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FEBRUARY 7, 2011 5:34 PM PST

## The Android Era: From G1 to Honeycomb (and beyond)

by [Jessica Dolcourt](#)

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(Credit: CNET)

There's no doubt that Google's [Android](#) mobile operating system has exploded from its first foray in [October 2008](#) to become--for many--the everyman's smartphone OS.

Google's breakneck development speed has paid off since it [acquired Android](#), then a start-up, in 2005. The mature [Android now accounts for 53 percent](#) of smartphone sales as of the final quarter of 2010, according to research from Canalys--and there's no slowdown in sight.

Despite an earlier promise that Android updates would be reduced from about twice per year to [once per year](#), Google has recently released [Android 2.3 \(Gingerbread\)](#) and the [tablet](#)-specific [Android 3.0 \(Honeycomb\)](#), and hinted at the next treat in its enticing alphabet of releases, [Ice Cream Sandwich](#). Meanwhile, many people are still waiting or hoping for their Android 2.2 (Froyo) updates.

Here's a look at milestones in Google's Android operating system, from its humble beginnings to its current ambitions in tablet domination.

ANDROID VERSION	SDK RELEASE*	NOTABLE UPDATES
1.0 (G1)	February 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• GPS and Bluetooth (but not stereo Bluetooth)</li><li>• Multitasking</li><li>• Tight integration with Google services like Gmail, Google Maps (with Street View), and Google Calendar</li><li>• Apps: Amazon MP3 Store; YouTube</li><li>• Android Market (about 35 apps at launch)</li><li>• No Microsoft Exchange Server; no camcorder</li></ul>
1.5 (Cupcake)	April 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Universal search box (search had been limited to the Web)</li><li>• Revamped Android Market: Browsing categories (Apps, Games, Downloads) and filters (Top Free, Top Paid, Just In)</li><li>• Camera: Toggle between camera and video modes; integrated photo gallery and camera with bulk photo deleting</li><li>• SDK expands support for gestures, voice-to-text</li></ul>
1.6 (Donut)	September 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Virtual onscreen keyboard</li><li>• Camcorder mode for recording (and watching) video</li><li>• Stereo Bluetooth</li><li>• Home screen widgets and folders</li><li>• Copy/paste and search within the browser</li><li>• Direct upload to YouTube and Picasa</li></ul>
2.0 (Eclair)	October 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Multiple user accounts</li><li>• Exchange support; universal e-mail inbox</li><li>• Quick Contact pop-up widget to launch communications with friends in the address book</li></ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Search saved SMS and MMS messages</li><li>• Camera improvements include support for flash and digital zoom</li><li>• Bluetooth 2.1</li><li>• Keyboard improvements: Adaptive dictionary that includes contact names in suggestions</li></ul>
2.1 (Eclair, second helping)	January 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Live wallpaper; five home screens</li><li>• Speech-to-text added to any text field; microphone icon for voice dictation in e-mails, texts, and so on</li></ul>
2.2 (Froyo)	May 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Speedier OS</li><li>• USB tethering and hot-spot support</li><li>• Android Market update: Batch and automatic updates; installing apps to the SD card</li><li>• Adobe Flash 10.1</li><li>• File uploading in the browser</li><li>• Improved Microsoft Exchange support: security policies, global address lookup, calendar sync, remote wipe</li><li>• Bluetooth support for voice dialing and contact sharing</li></ul>
2.3 (Gingerbread)	December 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Redesigned copy/paste</li><li>• WebM video compression support</li><li>• NFC (near field communication) support</li><li>• Switch to front-facing camera from camera app</li><li>• Virtual keyboard shortcuts</li></ul>
3.0 (Honeycomb)	Preview SDK January 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 3D graphics support</li><li>• Side-by-side browser tabs; private browsing</li><li>• Dual-pane modes for address book, e-mail</li><li>• Redesigned UI includes program thumbnails</li><li>• Video chatting with Google Talk</li><li>• Full-screen-mode photo gallery</li><li>• Bluetooth tethering</li></ul>
* We list the date of the SDK release rather than the over-the-air (OTA) update timeline since OTA release dates vary by carrier and handset model.		

### Gingerbread (Android 2.3)

The [Nexus S](#) is the only Android phone to currently run on [Gingerbread](#). Indeed, Android 2.3 included a few of the feature upgrades we expected, like support for video playback using Google's [WebM video format](#). We also saw progressive improvements to copy/paste.

An [online Android Market](#) did arrive to shower Android users with over-the-air installations, but it came independently of the OS release cycle, and after the Nexus S debuted.

### Honeycomb (Android 3.0)

We've taken several looks at Google's Honeycomb OS on CNET's top [CES](#) product, the [Motorola Xoom](#). So far the tablet optimization impresses, especially when held up against other Android tablets running Android 2.2.

Google made its heavy investment in Honeycomb evident at its [special demo event](#) this month. There, The Goog showed off two-way video chatting with Google Chat and a new interactive app called Google Body that takes a Google Earth approach to human anatomy. CNET will have much more on Honeycomb when we get the Xoom in-house.

### Ice Cream Sandwich (Android ??)

There isn't much known about Google's next Android release, not even a confirmation of the name. We're unsure if Ice Cream Sandwich will pick up where Gingerbread left off, as Android 2.4, or if it will follow in Honeycomb's footsteps as Android 3.1. It could roll out as soon as Google's annual I/O conference this May.

In the meantime, there's [mounting evidence](#) that Android 2.4 will be a modest update that will enable Android phones with one processor to run apps made for dual-core phones. It's suggested that like Eclair (Android 2.0 and 2.1), we may get a second helping of Gingerbread before moving on to the next dessert course.

### What about Google Music?

Speaking of I/O, we're also waiting for Google's [Android Market music store](#) to rival iTunes, something we've been looking out for since Google [acquired Simplify Media](#). At this point, it's more probable we'll see Google Music announced and demoed there than at another special event like the Honeycomb demo.

Watch out, Apple. It's getting to be a Google World.

***Editors' note:** This article was originally published August 4, 2010. It was updated February 7 and February 15, 2011.*

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