Lenovo embraces Google Assistant with new Smart Display 7 and convertible tablets

Lenovo was one of the first companies to build a Google Assistant-powered smart display, and at IFA 2019 it's introducing a few new Google Assistant display options: a smaller Smart Display 7 and a pair of Smart Tab tablets that run Android, but offer enhanced Assistant integration thanks to a new Ambient Mode feature.

First up is the Smart Display 7, which joins Lenovo's larger Smart Display 8 and Smart Display 10 models. As the name implies, it offers a seven-inch screen, instead of the eight- and 10-inch options on its larger siblings, as well as a new design that puts the speaker below the display, instead of on the side. Otherwise, it runs the same Google Assistant software as the others, including a camera (with a physical, sliding shutter) for video calls, just in a more compact format.

Photo by Tom Warren / The Verge

The Smart Display 7 is set to cost $129.99, making it a cheaper option than the $169.99 Smart Display 8, but pricier than the $59.99 Lenovo Smart Clock, which is far more barebones. It'll be out in October.

Along with the smaller, full-fledged smart display, Lenovo has two new dockable Smart Tab tablets, the Lenovo Yoga Smart Tab and the Smart Tab M8 — similar to the Alexa-powered ones it announced earlier this year — that will also turn into ad-hoc Google Assistant smart displays.

Google Assistant Ambient Mode on the Smart Tab M8
Photo: Lenovo

Instead of turning into a full smart display (like the aforementioned Lenovo ones or Google's own Nest Hubs), the tablets rely on the new Ambient Mode for Google Assistant, which offers many (but not all) of the functionality of the other displays: calendar info, weather, notifications, reminders, music controls, smart home controls, and a photo frame feature. It's not quite the same UI as smart displays for some reason, although most of the features are there.

Of the two tablets, the Smart Tab M8 is the more basic, essentially boiling down to a smaller eight-inch and Google-powered version of the Alexa-based Smart Tab M10. Like the M10, the M8 is a midrange Android tablet (eight-inch, 1280 x 800 display, 2GB of RAM, quad-core MediaTek A22 processor, 5-megapixel rear camera, and 2-megapixel front camera), but it's also equipped with far-field microphones that transform it into a smart display when placed into the included dock.

The Yoga Smart Tab's many possible stand options
Photo: Lenovo

The Yoga Smart Tab, on the other hand, doesn't even need a dock, thanks to an included kickstand that allows you to prop it up anywhere (or even hang it from a wall hook) to serve as a smart display. The specs aren't that impressive either, but with a Qualcomm 439 processor, 3GB / 32GB or 4GB / 64GB of RAM and internal storage options, and a 10.1-inch, 1920 x 1200 display, it's at least a little more powerful than its smaller sibling.

The Yoga Smart Tab will start at $249.99 when it releases later this month, while the Smart Tab M8 will cost $119.99

when it comes out in October.

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