Walmart+ Is Finally Here (Almost)

Walmart's highly anticipated Walmart+ membership program officially has a launch date: Sept. 15.

Walmart+ will be $98 a year, or $12.95 a month, and comes with a complimentary 15-day trial. That means it's slightly more affordable than Amazon's 15-year-old Prime program, which is $119 annually, or $12.99 monthly.

Walmart+ perks include free delivery of more than 160,000 items from 4,700 stores—including 2,700 stores that offer same-day delivery. However, members and non-members alike will have to spend $35 to tap into free delivery.

Walmart+ members can also use the Scan & Go payment option in the Walmart app to scan items as they shop and then bypass the checkout line using Walmart Pay for a touch-free—and some might say Amazon-Go-like—experience.

Members will also receive gas discounts of up to 5 cents per gallon at nearly 2,000 Walmart, Murphy USA and Murphy Express gas stations—with pumps at Sam's Club to come soon.

"We have been contemplating this program for a period of time. It was important to make sure we understood what was most important for our customers," said evp and chief customer officer Janey Whiteside in a conference call. "As we went through the pandemic, what we saw was customer needs and wants were rapidly changing—at the beginning, it was almost on daily basis … now felt like right time—we understood what we needed to do to bring something we knew we would be able to scale at the rate we wanted to and deliver the right kind of experience."

If the delivery benefits sound familiar, it's because Walmart

previously offered the perk through the subscription service Delivery Unlimited, which launched in 2019. Walmart said Delivery Unlimited subscribers will automatically become Walmart+ members.

A Walmart spokesperson declined to provide a number of subscribers, but said the retailer has “a healthy base of customers” and has seen “accelerated growth of [Delivery Unlimited] during the pandemic.”

As of September 2019, Delivery Unlimited was available in 200 metro areas with 1,400 stores, including Houston, Miami, Salt Lake City and Tampa, Fla.

In the call, Whiteside noted Walmart+ will be a U.S. program and declined to comment on international expansion.

Whiteside repeatedly stressed Walmart+ is about saving customers money and time at a particularly complicated moment for American consumers—and even said she is “confident the benefits are tangible beyond fast shipping and entertainment” in what seemed to be a nod to Amazon.

Otherwise, Whiteside insisted the program exists to “meet the needs of our customers” rather than “compete with anything else.”

In turn, Whiteside said she hopes the program yields more share of wallet and mind among participants.

She noted Walmart started with benefits in convenience and savings, which the retailer knows are the greatest priority for customers right now, but Walmart plans to add benefits “in a variety of services and offerings” next year. (Whiteside would not comment on plans for benefits in entertainment akin to Prime Video.)

“We think [Walmart+ is] a really compelling offer to customers,” Whiteside said. “And as it relates to other

programs, like [Savings Catcher] and JetBlack, we tested those, learned a lot and applied all the learnings from all those programs to Walmart+ to make sure it meets the needs of our customers and we know it’s robust enough to scale and be here for the long term.”

Walmart first confirmed the program in February. Since then, it reported ecommerce sales were up 97% in Q2 alone.



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