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The Apple iPad Wi-Fi + 3G
Apple

[Apple iPad Wi-Fi + 3G Review](#)

The "œtablet to rule all tablets" under close scrutiny

Without a doubt, the whole world of IT and consumer electronics was taken by storm when Apple released its already super-famous iPad multimedia tablet back in late January. I mean, even before making its way onto the market, the device was regarded as some sort of "holy grail" of convergence technologies, being able to deliver a very large number of features and functions by taking the Cupertino-based company's whole App-based ecosystem to a whole-new level.

Naturally, after the first iPad models made their way into the eagerly waiting hands of consumers, things got even better for Apple, the hype around the device growing, despite of its inherent problems (most of which are related to the lack of support for Adobe's Flash and the lower battery life). I mean, the thing really sold like hot cakes, whether we're talking about the basic Wi-Fi or the more advanced Wi-Fi + 3G version.

And since we're on this subject, we'll have to mention that we were lucky enough to get our hands on the latter iPad flavor mentioned above only a couple of weeks after the tablet managed to finally make its way into stores, thus being able to see for ourselves whether there was really some substance to the iPad or we were talking just about fanboy-induced hype. The answer, as you'll be able to see throughout our review, lays somewhere in the middle.

As you might expect, the experience delivered by the iPad Wi-Fi + 3G, which we'll try to reproduce for you to the best of our abilities, will probably get a lot better in the future, as Apple unlocks further levels of functionality via firmware updates and more apps become available. In fact, as in the case of the iPhone, we're pretty sure that the huge variety of applications, as well as the fast and easy access to multimedia content and the Internet are going to push even further the iPad's popularity, perhaps trampling quite a lot of competitors in its path.

[[BREAK=Aesthetics and Design]]

Overall design features

If there's one area where Apple manages to look down on pretty much all of its competitors, that's the design of its various products. And naturally, that's exactly the case with the iPad as well, this thing is looking absolutely gorgeous, an opinion shared by pretty much everyone who's seen it.

If you've ever owned an iPod touch or an iPhone, then you can certainly testify to the fact that the company from Cupertino doesn't really joke around when it comes to the design and build-quality. And you can certainly expect the same from the iPad, the multimedia-Internet tablet featuring a brushed-aluminum rear side, accompanied by a metallic edge that incorporates the slightly rubberized control buttons and connectivity interfaces.

The choice of colors should, once again, prove to be pretty familiar, since it follows in the footsteps of the company's previous products (yeah, we're talking about the same nuance

of silver for the rear side of the iPad as the one found on the iPhone 2G, for example). So, there's plenty of silver and brushed aluminum, but also black, the device having the aspect of a dark monolith when looking at it from the front side.

[IMG=21]

All in all, as far as the design is concerned, the iPad manages to fit extremely well into the Apple product lineup, proving that it's indeed been designed in order to fill the gap between the small and ultra-portable iPhone and/or iPod touch and the larger MacBook and MacBook Pro portable computing systems.

Size and portability

Naturally, the iPad is big... in fact, it's a lot bigger than we had initially imagined, and a lot bigger than the "puny" iPhones or iPods available out there.

[IMG=22][IMG=23]

The official measurements read 9.56 inches (242.8 mm) in height, 7.47 inches (189.7 mm) in width and 0.5 inches (13.4 mm) in depth, which makes this thing extremely thin. Indeed, we were pretty shocked by just how super-slim this thing really is, but also equally impressed by the fact that it didn't really feel flimsy at all, which is quite an important asset, as far as we're concerned.

[IMG=24][IMG=25][IMG=26][IMG=27]

As far as the portability is concerned, we'd have to say that carrying this thing around shouldn't be much of a problem, since it only weighs 730 grams (quite impressive, given the size). However, if you plan to use it for longer periods of time, then it's perhaps for the best to find a suitable support, since the device will ultimately take its toll on your arm muscles.

[IMG=28][IMG=29][IMG=34]

We'll also have to point out that people with bigger hands will certainly have no trouble operating this thing with just one of them, but the large majority will most likely have to use both hands in order to ensure a solid, stable grip, especially when typing at high-speeds on the built-in virtual keyboard.

