

CREATIVE JUICES COMPUTING

Buying a New Tablet or Smartphone?

My 2c Worth by Kaye Walford of Creative Juices Computing 4-3-14

So. You want to buy a tablet or smartphone huh? Which one to buy out the myriad of options?!

As soon as I have written this, there will be new models already on the shelves and updates will have changed the face of the existing devices. It's a fast-moving world and nothing stays the same for long.

There are pros and cons for all types, some of which I have given below, with reasons for each but it may just come down to personal preference. It's just my opinion but based on several factors including future proofing, purchase price, usability, repair options, and personal experience.

Consider what you're going to be using this new piece of technology for. I suggest making a list of the things that you would like to do on it, including the things that are dealbreakers – the things that you just couldn't do without and the 'cherry on the top' – things you would like but aren't essential.

Ask yourself how often each day you will use your piece of equipment, any usability issues you might have, and how much money you have to spend. I suggest you spend several months just going around the major retailers and seeing what is on the market, what prices they are asking, and what exactly that buys you. Then you'll have a really good idea of what a good buy is, if a special does come up. And you won't get taken for a ride by some fast-talking salesman.

The 4 types of technology in this area are: iPad (made by Apple), Android Tablets (made by Samsung, ASUS, Acer etc), Phablets (made by Samsung, ASUS, Acer etc) and Smartphones (made by Apple, Samsung, Nokia etc).

So, what the difference between all these?

Tablets

Windows 8 Tablets

Windows 8 is the new operating system from Microsoft. This OS will be available for desktop and laptops, but it's also designed for use with tablets. A version called Windows RT has been specifically tailored for tablet use. Windows 8 looks very different but is very much like Windows 7 once you get past the new tiled start screen.

The Windows Surface RT only uses apps from the Microsoft Store – it cannot download or use any programs from the internet. The Surface Pro acts more like the Windows that you are used to and does not have the software limitation of the Surface RT.

Android Tablets

Tablets are typically bigger in size – from 7 inches up to 10.1 inches. An iPad is a tablet. Sometimes people use the word iPad as a generic term for a tablet, but an iPad is a particular brand of tablet made by Apple. There are many brands of tablets including Samsung, Acer, ASUS, for the more expensive,

quality tablets, and Cruz, Vigo, Nextbook etc for the less expensive, lower quality tablets. Most if not all of the tablet market uses Android as their Operating System whereas Apples iPad uses their own iOS system which is also used on their iPhones.

Tablets can come in a variety of flavours – they can be Wifi Only, or Wifi and 3G and have a range of computing power. They typically have a bigger screen and are used for quick net surfing, skypeing, watching tv on demand and other light duties. And unless they have the added feature - they also typically do not have text or phone capabilities.

Phablets

A phablet is a cross between a tablet and a phone hence the name Phablet. The early Galaxy Note is a good example of this. It typically has a bigger screen than a smartphone (from 5 to 7 inches) and has the functions of both a tablet *and* a phone.

Smartphone

The new breed of phone after the last crop of CDMA digital phones. Typically they are smaller in screen size – anywhere from 1.5 inches to 4.5 inches. Any bigger than that, and you're getting into the phablet category. Smartphones have all the usual phone features, plus the ability to surf the internet, skype, etc etc. They most often run the Android operating system, so once you've learnt the Android system you can use practically any other phone or tablet that uses Android. You can add 'apps' from the Play Store and the processing power is higher with each new model.

Comparisons

Hardware

In terms of hardware, it's a close battle between and iPad and its Android counterpart. In some cases Android holds the lead and then the next version iPad will have the better specs. However, Android is now coming out with Quad-Core CPU's and more powerful camera (up to 8megapixels) and in most cases they have a micro card slot for easily expandable memory.

Screen

The iPads new Retina Display is arguably better than any Android Display, but new models are closing that gap all the time. You may have to choose between the best display and the best overall specs.

Software and apps

The iTunes Store has an application for just about everything, and they are vetted by Apple before being made available, however recent studies have shown that Apple apps have more risky behaviours (91%) compared to Android apps (83%). The Android Play Store is fast catching up with their offerings but they are not vetted before being made available. The Apple iOS looks good and works well, but you can't customise it as you can with Android tablets. Changing background colours and the order of your apps is about the limit of what you can do. Apple has some issues with some software that has drawn criticism for its inaccuracies.

Usability and performance

Both Android tablets and the iPad have simple, icon-driven interfaces. Apple has a standardized hardware and software combination whereas Android devices can have added manufacturers overlays so that two Android tablets running the same software, will not look or act the same.

Variety

Android tablets come in all shapes and sizes with varying options of included features, with display ranging from 5-10 inches. Processors range from single-core, & dual-core to quad-core and some have dual cameras while some have only one, or none. Most recent models have at least 16GB of internal storage but most Androids also have a Micro SD slot for added storage. Specific models of Android tablets have styluses.

The iPad, on the other hand, is available only in three versions, currently with only onboard storage.

Price

Apple iPads can come with a hefty price tag whereas the Android tablets can be kinder to the wallet. However prices are coming down and there's always a sale.....

