

IS IT ACTUALLY USEFUL?

Gadget scorecard: Problem > Proof > Cost > Friction > Support

ITEM AND EVIDENCE

ITEM _____

PRICE / DATE CHECKED _____

SOURCE / LISTING _____

RELATIONSHIP ☐ Own ☐ Tried ☐ Borrowed ☐ Research only

01 REAL PROBLEM FIT

SCORE

Does it solve a specific problem often enough to matter?

Name the user, the problem, how often it happens, and the current workaround. A novelty can still be fun, but fun is a different promise from useful.

EVIDENCE / NOTE _____

02 EVIDENCE QUALITY

SCORE

What proves the claim beyond the product page or one clip?

Separate hands-on use, first-person footage, independent testing, manufacturer claims, and unanswered questions. Score the evidence you have, not the evidence you hope exists.

EVIDENCE / NOTE _____

03 TRUE COST

SCORE

Is the complete cost proportionate to the problem it solves?

Include shipping, tax, accessories, subscriptions, consumables, replacement parts, maintenance, and the cost of a failed experiment - not only the headline price.

EVIDENCE / NOTE _____

04 EVERYDAY FRICTION

SCORE

Will setup and upkeep erase the promised convenience?

Count charging, pairing, accounts, compatibility, space, cleanup, storage, learning, noise, and attention. Useful on day one is not the same as useful on day one hundred.

EVIDENCE / NOTE _____

05 SUPPORT AND EXIT

SCORE

Can it be repaired, returned, resold, or abandoned safely?

Check warranty, return terms, parts, app dependence, account or cloud dependence, privacy, support history, resale, and what stops working if the company disappears.

EVIDENCE / NOTE _____

VERDICT

TOTAL / 20 _____

- ☐ 16-20 Strong fit - still state the caveats
- ☐ 11-15 Interesting - verify before buying
- ☐ 06-10 Clever idea - weak everyday case
- ☐ 00-05 Not useful yet

THE USEFUL ANSWER

ONE-SENTENCE VERDICT _____

WHO IT HELPS _____

WHO SHOULD SKIP IT _____

NEXT MOVE

☐ Test

☐ Borrow

☐ Buy

☐ Wait

☐ Skip

☐ Watch list

SCORE THE EVIDENCE, THEN EXPLAIN THE VERDICT

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Scoring guide: 0 = no useful evidence, 1 = mostly promise, 2 = conditional or incomplete, 3 = solid with tradeoffs, 4 = unusually strong. The total is a conversation tool, not a scientific rating.

Label the relationship to the item and disclose gifts, review units, sponsorships, affiliate links, and synthetic media. This worksheet organizes research and personal judgment; it is not product testing, safety, financial, or buying advice.

Guide and printable: colinmichaels.com/resources/gadget-usefulness-scorecard