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# RIM BlackBerry 7230 (T-Mobile) review: RIM BlackBerry 7230 (T-Mobile)

RIM BlackBerry 7230 (T-Mobile)



**David Carnoy** 

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5 min read 

Research in Motion's (RIM) early attempts at mating its popular wireless e-mail device/PDA with a cell phone didn't turn out as well as the company had hoped. But the BlackBerry 7230, RIM's first color-screen model, is a different story. Offered by T-Mobile in the United States for a reasonable \$400, the 7230 combines a GSM/GPRS world phone, a PDA, and wireless e-mail capabilities in a slim, 4.8-ounce unit that doesn't require an earbud to talk on. The only potential drawback is T-Mobile's service; if the carrier's GPRS coverage is not widespread in your area, you'll have a tough time getting e-mail on the go.

**Editor's note:** We have changed the rating in this review to reflect recent changes in our rating scale. [Click here to find out more.](#)

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Exhibit 1015



Some jokingly refer to the 7230 as a BlueBerry rather than a BlackBerry because of its blue casing. A bit shorter and thicker (4.4 by 2.9 by 0.94 inches) than RIM's stalwart 957, the unit is compact for a smart phone; male buyers will probably wear it clipped to their belts using the included swiveling holster.



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### RIM BlackBerry 7230 (T-Mobile)

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#### THE GOOD

Compact; color screen; nice built-in keyboard; real-time e-mail; Web browser; Java support (J2ME); compact travel charger and syncing cable; decent battery life.

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#### THE BAD

Lacks speakerphone and memory-expansion slot.

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#### THE BOTTOM LINE



So long as you have decent T-Mobile coverage in your area, the BlackBerry 7230 makes an excellent smart phone.

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**Pocket-friendly: While most will wear the BlackBerry on a belt, it'll fit in a shirt pocket.**

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**A little girth: The 7230 is slightly thicker than the old BlackBerry favorite, the 957.**

The high-resolution, 240×160-pixel color display supports 65,000 colors and is the same width but a shorter length than the 957's screen. Though not as bright--even with the backlight on--as the displays found on Pocket PCs or Palms, the screen is readable and is made for viewing in direct sunlight. As for the keys, they're slightly bigger and more raised than the 957's, making them more tactile. Either way, the 7230's minikeyboard is among the best available to date and certainly superior to the ones found on Handspring's Treo models.

The first thing you'll notice when you go to dial a number manually is that RIM has created a traditional number dial pad over the keys on the left side of the keyboard. When inputting numbers as part of a text message, you may be initially thrown off by the layout. However, the arrangement is essential if you want to dial numbers on the 7230 as you would with a traditional phone.

As with RIM's earlier combo units, you can plug in the bundled headset to make a call, but this model also features a built-in earpiece and mike. It's not the most comfortable implementation, but it's quite usable as a phone as well as a wireless e-mail device and PDA.



Along with the familiar scrollwheel and the Back button (which you press to end a call) on the right side of the unit, you'll find a port for a USB cable/charger on the left side. On top, there's a quick-launch button for phone mode, plus an IR port. The removable lithium-ion battery can be replaced.

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**No cradle needed:  
We appreciate the  
included USB  
cable/charger.**

While it has no SD (Secure Digital) card expansion slot, this model ships with a healthy 16MB of internal flash memory and 2MB of SRAM. BlackBerrys are known for their e-mail prowess, and the 7230, which supports world roaming (GSM 900/1800/1900; GPRS) with the appropriate SIM card, worked well in this department and easily synced with Microsoft Outlook on our desktop computer. Lotus Notes is also supported.


If you don't work for a company that has BlackBerry Enterprise Server installed on its servers, you can opt for BlackBerry Web Client, which is included in the T-Mobile package and allows you to have e-mail messages wirelessly forwarded to your 7230 from up to 10 POP3 e-mail accounts. Setup is fairly simple and can be done on the Web or via a wireless Web connection on the device in a matter of minutes. Data plans start at \$29.99 per month for unlimited e-mail.

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**World traveler: The 7230 comes with all the plugs a globetrotter would need.**

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One-handed dialing: We like the overlay of numeric keys on the QWERTY keyboard.  
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While the enterprise version offers real-time e-mail delivery and wireless calendar syncing (a secretary can wirelessly update an appointment from the office), the e-mail pushed to the 7230 by Web Client has about a 15-minute delay. And Web Client now offers some wireless syncing; if you delete e-mail on the 7230, it will also be deleted on your desktop. Previously, this feature was available to corporate customers only.

The BlackBerry's address and calendar applications aren't quite as snazzy as a Pocket PC's or Palm's, but most users will be pleased with the device's PDA side. Other core electronic organizer applications include a task manager, a memo pad, a calculator, and an alarm. The BrickBreaker game comes preinstalled, and you can add third-party applications just like you would with a Palm or a Pocket PC.

With J2ME onboard, RIM is touting the BlackBerry's expansion into the Java realm, which is a plus. You can now open a wide variety of e-mail attachments--most importantly, Microsoft Word, Excel, and PowerPoint files, as well as Adobe PDFs--and view them on the device. Unfortunately, you can't edit a Word or Excel file, save it, and send it back to a colleague. This is a read-only situation.

Like other BlackBerrys, the 7230 is lacking in the multimedia department, but that's not a sin, especially since this is a business-oriented device. However, in an ideal world, we would like to have seen a speakerphone and Bluetooth support for wireless headsets.



All the phone basics are here, including a robust call history, the ability to dial contact numbers directly from the address book, two-way SMS messaging, and a vibrating ringer option. Phone and PDA elements are well integrated. A Web browser is onboard, though only Enterprise customers can currently surf full-blown HTML sites (RIM says a downloadable software update that adds HTML browsing will be available for Web Client users later this year). We mostly used T-Mobile's T-Zones text-only WAP site to check the latest news and sports scores.

You'd expect a color screen to have a serious impact on battery life, but the 7230's display is designed to use the backlight sparingly; you'll need to activate it in only a dimly lit environment or at night. As a result, you can expect decent battery life that's on a par with that of the most energy-efficient smart phones currently available. RIM says you can get up to four hours of talk time and 10 days of standby time. In our tests, we hit the talk-time number and managed to go a full week on standby. With normal use, however, you should expect to recharge after every third day, or every two days to be on the safe side.

Using T-Mobile's GSM/GPRS service in New York City, we had a generally good experience. Occasionally, we lost the sweet spot of the speaker on our ear and had to adjust the phone accordingly. But the BlackBerry was fairly loud, and we appreciated that we could raise and lower the volume using the scrollwheel in the middle of a call. On their end, callers said we sounded clear with no static. In noisier environments, it helps to use a headset, but it's not essential.



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## RIM BlackBerry 7230 (T-Mobile)

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### SCORE BREAKDOWN

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