

Choosing a Tablet PC?

Google's Android operating system is considered to be the best alternative to Apple's iOS when it comes to smartphones and tablet PCs. Unlike Apple's proprietary hardware and software system, Google's Android OS is open source, making it inviting for many hardware manufacturers to try their hand at making an Android-based device.

When choosing a tablet PC you may want to consider the differences between Apple's and Google's operating systems. Some of the key differences are:

OPERATING SYSTEM - The Apple iOS is clean and has an incredibly user friendly interface with great graphics, a sensitive touch screen, great battery life, Wi-Fi, and Bluetooth. The user interface is exceedingly easy to use and even those who have not used an iPad before will have no difficulty in using it.

Google's Android 3.0 (aka Honeycomb), is also easy to use and is slick with a 3D interface. When it comes to customization Android is clearly superior. Through the use of widgets, you can customize the icons that appear on the tablet's home screen, and are not limited to rows of static icons, as you are on an iPad.

Almost all Android Honeycomb tablet PCs have USB ports built into them so that any type of hardware that is USB port enabled can be plugged into the tablet. Keyboards and flash drives can be used on these PCs. This is a huge advantage over the iPad2 which doesn't supply these ports.

APPS – The number of Android apps (more than 500,000) are quickly approaching the number of Apple apps. The Apple apps tend to be more expensive while there are many more free apps on the Android platform. With Android, you can choose where to purchase music and video (Amazon, Google, etc.) Alternatively, Apple apps are regulated and must be approved by Apple before they are released. Android apps are not regulated, so they are often updated as people report issues.

DEVICE SCREEN - The popular tablet screen size today is approximately 10 inches and can be compared to a small laptop. It is great to use for watching movies and viewing Websites. Some Android Honeycomb tablets feature a higher resolution display – 10.1 inches at 1280-by-800, where the iPad 2 comes with 9.7 inches at 1024-by-768 resolution.

PRICE – Android tablets tend to be priced about \$100-\$200 cheaper than a comparably equipped iPad. Apple does not offer discounts on hardware and strictly control the price of their units. Since Android tablets are provided by various manufacturers, they can often be found at discounted prices.

FILE ACCESS – You can directly access or manage the files on an Android Honeycomb tablet by plugging it into your computer and browse it as if it were a hard drive. You can also drag and drop files from your PC, like you do with an external storage device, without the need for proprietary software. The iPad, however, requires the use of its proprietary iTunes software for file transfer. This makes it difficult to manage files, share materials, and do what you need to do.

HARDWARE – Apple controls the price and the features and they do not release new hardware updates often. With Android's open source platform, you can choose different hardware from a variety of

manufacturers. This variety gives the buyer an opportunity to often find newer hardware from various manufacturers.

BATTERY LIFE – The battery in an Android doesn't last quite as long as the iPad 2 with comparable usage. This is probably due to the USB ports and other hardware differences on the Android.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS – An Android based tablet isn't locked down the way the iPad is. You can customize it to your preferences without having to unlock or jailbreak anything. Android also gets the edge for being Flash compatible. This allows for an open platform for adding plug-ins. This is a feature that distinguishes an Android tablet from an iPad 2, which means you can watch YouTube videos or visit Flash sites on Android tablets. Apple iOS operating system will not allow the use of third-party plug-ins, which limits its capabilities considerably.

UPCOMING RELEASES

The Consumer Electronics Show is January 10th- 13th, and many manufacturers are showing off their newest tablet PCs running Android's newly released operating system version 4.0 (aka Ice Cream Sandwich). Among them are the Acer Iconia Tab which features a quad core processor, the Toshiba Excite 10, the Lenovo S2, and Lenovo K2. Look for them to be available later this quarter.

The tablets below are mostly all configured identically with the Android Honeycomb OS, 16GB RAM and Wi-Fi connectivity for comparison purposes. I gathered the comments from a variety of hardware review sites. I hope that this helps if you are considering an alternative to the iPad.

| <u>Tablet</u> | <u>Street Price</u> | <u>Screen Size</u> | <u>OS</u> | <u>Comment</u> |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|------------------|---|
| Apple iPad 2 | \$499 | 9.7 | iOS 5 | The iPad 2 refines an already excellent product. Its easy-to-use interface, vast app catalog, and marathon battery life bolster Apple's claim to being the king of tablets. |
| Lenovo IdeaPad Tablet K1 | \$340 | 10.1 | Honeycomb | A solid tablet that does little to stand out from the Honeycomb herd. |
| Samsung Galaxy Tab 7.0 Plus | \$349 | 7.0 | Honeycomb | Pretty and sleek, with well-implemented remote-control functionality, making it one of the best 7-inch Honeycomb tablet yet. |
| Archos 101 G9 | \$353 | 10.1 | Honeycomb | Delivers a complete Honeycomb experience, but its rough design, low-quality camera, and awkward button placement make it feel rushed to market. |
| Sony Tablet S | \$370 | 9.4 | Honeycomb | It's on the pricey side, the charging adapter is proprietary, and screen brightness isn't what it could be. |
| Acer Iconia Tab A500 | \$398 | 9.4 | Honeycomb | Offers the features of the Motorola Xoom at iPad-beating prices but weighs in as the heftiest Android tablet yet. |
| ASUS Eee Pad Transformer | \$399 | 10.0 | Honeycomb | The Wi-Fi-only version of the Asus Eee Pad Transformer is the cheapest Honeycomb tablet on the market and undercuts the lowest price iPad 2 by \$100. |
| Toshiba AT100 / Thrive | \$399 | 10.1 | Honeycomb | The Toshiba Thrive is a bulky but aggressively priced tablet that earns its girth with full port support and a removable battery. |
| Samsung Galaxy Tab 8.9 | \$437 | 8.9 | Honeycomb | Is everything we loved about the Tab 10.1 in a slightly smaller form, with a slightly smaller price. |
| Samsung Galaxy Tab 10.1 | \$449 | 10.1 | Honeycomb | Sleek, sexy, and light, the Samsung Galaxy Tab 10.1 gets as close to the iPad 2 as any Android tablet before it. |
| Motorola XOOM | \$454 | 10.1 | Honeycomb | The Xoom's spec sheet is enough to make any tablet tremble, but the price is high, the design is bulky. |

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