What to expect from Google’s 2020 Hardware event

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Google’s big yearly hardware event is scheduled for September 30, and as usual, we’re expecting a big pile of products to be announced. Google has a hard time keeping anything under wraps before the event, so we’re doing a roundup of all the leaks so far. We’re expecting four products: the Pixel 5 (and Pixel 4a 5G), the “Nest Audio” smart speaker, a new Chromecast with a remote and Android TV, and maybe even a new Nest thermostat.

The Pixel 5 (and Pixel 4a 5G)

No yearly Google hardware event would be complete without the launch of a new smartphone, and this year we’re getting two phones: the Pixel 5 and Pixel 4a 5G. We don’t need rumors for the basics on this one: these phones were officially confirmed by Google in the Pixel 4a launch blog post. The Pixel 4a (5G) even has an official price: $499.

This year we should see Google’s Pixel line change from ultra-premium, ultra-expensive flagship phones to a lower price with a lower specs. Between leaks from WinFuture and a prototype Pixel 5 in the wild, we can piece together a 6-inch, 2340×1080 90Hz display, a Snapdragon 765G SoC, 8GB of RAM, 128GB of storage, and a 4080mAh battery. The phone has a rear capacitive fingerprint reader instead of the in-screen reader

every other high-end Android phone has. It also has wireless charging. Besides a wide-angle camera, the Pixel 5 disappointingly has the same main camera sensor as the Pixel 4, which has the same sensor as the Pixel 3, which, with a minor revision, has the same sensor as the Pixel 2. Google has been staying atop the camera comparisons all these years thanks to pure software magic, but you've got to wonder what the company could do with a bigger, more modern sensor. WinFuture lists the price in Germany as "629 euros," which would work out to $736.84.

Meanwhile, the Pixel 4a 5G prototype had a 6.2-inch 60Hz display, a Snapdragon 765G SoC, 6GB of RAM, 128GB of storage, a 3800mAh battery, and a rear fingerprint reader. This phone also has a wide-angle sensor and the same main camera sensor as every other Pixel phone except for the Pixel 1. One bonus addition on the cheaper 4a 5G is a headphone jack. A last note is that, on both phones, the gimmicks introduced with the Pixel 4 look to be dead. Neither phone has Google's Project Soli air gestures or Google's face unlock system.

Switching from a premium spec sheet to a more midrange device makes for some awkward comparisons between Google's devices. The Pixel 5 will be slower than the Pixel 4, and coupled with the lack of a camera upgrade, it's hard to see a compelling sales pitch here. If you're looking for a budget midrange phone with the Pixel camera and all the right specs, the Pixel 4a at $349 is hard to argue with. If you're in a country with the OnePlus Nord, that phone offers better specs at a lower price.

One FCC filing for the Pixel 5 suggests it has mmWave 5G support, not just the sub-6GHz 5G support of most cheaper devices. Millimeter-wave 5G is responsible for all of the 5G speed test records you see, but it's very difficult to roll out and probably won't ever exist outside of major cities. Even Verizon, King of the mmWave Hype, only has 4 percent mmWave network coverage. Adding mmWave support to a

phone is very expensive and, as we saw with the OnePlus 8 Pro, adds about $100 to the cost of a phone. Jose Antonio Ponton on Twitter has pictures of a “Pixel 5s” device, which looks exactly like the Pixel 5, so that might be the name for a mmWave 5G version.

The Google Home 2, named the “Nest Audio?”

- The new Google Nest smart speaker. This is an official photo from Google.
- Here it is in black.
- Here’s the light-gray version.
- A pink version.
- Japan MIC’s pictures. These were so ugly Google released its own official image.
- The bottom rubber foot and DC jack.
- The mute switch.
- MIC did a teardown showing a Marvell 88W8987 chip, which is just for 802.11ac Wi-Fi, the same as the original Google Home.
- Power bricks.

The original Google Home speaker is 4 years old now, having been originally released in November 2016, so Google is planning an upgrade. A new version of the main, “medium-sized” Google Assistant smart speaker leaked through Japan’s Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (or “MIC,” Japan’s FCC equivalent), and in response, Google figured it might as well release some good-quality, official images of the device.

