

Everyday Organiser

Sony Ericsson's G700i is a product aimed at helping you get more out of each day. It's an approachable product, for those who like practical advantages without being super geeks.

Intro

Sony Ericsson has had touch screen 'smartphones' for many years now. But in the past the experience has been a bit too techie for most people.

They have now redesigned their touch screen system so it's easier to use. There's plenty of depth in the G700i for the most advanced users, but it's hoped to be an organiser for beginners.

Perhaps it will appeal to young parents who can appreciate a mobile doing a little more than just being a 'phone'; or those juggling a busy work and social life.

Even though the saying is a bit of a cliché - mobiles are life management tools and the G700i helps people remember when life's little 'jobs' need doing.

In addition to regular phone capabilities, the G700i is a cross between the equivalent of a note pad beside the phone, things stuck to the fridge and Post it Notes around the home or office.

It can remind you to take out the garbage, buy milk on the way home, remember there's a family BBQ on Sunday or pay credit a credit card bill on time.

Look & Feel

Sony Ericsson's G700i is basically a bar shaped micro phone, perhaps a smidge wider than most candy bar handsets. A relatively large screen is included but even so, it's not chunky like other more geeky organiser phones. A grooved back helps provide grip.

It's designed to work by using either the touch screen or regular buttons, perhaps a combination - whatever the user's comfortable with. As advanced phone users we found a combination of all three; keypad, touch screen and shortcut buttons was the fastest, most

direct way of doing things.

Organiser phone beginners can move into using the touch screen at their own pace, using traditional keys first. Sony Ericsson claim that a combination of touch screen and buttons reduces key presses by 10-25 percent in general.

It's easy to get around, with a sideways scrolling list of popular functions located along the base of the screen. You can press each such icon for messages, general shortcuts, favourite contacts, alarm, bookmarks, calendar, photos, newsfeeds (RSS) etc. revealing a touch panel with corresponding information above.

A bit like scrolling sideways to bring up different pages. Sounds complicated, but it is easy to use. Each of these panels can be left as the default view when glancing at the G700i when idle.

Have a look at screen grabs below to see what we mean.

Large on-screen panels have been installed so that you can use your fingers to select primary options. A stylus is also included for handwriting and fine detail.

Larger fonts have been used to help make options easy to see and less daunting. In summary, the G700i is a layered handset that can be as advanced or simple as you like.

Organise My Life

This product is designed to be practical and efficient, an everyday organiser. A mid-range mobile that's still pretty much a micro phone size.

Sony Ericsson call this an 'approachable design' and they've worked at making it easy for non-techie people to use. A nice 2.4" screen complements touch panels, touch calendar and 'sticky notes'.

The 'Favourite contacts' view is a winner. It's a shortlist of your most important phonebook contacts. How you usually communicate with each person can be preset - as a call or SMS. Much like a speed dial list - where touching the photo icon of that person in the shortlist initiates a call or SMS writing.



You can use buttons, the navi-key, stylus or your fingers to operate this product. A combination of fingers, navi-key and buttons ends up being the fastest way to get around.

Post It Notes

Another interesting organiser function is virtual (Post It) sticky notes. These are on-screen notes that you can write to yourself as reminders. A range of colours can be used for each note, helping you group them or sort by priority. Filing can be by three different categories - Business, Personal or Urgent.

If you choose, a view of your sticky notes can stay on the phone's desktop while it's idle.

Entertainment

A host of entertainment options are available, ranging from a touch screen music player, FM radio, picture and video blogging.

Also included is a 3.2Mpx camera with photo/video light, photo fix and camcorder capabilities.

Online access is delivered through a robust browser capable of viewing full size internet pages and opening multiple windows.



Here are real grabs showing how the touch panels work. Icons at the bottom of the screen scroll sideways using the navi-key or you can press each with your finger. The top section then brings up that content, eg. messages in this grab.

It's like bringing up different pages, a bit like the way you flick through a magazine. This panel allows you to set up shortcuts. They can be selected by finger presses or using the navi-key. Notice icons at the base of the screen again for each panel.

Up to seven different panels are available - Alarm, Music, Bookmarks, RSS, World clock, Tasks and Photo. You can have as many of these as you like appear as icons at the bottom of the screen. This grab is newsfeeds (RSS).

And the panel we liked best - Favourite contacts. It's like a speed dial/speed SMS list. Look closely to see an icon showing the default mode of contact for each person. Three out of four above have SMS as the default. Photo thumbnails look great here as well.

Any one of the examples on the left can be left as the default view in idle mode or press the notes button and bring up sticky notes. It too can be left as the default view - great for forgetful people. We all look at our phone many times a day, making it a great place for reminders.

Extras

As mentioned, the G700i has a layered structure. It delivers practical advantages simply, or can act as a mini-computer.

For those a little more adventurous there's both Blackberry Connect and Microsoft ActiveSync for email. For beginners there's an email setup wizard.

