f you're a brand new customer or eligible for a phone upgrade through your carrier, you'll get to pay the subsidized prices above. You can check if you qualify by heading to the Apple website.

The iPhone 4S became available for purchase in stores and online Friday, October 14. Here's where you can buy yours and what you need to know before reaching for your wallet.

When exactly can I get my iPhone 4S?

You can order an iPhone 4S via Apple.com right now, but it won't ship for one to two weeks since pre-orders have sold out. The same thing stands true for the authorized carriers' online stores. So if you're eager to get your hands on the device sooner, you'll have to try your odds at a good ol' brick-and-mortar retail location.

The doors at Apple's own retail stores open at 8 a.m. local time, but you can also choose to head to Sprint, AT&T, or Verizon locations. Select Best Buy, Target, and Walmart stores will also be in on the fun.

How much will I spend?

Depending on which model you choose — and assuming that you're eligible for subsidized pricing — you'll spend anywhere from $199 to $399 on the device. Here are your options:

- 16GB for $199
- 32GB for $299
- 64GB for $399

Each model will be available in your choice of white or black. You will be able to choose either Sprint, AT&T, or Verizon as your carrier.

If you are looking for an unlocked, contract-free iPhone 4S — which will work on any supported GSM wireless network — you can get that, too. But you'll have to wait until November and pay $649 for the 16GB model, $749 for the 32GB model, or $849 for the 64GB model.

How do I know if I'm eligible for subsidized pricing?

If you're a brand new customer or eligible for a phone upgrade through your carrier, you'll get to pay the subsidized prices above. You can check if you qualify by heading to the Apple website.

What do I do with my old iPhone?

If you've got an older iPhone which will be replaced by the iPhone 4S, you can sell the device through a service such as NextWorth or Gazelle. Alternatively, you can also trade it in via Verizon Wireless. For more details on those options, check out our coverage of iPhone 4 trade-in pricing — but hurry, because the offers are getting lower by the minute.

What if I'm switching carriers?

If you have an existing agreement with a cellular service provider but want to switch to another one of the authorized iPhone carriers, you can still get an iPhone 4S. It just might cost you a bit more since there's a chance that you'll be breaking the terms of your service agreement. The severity of that financial punishment will vary based on carrier and how far into your existing agreement you've gone.

There's good news though: You don't have to put much effort into the process of switching carriers. You simply have to head to one of the locations which offers an iPhone 4S and ask to have your current phone number ported to the new service provider. Your old provider will automatically be notified that you're saying goodbye. (Mind you, I'd still suggest giving them a call after you finish everything — just to make sure that everything went ok.)

Where can I read more about the iPhone 4S before deciding to buy it?

If you want to read up on the iPhone 4S before settling on a purchase, I recommend that you check out msnbc.com's coverage of the initial iPhone 4S announcement and our review of iOS 5 , the mobile operating system used by the iPhone 4S.