

# Is it possible to develop for the iPhone without an iPhone?

Asked 16 years, 3 months ago

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I know there are emulators, but is this good enough? If someone is serious about iPhone development, do they absolutely need an iPhone?



iphone

emulation

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asked Sep 23, 2008 at 13:33



[Brian R. Bondy](#)

347k ● 126 ● 602 ● 640

From a UI standpoint, the image of the simulator is HUGE compared to the actual device. I ran into trouble making buttons too small and close together when designed on the simulator. So even if you wind up getting a device, remember to periodically test your app on a real device during development. – [willc2](#) Nov 5, 2009 at 23:24

18 Answers

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Just my personal opinion: if you're serious it means that you're committed to quality of your product. If you're

46

committed to quality there is no way to deliver a product without actually launching it on the target platform :)



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answered Sep 23, 2008 at 13:35



[Ilya Kochetov](#)

18.4k ● 6 ● 47 ● 62



25

Don't forget that most types of iPhone apps also work on the iPod Touch, which is a one time cost and no monthly fees. Even network apps work if the iPod Touch is connected to WiFi.



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edited Jan 12, 2014 at 5:36



[Kara](#)

6,206 ● 16 ● 53 ● 58

answered Sep 23, 2008 at 13:42



[Paul Tomblin](#)

183k ● 59 ● 323 ● 410

I think this is a valid option, unless you're developing using some of the iPhone-only features, like GPS or photos (or the phone interface). The touch also has the accelerometer, so the rotational aspects work fine, too. – [cori](#) Sep 23, 2008 at 13:47

Another benefit of using a Touch for development is that you don't risk screwing up your iPhone, which you may be relying on. – [Kristopher Johnson](#) Sep 23, 2008 at 14:20

I did some development on iPod touch. Except for features like GPS and calling phones, it is very good for testing apps.

– [amadamala](#) Mar 29, 2011 at 11:44

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**12**



During development of my first iPhone app, I wrote code that worked fine on the iPhone Simulator, but which did not work on the device. So I would say "Yes, you definitely need to test on an actual device."

The simulator is not an emulator. It is not running the actual iPhone OS; it is running a set of Mac OS X libraries that are very similar, but not identical, to iPhone OS. The simulator is great for debugging and saving time during the code-and-test cycle, so you will use it a lot more than the device, but a device is indispensable.

You really do need to touch-and-feel your app on a real device. A UI that works great while pointing and clicking with a mouse might be terrible when used with thumbs and fingers. If there is any text entry, you need to feel how painful it is to type using the onscreen keyboard, to determine whether it makes sense to provide alternative data-entry methods.

There are also significant performance differences between the simulator and actual devices. You need to test with the oldest (slowest) device you want to support to verify it is not too slow, doesn't run out of memory, etc.

As others have suggested, an iPod Touch is also sufficient, so the cost of a device isn't huge. Also, try to

find beta testers with a variety of different models.

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community wiki

5 revs

Kristopher Johnson



8



**Necessary:** How the app handles in your hands is critical to something like the iPhone. you cannot tell how it will feel to use when plastered straight in front of you in the emulator on a big screen.



If you cannot hold it you won't be getting the true user experience.



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answered Sep 23, 2008 at 13:38

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Loofer

6,969 ● 9 ● 65 ● 106



8



If you need to learn Obj-C, go with the emulator for a while until you learn the ropes and save the expense for later. But yes, eventually you will need an iPhone for final testing. How long you can wait will depend on the features that your app uses, If all you are doing is button presses, you can wait a long time. If you are dragging, using location services, etc., you'll need a device earlier in the development cycle.



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**KevDog**

5,803 ● 9 ● 45 ● 74



6

Are you trying to convince yourself or your boss? ;-)

I'd say you need one. Emulation of such a new device can only go wrong. Plus don't forget the tactile aspects.



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answered Sep 23, 2008 at 13:34



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**Iain Holder**

14.3k ● 10 ● 68 ● 86



6

The iPod touch is a reasonable substitute provided you are not using:

GPS, BlueTouch or Camera - the iPod touch doesn't have these



Cellular network - although the iPod touch has WiFi, the latency of a cellular network is way way higher than that of a wifi network. If you are doing anything like designing a custom protocol for your application, you will want to check real-world performance - and if you do this too late in the development cycle, you will be in for an unpleasant surprise.

Whether you develop on the iPod touch or on the iPhone, you absolutely must have a device. This is not optional! The simulator is good, but it is not perfect, and there is no

substitute for having a device which correctly indicates performance, screen resolution, brightness, form factor and all the other factors that you will need to consider in your application.

If you buy an iPod touch, you will probably end up getting an iPhone too. I'd just go straight for the iPhone. That way you can use it as your main phone, and get a real feel for how the platform behaves and what an application needs to do to make it great.

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edited Sep 24, 2015 at 15:34

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answered Sep 23, 2008 at 21:00



**Airsource Ltd**

32.6k ● 13 ● 74 ● 76



4



Kind-of "yes".

Just download iPhone SDK (it's easy and free) and check out the emulator that is in there. You'll see whether that suits your needs or not. The emulator is not indicative of real hardware performance, there's no touch input, some quirks might be different, some things can not work, etc.

