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Macworld

AirPods Pro 3 review: Small improvements make a sizable difference

Better fit, better sound, longer battery, and the same price. What's not to like?

By [Jason Cross](#) Senior Editor, Macworld SEP 26, 2025 5:11 am PDT

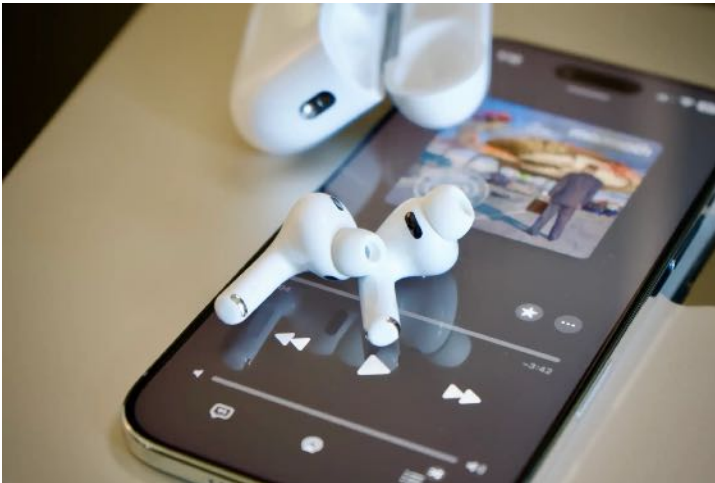


Image: Foundry

At a glance

Expert's Rating



Pros

- More comfortable and secure fit
- Heart rate sensor works well
- Improved battery life
- Better noise cancelling and transparency
- The price didn't go up

Cons

- No significant new audio features
- Charging case holds less charge

Our Verdict

The only really new feature—heart rate monitoring—is unrelated to audio in any way. But a few smart design and build tweaks add up to real improvements to an already stellar product.

Price When Reviewed

\$249

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The [AirPods Pro 2](#) are one of Apple's best products of the last decade. They were great when released three years ago and have only gotten better with one software update after another adding useful new capabilities.

[AirPods Pro 3](#) seems like only a minor update, at first. They changed the eartips? The shape of the "bud" part is just a little bit different? It measures heart rate now (which my Apple Watch already does)?

More like AirPods Pro 2.5, am I right?

But despite using the same H2 chip as AirPods Pro 2 and AirPods 4, the thoughtful changes to Apple's best earbuds make them significantly better without raising the price tag. I hesitate to recommend them as an upgrade to AirPods Pro 2 users, but it's easy to see Apple has another big winner on their hands.

Can't get it out of my head

I have a love-hate relationship with AirPods. The convenience and ease of use are so desirable, but ever since the very first pair, they just have not fit my ears very well. AirPods Pro 2 are the closest to staying put and feeling comfortable, but I still have to adjust them from time to time during a workout or risk losing one.

My go-to solution has been [aftermarket foam tips](#), which make a night-and-day difference. They're more snug and comfortable, and improve sound quality by blocking more outside sound.

So imagine my curiosity when Apple announced that AirPods Pro 3 use "foam-infused eartips." And they even come with five sizes—that new XXS size might be just the thing for my rather small ears! Are these as good as my beloved AirPods Pro 2 foam tips?



New eartips at a steeper angle make a big difference.
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Yes. While they still look and act more-or-less like the familiar silicone flanges, there's enough foam buried inside to create the same snug and comfortable fit I'm used to with the aftermarket tips. They stay put, feel great, and block more outside sound. And those XXS tips are just my size.

Oh, and don't try to use AirPods Pro 3 tips on AirPods Pro 2—Apple changed the connection to be more secure, so

the tips don't pop off when you pull the earbud out. This makes them incompatible.

A change would do you good

Unless you get really close, you're not going to spot the difference between AirPods Pro 2 and 3.

Holding one next to the other, you can see the shape of the "bud" part is slightly changed: flatter here, rounder there. The eartips are angled inward much more—pointing more toward the center of your head than in front of you—and it really makes for a much better fit.



A steeper angle for the eartip (and an XXS option) really make for a much better fit.

Foundry

The result of this fine-tuning, along with the new foam-infused eartips, is the first pair of AirPods that actually stay in my ears, even through intense activity. I could achieve this with aftermarket foam eartips before, but now it works that way out of the box.

Apple has changed the venting system as well, which is said to result in clearer bass and a wider soundstage. You can see it's just slightly bigger if you look up close, and I definitely noticed better bass response, though

that could be down to the new eartips and their steeper angle, too.

We got the beat

The other big change with AirPods Pro 3 is heart rate monitoring. Together with iOS 26, you can now open the Fitness app on your iPhone and start one of 50 different exercises (basically the Apple Watch workout list, minus a few like swimming that require an Apple Watch).

Your heart rate is read from both earbuds, and your Apple Watch if you have one, with iOS choosing what it believes to be the most accurate every five seconds.



You can see the heart rate sensor on the bottom -inside edge of the earbud.
Foundry

I usually work out with my Apple Watch on, and I can't say I noticed a significant difference in results between the Watch, AirPods, and AirPods + Watch combo. I suppose that's a good thing.

The heart rate monitoring being restricted to workouts is a necessary limitation for battery life; the Apple Watch is more

useful with its periodic all-day heart rate checks. And it's hard to imagine there are millions of potential AirPods Pro 3 customers that are interested in this feature but don't have an Apple Watch yet. If you're that person, this is a nice feature to have and works as advertised.

Good vibrations

The sound quality of AirPods Pro 3 is definitely better than AirPods Pro 2, and more-or-less on par with AirPods Pro 2 when augmented by good aftermarket foam tips.

If you really focus, you can convince yourself that you hear a small improvement in noise reduction, transparency (already a strength for AirPods Pro), and bass response when compared with AirPods Pro 2 and foam eartips. When compared with stock AirPods Pro 2 eartips, the difference is more obvious.

That said, I can't help but be disappointed that there are no obvious major audio technology improvements here. No H3 chip, no [LE Audio](#) with its superior LC3 codec, no lossless audio, just AirPods Pro 2 with some smart modifications.



The new case doesn't hold quite as much charge, and has a 2nd-gen UWB chip, but it otherwise very similar. Page 4
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Beyond that, the battery life is slightly better. Apple's eight-hour estimate (with noise cancelling) seems accurate after several days of on-and-off testing. In two separate hour-long workouts with noise-cancelling and heart rate monitoring enabled, the battery drained about 17 percent, so it seems you'll get nearly six hours in that scenario. AirPods Pro 2 last a couple of hours less (six hours with noise cancelling), but its charging case holds an

additional 24 hours' worth, while the AirPods Pro 3 case has only 16 hours of charge.

As AirPods Pro 2 are one of our favorite Apple products of the last decade, and while AirPods Pro 3 are in no way a revolutionary change, they still manage to improve the fit, comfort, sound, battery life, and add heart rate monitoring all without raising the price. Apple has another home run here.

If you're an AirPods Pro 2 customer, especially one with an Apple Watch, spend [\\$20 on foam eartips](#), and you'll enjoy most of the AirPods Pro 3 benefits. For everyone else, AirPods Pro 3 are easy to recommend, and we can only hope to soon find them on sale soon for the same steep discounts for which we have often found AirPods Pro 2.

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Jason has written about technology for more than 25 years - first in the gaming press, then focusing on enthusiast PCs and general technology. He enjoys learning how complicated technology works and explaining it in a way anyone can understand.