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Tablet Computers 101 (for those among us who don't have one)

Although they haven't been around that long, tablet computers have become one of the most popular tech items since the introduction of the Apple iPad in early 2010. By now, everybody who absolutely had to have a tablet computer has purchased one. But there is still a significant percentage of the population who have not.

We would like to address this article to those among us who don't have a tablet computer. Should you purchase a tablet computer if you don't have one?



computer that we will be discussing in this article can be described as follows: A device with a screen that is bigger than a smartphone, stores more data, and has the ability to do all the things that a smartphone does, except that it is no longer a phone.

This is not an oversimplification. Smartphones and tablet computers are fundamentally the same device – just different in size. The operating systems that make the smartphones and tablet computers work are the same. An Apple iPhone and Apple iPad run on the same operating system: iOS. The Android

What is a tablet computer?

Originally, a tablet computer was defined as a laptop computer with a screen that could be rotated around and folded flat against the unit. In this form, the tablet computer was as heavy as a laptop, no more portable than a laptop, and extremely awkward to use. The tablet



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operating system is the most common non-Apple smartphones and the non-Apple tablet computer operating system.

What are the advantages of a tablet computer?

The biggest advantage of a tablet computer is portability. Because of its size, it is possible to take a tablet computer almost anywhere. Weighing under 2 pounds and having screen size of 10 inches or less, they are far more portable than a laptop. They are easy to carry around whether at home or at work. Tablet computers can be used in places where it would be impractical to use a keyboard and/or mouse. They can even be used while standing or walking. Since they are smaller, they use less power and the batteries last longer – up to 10 hours on a single battery charge.

Tablet computers have WiFi and/or cellular data network

connectivity (3G or 4G wireless networks). Staying connected to the Internet (without a wired data connection) is easy.

Many tablets have forward-facing and rear-facing cameras as well as microphones. They can be used to record audio, still pictures, or video. When combined with WiFi or a wireless cellular connection, the devices can be used for video chatting through Skype



or other service providers.

Most tablet computers have handwriting-to-text capabilities. Using your finger or the stylus that comes with the unit (not all tablet computers have a stylus), just write (or print) the words on the screen and the tablet will convert them to text.

The touchpad screen on a tablet responds to all of the same touch gestures as a smartphone. If you are already using a smartphone, there is no need to learn a new user interface.

What are the disadvantages of a tablet computer?

Maybe using the word “disadvantage” is a little strong, but there are some issues to

be aware of. While its small size might be considered advantageous in a lot of situations, there are times when small size limits the usefulness of a tablet. Do you need to display a lot of detailed information? The biggest tablet screen is 10 inches (measured diagonally). It might not be that easy to

see.

While hopping on a WiFi network at a coffee shop or airport might be free, it costs money to connect via a 3G or 4G cellular data network. Depending on the amount of data that is sent or received, the cost per month for a data plan from a wireless provider can get expensive.

You do not get a real keyboard with a tablet computer. Information can only be



typed in on the simulated keyboard on the touch screen. If you send a lot of emails, the lack of a keyboard can be a drawback. Typing long messages using the touch screen is time-consuming and frustrating. Keyboards can be purchased, but using them makes the tablet computer less portable.

Tablet computers are not designed to be ergonomically correct. While you can take them to many places that a laptop would be impractical, using them for extended periods of time could cause repetitive strain injuries to neck, back and wrists.

Just because a tablet computer can be used in a given situation doesn't mean that it should be.

One of the biggest complaints about tablet computers is the lack of expandability. Some makes of tablet computer have a USB port and possibly one slot for a micro SD card. That is about it. And if you purchased an iPad (from Apple), there is no USB port or SD card slot at all.

Do you need to purchase a tablet computer?

If you currently have a smartphone and a full-size computer, a tablet computer will not provide you with any additional functionality. But, because of its size and portability, a tablet computer will provide you with a very convenient way to check email, browse the web, listen to music, take notes at a conference, video chat,

watch movies, share photos, and play games. A tablet computer is small enough and portable enough to go with you anywhere you choose to go. It's not about needing a tablet computer – It's about wanting a tablet computer.

Choosing a Tablet Computer

Since there are fewer options to select from on a tablet computer, selecting the one that is best for you is not as difficult as finding the right full-size computer. But, the selection process begins with an answer to the same question: What are you going to use this for? Once that has been decided, the rest of the selection process gets easier...

Screen size. Tablet computers come in various sizes that balance between functionality and portability. Screen sizes typically range between 8 inches and 10 inches, though some tablets, like the Samsung Galaxy Note, can come as small as 5.3 inches. When choosing a tablet computer, it's important to remember that bigger isn't always better -- while a larger screen might be easier on the eyes, it may not be as practical while you're on-the-go.

