beneath each home screen. Swiping our finger down from the top of the screen revealed the notification shade. The second screen is home to the Feeds and Updates widgets, where we could update our Facebook, Twitter, and MySpace (remember that?) status. The third screen houses the Google search bar and icons for the camera, Google Maps, Web, and Android Market. The fourth screen features multimedia apps such as T-Mobile TV, Slacker Radio, and Samsung Media Hub. The remaining screens are blank, leaving plenty of room for apps and widgets.



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**Apps**

T-Mobile and Samsung bundled the Exhibit 4G with a modest number of apps. For \$3.99, T-Mobile ID labels unknown callers by name, city and state. We watched a few episodes of Phineas and Ferb on T-Mobile TV's app (\$9.99 per month). The Samsung Media Hub also lets you rent or buy movies or TV shows, including Burn Notice and Sons of Anarchy. In addition to the Android Market, the T-Mobile Mall lets users purchase ringtones, callertones, games and applications. Samsung's AllShare lets you stream content to other DLNA-

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enabled devices. Third-party apps include Oik, Slacker Radio, Scrabble, ThinkFree Office, YouTube and FaceBook.

## Performance

Running a 1GHz Cortex A8 Hummingbird processor with 512MB of RAM, the Exhibit 4G was responsive, but not as quick as more powerful phones on the market. Opening apps and scrolling through menus was smooth. We only noticed lag once we had several apps running. During the Linpack test, the Exhibit 4G scored a 16, besting the category average of 12.2 and the T-Mobile SideKick 4G (12.6). However, the [HTC Sensation 4G](#)'s 1.2GHz dual-core Qualcomm processor ran circles around the Exhibit with a whopping 44.8. During the An3DBench, a synthetic graphics benchmark, the Exhibit 4G scored 6,454, besting the SideKick 4G (6,300) as well as the category average (6,266). The HTC Sensation 4G continued to dominate, posting a strong 7,072.

## Camera

Using the Exhibit 4G's rear 3-megapixel camera, we captured sharp pictures outdoors. Snapshots of flowers and a nearby fruit stand came out vivid with a good level of detail. When we took pictures in the office, colors appeared muted under florescent lighting. The flash did come in handy when we snapped images in low light. The camera has 13 scene modes (including Sunset, Backlight, and Landscape) that allowed us to create a decent portfolio of camera shots. When we wanted to capture stills of people, we switched to the Portrait setting, while Sports came in handy for catching action shots of our dog.

Using the rear-facing camera we recorded 720p video with smooth playback and sharp, clear images. However, we noticed the camera had trouble adjusting after we panned left or right.

We used the Exhibit 4G's front-facing .3-MP camera to conduct a Qik video chat. Our caller reported vivid colors while we were in natural light, but colors appeared washed out when we were under the florescent lighting in our office. We experienced about of second of lag on our end of the call while our caller reported about 2 to 3 seconds of lag. Unfortunately, the Exhibit 4G doesn't support Google video chat through Google Talk--at least not yet.

## Web

Using T-Mobile's HSPA+ 4G network, the Exhibit 4G is capable of theoretical peak speeds of 21 Mbps. Using Speedtest.net, the Exhibit 4G achieved a swift download speed of 6.5Mbps and an solid upload speed of 1.4 Mbps at an optimal 4G location. This was slightly better than the SideKick 4G ,which posted 6.1 Mbps and 1.3 Mbps respectively.

During our web surfing tests, the Exhibit 4G was loaded the mobile version of ESPN.com in 10.4 seconds while The New York Times mobile site took 5.9 seconds. It took 13.3 seconds to load Laptopmag.com. That's about the same as the SideKick 4G, which took 6.3, 7.6, and 15.6 seconds to load those same respective sites.

## Mobile Hotspot and Data Plans

The Exhibit 4G can be used as a mobile hotspot for up to five devices. We wish there was a widget for enabling this feature; we had to dig through the Wireless and Network settings to activate it. During our testing, this smartphone provided an Internet connection to our laptop, PlayStation 3, and our Internet-enabled television simultaneously. The connection became slower as we continued to add devices. With just a Toshiba Satellite A305 connected, we measured average download speeds of 4.24 Mbps and upload speeds of 1.2 Mbps using Speedtest.net. Mobile hotspot functionality will tack on \$15 per month to your bill and will count against your monthly data allowance. Go over the limit and T-Mobile might throttle your speed.

T-Mobile customers using the Samsung Exhibit 4G have four data plan options:



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200MB for \$10/month, 2GB for \$20/month, 5GB for \$30/month, and 10GB for \$60/month.



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## Call Quality and Battery Life

During our test calls to New York, New Jersey, and California with the Exhibit 4G, our callers reported they could hear us loud and clear. They also got an earful of the majority of the background noise, including subway announcements when we traveling home and our television once we'd arrived. Voices on our end were crisp and clear via the earpiece and speakerphone. We appreciated the Wi-Fi calling feature on the Exhibit 4G, which allowed us to keep the conversation going in areas with spotty coverage.

During the first few seconds of our Wi-Fi call, the caller's voice faded in and out, but after that, we were able to continue our call without incident. T-Mobile claims that the Exhibit 4G's 1500 mAh lithium ion battery can get up to 9 hours of talk time and up to 15 days of standby time. On the LAPTOP Battery Test (web surfing while on 4G), the Exhibit 4G lasted a very good 8 hours and 10 minutes, about an hour longer than the Sensation 4G and nearly 2.5 hours longer than the Android category average. Still, the Sidekick 4G lasted an epic 10 hours on the same test.

## Verdict

The Samsung Exhibit 4G is one of the best Android phones under 100 bucks. For \$79.99, this Android device offers zippy data performance over T-Mobile's HSPA+ network along with a good camera and long battery life. Heavy texters will prefer the physical keyboard on the identically priced Sidekick 4G, and those looking for a larger screen and more power will want to check out the \$199 HTC Sensation. Overall, though, the Exhibit 4G is a very good choice for budget conscious shoppers.

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