Roomba Combo j7 Plus review: now with a mop on top

The Roomba Combo j7 Plus is a top-of-the-line robot vacuum that can also mop and empty its own bin. Thanks to its ability to map your home and avoid common household clutter, it's one of the few bots I've tested that rarely gets stuck. All this autonomy makes it a good household cleaning companion, though it's a better vacuum than a mop, and you do have to refill its water reservoir fairly often. But it's one of the only robot vacuums that can reliably vacuum *all* your rugs and carpeted areas *and* vacuum and mop your floors in one go *without* dragging its damp, dirty mop over your nice rug.

iRobot's first combo mop / vacuum, the $1,099 Combo j7 Plus takes the excellent j7 robot vacuum and adds some new sensors, a bigger battery, a small water reservoir, and a robotic arm that raises and lowers a very small mopping pad.

That robot arm is key. Almost every other robot vacuum with a mop requires manual intervention: you have to remove the mopping pad so it will tackle carpets and put it back on when you want mopping action. But the Combo j7's arm keeps the mop pad tucked away on top of the robot when not in use, then lowers itself behind and underneath the robot when needed. This operation is entirely autonomous and worked reliably and smoothly in my testing. It's also very fun to watch.

The mop only deploys when the robot is on a hard floor surface — wood, tile, concrete. If it's in mopping mode and encounters a rug, it won't go over it (I tried to trick it, but it always backed away). Cleverly, when you send it out on a job it vacuums all the rugs and carpets first, then deploys the mop and and cleans and vacuums the hard floors. It's not entirely hands-off, though; depending on the size of your home, you'll have to refill the water reservoir at least once to mop it

all.

7 Verge Score

iRobot Roomba Combo j7 Plus

$ 899

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The Bad

- Mopping isn’t “real” mopping
- Mop pad is very small
- Have to refill water tank frequently
- Expensive

How we rate and review products

The Plus in Combo j7 Plus means it comes with iRobot’s Clean Station, an auto-empty base that charges the robot and sucks the dirt out of its bin. The regular j7 vacuum can be bought with the base (as the j7 Plus) or without it, but you can currently only buy the Combo with the base, which partially explains the eye-watering $1,099 price tag.

The Combo works well if you have of hard flooring combined with lots of plush rugs and carpets

Design-wise, the Combo j7 looks almost identical to the j7. The only difference is the smooth top piece of the robot is broken up slightly by the mopping plate. This is still a good-looking robot; it’s easily the best design in the world of robot vacs. Its matte black plastic doesn’t show dust or fingerprints, and small touches — like the brushed aluminum top piece with a small iRobot logo — are much classier than the loud designs of competitors such as Shark and Roborock.

The Combo has all the smarts of the j7, including AI-powered obstacle avoidance plus new onboard acoustic sensors to determine the floor type. It uses those sensors, plus the knowledge it gleans from mapping your house, to determine its cleaning pattern. When it enters a room, it vacuums the rugs and carpets first, then mops and vacuums the hard floors before moving on to the next room. There is no option to mop only; the robot is always vacuuming and sometimes mopping.

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dark:text-gray-e9 dark:[&>a:hover]:text-gray-e9 [&>a]:shadow-underline-gray-13 [&>a:hover]:shadow-underline-black dark:[&>a]:shadow-underline-gray-63 dark:[&>a:hover]:shadow-underline-gray-63″>*The auto-empty charging base has a bagged compartment that holds the dirt from the vacuum and another that holds a spare bag.*

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underline-gray-63″>*Roomba’s dual-brush system is very good at cleaning hard floors and carpet alike.*

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iRobot app is easy to use, and its mapping is effective. It automatically identifies carpeted areas.

You designate these zones on the map the iRobot app creates when you run the robot. (Of note, iRobot was recently purchased by Amazon, a move which may be to gain more insight into our homes through those maps. The deal has not yet closed.)

The j7 maps more quickly

than previous Roombas, thanks to its onboard camera. This helps it identify not only rooms but also furniture and appliances. I could easily set up a clean zone in front of the stove and send the robot there with a voice command to clean up after dinner.

The bot can also identify things like Christmas trees and pet bowls and suggest clean zones for you —

although I didn’t have any of these set up during my testing. It will also suggest keep-out zones after each run if it encounters obstacles.

Voice commands are a great way to control the Roomba, and it works well with Google Assistant, Alexa, and Siri (using Siri shortcuts). The Combo also has specific mopping commands, so you can tell it just to vacuum or to mop

and vacuum.

a:hover]:shadow-highlight-franklin [&>a]:shadow-underline-black dark:[&>a:hover]:shadow-highlight-franklin dark:[&>a]:shadow-underline-white md:text-30″>Smart home data privacy: iRobot

Bringing connected devices into your home also brings with it concerns about how the data they collect is protected. The Verge asks each company whose smart

home products we review about safeguards it has in place for your data.

The primary home data managed by a robot vacuum like the Roomba Combo j7 are the maps it generates and image data from its onboard camera. iRobot says it does not sell customer data and that no data is shared with third parties without the customer's knowledge or control. It outlines its Privacy

Principles on its website.

The robot vacuum collects usage data, the level of dirt detection, the Wi-Fi signal strength it receives, and the map of your home, including furniture and obstacles. iRobot says this data is encrypted and stored securely.

Image collection is opt-in and helps with navigation and obstacle avoidance. iRobot says images are not

viewable by the company unless you opt-in both to image collection and to sharing each image with iRobot. If you view your map or obstacle avoidance images on your phone the data is shared through the Cloud. You can opt-out of sending map data to the Cloud in the app.

You can also choose to share data from the robot with third parties such as Amazon and Google for voice

control.

The Roomba Combo j7 does not need to be connected to Wi-Fi or the Cloud to work – but you won't be able to use features like scheduled cleanings, customized cleaning features, and voice control.

iRobot's app is also one of the cleanest and easiest to navigate, especially compared to Roborock's cluttered interface. A couple of new app features

address some of my biggest gripes with the Roomba. First is a new on-the-fly skip option. When Roomba starts on a job but encounters resistance — say, a husband watching TV — instead of stopping the job entirely, you can tell it to skip this room, and it will go off and continue the rest of its job.

There’s also a new quiet drive feature, so when you send it to clean a specific

room, it doesn’t start up its loudest motors until it’s there, again making it less likely someone will turn it off because it’s annoying them. Roomba is one of the few robot vacs where you can’t set the suction level; others offer quiet and medium modes in addition to regular and ultra.

Of course, the best way to ensure a robot vacuum finishes its job is to run

it when no one is home. You can do this with the iRobot app using **IFTTT** and your phone's location or events from other connected devices you might have — such as an August smart lock locking, an Ecobee thermostat going into Away mode, or by connecting it to a smart home platform such as Alexa.

I tested the IFTTT and the Alexa integrations, and in both cases, the Roomba

started to run when I left and docked itself when I arrived home. If you don’t want it to stop every time you arrive home, you can also set it to pause and ask if you want it to continue.

These quality-of-life touches go a long way to making Roomba’s robots some of the best you can buy. And the **iRobot OS that runs them** is on all the bots the company currently sells,

not just the high-end models. Another thing I like about Roombas compared to much of the competition is their repairability. You can buy (not inexpensive) replacements for many of the moving parts on these bots, greatly extending their lifespan.

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