Is the Samsung Galaxy S21 Still a Good Phone in 2026

Description

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The Samsung Galaxy S21, released in early 2021, was one of the most advanced smartphones of its time. With a powerful processor, a high-quality display, and a versatile camera system, it set a benchmark for flagship devices. However, as technology evolves rapidly, many users wonder whether the Galaxy S21 remains a viable option in 2026. This article examines its performance, software support, hardware durability, and overall value to determine if it still holds up five years after its launch.

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Performance and Hardware in 2026

Processor and Speed

The Galaxy S21 was powered by the **Exynos 2100** (in most regions) or the **Snapdragon 888** (in the U.S. and select markets). Both chips were top-tier in 2021, but how do they compare in 2026?

- **Snapdragon 888:** Still a capable chipset, though it may struggle with the most demanding modern apps and games. Basic tasks like web browsing, social media, and video streaming remain smooth, but newer flagship processors (like the Snapdragon 8 Gen 3) offer significantly better efficiency and performance.
- **Exynos 2100:** While competitive at launch, Exynos chips have historically had worse thermal management and efficiency compared to Snapdragon variants. In 2026, it may feel sluggish in multitasking and resource-heavy applications.

Verdict: The Galaxy S21 can still handle everyday tasks, but power users may notice slowdowns in intensive applications.

RAM and Storage

The Galaxy S21 came with **8GB of RAM** and storage options of **128GB or 256GB** (non-expandable). In 2026:

- **8GB RAM:** Still sufficient for most users, but newer apps and multitasking may push its limits.
- **128GB/256GB Storage:** While adequate for casual users, those who store large files, games, or high-resolution media may find it restrictive.

Verdict: The RAM is still decent, but storage limitations could be a concern for heavy users.

Display Quality

One of the Galaxy S21â??s strongest features was its **6.2-inch Dynamic AMOLED 2X display** with a **120Hz refresh rate** and **Full HD+ resolution**. In 2026:

- **120Hz Refresh Rate:** Still a premium feature, offering smooth scrolling and gaming.
- **AMOLED Technology:** The display remains vibrant and sharp, though newer phones may have slightly better brightness and color accuracy.
- **Resolution:** Full HD+ is still more than adequate for most users, though flagship phones now offer QHD+ or even higher resolutions.

Verdict: The display remains excellent, rivaling many mid-range phones in 2026.

Software and Updates

Android Version and One UI Support

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Samsung has been one of the best manufacturers in terms of long-term software support. The Galaxy S21 launched with **Android 11** and received updates up to **Android 15** (One UI 7.0), with security patches extending into **2026**.

- **Final Major Update:** The S21 likely received its last major Android version update in late 2024 or early 2025.
- **Security Patches:** Samsung typically provides **four years of major updates and five years of security patches**, meaning the S21 should still receive critical security updates in 2026.

Verdict: While it wonâ??t get the latest Android features, it remains secure and functional.

App and Game Compatibility

Most apps and games in 2026 will still run on the Galaxy S21, but:

- **High-End Games:** Newer titles with advanced graphics may struggle due to the aging chipset.
- **AI and Productivity Apps:** Some newer AI-driven features may not be optimized for older hardware.

Verdict: The S21 can still run most apps, but performance may not be as smooth as on newer devices.

Battery Life and Charging

Battery Degradation

The Galaxy S21 has a **4,000mAh battery**, which was decent at launch but may show signs of wear in 2026.

- **Battery Health:** After five years, most lithium-ion batteries retain **70-80% of their original capacity**, meaning the S21 may last **4-6 hours of screen-on time** instead of the original 6-8 hours.
- **Charging Speed:** Supports **25W fast charging**, which is still competitive, though newer phones offer **45W+ charging**.

Verdict: Battery life will be noticeably worse, but it should still last a full day for light users.

Camera Performance in 2026

The Galaxy S21 featured a **triple-camera setup**:
â?? **12MP main sensor**
â?? **12MP ultra-wide lens**
â?? **64MP telephoto (3x hybrid zoom)**

Photo and Video Quality

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- **Daylight Photos:** Still sharp and well-balanced, though newer phones offer better dynamic range and detail.
- **Low-Light Performance:** The S21â??s Night Mode was good for its time, but modern flagships have superior computational photography.
- **Video Recording:** Supports **8K recording**, which remains impressive, though newer phones offer better stabilization and HDR.

Verdict: The cameras are still capable, but they lag behind 2026â??s flagship standards.

Design and Build Quality

The Galaxy S21 featured a **Glasstic (plastic) back** with an **aluminum frame**, making it durable yet lightweight.

- **Durability:** The phone holds up well, though the plastic back may show scratches over time.
- **Water Resistance: IP68 rating** means it can still handle splashes and brief submersion.
- **5G Support:** The S21 was one of the first mainstream 5G phones, and it remains compatible with modern networks.

Verdict: The build quality is still solid, and 5G support ensures future-proof connectivity.

Value for Money in 2026

Price and Alternatives

In 2026, the Galaxy S21 can be found **used or refurbished for around $150-$250**, making it an excellent budget option.

Alternatives:
â?? **Samsung Galaxy S22 (2022):** Better performance, longer software support, and improved cameras.
â?? **Google Pixel 6 (2021):** Stronger software support and AI features.
â?? **Mid-Range 2026 Phones:** Newer budget phones may offer better performance and battery life.

Verdict: If you need a cheap, reliable phone, the S21 is still a good choice, but newer mid-range devices may offer better value.

Final Verdict: Is the Galaxy S21 Still Good in 2026?

The **Samsung Galaxy S21 remains a capable phone in 2026**, but its usefulness depends on the userâ??s needs:

â? **Still a Good Choice If:**
â?? You need a **budget-friendly phone** for basic tasks.
â?? You prioritize **display quality and design**.
â?? You donâ??t play **high-end games** or use **demanding apps**.
â?? Youâ??re okay with **reduced battery life** and **no future major updates**.

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â•? **Not Ideal If:**
â?? You want **cutting-edge performance** for gaming or multitasking.
â?? You need **long-term software support** (beyond 2026).
â?? You take **a lot of photos/videos** and want the best quality.
â?? You prefer **expandable storage** or **longer battery life**.

Conclusion

The Galaxy S21 was a fantastic phone in 2021, and it still holds up reasonably well in 2026 for casual users. However, its aging hardware, reduced battery life, and lack of future updates make it less competitive against newer mid-range devices. If you can find one at a low price, itâ??s still a solid choiceâ??but for those who want the best performance and longevity, upgrading to a newer model may be worth considering.

Category

1. Uncategorized

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vvfvw