# BlackBerry Motion review: moving backwards

The defining characteristic of BlackBerry smartphones is that they have physical keyboards with lots of little buttons that you can peck at with your fingers to write a message, compose an email, or perform a Google search. Not every BlackBerry phone has one of these keyboards, but the only ones that anyone remembers do.

The new BlackBerry Motion, which was released late last year but just arrived in the US a few weeks ago, does not have a physical keyboard. It is a typical, rectangular touchscreen slab phone, with a 5.5-inch display and a handful of buttons on the side. Cover up the BlackBerry logo that adorns the home button / fingerprint sensor and it could be any other generic Android phone.

And frankly, that makes it hard to get excited about it. The $449.99 Motion, which is sold unlocked and works on AT&T or T-Mobile, but not Verizon or Sprint, is not a particularly impressive Android phone. Though it has a very large battery and is well-built, it uses a two-year-old processor and a completely average and mediocre camera. On top of that, the phone's design is large and clunky, and it's just not a very comfortable or enjoyable device to use.

The standout feature for the Motion is its battery life. The company says the 4,000mAh battery inside the phone is the largest cell it has ever used and can last for up to 32 hours on a single charge. In my experience, it can easily keep the Motion going through a full day of heavy use, and most people should be able to get multiple days between charges with it. A

Quick Charge 3.0 charger that can rapidly top off the battery through the Motion's USB Type-C port is included in the box, though the Motion does not support convenient-but-slower wireless charging.

The other feature worth praise is the Motion's build quality. It's a solid brick of a phone, with a brushed metal frame and soft-touch rubberized back. The buttons click with precision and all of the ports and openings are finely milled. On top of that, the Motion has IP67 water and dust resistance, so it's safe from the elements. This is one particular phone that most people will not need a case with. Unfortunately, its brick-like build quality is reflected in its squared shape, which isn't comfortable to hold or keep in my pocket.

Build quality and battery life aside, there are a number of things I don't like about the Motion. The reason it has such great battery life is not just because of its giant battery, it's also because it uses a two-year-old, midrange Qualcomm Snapdragon 625 processor. This processor has been used in long-stamina phones before, most notably in 2016's Motorola Moto Z Play, and in BlackBerry's own KeyOne from last year. It is not a fast chip by any means, and that shows in the Motion's performance: it's hesitant to open apps and stutters when scrolling. It's noticeably slower in my experience than the Motorola, which indicates to me that the software is not particularly well optimized. It's disappointing to see BlackBerry (and by extension, its manufacturing partner, TCL) use such a dated chip in a phone being sold as new in 2018.

The Motion's 1080p screen also contributes to its long battery life, though I don't really have any issue with its resolution. It's a perfectly average 16:9 LCD screen, with adequate brightness and color reproduction. Though it's only 5.5 inches in size, the large bezels above and below the screen make the Motion feel much larger than it should. For comparison, the $499 OnePlus 5T has an OLED panel that is nicer to look at and larger, with a more modern 18:9 aspect

ratio, and a top-of-the-line Qualcomm Snapdragon 835 processor in a body that’s identical in size to the Motion.

Likewise, the 12-megapixel rear camera and 8-megapixel front cameras are slow, but serviceable, and won’t win any acclaim. They can take pictures, albeit not great ones, and the camera app is simple enough to use with a handful of added features such as exposure control.

For software, the Motion runs Android 7.1.1 Nougat instead of the current Oreo version. BlackBerry is very good about updating its phones with security patches, but it’s terrible about updating them to new versions of Android, so I wouldn’t buy the Motion expecting an Oreo update any time soon.

BlackBerry largely leaves the Android interface unchanged, instead including new features in pre-installed productivity apps such as the Hub unified messaging client, BBM messenger, a tasks app, and a notes app. A dashboard of upcoming appointments, unread messages, and to-dos is available with a swipe on a tab of the homescreen, which is particularly useful. But the Hub still doesn’t get along all that well with Google accounts, and it lacks many modern features like smart notifications or one-click unsubscribe features.




At the end of the day, I’m not sure why anyone would opt for the BlackBerry Motion. It lacks BlackBerry’s defining characteristic and is outclassed by the many other Android phones available in its price range, such as the aforementioned OnePlus 5T, or Motorola’s Moto Z2 Play or Moto X4, which have better design, newer processors, and better software. Its one stand-out feature – long battery life – is great, but it’s not enough to put up with the below-average performance, clumsy design, old software, or mediocre camera.

5 Verge Score




## Good Stuff

- Long battery life
- Great build quality

## Bad Stuff

- Sluggish performance

- Dated, clumsy design
- Outdated software
- Mediocre camera

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