# Why I’m using a keyboard phone in 2023

For the past month, I’ve been using the Unihertz Titan Pocket, a phone released in 2021 that rocks a 3.1-inch display above a full Qwerty keyboard. To be clear, it’s been by choice — my editors didn’t assign me to do this as a prank (in fact, some of them have clowned on me for using it), and it’s not like I don’t have other options. I’ve got a perfectly good iPhone 12 Mini that I actively gave up to switch to this phone.

So uh… why?

The first reason is that it can just be kind of fun to try something new. Or, in this case, go back to something old; my first experiences with a smartphone were stealing my dad’s Navy-issued BlackBerry to email my significant other when I was in middle school. But for the past 10 years or so, the phones I’ve used have pretty much had the exact same form factor. They’ve just changed size.

That’s also largely true for everyone else. I don’t think I’ve ever gotten as many comments on a gadget as I have the Titan Pocket. I’ve gotten several “is that a BlackBerry?” or “whoa, cool, what phone is that” comments, and I think that’s mostly down to the fact that people just aren’t used to seeing someone use this sort of phone anymore. (Though there *are* dozens of us! Someone who goes to my gym also has a Titan Pocket, which shocked me; I never expected to see another one in the wild.)

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dark:[&>a]:shadow-underline-gray-63″>*Okay, so the time savings aren’t that significant. But I do feel way cooler pressing the enter button than tapping on an icon.*

Unihertz also has a system that lets you set keys as shortcuts for apps and actions. For example, no matter where I am on my phone, I can long-press the “t” key to start a new timer or the “c” key to open Chrome. It turns out that having extra buttons can be super useful if you want to get things done quickly

This phone has a lot going for it beyond the keyboard. For one, it has features that my iPhone 12 Mini, which cost a full $479 more than it, doesn’t. You know how everyone complains about how phones don’t have headphone jacks or microSD card slots anymore? The Titan Pocket does. Those are going to be very useful for me while I’m attempting to hike across the US for reasons that I explained to my colleague David Pierce on an episode of *The Vergecast*.

It also has an IR blaster that I can use to control my TV and oscillating fan, and if I plug some wired headphones in, I can use it as an FM radio. Plus, there’s an extra hardware button that you can program to do three separate actions based on whether you single-, double-, or long-press it. Why has the market decided that there shouldn’t be *any* flagship phones that have these features when so many budget handsets do?

Also: please look at this battery chart and then remember that this is a phone that’s approximately the same size as an iPhone Mini. (Admittedly, it’s a fair bit thicker, but it’s just as easy to hold, in my opinion.)

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*actual buttons.*

This may be all in my head, but using the Pocket puts me in the mood for writing and lets me focus on what I'm doing in a way that other phones just don't. I'm not tempted to just switch away from a draft and watch a YouTube video because, honestly, watching YouTube on this thing sucks! My wife has made fun of me because of how close I have to hold the phone to my face when I do watch videos on it.

And yeah, it's totally fair to criticize the Titan Pocket for those shortcomings (though, really, they're mostly inherent to all keyboard phones, as Steve Jobs pointed out while announcing the iPhone). But in some ways, they're part of why I love this phone so much. As someone who's spent pretty much my entire life addicted to the internet, I appreciate the tiny moment of hesitation I have before picking up my phone, and it's not terribly usable one-handed, so I have to commit to it when I do decide to use it.

I'm absolutely not trying to argue that phones in general should be a little less convenient so that people use them less. I'm just saying that I'm happy *mine* is. And yes, I love that anything I do with it feels like serious business, even if I'm just typing out silly jokes to friends and co-workers. It's hard to think of another phone that has fundamentally changed how I think about what exactly I use a phone for. And sure, when I return to society, I'll probably go back to my iPhone. But I hope that at least some of my BlackBerry habits stick around.

*Photography by Mitchell Clark / The Verge*

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