Guidemaster: The best Qi wireless charging pads for your smartphone



Valentina Palladino

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Update: Ars has stayed busy after publishing this guide in April 2019. We've tested a number of new Qi wireless chargers available since and have updated our top picks ahead of the 2019 holiday shopping season.

Wireless charging has a long way to go before it replaces wired charging, but the technology has advanced dramatically in the past few years. Everyone with the newest smartphones,

wearables, and other gadgets can get behind the idea—simply place your device on a charging pad or stand and let it sit. Within a few minutes, you'll have more battery power than you did before, and you didn't have to fuss with wires or cables to get it.

But quite a bit of technology goes into making an accessory that makes your life that much easier. Most wireless chargers come in the form of circular or rectangular pads, some of which are propped up on legs to make stands that take up minimal space and work well as nightstand or desk accessories. But don't be fooled by their minimalist exteriors—there are a number of things you should know before investing in a wireless charging pad. To navigate this murky world, Ars tested out some of the most popular Qi wireless chargers available now to see which are worth buying.

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The short version

- Standing strong as **our favorite Qi wireless charging pad** is RavPower's RP-PC034 Fast Charger, a well-rounded wireless charger at the decent price of $24.99. It has the best combination of necessary features and added perks of any wireless charging pad we tested. Its design is simple, but the added rubberized ring on its surface area prevents smartphones from sliding off while charging. It also comes with an AC adapter, something that many cheaper Qi wireless charging pads do not include. But what makes it stand out the most is its speedy charging capabilities—most smartphones will get 30 to 40 percent battery power after just one hour of charging. All of that in a $24.99 device is a great value.
- Mophie holds the title of **runner up** with its $41 Charge

Stream Pad+. A lot of the things we like about RavPower's charger we also like about Mophie's charger, particularly its TPU-encased design that prevents smartphones from sliding off as well as the charger itself from moving on hard surfaces. The Charge Stream Pad+ is almost as efficient in terms of charging speed as RavPower's charging pad as well. But its more expensive price tag places it in the runner-up spot—it's essentially a more luxurious version of our top pick.

- **Our favorite budget pick** is the Anker PowerWave Stand that costs just $15.99. Anker made a stable stand with this device, and smartphones can be placed on it both in portrait or landscape mode. That makes it even easier to use your smartphone while it's charging without too much hassle. We also like stand's rubberized base that keeps it in place, and its larger indicator light that shows when your device is charging successfully. It's not as quick to charge smartphones, but it's not painfully slow either. Lower-watt charging is one of the sacrifices you can expect to make when paying just $15.99 for a wireless charger, but thankfully Anker doesn't make you sacrifice much else with its PowerWave Stand.
- A solid **multi-device charger** is Mophie's Dual wireless charging pad. It can wirelessly charge two devices at once, be it two smartphones or one smartphone and a pair of AirPods, and a third device via an included USB-A port on its back edge. This is the closest thing you'll get to Apple's idealized version of AirPower (now an abandoned project), making it a convenient option for those that want to be able to wirelessly charge more than one device at the same time using just one accessory—but you have to pay a more expensive price of $80 to get it.

Best overall

RavPower RP-PC034 Fast Charger

- RavPower’s RP-PC034 charger comes with a USB cable and an AC adapter.
  Valentina Palladino
- A ring of rubberized material keeps smartphones on the pad.
  Valentina Palladino
- The included cable connects to the pad via this microUSB port.
  Valentina Palladino

Specs at a glance: RavPower RP-PC034 Fast Charger	
Price	$24.99
Standard W	5W
Max W	10W, 7.5W (iPhones only)
LED indicator	Yes
Included adapters	USB charging cable, AC adapter
Phone case support	Yes, max 3mm thick
Phone orientation support	Vertical, horizontal
Extras	HyperAir cooling

While we tested a number of eye-catching wireless chargers,

the humble RavPower Fast Charger RP-PC034 pad was the best of the bunch. Not only is it designed well (not flashy—we'll explain), but it also powered up each smartphone quickly and efficiently.

This wireless charging pad could be mistaken for many others. It's a simple black circle, stamped by the RavPower logo in the middle and "HyperAir" directly below it. The company's HyperAir technology promises 15 percent faster heat dispersion than other wireless charging pads.

We didn't see a huge difference in device temperature among any of the wireless charging pads we tested, but smartphones powered up by the RP-PC034 pad were consistently on the low side of the temperature scale. In fact, temperature after a full charge appeared to be more dependent on the smartphone itself, with the Note 9 almost always being a few degrees hotter than the other smartphones we benchmarked.

Aside from keeping smartphones cool, the RP-PC034 wireless charging pad keeps smartphones in place thanks to a rubberized circle that sits along the pad's inner circumference. While most wireless charging pads are flat where the smartphone is supposed to sit, some have a slight curve or even a raised design on them. The few that we tested that were like that didn't make the cut because smartphones, particularly the iPhone XS and XS Max, slid off of them a few times.

We hypothesize that the reason for that is two-fold: the wireless charging pads didn't have a completely flat surface on which the smartphone could sit, and the iPhones' slippery glass backs made them prone to sliding off.

