



Forget photo messaging – it may sound like a great new way to communicate with your mates, but ultimately it's not that useful. Other than sending a picture of your bum when you're drunk, are there really that many compelling uses for it? And it's expensive too.

Phone companies missed a trick with text messaging. Gone are the days of 2p per message – you're now expected to buy in bulk or you're looking at around 10p a pop. But even at 10p a go it's still low enough in price that you don't really think about it before sending.

However, 35p-plus for a photo message breaks a psychological barrier. Do you really need to send that poor-quality pic to your friend just to let them know what a good time you're having?

Adding features to phones is all very well, but telling people they should be using them rather than being allowed to discover these facilities in their own time is likely to end in tears. After all, we didn't need high-profile ads featuring David Beckham to persuade us that text messaging or email were cool.

With the pressure currently being applied to photo messaging it's in danger of suffering the same fate as WAP – death by overhype. Email, on the other hand, is something we use every day, while GPRS allows us to be in constant contact with our inboxes. The down side of using a mobile phone to access email is that most handsets don't have keyboards. Unless, of course, you purchase RIM's BlackBerry 7230 (see page 37). The 7230 takes RIM's expertise in the corporate space and puts it in the hands of the consumer, adding a colour screen and built-in phone capabilities.

Keep your photo messaging, Vodafone et al. We'll take RIM's less cool but ultimately much handier option, thanks very much. ■

Will Head, reviews editor

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Scoring and testing explained

Each review rates a product according to a set criterion for its type. The score is broken down at the end of the review to show how we reached our final verdict. Ratings range from 1 to 10 and fall into the following classifications:

- 1 to 3 – poor
- 4 to 6 – average
- 6 to 8 – good
- 8 to 10 – excellent

How we rate hardware

- **Features** This score rates the specification of a product by current standards. For example, a 2.6GHz PC with 512MB of RAM and a 120GB hard drive would score highly.
- **Build quality** This rating denotes how well the product is made and the quality of the components.
- **Value for money** The price of a product will often be the deciding factor between

a good review and a bad review. This is not to say that cheaper products will always win out, but the better the price/performance and features ratio the higher the score.

How we rate software

- **Ease of use** Rates how easy software is to install and use.
- **Features** Indicates how much the package contains. An office suite that



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Looking for a portable device to organise your life? This month, we delve into the world of smartphones.

only came with a spreadsheet would score poorly.

- Value for money Lots of features, good performance and a low price tag will result in a good score.

Prices

All prices are quoted by the manufacturer or distributor and exclude VAT. Please note

that prices are only intended as a guide and you may see products on sale for less or more than our quoted price. *PC Advisor's* recommendations are for guidance only and are not a guarantee of suitability. The publisher takes no responsibility for purchasers' decisions.

PC Advisor Gold award

Outstanding hardware products receive a *PC Advisor* Gold award. This may indicate that the product will enter our charts next month but *PC Advisor* Gold also honours excellence in a product that is not covered in this month's charts.



198 Top 10 charts

Located at the back of the magazine, the charts are designed so they're a cinch to navigate. The at-a-glance comments and buying advice help you make the right purchasing decision. Products we've already tested are ranked in our charts after competing against existing entrants. The result is a definitive guide to the best hardware on the market.

