

# Samsung Galaxy S3 goes on sale

Samsung's third-generation Galaxy smartphone expected to keep company ahead of nearest rival Apple

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Customers queue to buy the new Samsung Galaxy S3 during a late night sale event in Berlin. Photograph: Fabrizio Bensch/Reuters

11 Samsung launches its latest Galaxy S smartphone in Europe on Tuesday, with the third-generation model expected to be even more successful than its predecessor, the S2, which in 2011 helped the South Korean company topple Apple as the world's top smartphone maker.

The S3, which has features such as eye-tracking to keep the screen from dimming or turning off while in use, hits stores in 28 European and Middle East countries, including Germany and Britain, as Samsung aims to widen the gap with Apple months ahead of its rival's new iPhone, expected in the third quarter.

The Galaxy S3, running on Google's Android operating system, boasts a 4.8in (12.2cm) screen, bigger than the 3.5in display on the iPhone 4S and the 4.7in screen on HTC's One X model.

In the kind of anticipation that has become the norm for new Apple gadget releases, hopeful customers began queuing outside an electronics retail store in Berlin on Monday night eager to be the first to lay their hands on the phone.

Major global carriers – from Vodafone to Singapore's SingTel – have been aggressively promoting the S3, fuelling speculation the smartphone could top the Galaxy S2's worldwide sales of 20m units.

The company has said that it has had 9m pre-orders worldwide, though it is not clear if those are from carriers or directly from customers.

"In the two years that we've been offering pre-orders, it's the most pre-ordered Android device we've had in our lineup," said a spokesman for Vodafone UK, declining to disclose exact numbers.

"It's on track to meet, if not exceed, the level of pre-orders we expected by the time it actually launches."

Samsung introduced its first Galaxy in 2010, three years after the iPhone's debut, to

counter Apple's roaring success in [smartphones](#) at a time when other rivals such as Nokia were struggling to make much impact.

Samsung shipped an estimated 44.5m smartphones in January-March – equal to nearly 21,000 every hour – giving it 30.6% market share.

In the Android space alone, it has roughly a 50% share, but also offers phones running the Windows Phone and its own Bada software. Apple said it sold 35.1m iPhones, taking 24.1% market share.

"The Galaxy S3 is a real challenger to the upcoming iPhone," said Francisco Jeronimo, smartphones analyst for the research company IDC.

"This is likely be one of the most sold smartphones this year, though the real test will come when the next iPhone is launched."

The race for global smartphone supremacy comes as Apple has accused Samsung of copying some of its products. The South Korean company counter-claims that Apple has infringed its patents.

Both have denied the allegations, and a long-running court saga continues in a number of locations around the world.

Rumours suggest that Apple plans to use a larger screen with a 4in diagonal on the next iPhone, the first change of screen size configuration since the device was introduced in 2007.

The iPhone 4S, the top end of Apple's line, was introduced in October 2011, but it still sells the iPhone 4 and iPhone 3GS from 2010 and 2009.

In a departure from its predecessor, whose look and feel became the main subject of the legal dispute with Apple, the latest Galaxy has a more rounded outline.

It also has voice recognition, dubbed S-Voice, which will inevitably be compared to Apple's Siri voice system, and image recognition software that can tag and share photographs.

Prices vary depending on the contract. A model with 16GB of memory costs up to £189 under a 12-month contract with Vodafone. A similar package for the iPhone 4s costs £159, but has a more expensive monthly data plan.

Samsung said it would release the S3 via 296 carriers in 145 countries by July.

Profit from Samsung's mobile division nearly tripled in January-March to \$3.6bn (£2.3bn), accounting for 73% of Samsung's operating profit.

Samsung – whose shares have gained 82% since late-August, beating Apple's 58% rise – is now banking on an aggressive marketing campaign ahead of the summer London Olympics to further drive sales.

It has said its mobile market share in China doubled after the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

"The S3 is supported by an unprecedented promotional campaign," said Geoff Blaber, an analyst at CCS Insight in London. "Samsung's timing with the Galaxy S3 is perfect."