Quickoffice gives you document readers/editors, being able to open Microsoft Office and PDF documents on the phone.

In addition to a M2 memory card slot, 160 Mb of internal memory is available.

Sony Ericsson's optional plug-in GPS, Wayfinder and Google Maps worked with our trial unit, so navigation and geographic services are available if they tickle your fancy.

This product is 3g capable (not 3.5g), for video calling, email, downloads and connecting online. Bluetooth and high speed USB 2.0 abilities round out connection options.

Impression

After reviewing at least five generations of Sony Ericsson touch screen phones, we were sceptical about how techie the G700i experience would be. After starting off using the keypad and slowly moving into touch screen controls, we have to agree that the G700i is much easier to use.

It actually becomes a relatively unique and more interactive product than most after you build a little confidence.



Actual size

Place your existing phone over the top of this photo to compare.



Sticky notes
As mentioned, hand drawn sticky notes can be left on the phone's desktop when in idle mode. These can be colour coded or filed as Business, Personal or Urgent.



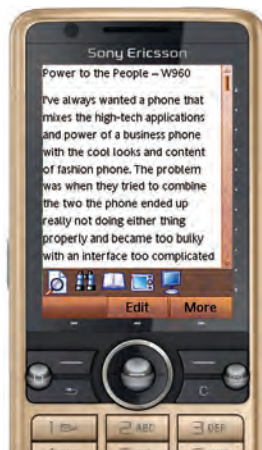
You can also set an alarm, with an audible alert and a full screen view of the note appearing. Here's an example where an alarm is being set as a reminder to buy something.



The note displays when the alarm goes off. You can even hit snooze. Another twist is setting a reminder as your wakeup alarm - making sure you don't forget to take something with you that day.



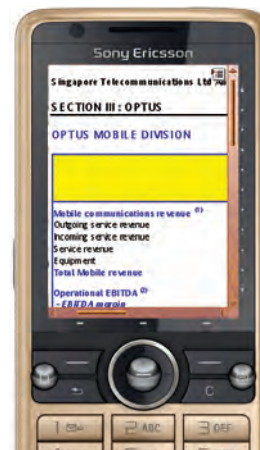
Or hand draw maps and diagrams. Add emotion by creating special hand drawn messages. Your own hand writing is a lot more personal than text. The person at the other end then receives the message as a MMS picture.



Quickoffice
Quickoffice is a viewer for reading and editing Microsoft Office and PDF documents. Here's what a Microsoft Word document looks like on screen.



Even though it took a little time, Quickoffice opened up a 16 Mb Powerpoint presentation. With memory cards so common, you can carry such things as a backup and in case of emergencies.



Here's a PDF. The G700i is great for reading urgent PDFs sent via email while on the move. You can carry personal information, that you might want to look up from time to time.



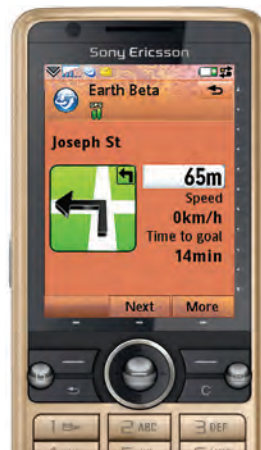
Here an Excel file was viewed on-screen, checking prices of various products from a previous order. You can zoom and scroll, which is usually enough while at home or on the go.



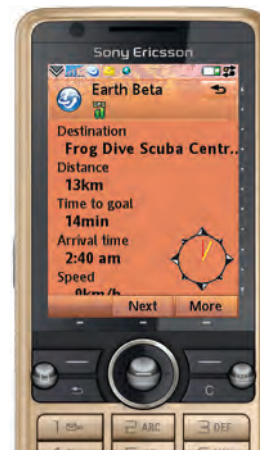
Sony Ericsson's G700i is relatively slim at 13 mm, with a grooved, non-slip back.



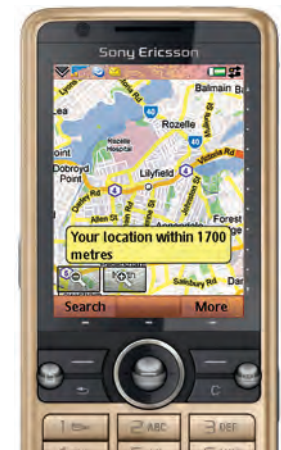
Geography & Navigation
In line with an underlying theme this edition, the G700i has a number of capabilities in this area. Sony Ericsson's HGE-100 GPS/PHF came in handy.



We also tried Wayfinder Earth, which provided street maps and turn-by-turn directions. Left is a view of the area, and above are directions to a store located using a search function.



We typed in the word SCUBA into a search and Wayfinder came back with the nearest stores. It did surprisingly well as we wondered if they even had country info, let alone local Sydney directories loaded.



It also worked without a GPS, as Google Maps approximated our location to within 1700 metres in this example.