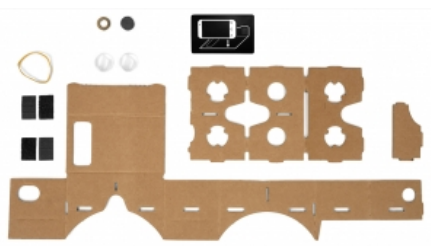


Google Cardboard

Google Cardboard is a very unique and interesting device which simulates a virtual reality experience by using a simple piece of cardboard. This gadget was first launched in 2014 but recently it received an updated version that supports larger and newer phones than the first version did. The device works by placing your phone inside and using a variety of different apps to give yourself the illusion of being in a virtual realistic setting. The device follows your head movements and gives you a full 360 degrees of vision that accurately corresponds when moving your head.



In order to obtain this nifty headset, you can order one from a few different online stores such as amazon.com. They can be a variety of prices especially if you want a head strap, to come with one removing the need to hold the headset. The general price for the device is about \$15 but that can change based on the model you want. One interesting thing to note is that Google has given instructions on its website on how you can create a cardboard headset yourself. However, it can become a bit confusing to create one on your own so it might be easier to purchase one. If you have an older phone then you want to buy the first version of the cardboard because due to size, version two does not support the older phones. Also you should check what type of operating system the apps require before you purchase the device because you want to make sure that your phone is compatible with them before you spend your money.



The headset works by starting any number of apps that support virtual reality (VR) and placing your phone inside the box and then staring at it through the two lenses. The lenses are designed for each of your eyes individually as they split the screen into two and show you the exact same image. It then tracks your head movements and moves the images you see along with your head. Whenever you want to click something inside the app, there is a flap on the side that functions like a button that you can press down which activates the phone's magnetic sensors and activates clicks for the device. The older model had a magnetic ring that you would slide down instead. You then select a compatible game, video, or app and then watch as you become part of an interactive experience that is very unique and cool.

The first app I tried was an introductory app that is meant to start off your VR experience. It was simply called Cardboard and was officially released by Google for free so people could try it out. The app worked by first scanning a QR code located on the cardboard and then placing your phone inside the headset. You then have a few options to select whether it is going to different exhibits showing off dinosaur bones or space crafts or even travelling to exotic and far places without ever leaving the comfort of your own home. The experience is very palpable as it does feel like you have actually travelled to a foreign land. Of course one limitation is that everything is frozen in place so all you see are still images but it is very exciting to see all these distant places. Another issue is that prolonged use of the app can result in headaches so I recommend that usage is kept under ten minutes at a time and breaks are taken in between.

I also tried a few non-Google apps to see what other functions the VR device was capable of. One app I tried was a game called Lamper and in it you controlled a bee and flew around trying to collect candy. Another app I tried was an app called Vrse which held a few different videos that people could watch. I watched a video of Saturday Night Live which actually made me feel like I was in the audience watching the show. Not only could I see the stage but if I turned my head, I could see all the audience members and see the staff prepare for the next parts of the show.

I wanted to see how other people experienced the VR so I had my parents try the device and see what they thought of it. When I showed them the different places they could see such as Venice or The Great Barrier Reef., they were blown away and it really felt to them like they were there. Normally while using the device you have some small peripheral vision where you can still see your actual surroundings outside of the device. But my mom was so immersed that she did not even noticed when I turned off all the lights in the kitchen. My favorite one to show them was the Roller Coaster VR app. They had the same reactions they would have if they were on an actual roller coaster and they seemed to have a lot of fun with it.



After trying Google cardboard for myself, I can see that we are getting closer and closer to having virtual reality become a standard part of our lives. When you try it, it does give you a feeling like you are immersed in a brand new environment and it feels very exciting. Google Cardboard is not the only attempt at virtual reality either. The Oculus Rift is a more complex device that uses virtual reality more in depth in order to assimilate the whole VR environment. Nokia is also planning to release a camera called the Nokia OZO which will allow people to make very vibrant and immersive movies that put you in the setting and make you feel like you are actually there (see our review of the Nokia OZO here: <http://digilifelearn.com/nokia-ozo/>). I am very curious and excited to see how far VR will come in the next decade and see if we can finally perfect entering a virtual realistic world.