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[Sony Ericsson T280i Review](#)

Cheap unworthy low-end mobile phone



Low-end phones have been a necessity on the mobile phone market for a long time. Cheap and pretty standard in design, these mobile phones guarantee the user only the basic features that other evolved handsets are offering these days. If you are tempted to buy such a phone, don't expect anything else from it, except for the ability to communicate with other people. Sony Ericsson T280i includes some features that might look cool at first glance, but don't be fooled by what's written on the paper. The latest low-end mobile phone launched by the Swedish-Japanese company, T280i, is the sequel to T270i and to the much older T250i. In fact, the T280i looks include the same features as the T270i, plus a 1.3 Megapixel module camera. Announced in January 2008, Sony Ericsson T280i was made available on the market in May 2008 and can be acquired for a price as low as USD 120\$. The device can be price-tagged even lower than 100\$, but that depends on the location. **Design** There are people that think this phone is made from metal compound, but there are others that don't believe such good material can be used for mass market phones. The truth is that Sony Ericsson T280i is only half made from aluminum. The upper brownish part of the phone has been covered by a metallic brushed compound, while the lower part is made of cheap plastic. The metallic construction of the phone gives the user a strong feeling of sturdiness. Both parts of the device are very well polished and shine, so users won't feel the device cheap. The bar form of the handset doesn't have anything out of the ordinary. It is very clear that Sony Ericsson T280i will not stand out from the crowd. Thus, in terms of design, 'standard' is the word that best defines T280's form factor. There are no external keys or ports, except for the one on the top side of the phone that can be used to attach the wired headset which comes with the phone, or simply charge it. The small display has been covered by a highly-durable plastic for protection reasons. Above it, there's a large in-call speaker, while below, there is a standard keypad and a small mic. The layout of the keypad is pretty standard as well, with the big D-pad flanked by the two contextual keys (Accept and Reject calls) and two soft keys. Unfortunately, the big D-pad button only works when pushed on all its four sides, but pushing the center of the key is useless. Basically, you'll have to use the Accept calls key instead of the Center key of the D-pad. This takes time and it was pretty annoying for me. The back of the phone features an unprotected 1.3 Megapixel camera that doesn't have any flash, autofocus or video capabilities. Below the camera, there is a large loudspeaker that can be used to listen to music when you don't want to use headphones. The phone doesn't feature an opening mechanism for the back cover, so you'll actually have to stick you finger(s) into one of the small gaps found on both sides of the device. It pulls out pretty easily and putting it back is also very easy. The phone is lightweight (82g including battery) and small in size (100 x 45 x 13 mm), which might attract fans of low-end phones. Overall, Sony Ericsson T280i looks standard for a mass-market phone, but the aluminum material may 'trick' a big chunk of buyers who are looking for cheap shiny handsets. **Display and Camera** Even if I didn't expect a better display to be embedded in such a low-end phone, I was still unpleasantly surprised by its size and quality. The screen only measures 1.7 inches and supports 65k colors, plus very small resolution (128 x 160 pixels). The display is pretty dimly when used outdoors, especially in areas with strong light. The device doesn't support complex display benchmarks, so we were forced to use the standard Jbenchmark 1.0 and 2.0 to determine the performance of T280i's screen. The device didn't perform well at all, and results were as low as expected. This suggests that Sony Ericsson's T280i is not a phone that can be frequently used to play mobile games. The 1.3 Megapixel camera doesn't have any improvements added like

autofocus, flash or video capabilities. You can't even use digital zoom if you keep the maximum resolution (1280x1024 pixels). The interface of the camera barely offers any settings: Effects (Black & White, Sepia and Negative), Night mode, Picture quality and Picture size. The samples below are the best that the camera can do in exceptional light conditions. As I have stated above, the camera cannot be used to record any clips.

Menu and Software Sony Ericsson T280i features only a basic interface that looks like a primitive version of the more evolved Sony Ericsson that is implemented in mid-level to high-end devices. Unfortunately, the interface isn't user-friendly at all and a first time user will have problems finding the various settings and functions the phone offers. Further, the device is very slow when browsing through various menus, thus lowering functionality even more. There are few productivity tools that can be used, but finding them will be a little tricky. The Extras folder contains some of them: Calendar, Timer, Stopwatch, Calculator, Games (JC Does Texas and QuadraPop) and a basic File manager. The last also replaces the Gallery, a place where you can find the pictures you take. The Internet icon, as the name suggests, gives users access to basic Web browsing. Next, the Radio only works when the wired earphones are inserted. Then, there are some usual shortcuts that will give the user access to some of the handset's functions: Camera, Alarms, Messaging, Calls, Contacts and Settings. The Java emulator works with just about any compatible application, like games or productivity software. Overall, SE's T280i user-interface offers few features and low functionality to a starter as well as to a mobile phone freak.

