Roomba’s latest robot vacuum has a robot mop on top

Robot vacuums that can also mop have been around for a while, but most make you remove the mop before they can vacuum your carpets — unless you like slightly damp carpets. iRobot’s newest bot looks to solve this problem with a retractable robot mop arm that can lift itself up and under the vacuum to mop when it’s needed and stow itself up top when it’s not.

The Roomba Combo j7 Plus costs $1,099 and is available to preorder today. It will ship on October 4th, and is only being sold with the auto-emptying Clean Base at launch. The two-in-one vacuum mop uses a new combination of acoustic sensors to detect the different types of flooring in a home and “decide” when to lift its pad to avoid thread counts and when to lower it to clean hard floor types like wood and tile.

iRobot CEO Colin Angle told *The Verge* in an interview that it’s the first “hands-free” two-in-one vacuum and mop robot — because, while other companies have mopping pads on their robot vacuums in most other cases, the user has to manually attach the mop to clean the floors. They then have to remove it when they want it to vacuum carpets.

This is largely true. The $950 Roborock S7 Plus is one competitor bot that can also lift its pad up when it goes over carpet. However, it only rises by a few millimeters. By contrast, the Roomba Combo j7 Plus lifts the mopping pad up completely, so there’s no chance of a damp rug.

The Roomba Combo j7 Plus is essentially the Roomba j7 Plus robot vacuum with an integrated mopping pad. It has a slightly smaller bin to make room for a 210 ml water tank and a larger 4,400 mAh battery to help power the mop. In most other respects, it’s identical. It has smart room mapping,

scheduling, and virtual no-go zones controlled in the app, and it works with Amazon Alexa, Google Assistant, and Siri Shortcuts for voice control. It also comes with iRobot’s Clean Base to automatically empty the bin, but users do have to refill the water tank manually.

A few manufacturers, such as Roborock and Ecovacs, have robot vacuum / mops with bases that can empty the bin *and* refill the robot’s water tank. But users may have to remove and attach the mopping pads on those robots, especially if they have thicker carpets.



a:hover]:text-black [&>a]:shadow-underline-gray-63 [&>a:hover]:shadow-underline-black text-gray-63″>Image: iRobot Cleaning jobs for the new Roomba can be customized in the iRobot app, so it can be sent to vacuum the living room and

then mop and vacuum the kitchen. Water levels can be adjusted, too, for a deeper clean, and it can be set to clean an area twice. Angle said in their testing this was as effective as an oscillating motion, which some other robot vacuum mops use to simulate scrubbing the floor.

It’s interesting that iRobot chose just to add a pad to its flagship robot vacuum rather than produce a whole new vacuum and mopping bot. The design appears quite simple – using aluminum alloy arms to raise and lower the pad and then tuck it on the robot – and doesn’t alter the overall look of the vacuum much at all.



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And while it’s hard to see how it can clean as well as iRobot’s dedicated mopping robot, the Braava Jet m6, Angle said the Combo was as effective as the Braava Jet in their

testing. However, he did say they still consider the Braava Jet combined with a Roomba robot vacuum to be the “ultimate cleaning experience” as the two robots can work at the same time.

The simplicity of the Combo design means it could be easily incorporated into iRobot’s other models – such as the more budget-friendly Roomba i3 Plus Evo. Presumably, iRobot started with the j7 as it is iRobot’s “smartest” robot.

I reviewed it earlier this year, and it does a good job of avoiding most common household items – including pet waste – thanks to an AI-powered brain. This means it’s less likely to get derailed during a clean and more likely to actually get the job done.

The intelligence is partly powered by iRobot OS, an AI platform that helps the robot’s navigation system recognize more than 80 common objects, according to iRobot. Along with the new robot vac, iRobot is releasing an update to the OS that adds the ability to identify more items.

The company says iRobot OS 5 brings recognition of pet toys, pet bowls, litter boxes, and backpacks, as well as the shoes / slippers, socks, cords, headphones, clothing, towels, and solid pet waste it was already able to spot and avoid.



a:hover]:text-black [&>a]:shadow-underline-gray-63 [&>a:hover]:shadow-underline-black text-gray-63″>Image: iRobot The Roomba Combo j7 Plus is putting that intelligence to use with a new ability to automatically detect and recommend areas that might need more cleaning. The mopping and vacuuming bot can autonomously suggest new “Clean Zones” around dishwashers, toilets, ovens / stoves, litter boxes, and pet bowls. The user can then send the robot to clean the zone using the app or an Alexa or Google Assistant voice command. This ability also comes to the Braava Jet m6 and other smart-mapping Roombas.

Another new feature coming to compatible Roombas with OS 5 is the ability to skip a room during a cleaning job. Now, rather than shutting down the whole job because the family is trying to watch TV, you can just tell the robot to skip this room in the app or with a voice command.

iRobot was recently purchased by Amazon, although the deal has not closed and is currently being investigated by the FTC, partly due to concerns around how the company’s data on consumers’ homes might be used by Amazon to gain an unfair

advantage in the space. iRobot recently gained the TÜV SÜD Cyber Security Mark for the Roomba j7 robot vacuum, which goes beyond industry standards for protecting customer data from cyber security threats (but not from its owners).

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