

# Tablets: How best to bridge phone, laptop

December 2 2010, By David Sarno

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The season of the tablet computer has arrived. Sparked eight months ago by Apple Inc.'s debut of the iPad, every major computer company is now trying to get one in stores in time for holiday shopping.

But just what is a tablet, and why would you want one?

It's part laptop and part smart phone - a [mobile computer](#) that enables consumers to watch video, read books, talk on the phone and play games, whether on the couch, at the desk or somewhere in between.

But because nearly every one of those features is already available on mobile phones or PCs or both, the tablet is still struggling to show why it's special. That's partly because a "killer app" - which would make the tablet indispensable - has yet to emerge.

What is clear is that the tablet, with its touch screen, allows for a more visual approach to computing.

Professionals who deal heavily in video and images - interior decorators, Web designers, surveyors - can easily carry around large portfolios to show colleagues and clients.

As more models come with built-in cameras, the tablet will allow for mobile videoconferencing - so that users can show each other rooms, job sites or documents in real time.

But for most consumers, the tablet is still so new that it's not clear where

it fits into their day.

The motley crew of iPad competitors now hitting stores shows that even tablet makers aren't sure what consumers want in a tablet.

Should the screen be large enough to read a screenplay at full size, or small enough to comfortably fit in the pocket of your jeans? Is \$800 too expensive? Is 2 pounds too heavy? Does it need to have a camera? To make phone calls?

We look at a few tablets that will be available for the holidays. But these are just the first wave: Many more tablets are expected next year from electronics heavyweights like Hewlett-Packard Co., Google Inc. and BlackBerry maker [Research in Motion](#) Ltd.

### [APPLE IPAD:](#)

-Price: \$499 for the 16 GB Wi-Fi, \$629 for the 16 GB 3G

-Size: 9.6 by 7.5 inches with a 9.7-inch (diagonal) screen

-Battery life: 10 hours

-Weight: 1.5 pounds

-Processor speed: 1 GHz

-Disk space/capacity: 16, 32 or 64 GB

-Operating system: iOS

-Number of apps: 250,000-plus

-Camera: None

-Internet connection: Wi-Fi-only and Wi-Fi plus 3G models

-Touch-screen rating: 4 out of 5. Sensitive, bright. Resolution could be better.

-Overall: Thumbs up

-Impressions: The iPad is still the Cadillac of tablet computers, with its large screen, fast processor and elegant design. The device has attracted thousands of software developers, who are creating a huge stream of new applications - but the so-called killer app for the iPad has yet to arrive, and until it does, it's still not a must-have.

-By David Sarno

### SAMSUNG GALAXY TAB:

-Price: \$400 to \$650

-Size: 7.48" x 4.74" with a 7" (diagonal) screen

-Battery life: 7 to 10 hours

-Weight: 13.4 ounces

-Processor speed: 1 GHz

-Disk space/capacity: 2 GB built-in flash drive, with a microSD card slot

-Operating system: Google Android 2.2 (Froyo)

- Number of apps: 100,000-plus
- Camera: 3.0 megapixel with an LED flash for photos and video on back, and 1.3 megapixel on the front for video chat
- Internet connection: Wi-Fi and 3G
- Touch-screen rating: 4.5. The LCD screen is responsive and looks great, though it's not as sharp as the iPad or Samsung's AMOLED screens found on the Galaxy S [smart phones](#).
- Overall: Thumbs up
- First impression: For users who think the iPad is too big and their smart phone is too small, the Galaxy Tab might be ideal. It's about the size of a thin paperback book - making it a solid e-reader. Its light weight makes it easy to carry around. But the smaller screen makes apps for e-mail and, at times, the Web browser, feel undersized when compared with the iPad.
- By Nathan Olivarez-Giles, Los Angeles Times

#### DELL STREAK:

- Price: \$299 with 2-year service contract, \$549 without
- Size: 3.1 by 6 inches with 5-inch (diagonal) screen
- Battery life: Unpublished, but has removable battery
- Weight: 7.7 ounces
- Processor speed: 1 GHz

- Disk space/capacity: 512 MB onboard, 32 GB with microSD card
- Operating system: Google Android 1.6
- Number of apps: 100,000-plus
- Camera: Video camera in front, 5.0-megapixel camera with flash in back
- Internet connection: Wi-Fi and 3G
- Touch-screen rating: 4. Responsive. Impressive definition.
- Overall: Thumbs up
- Impressions: Dell's Streak is a perfectly competent multifunctional touch-screen device that shoots good-quality pictures and video, allows voice and video chat and delivers a comfortable browsing experience. But it's way too small to be considered a tablet. It's more an outsize smart phone.
- By Craig Howie, Los Angeles Times

**MAYLONG M-150:**

- Price: \$99 at [walmart.com](http://walmart.com)
- Size: 7.5" x 4.6" with 7" (diagonal) screen
- Battery life: About 3 hours
- Weight: 13.5 ounces

- Processor speed: 533 MHz
- Disk space/capacity: 2 GB built-in flash drive, with a microSD card slot
- Operating system: Google Android 1.6
- Number of apps: 100,000-plus
- Internet connection: Wi-Fi only
- Camera: 0.3 megapixel front-facing camera for photos and video
- Touch-screen rating: 2.5 out of 5. It's not very bright, is low-resolution and is slow to respond. Stylus works better than fingers.
- Overall: Maybe
- First impression: The Maylong M-150 is the nicer of the two bargain-basement tablets we tested, but you get what you pay for. The screen reacts better with a stylus than a finger, but there is no slot for your stylus. And the overall unit feels like it's made with low-quality plastics, with buttons and a screen coating that doesn't quite fit right.

-By Nathan Olivarez-Giles

#### AUGEN GENTOUCH 78:

- Price: \$150 to \$250, available at Kmart and Amazon.com
- Size: 7.4 by 4.6 inches, 7-inch (diagonal) screen
- Battery life: About 3 hours

- Weight: 12.2 ounces
- Processor speed: 800 MHz
- Disk space/capacity: 2 GB built-in flash drive, with a microSD card slot
- Operating system: [Google](#) Android 2.1
- Number of apps: 100,000-plus
- Camera: None
- Internet connection: Wi-Fi only
- Touch-screen rating: 1 out of 5. It's not very bright, and the coating causes a lot of glare and makes everything look like it's behind a gray haze. The device is also low-resolution and slow to respond.
- Overall: Thumbs down
- Impressions: I had hoped the Gentouch, with a faster processor than the Maylong tablet's, would be faster, but it's not. The touch screen may be the problem. It is slow to respond to touch, and the picture is never bright enough to properly fight off glare. Outside, it's almost unusable in the sun. This, like the Maylong tablet, feels like an unfinished product.
- By Nathan Olivarez-Giles

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