Communication Sony Ericsson T280i has been gifted with only GPRS Class 10 technology, thus don't expect high data speed transfers. The handset hasn't been made for Web browsing, as its screen is simply too small to offer even a mild Internet experience. Fortunately, the device has Bluetooth technology, which does its job fairly (51 KB/s receiving and 83 KB/s sending). The specific Sony Ericsson port placed on the top side of the phone enables users to connect it to a PC via a USB cable, but that will only charge the battery, as the synchronization is not possible. Thus, the only way to transfer files (music, pictures) is through the Bluetooth connection. In terms of messaging, the phone is compatible only with SMS and MMS options. The dual-band (GSM 900 / GSM 1800) network compatible handset has a good GSM signal reception. Unfortunately, the sound muffles and is pretty low. There are times when you really have to scream so that the other person can clearly hear you. The vibration alert is also low in intensity and cannot be set to higher levels.

Processor and Memory Sony Ericsson T280i features an ARM7 family processor running at speeds up to 50 Mhz, one of the lowest CPUs I have encountered. This is also showed by the sluggishness of the device when simply browsing through its menus or when simply loading a Java compatible application. This is bad even for a low-end Sony Ericsson handset, but the Swedish-Japanese company is renowned for not using powerful CPUs. I have also noticed big lags when browsing through the pictures, which are showed in a small frame first and then (it takes about 4-5 seconds) in full screen. Unfortunately, the crappy processor lowers the functionality of the phone to a degree that it can become unbearable to use it. There are only 10MB of internal memory that the user can take advantage of. There are no slot cards for memory expansion, so the use of the phone as an MP3 player is out of the question.

Multimedia There is not much to talk about multimedia experience when using a low-end phone. Besides, even if the official sheet says that Sony Ericsson T280i features an MP3 player, this cannot be accessed from the interface of the device. If you have a music file that you want to listen to, you can click on it and the music player will start playing it. Anyway, the low quality of the sound will probably make any user forget about this 'hidden' feature of the phone. Further, Sony Ericsson T280i features an FM Radio with RDS that can store up to 20 base stations. This can only be accessed with the wired earphones inserted. The loudspeaker of the phone sounds pretty loud and clear without any distortions, but you'll not hear any bass. Overall, multimedia experience is pretty bad and could've been entirely missed.

Battery Sony Ericsson T280i uses a Li-Polymer 780 mAh standard battery that has a standby time of 300 hours and up to seven hours of talk time. In fact, the phone's battery

exhausted after about four hours of talk time and a little bit over 200 hours in standby mode. I would've not expected less from a low-end handset that doesn't have any high-end features that could deplete the battery faster. **Impressions** There's no doubt about it, Sony Ericsson T280i must be seen as a low-end phone and treated accordingly. If you are looking for a basic device that doesn't look bad, it's cheap and offers only primary functions, and then you can choose the T280i. Still, I couldn't get over the looks of the phone, which is not different from 100 other handsets Sony Ericsson manufactured a while ago. If you can forget about the standard design and the low functionality of the device, then the USD 100\$ SE phone will be a worthy investment. At least, for a while. **The Good** What we have here is a low-end phone that still has some features to offer, even if these are only basic. The aluminum material covering more than half of the phone, features such as: FM Radio with RDS, 1.3 camera, GPRS and Bluetooth connectivities, as well as the low price recommend T280i as one good low-end mobile phone. **The Bad** Unfortunately, it's not enough to just crowd a bunch of technical features. You need to make these features really work at the highest standard possible. Sony Ericsson T280i doesn't surprise through performance; on the contrary. The sluggishness of the interface, the low camera quality and the lack of multimedia features or better connectivity tools (USB connectivity and EDGE) make it almost unusable on the long term. **Sales package** Sony Ericsson T280i handset 780 mAh Li-Polymer Battery (BST-36) Wired stereo headset (HPM-62) Charger *Photo: Tudor Raiciu for Softpedia.com*