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answered Sep 23, 2008 at 13:35

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**NeARAZ**

6,035 ● 29 ● 29



4



The iPhone Simulator makes it easy to test your applications using the power and convenience of your desktop or laptop computer. Although, **your development computer may not simulate complicated touch events, such as multifinger touches**, the Simulator lets you perform pinches. To perform a pinch, hold Option while tapping on the Simulator screen.

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answered Sep 23, 2008 at 13:41

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[prakash](#)

59.6k ● 25 ● 94 ● 115



3



I'd say it depends on the kind of application you are developing. For a successful iPhone app, one which is properly integrated on the system, you are going to *need* to be able to test your tactile interface. That's hardly accomplished with the Emulator.

So, my answer is Yes, you do need an iPhone to develop iPhone apps. Fortunately, if you cannot afford one, an iPod Touch (200 bucks) is a very competent replacement. The underlying hardware is pretty much the same.

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[Vicent Marti](#)

7,295 ● 6 ● 32 ● 34

There's no microphone, vibration feature or GPS on an iPod touch, which may or may not be significant depending on



3

Necessary. If you plan to develop a successful product it needs to be one the end users (not just the developers) find easy to use.



The best way to do that would be to load your app on an iPhone then take it to various people and ask them to use it while you watch them to see if they experience any issues. Users can get mighty creative in trying to do things a developer never intended - just ask any support tech.



Unless you're app is going to sell for less then \$500 total it's a relatively small investment to build a quality app.

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answered Sep 23, 2008 at 13:56

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[mdzindzeleta](#)

31 ● 3



2

If you are serious about development, an iPhone (or iPod touch) is a must. However, the official SDK comes with a very complete "iPhone simulator". This will allow you getting a feel for Objective C and the entire development workflow. The SDK requires Leopard.



You don't need a Mac for this. You can use OSX86 on your PC, either installed on and booted from disk or through **VmWare**.



It works. In fact, you can even synch the iPhone through Leopard running in vmWare.

Now, testing on a real iPhone is a necessity because of performance, memory usage etc. Also you need it for the entire authentication procedure, getting the keys etc. (if you want to sell your stuff on the Appstore), testing this really requires an iPhone.

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edited Sep 23, 2008 at 14:47

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answered Sep 23, 2008 at 14:38



kitsune

11.6k ● 15 ● 59 ● 78



2



If you buy an iPod touch, you will probably end up getting an iPhone too. I'd just go straight for the iPhone. That way you can use it as your main phone, and get a real feel for how the platform behaves and what an application needs to do to make it great.

I absolutely agree with this.

If you are seriously developing an iPhone application - for fun or for profit - you will have to run it on a real iPhone to test out compatibility and usability at some point. Since you going to have to get one at some point, you may as

well get one now. Don't go for half measures. An iPod Touch may be [significantly] cheaper to start with, but will be money wasted when you go and get your iPhone. (Of course, if you are planning an app that runs on the iPhone as well as the iPod Touch, then you MUST test it on both. You cannot assume that if it is good on one it must be good on the other).

Also, by having an iPhone from day one, you can familiarize yourself with its user interface, its norms and the common metaphors the apps use. That will heavily feed into your own application design process, and make sure that your app looks, feels, and works like a first class iPhone citizen.

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answered Sep 24, 2008 at 13:46

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Vihung

13.4k ● 18 ● 67 ● 95



1



From experience developing on other mobile platforms, once you get to a certain point, it really is *best* to have a physical device to test on. If this is something that you would also be using yourself, it is much easier to get some real world type of testing by using the application out and about.



I also think it helps one to understand the platform better by having the device or devices you are targeting with your app,

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[crashmstr](#)

28.5k ● 9 ● 64 ● 80



1



if you are going to develop native apps for the iphone, I would say get an iphone or ipod touch to target.

emulators are good, but eventually you will need to target the real thing. if you are developing web specific content

there are lots of things you can do without it (there are some great dev videos free from apples dev site which

will only cost you a sign up) but eventually I would think

you would still want to test with the real deal

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answered Sep 23, 2008 at 14:29

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[MikeJ](#)

14.6k ● 22 ● 74 ● 89



1



Get a cheap used iPod touch, develop, get money, buy an iPhone 5.

I'm a nokia dev now, I'm thinking of going to iPhone,

Actually I have the Mac to work, just the device itself ;)

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answered Mar 8, 2011 at 13:46

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[q8phantom](#)

11 ● 1



I've tried iPhoney and compared to my iPhone (Mark 1) it's not the same, it's close - but not close enough to rely

0

on if the interface is of importance to you.



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answered Sep 23, 2008 at 13:43

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[Andy Jeffries](#)

402 ● 4 ● 16



0

You absolutely need the real device. The performance difference between the simulator and the actual iPhone/iPod Touch hardware is huge. Code that will run nice and fast in the simulator can easily turn out to be too slow to be usable on the real thing. Also the API provided by the simulator is not 100% identical to the real thing, so code that works fine in the sim, may not work on the device. The only way to know for sure is to test often on the actual device.



As others have mentioned, the iPod touch works well as a development device. So if you don't need any of the features of the iPhone, it's a good, cheaper, alternative.

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answered Sep 25, 2008 at 20:46

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[Mike Akers](#)

12.2k ● 14 ● 60 ● 72