Controls

Much as in the case of the iPhone, the iPad's main control element is represented by the large-size capacitive touchscreen. However, we'll have to admit that Apple's engineers managed to do a great job at making this very large display (9.7 inches diagonal size) work in exactly the same way as the iPhone's, users being able to very easily pinch and zoom, as well as rotate, scroll, pan, etc. Yeah, multi-touch works very well on the Apple tablet, regardless of orientation of the tasks at hand.

One of the things we really loved about the iPad's built-in touchscreen was the fact that it was equally responsive no matter where you might press it. This might seem like a slightly odd criterion, but given our past experiences with various touchscreen-equipped gadgets, it's something we deem important to point out. Plus, it's very fast, users being able to type very easily on the built-in virtual keyboard without feeling any lags or other similar problems.

The only thing we've found to be missing was some sort of haptic feedback system. A slight vibration when pressing a certain button would have brought an extra level of realism to the whole iPad usage experience, especially in the case of those applications involving a whole lot of screen-touching (typing is a very good example, but we're willing to bet there are plenty of other fields where such a function would be quite useful).

OK, OK, we've praised the touchscreen enough already, it's time to move to something different, namely the few buttons the iPad comes equipped with. Obviously, the main

physical control element is the home button, placed on the front of the device, in the lower side (exactly as in the case of the iPhone). Its purpose is also identical, namely that of bringing up the main menu wherever the user might "be" at the respective moment. Indeed, quite a useful function, since it speeds up overall operation quite a bit.

Next in line comes the power button, located on the top/left side of the iPad, which also doubles as a sleep/wake-up control. Nothing really major to say here, apart from the fact that it's very responsive and one shouldn't have any major problems finding it, even in the dark.

[IMG=43][IMG=44][IMG=45]

The other two available physical buttons are located on the right side of the iPad. The first one is the screen rotation lock, which blocks the image orientation in the desired position, a feature that's actually extremely important, given the fact that the iPad's built-in accelerometer is extremely sensitive and will immediately rotate the image when detecting even the slightest move.

Last, but certainly not least, come the volume control buttons, located on the same right side, only a bit lower. They work pretty OK (in other words, the adjustment steps are fairly clearly visible/audible) and are quite easy to find/press.

Connectivity

Since the iPad's overall versatility is touted as being one of its main selling points, we sincerely expected to provide a lot more connectivity options than it actually did have. And the worst part is that, out of the few available interfaces, the wired ones are proprietary, which is really a bummer for most third-party accessory manufacturers out there.

The iPad's most important wired interface is located on its bottom side, and is used for a variety of purposes, from recharging the built-in battery to connecting to a computer to attaching all sorts of extra-accessories to the tablet. It's in fact exactly the same 30-pin connector installed on Apple's most portable solutions, which mean that it should work, without many problems, with the various iPhone or iPod touch accessories you've got lying around the house.

[IMG=40][IMG=41][IMG=42]

As expected, this thing also packs an audio jack, located on the top/left side. Not exactly sure why Apple chose this position for the audio connector (might have had something to do with the internal component layout, etc.), but in certain situations, it might prove fairly uncomfortable. Anyway, the audio jack will most likely work with all of the earphones approved by Apple for use with its products, so there are plenty of third-party options to choose from.

Unfortunately, that's about it as far as the iPad's wired interfaces are concerned, and we really miss an USB port and/or an SD card slot. Sure, one can add such interfaces to the iPad via specialized accessories, but it's not the same as having a native interface, and some activities will be utterly impossible (such as charging the device and accessing a USB flash drive at the same time, for example).

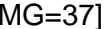
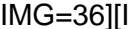

Since we were lucky enough to test the Wi-Fi + 3G model, our sample also featured an SIM tray, located on its left side. We'll comment a bit more on the SIM (actually, MicroSIM) card issue a bit later in our review, but for the time being we'll just say that the whole installation process is very similar to that of a normal SIM card within the iPhone.

Anyway, after going through the wired (and visible) connectivity options, it's time to move to the wireless (and invisible) ones.

Besides the 3G module, which supports UMTS/HSDPA (850, 1900, 2100 MHz) and GSM/EDGE (850, 900, 1800, 1900 MHz) technologies, but only works for data transfers (so don't start dreaming about making voice calls with the iPad, that's not going to happen very soon), the Apple tablet also packs a Wi-Fi (802.11a/b/g/n) module, as well as a Bluetooth 2.1 + EDR one, which allow you to pair the thing with all sorts of compatible devices. Most of these components are easily controlled via the built-in software, and can really come in handy in a multitude of situations, as you'll be able to see for yourselves later on within our review.

