

Star Tech

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GPS: Greatly Practical Stuff. Okay, okay. GPS actually stands for global positioning system—but I think the new name suits it well. The truth is, GPS units really are practical, but searching for one amid the myriad of choices can be overwhelming. I surfed over to <http://www.cnet.com> to find the latest and the greatest, and I've chosen to spotlight three units of varying price, brand and product features (all with good CNET reviews).

First up is the Mio Digiwalker C230. With prices from \$147-\$229, it's a good, solid entry-level GPS. It's small—really small—weighing only 5.1 ounces and sizing up at a scant 3.5"x3.3". Its small frame makes switching between vehicles a breeze, but some users have suggested that it may make using the

touch screen (and on-screen keyboard, used for entering addresses and such) a bit difficult. The C230 is the updated version of the C220—a brighter screen and a new text-to-speech function are useful upgrades on the newer model. The C230 is super basic and good for GPS newbies, as it doesn't include all the bells and whistles. Navigation features are really all you'll find on the unit. The text-to-speech capability means street names are read aloud—an unusual feature for entry-level GPS models. Turn-by-turn directions are helpful. Multi-stop trips, points of interest and follow me (tracking even if you don't have a specific destination) are some of the included features. The unit stores recent and favorite destinations, and it allows users to choose the fastest, short-

est or most economical routes. For those new to GPS units or who want only the basics, Mio Digiwalker C230 seems like a solid choice.

Up next is the Magellan Maestro 4250, a mid-level device that has a major edge over many competitors: voice commands. Although you can't input addresses via voice, it's still a handy feature (and a safety bonus). At 3.2"x4.8" wide and weighing 6.8 ounces, the Maestro is sufficiently small and its screen is large and bright.

Features are pretty standard, but it does include some handy extras: Bluetooth capabilities, split screen mode with the map on one side and directions on the other, a feature that allows users to run a demo of their trips before proceeding, a detour function, a choice

between 2D or 3D maps and a trip computer that calculates drive time, average speed, trip distance and the like. The voice command feature allows users to reroute, locate points of interest, find roadside assistance, calculate distance to destinations, route to a home address and more. Bluetooth capabilities mean using the unit as a hands-free speaker system for Bluetooth-enabled cell phones. You can search your call history and address book, dial a number, accept a call and redial a number, all without touching a button. Magellan Maestro 4250 costs about \$360-\$499.

Finally, the TomTom Go 920T is an advanced system that includes maps of North America and forty-one countries in Europe. The unit weighs 7.8 ounces and measures 4.6"x3.3". It

also allows users to input addresses by voice... nifty! In addition to the usual range of standard navigational features, the system automatically calculates a route after you speak the city, street name and address number. A 4.3" screen, Bluetooth capabilities, text-to-speech, FM transmitter, traffic receiver, map corrections and multimedia features including photo viewer, mp3 player and audiobook player are just a few features of the TomTom Go 920T. Additional SD cards may be added to increase storage capabilities. The TomTom website allows users to personalize their units with different voices, map colors and more. The Tom Tom Go 920T is available for about \$600-\$700. The unit is brand new, so prices may fall after a few months on the market.



Mio Digiwalker C230: small and basic



Magellan Maestro 4250: mid-level, voice commands and Bluetooth!



TomTom GO 920T: spenny but has all the bells & whistles

All photos courtesy <http://www.cnet.com>