So what’s new? Well, it will have a new, all-cloth design that makes it a better match for the rest of Google’s speaker line, complete with four lights on the front. An earlier 9to5Google report claimed it would have upgraded audio quality. Between Google’s official images and a leak from WinFuture, so far

we’ve seen devices in black, gray, blue, and pink.

We’re not entirely sure about the name of this speaker. The first generation of the product line used “Google Home” for the name of the medium-sized speaker, with additional “Google Home Mini” and “Google Home Max” speaker sizes alongside the “Google Home Hub” smart display. When Nest got shut down as a standalone company and merged into Google, Nest became a Google sub-brand for smart home products. The sequel to the Google Home Mini became the “Google Nest Mini,” and the Google Home Hub line became “Google Nest Hub.” Does that make this speaker, formerly the Google Home, the “Google Nest?”

Google might have a slightly more descriptive name in the works, as discovered by a 9to5Google teardown of the Google Home app: “Nest Audio.” That name at least gives you some idea of what the product is. This would be the Google Home line’s third brand in four years.

A new Chromecast with Android TV

- “Sabrina,” the new Android TV dongle. Yes, it looks like a big Chromecast.
- Official renders of the new Chromecast dongle and remote.
- Another angle of the official render.
- The dongle by itself.
- The remote. “Now with a remote” is interesting phrasing. Android TV devices have always come with a remote, so this sounds like it’s targeted to Chromecast users.
- This screen cycled through content from several different apps.
  XDA Developers
- The new Google Assistant results UI.
  XDA Developers

Since time immemorial, Google has had two TV platforms:

Chromecast, which is an HDMI dongle that acts as a streaming endpoint for smartphone apps, and Android TV, an Android set-top box that can install apps and is driven with a remote control. Functionally, Android TV has always been part Chromecast since it is also a Chromecast target, but Google's next product looks like it will bring the Chromecast branding and form factor to Android TV. XDA developers scored the first pictures of the device, which will finally bring a dongle-style device to Android TV. The operating system is also apparently getting a facelift, with leaked video showing the home screen breaking down the walls that exist between services and mixing together content from multiple services.

The original rumors for this device, from 9to5Google, say it is a successor to the Chromecast Ultra and is a 4K HDR device with voice control in the remote. That means it would compete with the $50 Roku Streaming Stick+. Android Police reports that various stores have listed the device at $50 and $60.

An earlier rumor from 9to5Google claimed Google was going to drop the name "Android TV" for the platform and resurrect the old "Google TV" branding. This would make plenty of sense since Google is mostly pitching Android as the "Phone and tablet" brand (just look at android.com). Meanwhile, the wider ecosystem stuff that also works on the Web or with iOS—Android Wear, Android Pay, and Android Market—have dropped the "Android" name.

As for the name of this device, what do you call it, since it's combining Google/Android TV and Chromecast? According to an entry in Target's system spotted by Android Police, Google is throwing everything into a blender and coming up with the Googley-est name ever: "Google Chromecast with Google TV."

A new Google Nest Thermostat and

Google Wi-Fi?

The phones, speakers, and dongles to this point are pretty much guaranteed. Next up, we have two items we only have hints on, but not the whole picture.

The first is the possibility of a new Google Nest Thermostat. A new model recently hit the FCC, and while there isn't a whole lot of things you can do with a smart thermostat, one strange new addition is a "60GHz Transmitter" in the FCC docs. The best explanation we can come up with is that this is for Project Soli, Google's radar-based version of air gestures.

Android Police and 9to5Google have also been tag-teaming a rumor of a new Google Nest Wi-Fi. 9to5 found mention of a new device in the Google Wi-Fi app codenamed "Breeze." Android Police, on the other hand, claims the device is a "second-gen Google Wifi" and highlights some minor external differences like a new power adapter and engraved logo. What really matters is what Wi-Fi tech it supports. The Nest Wi-Fi, which launched last year, doesn't support the newest 802.11ax (Wi-Fi 6) standard. It would be nice if a new one did.

We'll know for sure what Google is launching on September 30, when the event kicks off.

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