

plugged in 📶

by Marcie Taylor

The virtual reality experience

Tech developers around the world are racing toward the next frontier in communication, gaming and entertainment with virtual reality. Unlike television or even 3D projections, VR offers a completely immersive experience.

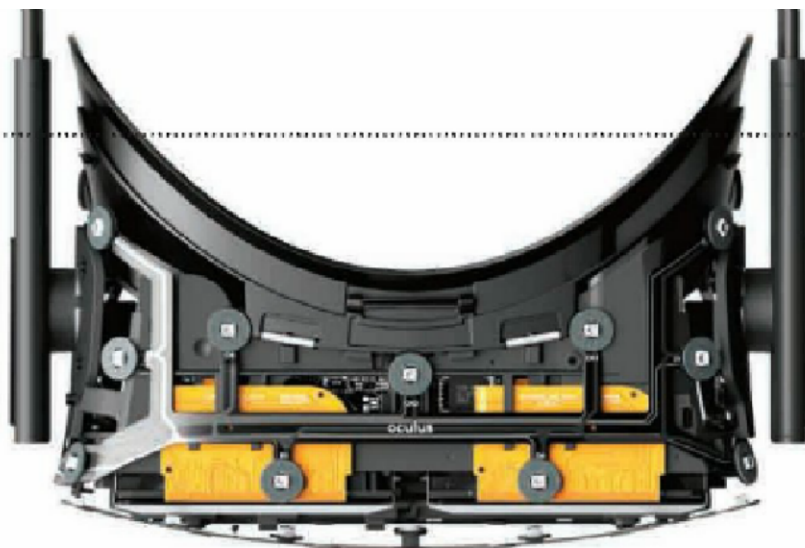
Imagine: You can step inside a museum halfway around the world, drive a racecar, ride a surfboard, become a part of your favorite movie or video game — all by simply donning a VR headset.

There are a number of VR headsets available on the market today at different price points.



GEAR VR

Powered by Oculus, Gear VR turns a Samsung Galaxy Note 5, S6 or S6 edge + and S6 Edge smartphone into a portable virtual reality system. To do this, take one of these devices and slide it into the Gear VR headset. You can download VR games and experiences on your phone and start exploring using Gear VR. \$99.99



RIFT

The Rift is a virtual reality headset developed by Oculus VR, the company acquired by Facebook for \$2 billion in 2014. Developed by 21-year-old Palmer Luckey, the Oculus Rift promises to take virtual reality gaming to another level. Available in the first quarter of 2016.

Google Cardboard

Perhaps the most inexpensive VR headset available today, Google Cardboard is literally made out of cardboard with a slot in front to hold your smartphone. You can make your own VR viewer by downloading a template online at google.com/get/cardboard/ or you can order a kit from Amazon. The cardboard is cut into a precise shape and the kit includes 45 mm focal length lenses, magnets, Velcro, a rubber band and an optional near-field communication



tag. Once assembled, you insert your smartphone and watch virtual reality-enabled videos and games. From \$19.95

Theme parks go 3D and 4D

Voyage to the Iron Reef at Knott's Berry Farm: This interactive 4-D ride combines the fun of a theme park ride with elements of a high tech video game. You get on the submarine ride, don the 3D glasses and arm yourself with your freeze ray. What follows is a journey through underwater forests, ocean current tunnels and mysterious mechanical wreckage. Compete with friends and family for points as you blast away sea creatures and save Knott's from doom. Caution: Younger children may be startled by some of the sea creatures and special effects.



Fast and the Furious-Supercharged:

The Universal Studios Hollywood 3D-HD thrill ride immerses you into the world of the "Fast and the Furious" movies. The ride uses hyper-realistic special effects, a state-of-the-art 3D audio system and 3D-HD imagery projected onto the world's longest and most expansive 360-degree screen. At the end of the ride, you will feel as if you rode through the streets of Los Angeles at 120 mph. ☞