

SPECIAL REPORT Smartphone INSIDER:

Smartphone Insider provides the inside scoop on today's hottest smartphones, including strengths and weaknesses, problems and solutions, user feedback, news, and tips & tricks.

by Dan Hart & David Seagull

T-Mobile Dash

The Dash is T-Mobile's weapon of choice in the battle for supremacy in the ultra-thin smartphone market. The Dash is quite similar in size and functionality to other smartphones such as the Moto Q and Samsung BlackJack, but it has the distinct advantage of being the only device with built-in Wi-Fi, which even Palm's top-selling Treo 700 series Phone Editions lack. This means that you can use the Dash to surf the Web and check and send e-mail from any Wi-Fi hotspot without having to pay for a data service plan.

Strengths

- Curved edges, rubberized feel for comfortable handling and grip
- Slim design (0.5" thick) and solid build
- Integrated Wi-Fi (b/g)
- Integrated Bluetooth 2.0, allows use of stereo headsets for music
- EDGE support for Web and e-mail anywhere
- Runs on the GSM Quad-Band world network
- Good call quality and battery life
- Includes leather case and hands-free headset (if purchased from T-Mobile)

Weaknesses

- Poor video (176 x 144, 10 fps)
- Washed-out colors on photos
- Limited processor power (200 MHz)
- Weak speakerphone
- Awkward volume touch strip
- Poor user manual
- Can't edit Microsoft Office docs

Limitations & Solutions

- The Dash has a unique volume touch strip to the right of the screen, which is designed to turn the volume up or down by touching the designated area. However, reviewers and users have complained that this function is temperamental, with commands only registering sporadically. It can be changed through the Settings menu, where the sensitivity can be adjusted or turned off completely.
- Microsoft Office files can be viewed but not edited. If you want to edit documents, you have to download the Windows Mobile 6 update (t-mobile.com/wmupgrade) or get a third-party solution. Documents To Go (dataviz.com) lets you view, edit, and create Word, Excel, and PowerPoint documents, and view PDF files. Also check out eText (handango.com) for text editing, and PTab (software.everythingq.com) for spreadsheet editing.

Tips & Tricks

- Toggle Wi-Fi on and off: If you are in a public Wi-Fi hotspot, simply select Wi-Fi >Wi-Fi on the Dash's Home screen to turn the radio on. When you leave, select it again to turn Wi-Fi off.

- Quickly access push e-mail: The Dash features push e-mail capability, which can be used if you have an Exchange Server set up. Push e-mail allows mail to be sent directly to your device so you won't have to repeatedly check for new messages, which saves battery life. To start push e-mail, quickly press the power button once, choose the Comm Manager option, and then choose DirectPush.
- Lock your keyboard: Smartphone devices like the Dash have exposed keys, which are prone to being accidentally pressed when the device is in a pocket or bag. This can be avoided by locking the keyboard, which is done by pushing down and holding the End button. The keyboard can be unlocked by pressing the Unlock soft key and then the asterisk (*).
- Use Flight Mode: You can use the Dash for anything other than wireless communications while on a plane as long as it is in Flight Mode (which disables all wireless functions). You can activate flight mode by quickly pressing the Power button once and then selecting Comm Manager >Phone.
- Close programs: One annoying feature of Windows Mobile devices is that after you close an application, it will continue to run. The Dash remedies this with a Stop All feature. Go to Start >Task Manager and then select Menu >Stop All.
- Caps Lock: Caps Lock can be switched on or off by pushing Cap/



The Dash will be upgradeable to Windows Mobile 6.

Shift two times.

- Quick switch to vibrate mode: You can switch from the normal (Default) profile to Vibrate mode fast by pushing the # key.
- Speakerphone: The speakerphone function can be turned on during a call by pushing and holding the green Send key.

Odds & Ends

- The Dash is available from T-Mobile (t-mobile.com) for \$99.99 with a 2-year contract (after discounts and rebates). The unlocked version of the Dash (HTC S620) is available from expansys-usa.com, simoncells.com, and other online vendors.
- One unique feature that is included in T-Mobile's wireless plan is myFaves, which gives you unlimited calling free of charge to any five numbers that you call the most. These numbers can then be quickly accessed from the Home Screen. To set up myFaves, log into your account at t-mobile.com.
- User reviewers at CNet gave the Dash a "Very good" 7.7 out of 10 rating. A full review, user reviews, and tips & tricks can be found at reviews.cnet.com.
- A list of available cases for the Dash is located at Cases.com. ■