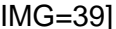

Display

We've talked a quick bit about the iPad's display a little earlier, within our controls-related segment, but the truth of the matter is that it requires a lot more attention, given the fact that, after all, it does represent the single most important selling point this product has to offer.



So, besides its impressive touch-related features, the 9.7-inch display is also capable of delivering very good quality images, namely a 1024 x 768-pixel resolution at 132 pixels per inch (ppi). The details are very crisp, the colors vivid and powerful, while the level of contrast is also very impressive. Plus, due to the use of IPS (in-plane switching) technology, the display provides some pretty ample viewing angles, which is not necessarily a good thing, especially when using the iPad in some busy location (such as the subway).

It's also important to note that the brightness is easily adjustable, meaning that one can easily choose the setting that best suits their eyes. This comes especially in handy when using the iPad to read a book, a situation when a lower brightness level is required. On the other hand, when watching some videos or browsing the web, one will probably want to crank up the brightness, the maximum attained level helping the iPad double as some sort of large-size flashlight.



The only (big) problem as far as the display is concerned is the fact that it's extremely fingerprint-friendly. Despite Apple claiming that the iPad sports a fingerprint-resistant oleophobic coating, the truth of the matter is that pressing the screen just once will result in your print remaining on its glossy surface, something that, in the long term, will certainly affect its overall aesthetics, but also the quality of the experience enjoyed by the user. Oh, well, guess that all those protective accessories' manufacturers also have to make a living, don't they?

Speaker and microphone

The iPad also sports a built-in speaker, located on the bottom side, near the 30-pin connector, which is capable of providing a pretty decent audio level. However, it's not particularly great, and if you really want to take advantage of the iPad's audio processing capabilities, then it's perhaps for the best to go for a pair of good-quality earphones.

There's also a built-in microphone (presumably, for using with those iPad apps requiring voice input), but that we're pretty sure will be employed for all sorts of other purposes in the future (Skype, anyone?).

[[BREAK=Tech Facts]]

Display

- 9.7-inch (diagonal) LED-backlit glossy widescreen Multi-Touch display with IPS technology;
- 1024-by-768-pixel resolution at 132 pixels per inch (ppi);
- Fingerprint-resistant oleophobic coating;
- Support for display of multiple languages and characters simultaneously.

Wireless and cellular

- UMTS/HSDPA (850, 1900, 2100 MHz);
- GSM/EDGE (850, 900, 1800, 1900 MHz);
- Data only;
- Wi-Fi (802.11a/b/g/n);
- Bluetooth 2.1 + EDR technology;

Location

- Wi-Fi;
- Digital compass;
- Assisted GPS;
- Cellular.

Capacity

- 16GB flash drive;

Processor

- 1GHz Apple A4 custom-designed, high-performance, low-power system-on-a-chip;

Sensors

- Accelerometer;
- Ambient light sensor;

Audio playback

- Frequency response: 20Hz to 20,000Hz;
- Audio formats supported: HE-AAC (V1), AAC (16 to 320 Kbps), Protected AAC (from iTunes Store), MP3 (16 to 320 Kbps), MP3 VBR, Audible (formats 2, 3, and 4), Apple Lossless, AIFF, and WAV;
- User-configurable maximum volume limit;

TV and video

- Support for 1024 by 768 pixels with Dock Connector to VGA Adapter; 576p and 480p with Apple Component AV Cable; 576i and 480i with Apple Composite AV Cable;
- H.264 video up to 720p, 30 frames per second, Main Profile level 3.1 with AAC-LC audio up to 160 Kbps, 48kHz, stereo audio in .m4v, .mp4, and .mov file formats; MPEG-4 video, up to 2.5 Mbps, 640 by 480 pixels, 30 frames per second, Simple Profile with AAC-LC audio up to 160 Kbps, 48kHz, stereo audio in .m4v, .mp4, and .mov file formats; Motion JPEG (M-JPEG) up to 35 Mbps, 1280 by 720 pixels, 30 frames per second, audio in ulaw, PCM stereo audio in .avi file format;

