

Review: Samsung Galaxy Tab vs. Apple iPad

November 19 2010, By Mark W. Smith



More than eight months after the release of the Apple iPad, fans of Google's Android mobile operating system finally have a contender in the race for tablet supremacy.

The Samsung Galaxy Tab is just the first in an avalanche of [Android](#) tablets planned for release in the winter months.

The Galaxy Tab is much smaller than the iPad, with just a 7-inch screen. That makes it a breeze to hold with just one hand. It feels more like an oversized [smartphone](#) than the [tablet computer](#) packed with powerful features that it is.

The iPad's considerable heft - it's almost twice as heavy as the Galaxy Tab - has made it a hard sell for the on-the-go crowd. Samsung's tablet would be a joy on a bus or airplane as a personal gaming or video device.

It features a superfast 1-gigahertz processor that makes navigating around the device snappy. Its touch screen is extremely responsive and never stutters.

It has front- and rear-facing cameras for video chats, mobile hotspot capabilities and turn-by-turn navigation - all unavailable on the iPad, which has sold more than 7 million units.

The Galaxy Tab is available from T-Mobile, Sprint and Verizon, with more carriers coming on board soon. I tested a model on the Verizon network.

FOR READERS AND GAMERS

Samsung has brushed the Galaxy Tab with the same technicolor interface it uses on its superb line of Galaxy smartphones.

And when paired with the tablet's super-vibrant display, that interface is a welcome respite from Android's often utilitarian, machine-like appearance.

The Galaxy Tab also has the same widgets Android users have grown accustomed to, like e-mail and calendar notifications.

As an e-reader, the Galaxy Tab is a no-brainer. Its size is almost exactly the same as the latest [Amazon Kindle](#) - think of a paperback - and the color screen offers utility not available on the leading single-use e-readers.

Users can download the free Android apps for e-booksellers including Amazon and Barnes & Noble to turn the Galaxy Tab into a full-featured e-reader.

The Galaxy's size makes it a great mobile gaming device, too. You'll get the same suite of games available on other Android devices. I found almost all of them to be a great experience, especially the popular Angry Birds, which really shines on this screen size.

TROUBLE IN THE APPS

The Galaxy Tab struggles a bit, though, if you're looking for a fully realized computing experience.

And Android - historically the less-polished sibling of Apple's iOS mobile platform - struggles a bit on the bigger screen.

The apps available for the Galaxy Tab are the same available on any Android smartphone, and [Google](#) has been mum on whether it plans to open a separate section of its Android Market for tablet-optimized apps.

This creates a roadblock for developers, who are now in the position of designing one program that will be on screens of several sizes and on devices from several manufacturers.

Even the app for Google's own YouTube video-sharing service feels less than fully featured. When a list of videos is viewed in landscape mode, the vertical list runs the entire width of the device. This is a wasted opportunity to provide more context for the videos in a preview pane on the right or left.

When using the 7-inch tablet, you're seeing the same thing you'd see on your 3-inch smartphone screen, and in many cases that doesn't feel like

enough.

And, like other Android devices, the Gmail inbox is still maddeningly relegated to a separate app, keeping it separate from other e-mail accounts.

SMARTPHONE FEEL, IPAD PRICE

There's no doubt, though, that there will be considerable interest in these Android tablets as they roll out.

And the brisk competition should bring down prices for tablets, which are still prohibitively expensive.

The Galaxy Tab retails for a whopping \$600 - just \$30 less than a comparable iPad.

But while the [iPad](#) feels like a wholly different computing experience, the [Galaxy Tab](#) ultimately feels like an indulgently large smartphone.

Now, there's nothing wrong with an indulgently large smartphone. In fact, I'll take two, please.

But paying \$600 for one - in addition to more monthly 3G connectivity fees - is a hard road to cross.

SAMSUNG GALAXY TAB

- Carriers: Available now from T-Mobile, Sprint and Verizon Wireless; coming soon to AT&T and U.S. Cellular

- Operating system: Android 2.2 (Froyo)
- Price: \$400 with two-year contract from T-Mobile or Sprint, \$600 from Verizon
- Data plan: Verizon tablet data plans start at \$20 per month for 1 GB and go up to \$80 for 10 GB; T-Mobile data plans are \$25 for 200 MB or \$40 for unlimited data each month; Sprint offers 2 GB for \$30 or 5 GB for \$60.
- Weight: 13.58 ounces
- Size: 4.74-by-.47-by-7.48 inches
- Screen: 7-inch WSVGA display; 1024x600 pixels
- Camera: 3-megapixel rear-facing with LED flash, 1.3 megapixel front-facing; 720p video recording
- Storage: 16GB microSD preinstalled, expandable up to 32GB

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