- Valentina Palladino
- Valentina Palladino
- Valentina Palladino

But none of the smartphones we benchmarked fell off the RP-

PC034 wireless charging pad (or any of the others that made our top picks). You can truly throw your smartphone onto this wireless charging pad and forget about it, because no matter the position in which it lands, it will be recharged to some degree when you return.

The RP-PC034 pad proved to be excellent in our benchmarking tests as well: after an hour, every smartphone we benchmarked (save one) had at least 40 percent battery life after charging from a completely drained battery on the RP-PC034. The only exception was the Pixel 3, which was consistently slow to charge on everything but the Pixel Stand. The RP-PC034 pad also powered up the smartphones to 100 percent faster than all of the wireless charging pads we tested. On average, it took 198 minutes, or a little more than three hours, to get from 0 percent to 100 percent battery.

To top it off, the RP-PC034 wireless charging pad costs just $24.99. That’s a good price for a wireless charging pad that not only powers up smartphones relatively quickly but also comes in a simple, compact design. We also appreciate that the price includes a braided USB cable that connects the pad to the included AC adapter. Many wireless charging devices under $50 don’t come with an AC adapter, making RavPower’s RP-PC034 pad a gem.

The Good

- Quick and efficient charging pad at a great price.

The Bad

- HyperAir cooling doesn’t provide incredible cooling gains over other charging pads.



RavPower RP-PC034 Charging Pad

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Runner up

Mophie Charge Stream Pad+

- Mophie’s Charge Stream Pad+ comes with a USB cable and an AC adapter.
  Valentina Palladino
- The whole disk is covered in a non-slip TPU coating.
  Valentina Palladino
- The connecting port sits inside a hole on the edge of the disk, protecting it from external elements.
  Valentina Palladino

Specs at a glance: Mophie Charge Stream Pad+	
Price	$40.59
Standard W	5W

Max W	10W, 7.5W (iPhones only)
LED indicator	Yes
Included adapters	USB charging cable, AC adapter
Phone case support	Yes, max 3mm thick
Phone orientation support	Vertical, horizontal
Extras	Internal circuitry to prevent overheating

RavPower’s Fast Charger RP-PC034 pad and Mophie’s Charge Stream Pad+ have a lot in common, and the main differences between them are brand name and price. Mophie’s wireless charging pad looks like a higher-end version of RavPower’s with its disk shape and all-encompassing TPU coating. Whereas RavPower’s charging pad has a rubberized circle inside its circumference, the entirety of Mophie’s charging pad is covered with a similar type of material. Needless to say, your smartphone—naked or in a case—will not fall off this charging pad. Extending the TPU coating to the underside of the pad also means the charger won’t easily slip off your desk or bedside table.

Similarly to RavPower’s device, Mophie’s charging pad has internal circuitry that’s designed to prevent overheating and overcharging. However, heat wasn’t a huge issue in general for all of the wireless charging pads we tested.

The Charge Stream Pad+ comes with a USB cable and an AC

adapter, and we appreciate how Mophie hid the microUSB port inside the charging pad. The port sits inside a small hole that has been cut out of the charging pad's back-end. Most other wireless charging pads have an exposed connecting port, which could be more easily damaged if you handle the device roughly or carelessly. It's a small design touch that could make a big difference in the lifetime of the charging pad.

Mophie's wireless charging pad was up there with RavPower's in terms of speed and efficiency: all smartphones except for the Pixel 3 powered up to at least 40 percent after one hour of charging, and it took an average of 197 minutes, or about three hours, to charge each handset from 0 percent to 100 percent battery.

RavPower's and Mophie's wireless charging pads share the same pros and cons—both have attractive, minimalist designs that will stay securely wherever you put them (and that will keep your smartphone secure while charging). They both also provide reliable charging for all kinds of smartphones, so even if you only have a half-hour to spare, you'll get some more juice in your smartphone that could carry you through the rest of the day. Ultimately, Mophie's Charge Stream Pad+ is our runner-up because of its $49 price tag—you're paying for the Mophie name and the clout that comes with it, as well as a slightly more attractive design.

The Good

- Efficient charging pad with non-slip TPU coating on the entire device.

The Bad

- On the expensive side.



Mophie Charge Stream Pad Plus

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Best budget charger

Anker PowerWave Stand

- Anker’s PowerWave Qi charging stand.
  Valentina Palladino
- It doesn’t feel as substantial as other wireless chargers, but it’s power efficient and a good stand for your smartphone.
  Valentina Palladino

Specs at a glance: Anker PowerWave Stand	
Price	$15.99
Standard W	5W
Max W	10W, 5W (iPhones only)
LED indicator	Yes
Included adapters	USB charging cable
Phone case support	Yes, max 5mm thick

Phone orientation support	Vertical, horizontal
Extras	None

Replacing our old budget favorite, RavPower's RP-PC063 charging pad, is Anker's $16 PowerWave Stand. We like Anker's device more because its stand design lets you use your smartphone more easily while it's charging, and it's just as efficient in terms of charging as RavPower's device is.