Mail attachment support

- Viewable document types: .jpg, .tiff, .gif (images); .doc and .docx (Microsoft Word); .htm and .html (web pages); .key (Keynote); .numbers (Numbers); .pages (Pages); .pdf (Preview and Adobe Acrobat); .ppt and .pptx (Microsoft PowerPoint); .txt (text); .rtf (rich text format); .vcf (contact information); .xls and .xlsx (Microsoft Excel);

Languages

- Language support for English, French, German, Japanese, Dutch, Italian, Spanish, Simplified Chinese, Russian; - Keyboard support for English (U.S.), English (UK), French (France, Canada), German, Japanese (QWERTY), Dutch, Flemish, Spanish, Italian, Simplified Chinese (Handwriting and Pinyin), Russian;
- Dictionary support for English (U.S.), English (UK), French, French (Canadian), French (Swiss), German, Japanese, Dutch, Flemish, Spanish, Italian, Simplified Chinese (Handwriting and Pinyin), Russian;

Accessibility

- Support for playback of closed-captioned content; - VoiceOver screen reader;
- Full-screen zoom magnification;
- White on black display;
- Mono audio;

Battery and power

- Built-in 25-watt-hour rechargeable lithium-polymer battery;
- Up to ten hours of surfing the web on Wi-Fi, watching video, or listening to music;
- Up to nine hours of surfing the web using 3G data network;
- Charging via power adapter or USB to computer system;

Input and output

- Dock connector port;
- 3.5-mm stereo headphone jack;
- Built-in speaker;
- Microphone;
- Micro-SIM card tray;

Size and weight

Height - 9.56 inches (242.8 mm);
Width - 7.47 inches (189.7 mm);
Depth - 0.5 inches (13.4 mm);
Weight - 1.6 pounds (0.73 kg).

[[BREAK=Real Life Performance]]

Before starting to talk about the level of real-life performance delivered by Apple's iPad, we'll have to mention a few important details, or, if you prefer, a few disclaimers. So, as some of you certainly know by now, the iPad Wi-Fi + 3G was only released in the US about two weeks ago, with an International version having to wait a lot longer.

[IMG=30][IMG=31]

For this reason (well, that and the fact that we're not based in the US), we've had a bit of trouble fully accessing the app store, which wasn't yet available internationally at the moment this article was written. This is the reason why we've decided to test and talk mostly about those basic features available for the iPad, the ones that come pre-installed and are available as soon as one activates the tablet.

And since we're talking about "issues" and "problems," we'll also add that, since no MicroSIM cards were available at our local Orange telco, we were forced to make our own out of normal-size SIM cards. And since this is a pretty easy process, we've detailed it in a short and comprehensive DIY guide, which you can check out for yourselves right [here](#).

[IMG=32][IMG=33]

Oh, and one last thing, before moving on to the next chapter of our review. Given the iPad's serious fingerprint-related problems (and for fear of scratching it early in its life), we've decided that it's safer to purchase a protective case, the one from Macally you can see in the photos perfectly suiting our needs. Of course, we're not going to go too deep into the usage experience when the iPad is inserted in the case (because not many people will probably go for such an accessory), but we will point out, however, that we're talking about a significantly improved experience, compared with the "bare" use.

Setup, menu navigation and main settings

Naturally, the first thing you'll want to do after taking the iPad out of the box will be to activate it, via iTunes. Of course, if you've bought the iPad within one of the official Apple stores, chances are that you've gone past that. This is done pretty much in the same way as activating an iPhone, so those people who've already undergone such a process before should have no trouble getting things done quite quickly (just connect the device via the proprietary connector to a computer running the latest iTunes version and voila!).

[IMG=48][IMG=49][IMG=69][IMG=70]

Anyway, after this step is over, you'll be able to safely start up the device. What we've noticed here is that, despite the fact that the iPad works seamlessly, allowing users to access the various menus and functions in a very fast and easy manner, the initial start-up time is not exactly short, namely somewhere in the vicinity of 10-15 seconds (or something like that). Indeed, you might say that this is not that much, and you're probably right, but given our excitement about seeing Apple's device put to good work, it seemed a lot longer than it actually was.

[IMG=71][IMG=72][IMG=73]

Each time you do so, you'll be prompted to unlock the SIM card by typing in the PIN code, something that the iPad Wi-Fi users won't have to deal with. After that's out of the way, you'll be free to start iPad-ing.

