iFixit teardown: Apple’s AirPods are “disappointingly disposable”

reader comments

140 with 76 posters participating

Share this story

- The OG AirPods and the new ones side by side. The latch is different, and Apple moved the sync button.
- The earbud, disassembled. Marked in yellow: probably a low-power stereo audio codec, according to iFixit. The red: “Apple 343S00289 (likely Apple’s new H1 chip).”
- Here’s the logic board inside the case. Marked in red is the Broadcom wireless charging module.
- This is the full spread of all the AirPods’ components.
- The packaging mentions AirPower! It lives?

As expected, iFixit tore down Apple’s new second-generation AirPods to see what’s different about them compared to the previous iteration and just how repairable they are.

Let’s get the second of those points out of the way right away: they are not serviceable at all. iFixit had to go to almost comical lengths to open the AirPods up, and despite their expertise and tools, the iFixit team was unable to do so without permanently damaging the product. They described the product as “disappointingly disposable,” which is to say there is no practical way to service or repair them even at a professional shop.

That’s disappointing, given that the batteries in the AirPods won’t last longer than a few years with heavy use, and they’re hard to recycle. Apple does offer to recycle headphones through partners as part of its Apple GiveBack program, but the GiveBack Web portal does not offer a product-specific category for AirPods to consumers like it does with most other Apple products. Consumers may simply select a general “headphones & speakers” category on the site.

Here’s one curious side note we had not noticed previously: writing on the new AirPods packaging makes a reference to AirPower, Apple’s long-delayed wireless charging pad. The new AirPods optionally come with a wireless charging-ready case, but Apple still hasn’t launched the beleaguered AirPower product. The text in the packaging says the AirPods case “works with AirPower mat and Qi-certified chargers.”

The teardown also revealed some differences from the first-generation AirPods. The battery is the same size, but iFixit identified the new, Bluetooth 5-ready H1 chip in the earbuds themselves. The site also found some small differences likely related to Apple’s efforts to increase the case’s water resistance. For all the details, visit iFixit’s teardown page for the product.

All told, iFixit gave the AirPods a 0 out of 10 for repairability—that’s low even for Apple products. By contrast, the site also opened up Samsung’s Galaxy Buds and gave them a 6 out of 10.

Listing image by iFixit

https://arstechnica.com/?p=1483187