

Should I buy a tablet?

Written by Johann Taylor
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This is another question that I hear on a fairly regular basis in my shop. It's no surprise, since tablets seem to be popping up everywhere these days. Unfortunately, like most new technologies, tablets are shrouded in myths, mystery, and misconceptions that can make buying decisions difficult. Should you buy a tablet? The answer? It depends.

For the purpose of this article, I am making the assumption that we are discussing iOS or Android powered tablets, not their big brothers that are simply convertible laptops.

Tablets can be quite useful when used for their intended purpose. Here is a list of advantages and disadvantages to help you make an informed decision.

Ultra Portable

- **Why this is good** - Tablets are lightweight and easy to take anywhere. They have super long battery life, and your arms won't get tired from carrying them around.

- **Why it isn't** - As usual, portability is a trade-off for power. We've seen this in the laptop market for years now. Generally, the more powerful it is, the bigger it will be.

Simple

- **Why this is good** - Many people are uncomfortable with computers and can't or don't want to learn to use them. This is where tablets excel. Whether iOS or Android based, they are very simple and easy to learn. If you use your computers for email, Facebook, and occasional word processing, a tablet may be all you need.

- **Why it isn't** - Students and working professionals will always need a full-blown computer to accomplish their day to day tasks. Try typing even a 3 page paper on a tablet and you will quickly see what I mean. Although some people can type pretty fast on a tablet, (fast being relative) the average user will still find typing on a tablet clunky and slow. Graphic design, accounting, spreadsheets, etc. will all require a computer for the near future. Tablets may be getting better, but they won't completely replace computers anytime soon.

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Cheaper

- **Why this is good** - A lower price opens up computing to many more people. Well cared for tablets may also have a much lower cost of ownership than a traditional computer. Computer repair is expensive, and while tablet repair can be equally expensive, there are generally less, and significantly simpler, software issues on tablets.

- **Why it isn't** - Arguably, there are netbooks (and some laptops) available that are far cheaper than tablets, yet have few of the drawbacks. These computers are just as portable, more powerful, and can do more advanced work for a similar or lower price.

To answer the question "Should I Buy a Tablet," the answer is maybe. This will be a very personal question that will depend heavily on your individual wants and needs. Where a tablet is a great idea for a salesman or even a doctor making his rounds, it would probably drive an accountant nuts. Some students love taking notes on a tablet; I got sick of mine after half a semester. If you are looking for something simple, portable, and low-cost, a tablet is the right choice for you. If you want power, compatibility, customizability, and don't want your hands tied, then a computer may be the better choice. It is really up to you.