If you're a noob and have never ever touched an iPhone or iPod touch before, then the whole user interface system and layout might indeed hold a few surprises. But since most people who've purchased the iPad were previous Apple customers, it's quite likely that they're used to the OS as well, since it's almost identical to that of the previously mentioned handhelds (albeit at a much larger scale, of course).

[IMG=74][IMG=75][IMG=76]

Moving through the menus is, of course, done in a very fast and easy manner, by simply swiping one's finger across the screen (which is what we'd dare call the trademark move for all Apple portable devices out there). Entering the menus is as easy as pressing them, while the Home button will also do a great job at bringing the user back to the main screen from wherever he or she might "be" at the respective moment.

We'll detail more of the particular menu options available in certain applications a bit later, and we'll move now to the topic of available settings, which seem to cover pretty much everything the user might want to customize about his/her iPad.

[IMG=77][IMG=78][IMG=79]

So, the settings icon on the iPad's main screen will allow users to customize not only the tablet itself, but also some of the apps running on it. However, that's of less concern, what's really important to mention being the fact that one will be able to tweak the display brightness, select the desired wireless network and connect to it, check out the telecom carrier stats, select the proper settings for the wallpaper, the eMail accounts available directly from the iPad, and much more.

In order to sum things up in this field as well, the iPad's settings menu will allow even the less tech-savvy users to easily customize and control everything about their tablet, without risking to damage anything in the process (yeah, Apple's tablet is what we like to call "fool-proof").

The iPad's user interface also offers a couple of serious improvements and novelties, compared with the iPhone OS. One such feature is represented by the pop-over windows, which simply "hover" above the content one is accessing at a given moment, while another interesting one is represented by the split screens, something that would never be possible on the iPhone due to its reduced size.

[IMG=80][IMG=81][IMG=82]

Users will also be able to access certain contextual menus by long-pressing a certain button/option, while Apple's engineers have also implemented a much easier toolbar drop-down menu, which will certainly feel familiar for both Windows and Mac OS users.

The last topic we'll tackle here is related to the iPad's virtual-keyboard. For many people, this was a make-or-break issue, but, fortunately for them, Apple has succeeded in coming up with a solution that manages to suit all tastes, including those of the faster typists out there. And that's because the keyboard orientation and size make it great for high-speed text input, regardless of the keyboard's orientation.

Sure, it might take a while before one will get perfectly accustomed to the virtual keys (and the lack of tactile feedback isn't certainly helping with the learning curve), but the results will be quite pleasing.

[IMG=83][IMG=84][IMG=85][IMG=86]

The only thing we found to be utterly displeasing about the whole iPad OS was the lack of multitasking. We're pretty sure that Apple had only the best intentions in mind when it implemented this software solution, but the truth of the matter is that we've really felt like something was missing, at least when compared with a netbook (or notebook experience). Oh, well, maybe this issue will be solved in future iterations, when the hardware limitations are overcome.

Wi-Fi vs. 3G connectivity

Since we were lucky enough to get to test the iPad Wi-Fi + 3G model instead of the basic Wi-Fi-only model, we were able to make a comparison regarding the transfer speeds attained using either of these two technologies.

So, while using the Wi-Fi connection, the iPad really shows what it's capable of, being able to access the Internet and the various online services in a very fast and easy manner. In fact, the best word to describe this is "seamless," since we've never experienced a drop in video/audio quality and playback while in the close vicinity of a hotspot. Web browsing also

went pretty smoothly, the various web pages loading very fast and being almost instantly available.

However, when rolling to 3G, things were in fact a bit different. I mean, sure, when reading e-mail, browsing or accessing such social-media services as Facebook or Twitter, the 3G connection managed to hold its own and deliver some pretty OK results.

Unfortunately, though, when moving to audio/video streaming, things got a lot worse. Practically, YouTube worked very poorly, with videos being very sluggish and image quality dropping significantly. In other words, it's not really something we'd recommend, especially if you like your videos to be crystal clear.

So, as a conclusion, we'd say that the only reason why one should get the iPad Wi-Fi + 3G model is related to mobility. If you really want to be able to access your e-mail or various Internet/social networking services/accounts wherever you might be (as long as the 3G signal works, of course), then this is the thing to get. However, if you're most likely going to use the iPad just in the comfort of your own home (or other areas where a Wi-Fi is available at all times) and you're not willing to commit to a wireless data plan from your favorite telecom carrier, then the basic Wi-Fi version should prove OK enough.