Other hardware...

- o **Camera:** Not all tablets feature built-in cameras, but several do, and this can be nifty for taking photos and videos when out and about. Some also offer front-facing cameras as





well, which can be used for things like video calling and self-portraits.

- o **Speed and processor:** A tablet worth purchasing should be able to open a webpage, launch an app, or adjust settings within a few seconds.

Processors of 1GHz speed or more are optimum and will be your best bet for fast performance.

- o **RAM:** Depending on the make/model, some tablet computers have as little as 256 MB of RAM. Others have as much as 4 GB. More RAM equates to better overall performance.

- o **Wireless capabilities:** Most tablets feature the ability to connect to the Internet over a Wi-Fi network, or at the very least, a 3G cellular data network. Wi-Fi offers faster browsing speed and downloading time, so take that into consideration — and most of the time, WiFi is free.

- o **Storage capacity:** Tablets are equipped with a varying amounts of onboard storage, usually between 8 and 64 GB. The larger the storage capacity, the more downloads you will be able to store on your device.

Operating system Determining the “best” operating system can be a difficult task, with many consumers having their own preferences and loyalties.

Currently, Apple iOS and Android are the two major operating systems being used today. If you have an Apple iPhone and

you are happy with the way the features on the iPhone work, you will probably be happy with the way that Apple iOS operates on the iPad.

On the other hand, if you have an Android-based smartphone and you are happy with it, there is no guarantee that you will like every Android-based tablet computer. The Android operating system is “open source”, allowing each manufacturer to make tweaks or major changes to it



as they see fit.

Applications Most apps are designed to work only on a specific make/model of tablet computer. If there is an app that you absolutely must run, verify that it works on the make/model of tablet that you wish to purchase.

Price For most consumers, price will be the biggest factor affecting their choice of tablet computers. The more features the tablet computer has, the more it will



ultimately cost. Casual users may only need the most basic model to match their needs, while those intending on using high-demand apps and programs should consider splurging on a more expensive device.

If you plan on remote operation where WiFi is unavailable, you will need to have a 3G or 4G data plan. These data plans can be convenient but costly, so choosing to forgo this feature may reduce the price significantly. Besides the cost of the data plan, adding 3G or 4G functionality to the tablet computer could add several hundred dollars to the cost of the unit.

Battery power Tablet computers are specifically designed to be used on-the-go. This means that, more often than not, they are used without a main power source. As a result, choosing a device with a dependable and long-lasting battery life is vital. For a good indicator of the device's power, check the quoted battery life of each device. However, it's important to remember that these are just indicators, and battery longevity can vary depending on how frequently and for what your device is being used.

There is another issue regarding the battery: Find out how long it takes to fully charge the battery. On some units, the time required to charge a dead battery is up to 10 hours. If you feel that is excessive, you may wish to eliminate that tablet computer from consideration.

Processor power Processor power is a highly important, yet often-overlooked feature of a tablet computer. The processing speed will determine how

quickly and efficiently your tablet will perform tasks and run applications.

More and more consumers are using tablets for CPU-intensive tasks, such as watching video, listening to music, and playing games with high-end graphics. Web browsing, as well, can be a processor hog, and if the device's processor is not up to the challenge, it can have a significant effect on the user experience.

And finally...

Once you have decided to take the plunge, check out the device in person. A picture may be worth a thousand words, but when you spend time playing around with a tablet computer at an electronics store, you can get a realistic feel of what it's like to use and how you feel holding it for long periods of time.

Browse the web for tablet reviews. With numerous models already available and dozens more anticipated in the near future, it can be difficult to settle for just one. Look online for reputable reviews of the devices you're considering, and check out photos and videos of how the device works to get a real feel of what your user experience will be like. Video sharing websites like YouTube offer a wide selection of visual reviews that can help narrow down your selection.





WNYLC Web Statistics For July 2012

Total Hits.....1,630,338
 Number of Pages Viewed.....303,991
 Total Visitors.....68,580
 Average Hits/Day.....52,591
 Average Pages /Day.....9,806
 Top Web Browsers Used:
 Internet Explorer 9.x.....33%
 Internet Explorer 8.x.....49%
 Internet Explorer 7.x.....14%
 Firefox.....17%
 Safari.....7%
 Google Chrome.....5%

Top Operating Systems Used:
 Windows 7.....29%
 Windows Vista.....8%
 Windows XP.....34%
 Mac OS.....7%
 iPad.....3%
 iPhone.....3%
 Android.....4%



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