

Battle of the digital assistants: Windows Phone Cortana vs. Google Now vs. Siri

To test the three services, we quizzed each assistant on a variety of general facts and conversions, and then asked them to perform a number of common smartphone operations—nearly 40 in all. We scored each assistant on the accuracy of its results and the elegance of its operation.

Points:

3 - For a card or oral response/successful completion of task

2 - For a search result that indicates the answer, or a partial completion of task

0 - For all others

0.5 - Awarded for exemplary results, or deducted for subpar results

	Cortana (Windows Phone)	Notes	Google Now (Android)	Notes	Siri (Apple iOS)	Notes
General knowledge:						
How tall is the Empire State Building?	3.5	1,454 feet (with antenna, noted)	3	1,250 feet (roof height; not noted)	3.5	Both heights shown, with picture
Where was the hottest temperature ever recorded?	2	Search results	2	Card doesn't answer question	3	Wolfram Alpha card
Which team won the World Series in 1989?	3	Correct answer given	3	Correct answer given	2	As queried, Siri said it could only provide recent World Series results. But if you ask it "Who won the World Series in 1989?" it gives the correct response.
What is the population of France?	3	65.43 million (2011)	3.5	65.7 million (2012); with graph	3.5	62.8 million (2010) plus other facts
Who was the twenty-first president of the United States?	3	Chester A. Arthur	3.5	Chester A. Arthur	3.5	Wolfram Alpha card
What year was Dark Side of the Moon released?	3	3/1/1973	3.5	3/1/1973; tracks listed, too	3	1-Mar-73
What year did Marilyn Monroe die?	3	8/5/1962	3	8/5/1962	3.5	Aug. 5, age 36
What is the atomic number of silver?	3	47	3	47	3	47
What is the weather like outside?	3	Location and forecast	3	Card: location and forecast	3	Card: location and forecast
What is the score of the Marlins game?	2	Search, but accurate score	2	Card, but score was behind	3	Card; accurate score
What is Apple's stock price?	3	\$526.76	3.5	\$526.79 (real time card, fluctuated)	3	Card: closed at \$530.32
What is Superman's weakness?	2	First search result answered question	2	Search results didn't quite answer	2	First search result answered

Battle of the digital assistants: Windows Phone Cortana vs. Google Now vs. Siri

	Cortana (Windows Phone)	Notes	Google Now (Android)	Notes	Siri (Apple iOS)	Notes
General knowledge, cont'd.:						
Who wrote The Red Badge of Courage?	3	Stephen Crane	3	Stephen Crane	3	"It looks like the author of the Red Badge of Courage was Stephen Crane."
How does James Bond like his martinis?	2	First search result answered question	2	Search results answered question	2	Search results answered question
How much it will cost me to fly to Paris?	2	Search results	2	Search results	2	Search results
Is it more expensive to rent an apartment in New York or San Francisco?	2	Search results	2	Search results	2	Search results
Subtotal, General knowledge:	42.5		44		45	

Calculation/conversion:						
How far is it from Sacramento to Seattle?	3	Card: 10 hrs 54 minutes, 753.4 mi	3	Card: 752.6 mi, 11 h 22 minutes	3	Card: 753 miles, 12 hr 32 minutes
Two dozen yen plus 17 euro equals how many dollars?	0	Just a page of currency converter search results	3	\$23.785924 (took several tries)	0	Interpreted correctly, but just a currency conversion table
How many inches are in two miles?	3	126,720	3	126,720	3	"About 127,000 inches," then specifies correct amount
What does hydrochloric acid plus calcium carbonate yield?	2	Search results	2	Search results	2	Search results
How long does it take for light to travel to the Earth from the Sun?	2	Had to access search results	3.5	Card: answer plus explanation (8 mins. 20 sec)	0	"Sorry, I can't provide maps or directions there."
How many fluid ounces is 4 tablespoons?	3	Card: 2 U.S. fluid ounces	3	Card: 2 U.S. fluid ounces	3	2 fluid ounces
How do you say "Where is the bathroom" in French?	2	Search results	3	Card: Ou se trouvent les toilettes	2	Web search
Subtotal, Calculation/conversion:	15		20.5		13	

Tasks:						
Call Jennifer's mobile number. (Pulling a number from a contact.)	3	Call was placed correctly.	3	Call was placed correctly.	3	Call was placed correctly.
Text Jennifer: I will be late for dinner. Let's order out.	3	Text sent correctly.	3	Text sent correctly.	3	Text sent correctly.
Email Jennifer. General Mills called. Can you send me a copy of our presentation for them?	0	Search results	3	Orally navigated through a few menus	3	Asked to edit subject
Remind me tomorrow at 9 AM to buy flowers for my wife.	3	Reminder set correctly.	3	Reminder set correctly.	3	Reminder set correctly.
Remind me every Wednesday at noon to eat lunch.	3	Repeatable reminder	3	Repeatable reminder	3	Repeatable reminder

Battle of the digital assistants: Windows Phone Cortana vs. Google Now vs. Siri

	Cortana (Windows Phone)	Notes	Google Now (Android)	Notes	Siri (Apple iOS)	Notes
Tasks, cont'd.:						
Remind me to buy eggs and milk at the grocery store.	3	Had to pick a grocery store	2	No geofencing	2	Generic reminder
Navigate to the White House, Washington DC	2.5	Had to select from a list	3	Launched navigation app	3	Launched Maps app
What time does Southwest flight 212 arrive?	0	Results unhelpful	3	Card with flight info	2	If "tell me about..." syntax is used, search results are generated
Play U2's Where the Streets Have No Name	3	Played song if on device	3	Played song if in Google Music library	3	Played song if in iTunes music
Play a funny cat video from YouTube.	2	Listed (accurate) search results	2	Listed (accurate) search results	0	"I can't help you with videos"
Take a picture.	0	Search results	3	Launched camera app	3	Launched camera app
What is the best Mexican restaurant in Las Vegas?	2	Search results	3	Cards with ratings, numbers, directions	2.5	Cards: need to tap to get details and directions
Where is the nearest gas station?	3	Card: map, number, directions button	2.5	Card, but not a great job answering question	2.5	Need to tap to get directions
Tweet: testing testing	2	"Twitter new tweet" opens Twitter, but that's all.	0	Irrelevant search results.	3	Created Tweet correctly and offered to send it.
Post to Facebook: Hello everyone!	0	Irrelevant search results	0	Irrelevant search results.	3	Created Facebook update and offered to send it.
Subtotal, Calculation/conversion:	29.5		36.5		39	

TOTAL: 87

101

97