The iPad as an Internet Tablet

There's been so much hype around the iPad that, at some point, we sort of compared it with the tablets of Moses, which pretty much the whole world has heard about. In fact, Steve Jobs and Apple really wanted to make the iPad the epitome of the Internet/multimedia tablet trend, the first and best of its kind. And to some extent, they've really managed to achieve this goal, albeit there are still a few areas where we found it to be a bit lacking.

[IMG=101][IMG=102][IMG=105]

Naturally, the first (and most important) thing we'll point out is the lack of support for Flash... yeah, this particular issue is a very hot one nowadays, with Adobe and Apple throwing all sorts of jabs at each other over their respective stances on this issue.

[IMG=103][IMG=104]

As far as we're concerned, we can't really say that we miss Flash too much on the iPad. I mean, sure, there were a couple of websites we weren't able to access (including a few offering access to various Flash-based games, for example), but nothing major, really. On the other hand, we've seen plenty of Flash-running sites that gave us a hell of a time in Linux but worked perfectly on the iPad (and its built-in browser, Apple's Safari), which leads us to believe that certain optimization processes have occurred.

[IMG=106][IMG=107][IMG=108][IMG=109]

We've mentioned in a previous section of the review that we were pretty content with Safari's loading times and overall behavior, but there's one thing we did not particularly enjoy, namely its approach to tabbed browsing. So, whenever one will open a new tab on Safari, that will be automatically activated and sent into a whole separate page, available by pressing a very tiny button on top of the browser.

Sure, the idea of creating a separate page for the new tab doesn't seem that bad, but the way Apple has implemented the access to these secondary tabs is absolutely atrocious. It's really sad, really, because it bummed down the whole browsing experience, which was otherwise pretty cool, overall.

We were particularly happy with how some of everyone's favorite social-networking services (Facebook and Twitter, namely) worked on this thing. In fact, one visiting guest who spent a couple of minutes with the iPad (hardcore twitter fan and technical PR for one of Apple's

arch-enemies in the IT field) even told us that the thing seemed to be "built for Twitter."

[IMG=87][IMG=88][IMG=90]

The iPad's built-in eMail client seems pretty well developed as well, but, to be honest, we're not really ready to give up on our web-based email accounts just yet. However, the application is fairly straightforward and easy to use, so it's likely that many people will ultimately get tired of checking out other accounts and go for the built-in version.

Naturally, the iPad has a special, optimized app dedicated to YouTube (albeit the service is Flash-based, it's been specially ported in order to work on the not-Flash-friendly device from Apple), which works in a very interesting manner, providing quick access to the huge library of videos offered by the aforementioned service. And while there's nothing particularly outstanding as far as the video playback is concerned (apart from the image quality, perhaps), we can't help but mention the real-time crop/zoom-in option provided by the video player. Very cool thing, indeed.

[IMG=89][IMG=91][IMG=92]

Well, to sum things up, as far as the Internet tablet functionality is concerned, the iPad really manages to live up to the hype. Sure, it might not support the Flash technology and the tab system is far from great, but, overall, it works quite well, offering seamless access to the very large amounts of content available online.

The iPad as an eBook reader

As some of you will certainly remember from our various articles regarding the iPad published ever since its launch, the tablet is not only seen by the company from Cupertino as a rival for notebooks, but for eBook readers as well. Practically, with the iPad, Apple entered the eBook-distribution game, where Amazon and Google had previously reigned supreme, and although it's a bit early to pass judgment on their success in this field, we'd dare say that the company from Cupertino has a pretty cool thing going, with its combo of an easily accessible online bookstore and a device that manages to provide quite an interesting book-reading app.

So, right from the start, we'll have to say that we were thoroughly impressed by the iBooks application, whether we're talking about the library menu or about the book-reading experience itself.

[IMG=93][IMG=94][IMG=95]

In the first case, the visual effect provided by all those books perfectly lined up and just waiting to be browsed is a very impressive one, and although we're only talking about a visual gimmick, it's certainly a plus.

However, the app really shines when it comes to book reading, especially in landscape mode. The feeling of reading a real-life paperback book is enhanced by the page-turning effects (one almost feels like turning the pages of a real book) and by the overall look of the app. Sure, the eInk screen on the Kindle might be a lot closer to real paper, but the overall experience is superior on the iPad.

