



TECH TALK: SMARTPHONES

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(Editor's Note: Bob Porter, Hiawatha Golf Course Superintendent, will begin a series of columns focusing on advances in technology.)

What is a smartphone and how much more does it cost to operate than my military grade flip phone?

I like to simply think of a smartphone as an extension of your main computer. Be it a PC or a Mac, a desktop or a laptop. A smartphone allows the user to become a great multi-tasker. I have often heard new smartphone users say "how did I ever get anything done with out this thing."

Smartphone's cost more than traditional phones. The costs are driven mostly by the wireless providers. So, due to heavy competition amongst the providers, the prices vary greatly. The majority of the costs involved with a smartphone are the data plans. Data plans usually run in the \$30-50 per month range. Then costs can go up with additional services, depending on your needs.

What is an app and do they cost more money?

App is short for application. Apps are what makes the smartphone world turn. Apps offer the user an enormous variety of ways to get things done. Anything from social media, business, finance, food, movies, and much more. Many great useful apps are FREE. While other just as useful apps do have costs. These costs can range from \$.99 to \$29.99.

What smartphone should I consider?

Since I am a devoted iPhone user, I would love to say you only need to buy an iPhone. This philosophy is not the best idea for everyone. As you are out shopping for a smartphone the best advice is to NOT look for the most popular. Instead, first look to the wireless provider that gets the best service in your area. Then you can shop the devices that provider has to offer.

How do I protect my smartphone from the elements?

When it comes to protecting your smartphone, there are as many options as there are apps. There are literally hundreds of options of cases, holsters, screen shields and other degrees of protection. I personally am a big fan of a company called Otterbox. The Otterbox offers three layers of protection and a belt holster for your coveted smartphone. The first layer is a hard plastic inner case. The second layer is a textured silicone outer case. The third layer is a screen shield. This case also has port covers for the headphone jack, dock connector and ringer switch. There are a number of other companies that offer great cases. Like anything else, you just have to find the one that fits you best. Some companies to consider are www.otterbox.com; www.goincase.com; www.speckproducts.com, and www.case-mate.com.

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