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# Samsung Gem SCH-i100 review (U.S. Cellular)

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CNET Editors' Rating  
★★★★★  
Very good

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**The good:** Interesting, angular design elements give the **Samsung Gem** personality, and it's inexpensive.

**The bad:** The Gem's smaller screen makes typing errors unavoidable, and the handset feels sluggish at times.

**The bottom line:** The Samsung Gem's decent specs and enviable budget price make this reliable entry-level Android phone a fantastic value.

**WHERE TO BUY**

MSRP: **\$30.00**

See [manufacturer website](#) for availability.  
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**QUICK SPECIFICATIONS**

Release date	04/6/11
Service provider	U.S. Cellular
Cellular technology	CDMA
Talk time	Up to 410 min
Combined with	With digital camera / digital player
Weight	3.85 oz
Sensor resolution	3.2 megapixels
Diagonal screen size	3.2 in

[Full Product Specifications](#)

**EDITORS' TOP PICKS**

By **Jessica Dolcourt**

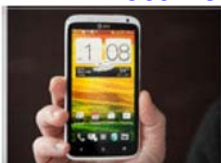
Jessica Dolcourt reviews smartphones and cell phones, covers handset news, and pens the monthly



Apple iPhone 5 (AT&T, Sprint, Verizon)  
★★★★★



Samsung Galaxy S III (S3) (T-Mobile, AT&T, Sprint, Verizon, U.S. Cellular)  
Starting at \$49.99  
★★★★★



HTC One X (AT&T)  
Starting at \$99.99  
★★★★★



LG Optimus 4X HD (Unlocked)  
★★★★★

column Smartphones Unlocked. She started at CNET in 2006, where she spent four years reviewing mobile and desktop software before taking on devices.

Gemlike is a good way to describe the angular Samsung Gem for U.S. Cellular. The touch-screen Android smartphone is glossy like its namesake, with sharp lines and points, and it has a pentagonal design element that evokes "Superman" as much as it does semiprecious stones. However, the comparisons stop there, since apart from its style, the Gem is an average, though reliable, entry-level Android phone with middle-of-the-road specs like a 3.2-inch touch screen and a 3.2-megapixel camera. Thankfully, unlike Alltel's version, which is powered by Android 2.1 Eclair, U.S. Cellular's Gem runs Android 2.2 Froyo. It costs a very reasonable \$30 after an \$80 mail-in rebate, which puts the Gem on par with a rival Android phone, the **LG Optimus U**.



[Photo gallery: Samsung Gem](#)

### Design

If it weren't for its interesting curves and angles, very little would differentiate the Samsung Gem from any other basic Android smartphone. Like so many of Samsung's models, the Gem is glossy black, shiny, and smooth. Lines and angles swoop into points, and there's that repeating stylized element we mentioned that borders the front-facing speaker, the Select button, and the Gem's camera lens. These alone give the Gem an edgy personality.



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If the pentagonal Select button evokes Superman, the Gem's screen size is its kryptonite.

The phone is 4.5 inches tall, 2.2 inches wide, and 0.5 inch deep. The plastic construction makes it a little light despite its respectable 3.9-ounce weight; it doesn't feel as sturdy or high-end as handsets made with metal or hard plastic materials. However, we appreciate its slim profile and portability.

The Gem has a 3.2-inch WQVGA resolution (432x240 pixels) and supports 262,000 colors. While usable and colorful, it certainly doesn't have the crispness, color saturation, or pop of the more premium devices. The screen size is also too petite for our tastes. Graphics and

icons have been shrunk to fit the smaller screen, and the keyboard is tiny in portrait mode, a challenge for clumsy typists or for those with thicker fingers.

To Samsung's credit, the Gem leaves off the manufacturer's now-customary TouchWiz interface and runs the stock version of Android Froyo instead. That gives the phone five customizable home screens and three static icons for placing a call, opening the application tray, and launching the browser. The app tray displays a vertically scrolling list of app icons on a black background. You can find more details on the Android 2.2 Froyo interface in our [T-Mobile G2 review](#).

There are five hardware buttons beneath the display: Talk, Menu, Back, End, and the aforementioned central Select button that's shaped like Superman's iconic chest emblem. The right spine hosts the camera shutter button; on the left are the volume rocker and the Micro-USB charging port. There's a power button and a 3.5mm headset jack up top, a 3.2-megapixel camera lens on the back cover, and a microSD card slot beneath the back cover. The Gem ships with a 4GB starter card, and the phone itself can accommodate up to 16GB of external storage.

## Features

The Gem carries all the essential Android features. Android 2.2 Froyo delivers support for Flash Player 10.1 and a mobile hot spot that powers up to five devices (an additional **\$25 per month**). There's Gmail, of course, as well as Google Talk, YouTube, Google Maps, Voice Search, and Places. The Gem also comes preloaded with shortcuts to Web portals for backing up your contacts, buying ringtones online, ThinkFree Office, City ID, and TeleNav Navigator (it also offers Google's turn-by-turn voice Navigator app within Google Maps by default). Thankfully, Samsung and U.S. Cellular kept the preloads to a minimum, since you won't be able to uninstall them.



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The 3.2-megapixel camera repeats the Gem's visual theme of facets.

Continue to next page



1

2

## EDITORS' TOP PICKS





Apple iPhone 5  
(AT&T, Sprint,  
Verizon)  
★★★★★

Samsung Galaxy S  
III (S3) (T-Mobile,  
AT&T, Sprint,  
Verizon, U.S.  
Cellular)  
Starting at \$49.99  
★★★★★

HTC One X (AT&T)  
Starting at \$99.99  
★★★★★

LG Optimus 4X HD  
(Unlocked)  
★★★★★

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