[IMG=96][IMG=97][IMG=98]

Plus, the tablet from Apple also delivers a couple of options one would not have available in the case of a real book. For example, you'll be able to easily adjust the screen brightness, as well as modify the fonts or zoom in on certain paragraphs. And if you're not familiar with the definition of a certain word, don't worry, the iPad also offers fast and easy access to the built-in dictionary.

However, in the long term, we've found the iPad to be a little bit difficult on the eyes. I mean, after a couple of hours of reading, our eye lids felt pretty heavy and the rear side of our eyes

started to hurt just a little bit. Sure, the fact that we'd been staring into an LCD display all day might have had something to do with this as well, but that's really not the point here.

[IMG=99][IMG=100]

Anyway, as far as eBook reading is concerned, the iPad will probably be quite a game-changer. It's very likely that people of all ages, but especially children, will be easily drawn to the colorful pages and impressive graphics offered by the tablet, which is ultimately a lot more exciting than the solutions provided by its direct competitors. Plus, the Voice Over app will also allow the iPad to read out loud stories to children, thus somewhat replacing the parent (OK, we'll admit it, this is a scary thought).

The iPad as a portable multimedia player

Of course, the iPad is also touted as being one of the most advanced PMPs out there, and while there's some truth to this claim, we wouldn't go as far as saying that it's the best.

The iPad does have a couple of things going for it in this field, though, one of the most important being the direct (on-device) access to what has become possibly the world's greatest content library, namely Apple's iTunes service. From here, users are able to easily download their favorite songs, videos, podcats, etc. directly into the device's memory, which will then be played with the help of the built-in application.

[IMG=61][IMG=66][IMG=67][IMG=68]

Now, while audio playback is not grand and the video player also seemed a bit... Spartan to us, providing way too few options, the truth of the matter is that video (and especially HD video) manages to really take full advantage of the great display the iPad comes equipped with. The clip-watching experience is quite an impressive one, with details, contrast and colors being pushed to the max.

[IMG=62][IMG=63][IMG=64][IMG=65]

Audio, however, is sort of restricted by the built-in speaker, so those users who really want to enjoy good quality sound will probably have to resort to earphones. Due to the positioning of the audio jack, though, this experience will be far from comfortable.

Another interesting thing worth mentioning in this segment is the fact that the Apple iPad is perhaps one of the coolest connected digital photo-frames out there. The device can easily handle hi-res pictures in a variety of formats, taking advantage once again of the impressive image quality delivered by the built-in display. Plus, the powerful system-on-a-chip the iPad is built around makes it quite easy for users to zoom in the photos, rotate them, move them around, etc., all of these processes working absolutely seamlessly, even in the case of large file sizes.

[IMG=110][IMG=111][IMG=112]

There are plenty of other photo-management options to play around with, but we won't go into other details on this subject right now. What we will tell you, however, is that you'll probably require some sort of stand in order to take full advantage of the photo viewing/slideshow capabilities, similar to the one we've used (the Macally protective case mentioned above was versatile enough to enable such a functionality as well).

The iPad as a notebook/netbook replacement

The first thing we'll have to mention within this segment is that, from certain points of view, the iPad will never ever be able to replace your average netbook or low-power notebook. I mean, those portable computing systems offer a lot more features than the tablet from Apple will ever do, probably the most important being the support they provide for multitasking.

Sure, the iPad will manage to carry out successfully at least a couple of the tasks traditionally associated with netbooks and notebooks, such as Internet browsing, multimedia playback, photo watching, checking one's email, engaging in IM conversations, updating one's status on a social networking service, etc. Plus, it will also support Apple's proprietary office applications, and it delivers a couple of interesting contact and time-management functions, which busy businesspersons will most likely find quite useful.

[IMG=50][IMG=52]

Oh, and we must not forget, we also know that it works with [Apple's Magic Mouse](#), and supports the addition of an external keyboard, via the built-in proprietary port, which means that users who simply can't get used to the virtual keyboard will be able to benefit from the advantages provided by real-life keys.

[IMG=51][IMG=53][IMG=54]

Another interesting thing worth mentioning here is that the iPad can also double as a navigation device, the built-in A-GPS system, combined with the Maps app creating a pretty solid solution, which we've quickly come to appreciate. After all, there are only a handful of netbooks providing such a level of functionality out there, the most notable being Sony's Vaio P series. Plus, Maps moves more seamlessly on the iPad than on any other device we've tested it onto.