The structure of Anker's PowerWave Stand is more of a selling point than the actual build quality. The stand itself is just wide enough to comfortably hold large smartphones like the iPhone 11 Pro Max and the Galaxy Note 9, and its square base is covered in a rubberized material that helps keep the stand in place.

But the stand does feel like a $16 device thanks to the lightweight plastic that makes up most of its design. Manufacturers have to make sacrifices when producing affordable accessories, and using plastic like this in an affordable wireless charger is not uncommon. We do, however, like that Anker put a larger than average indicator light right on the front of the stand—you can easily tell when your smartphone is placed properly on the charger to receive power because the ring of light will instantly light up in a light blue color.

Smartphones can sit on the PowerWave Stand in either portrait or landscape mode, letting you use apps, watch videos, and even use features like Apple's FaceID more easily. This makes the stand a good accessory for your nightstand, but especially for your desk because you can easily see notifications, incoming calls, and more without craning your neck over a flat charging pad.

Anker's stand is not as quick to charge smartphones as our top

pick, but it gets the job done. It has a standard charging speed of 5W and it supports 10W fast-charge for Samsung smartphones. In most cases, you'll get at least 20 percent battery power after leaving your handset on the stand for an hour, and it shouldn't take more than five hours to go from 0 percent to 100 percent battery.

If speed and efficiency are your top priorities, it's worth it to go with a slightly more expensive device that can charge devices at higher max voltages. A big difference to note is that our top pick and runner up can both charge the newest iPhones at up to 7.5W while the PowerWave Stand maxes out at 5W for those devices.

Anker also cut cost by forgoing an AC adapter with this stand—one does not come in the box, so you'll have to provide your own. Most wireless charging pads do not come with an AC adapter, so this isn't a strange omission. However, a number of higher-end pads (typically those above $30) include an AC adapter in the box.

I expect sacrifices like this in a wireless charging pad that only costs $15.99. At that low of a price, Anker's PowerWave Stand is a solid option for those who want a basic yet reliable wireless charger that can fit within a strict budget.

The Good

- Slim design that lets you use your smartphone in both portrait and landscape mode while charging.

The Bad

- No included AC adapter.



Anker PowerWave Stand

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Best multi-device charging pad

Mophie Dual wireless charging pad

- Mophie’s dual wireless charging pad and its AC adapter. Valentina Palladino
- It can charge two devices wirelessly, plus a third device using the embedded USB-A port. Valentina Palladino

Specs at a glance: Mophie Dual Wireless Charging Pad	
Price	$79.95
Standard W	5W
Max W	10W (7.5W for iPhones)
LED indicator	Yes

Included adapters	USB charging cable, AC adapter
Phone case support	Yes, max 3mm thick
Phone orientation support	Vertical, horizontal
Extras	USB-A port for passthrough charging

Not long after we found out that Apple abandoned its AirPower ambitions, Mophie came out with a couple of multi-device charging pads include the Mophie Dual wireless charging pad. This long oval is, essentially, two wireless charging pads in one, allowing you to charge two devices at one time.

The pad itself is a good one—its shiny black surface area looks slick, and its rubberized edges help prevent smartphones from sliding off. Two silver lines indicate where you should position your smartphones on the pad for them to successfully charge, but I found that you can deviate from that indicator slightly. It's actually best to position smartphones in portrait mode closer to the rounded edges of the pad, but you can also put a handset on one side of the pad askew and it will begin charging as well. Your placement doesn't have to be perfect, and you can always check the two indicator lights on the pad's edge to ensure that your smartphone is actually receiving power after you set it down.

Having space on one charging pad for two smartphones is convenient, but most individuals don't own two smartphones. But Mophie's Dual wireless charging pad also supports wireless charging for Apple's AirPods, making it an attractive choice for Apple diehards. In general, the pad will work with most

Qi-compatible devices, so there are a number of electronics (not just smartphones) that you could charge up with this device.

Mophie’s Dual wireless charging pad also has a hidden USB-A port on its back edge, so it can actually charge three devices at once: two on the wireless pad itself, and one via the USB port. This makes cable management much easier, and can turn the accessory into a charging hub of sorts for all your most-used devices.

The dual charging pad provides decent power to smartphones and will charge the newest iPhones at a maximum of 7.5W. In most cases, you’ll get 30 percent battery after leaving your handset on the pad for an hour. It took a bit longer than most (roughly 4.5 hours on average) to charge smartphones from 0 to 100 percent, though, but that won’t be too much of an issue for those that charge their smartphones most completely overnight.

Wireless chargers are all about convenience, and that makes a dual wireless charger overkill for most people. The best things about multi-device chargers, including Mophie’s, are that they help keep all your wireless charging devices in once place and they reduce the number of cords in your life. If those things are most important to you, and you’re willing to pay a bit more and sacrifice speed, then Mophie’s Dual wireless charging pad is a solid option.

The Good

- Charges up to three devices at the same time (two wirelessly, one via USB port).

The Bad

- Charging cable cannot be removed from AC adapter.



Mophie Dual wireless charging pad

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