

# What is a tablet computer?

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Tablets are small, flat computers with touchscreens that are between a book and a magazine in size. They're like large versions of a smartphone.




The most popular tablet computers at the time of writing are the Apple iPad and the Samsung Galaxy Tab.

## Key features and benefits of tablet computers

- Tablet computers are usually less powerful than 'proper' PCs. Instead of working via a fully fledged operating system (OS) such as Windows, a tablet will generally use an extended version of a smartphone OS.
- Small enough to fit in the hand but large enough to display a lot of text at a decent size, tablets are intended to bring the feeling of a book or magazine to a computer.
- The tablet is ideal for browsing the web, its size and shape making it easy to read and hold. All tablets include [wifi](#) to help you browse, with many including a 3G or 4G connection as well, allowing you to connect to the internet from anywhere.
- Just like smartphones, tablet computers will usually have access to an 'app store' where you can purchase and download a huge number of applications (or 'apps'). These can perform any number of things, from word processing to games – and are also designed for the tablet's larger screen.
- Tablet computers are also excellent media players. They'll play music on headphones or through their own speakers. Even more enticingly, videos look excellent on the relatively large screen.
- Most tablets include e-reader software that allows you to download books and other written material from the internet and read it on the machine. However, even though the 'e-ink' screens of dedicated e-reader devices such as the [Amazon Kindle](#) are much easier on the eyes for intensive reading, they're not considered tablets as they're not multifunctional enough. With the new launch of Kindle Fire, the reader element is an application and the screen is in colour like other tablets and it offers more functionality.
- Generally tablet computers have smaller screens than standard computers, which some people may find difficult to use.
- Some people may also find the access method of finger or pen more difficult, particularly if using a virtual onscreen keyboard, where the letters are smaller and therefore it is a smaller target.

***Alex Duin is a freelance writer, specialising in technology.***

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