[IMG=55][IMG=56][IMG=57]

One of the main reasons why we believe that the iPad is NOT a suitable notebook/netbook replacement is related to the lack of suitable connectivity options. Sure, those can be added via an adapter, but as mentioned above, they're not available natively, which is certainly a minus. And we'll also have to say that the deep customization options are virtually non-existent, Apple locking down everything pretty tightly in order to avoid crashes and other unfortunate user experiences.

[IMG=58][IMG=60][IMG=59]

Additionally, while the hardware powering the iPad is powerful, it's not nearly enough so to support some of the specialized applications available out there (we're not even sure that such apps are compatible with the iPad OS). For this reason, we really don't see the notebook segment in any danger right now, albeit netbooks might indeed face some serious competition from Apple's device (at least at the mainstream consumer level, that is).

Battery life

Apple claims that the iPad's battery life can go as high as 11 hours, in certain (very specific) situations. However, as far as we're concerned, it's better that you bet on around half that time, especially if you own a Wi-Fi + 3G model, whose 3G module requires a lot more battery.

Sure, the power consumption depends greatly on the task at hand and on the display's brightness, and for this reason, we'll refrain from passing definite judgments on this issue, saying only that it will be extremely difficult to attain that perfect battery life claimed by Apple.

[[BREAK=Conclusions]]

The good

- very slim form factor;
- high level of versatility;
- very high-quality display with multi-touch support;
- impressive build quality;
- powerful 1Ghz chip;

- very good browsing and eBook reading experiences;
- fairly easy to customize;
- built-in access to iTunes;
- easily adjustable brightness;
- built-in A-GPS and accelerometer;
- built-in 3G, Bluetooth and Wi-Fi modules;
- supports easy addition of apps from the App store.

The bad

- gets full of fingertip marks, very fast;
- no multi-tasking;
- no Flash support;
- no webcam;
- poor built-in speaker;
- poor placement of the audio jack;
- no built-in USB ports and/or SD card ports;
- relatively poor battery life.

Overall impressions

As far as we're concerned, the iPad is yet another one of Apple's huge successes, one of the main reasons being the fact that it manages to perfectly fit the whole consumerist trend found in the world's most developed countries. I mean, it's a device that pretty much targets those people who don't really care about specs or installing their own apps, but rather about the overall experience a device is able to provide. It's not something tech-savvy customers will use as a primary working device, but it is something they might employ during their leisure time, when they simply feel too lazy to fire up their notebooks.

Now, moving past these early (and somewhat subjective) conclusions, we'll have to admit that the iPad is one cool device, which manages to perfectly carry out the tasks it's been designed for in a manner that will leave no user unhappy. Sure, it might not have multi-tasking, or a webcam, but at least Apple is commendable for not having implemented into the iPad certain features that the hardware configuration would not have supported 100 percent.

As you've been able to see for yourselves throughout our review, the iPad is an extremely versatile device, capable of carrying out a very large number of tasks (Internet tablet, eBook reader, PMP, etc.). Nevertheless, its greatest asset is represented not by what it can do now, but about what it can do in the future. With the iPhone, Apple has demonstrated that the physical device is, in fact, just a support, a gate for opening a world of content and applications, and things are even better with the iPad, whose potential is absolutely huge.

So, we must not forget that this is only a platform. A tool that offers access to a world of content available online, as well as offline, via the numerous apps developed for it. In fact, from this point of view (and in spite of all the criticism), the iPad is an absolutely fantastic and revolutionary product. It will certainly feel simply way too limited for tech-buffs and power-users, but we foresee it being adopted in very large numbers by those people with less technical expertise but really eager to be able to access the whole eco-system the iPad enables in a very light and user-friendly form factor.

[IMG=46][IMG=47]

It's still rather debatable whether the iPad will manage to become the ultimate tablet/eBook reader/notebook killer, though, not because it doesn't have what it takes for it (it certainly

does, and future iterations will most likely further improve the experience), but simply because pretty much every major name in the IT segment is now in pursuit, and will do their best to beat it. And only time will tell whether the user experience provided by Android or the WebOS will manage to outdo the mighty iPad.

Sales package

- iPad;
 - Dock Connector to USB Cable;
 - 10W USB Power Adapter;
 - Documentation.
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