There are many many options with buying once of these devices – some features are standard to all devices and some have features that make them stand out from the rest. eg Samsung Galaxy Note with the S-Pen. I have included several models from different device manufacturers to give an overview of what's on offer and the many many options you will be faced with. Tick off which ones are most important to you and you will narrow down which device will best suit you.

iPad

- | | |
|------|---|
| Pros | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) good size screen 2) parts relatively easy to source 3) Apple vets all downloadable apps in the Store 4) excellent battery life |
| Cons | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) only 2 screen sizes to choose from – full & mini 2) difficult to get data (music, photos, documents) on and off iPad 3) no USB port 5) lacks ability to organize data into user-created folders |

Tablet/Phablet (Typically Android driven)

- | | |
|------|---|
| Pros | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) range of screen sizes 2) standardized operating system 3) 1000's of downloadable (and free) apps 4) highly customizable (much more so than an iPad) |
| Cons | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) repair options a little limited 2) some can't play tvnz on demand |

Smartphone

- | | |
|------|---|
| Pros | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) fits in the pocket well with the smaller screens 2) very portable 3) very handy in today's world |
| Cons | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) smaller screen difficult for big fingers 2) added manufacturers overlays can confuse users |

The specs you should be looking for in a tablet or smartphone.Processor/CPU (The bit that does all the work)

The fastest processor you can get. AT LEAST a Dual Core CPU, but a quad core if your pocket money will stretch to it.

Ram/Memory (the place where the work is done)

As with desktops, get as much ram/memory as you can afford.

Storage (where your stuff gets stored)

iPads come with built-in storage – you cannot add a micro card to iPads. For tablets, get the highest amount of the storage you can and buy a model that has a micro sd card slot so that you can add more storage as necessary.

Card Slots

These are micro sd cards which are used for more storage. Most come with a micro sd card slot, and support card sizes from 16 up to 32GB. I personally wouldn't buy a device without a card slot.

USB ports

The device may have a full size USB port or could have a mini or micro USB port. The port could be used for charging only or could be used for a pendrive or other such piece of equipment. Some tablets, like Samsung, have a proprietary connector, but you can buy a special cable that plugs in the proprietary port and has a USB extension port on the end for you to connect to. You can also buy specialty cables to be used for connecting the tablet to a TV etc.

HDMI Port

For connecting to an LCD or Plasma screen. The device may have a micro HDMI port for connecting to viewing equipment. It's a good extra to have.

A lot to take on board I know, but I wouldn't want you spending your money on something you ultimately weren't happy with. It may be your device for a number of years, so we want to make sure the purchase gets you something that meets your needs now, and in the future and takes into account your mobility, budget and general usage.

My Personal Preference

I like Android and my experience is with Samsung products so naturally I'm comfortable with them. To me, they seem intuitive. When I got an iPad, it didn't take me long to get to grips with it but it didn't seem nearly as intuitive.

The things that I really didn't like was that for one, you couldn't organize your 'stuff' into folders. I organize my stuff into folders, grouped by project or by topic, whether the stuff be photos, video or documents, I like them in the same place where I can access all the different types of data. With iPad, you can't do that – you're forced to go to Photos to show a photo, the Video player to show a video and who knows where to open a document! There's no typical folder structure like we're used to using in Windows – it's how I arrange my desktop computer and how I prefer to arrange my smartphone and tablet.

The second thing that bugs me is how difficult and tedious it is to put your stuff onto the iPad. Apple dictates that you use their iTunes software. It's okay putting on music or photos, but video can be a bit tricky and as for putting on documents – I had to download a whole other program to do that! But with Android, I just take the micro card out of the slot, put it in the card reader and into a USB port and copy and paste my stuff right from my desktop to the micro card like it was another folder. I can move single files or move entire folders over no problems at all. And I can organize the micro card the way I like.

The overall thing, is I don't like being dictated to, about how I organize my stuff, or how I use my technology. I feel Apple forces their way of doing things onto me and I don't like that too much. And I find that I can't customize the iPad in the same way that I can my Android. I think of the iPad as Vanilla and the Android as Strawberry, Vanilla & Chocolate all rolled into one.

That's my 2c worth.

	Galaxy S3	Galaxy Tab	iPad	Galaxy Note
	Phone	Tablet	Tablet	Phone/Tablet
		Wifi Version	Wifi Version	
Screen	AMOLED capacitive 720 x 1280 multitouch 4.8 inches	10.1" Display 1280 x 800	9.7-inch LED-backlit Multi-Touch 2048-by-1536 Retina Display	5.3" WXGA 1280 x 800 screen Super AMOLED
CPU	Quad-core 1.4 GHz Cortex-A9	NVidia Tegra 2 1GHz	Dual-core A6X with quad-core graphics	1.4 Ghz Dual Core Processor
Internal Storage	16/32/64GB	16/32/64GB	16/32/64/128GB	16GB
Card Slot	Micro, up to 64GB	Micro, up to 64GB	No	Micro, up to 32GB
Wifi	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
3G	Yes	No	No	Yes
Camera-Front	8MP	2 MP	VGA	2MP
Camera-Rear	1.9MP	3 MP	5MP	8MP
SMS	Yes	No	No	Yes
MMS	Yes	No	No	Yes
Phone	Yes	No	No	Yes
Email	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
OS	Android 4.04	Android 4.04	iOS 5.1	Android 4.1
Bluetooth	Yes	Yes	Yes 4.0	Yes 3.0

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