

# Inside Motorola's Xoom: Plenty of horsepower

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In this Feb. 2, 2011 file photo, a motorola Xoom tablet is shown at Google headquarters in Mountain View, Calif., Wednesday, Feb. 2, 2011. The Xoom is seen as the first real competition for the iPad — or at least for the first generation of Apple's wildly popular device, which launched a year ago. (AP Photo/Paul Sakuma, File)

Motorola's new Xoom tablet computer has enough power under the hood to challenge Apple Inc.'s iPad, according to analysis by market researchers IHS iSuppli, but buyers might be disappointed to find that it will need new hardware to work on new, high-speed networks.

The Xoom is seen as the first real competition for the iPad - or at least for the first generation of Apple's wildly popular device, which launched a year ago. Other gadget makers have tried to mimic Apple's success with the keyboardless, touch-screen computer, but the iPad remains the nascent market's clear leader, and Apple is expected to unveil the second-generation iPad next week.

Motorola's Xoom, which went on sale Thursday, may have the best shot yet at winning a slice of the tablet business from Apple. Motorola's tablet has a 10.1-inch screen, slightly larger than the iPad's, and dual cameras for video chatting and recording high-definition video.

The original iPad didn't come with a camera, though the second generation is rumored to also have front and back cameras. The Xoom is the first tablet running a new version of [Google](#) Inc.'s [Android](#) software designed specifically for tablets, rather than earlier versions that were meant to work on much smaller [smart phones](#).

While Apple's iPad costs \$499 to \$829, depending on storage space and Internet configuration, the Xoom comes in one model with one price - \$800, or \$600 with a two-year contract with [Verizon Wireless](#).

When IHS iSuppli opened up the Xoom, it spotted two components that should make for a speedy device. One is a dual-core processor from Nvidia, which controls how fast the gadget runs its software. In theory at least, this should be about twice as speedy as Apple's own chip.

The Xoom also packs more of the type of memory that helps applications run faster.

"On paper, Motorola's Xoom should be running laps around the iPad," said iSuppli analyst Wayne Lam said. In practice, however, he said it also depends on how well Google's software takes advantage of the

powerful hardware.

Motorola appears to have skimmed a bit on the quality of the display, at least compared with what Apple was willing to spend. Lam said the Xoom has a more limited range of colors. The iPad will also do a better job of showing people what's on the screen even if they're not looking at the device head-on, whereas on the Xoom, the image will appear to fade out when the tablet is held at an angle.

The parts of the Xoom that control how touch-sensitive the screen is, however, are on par with what's inside the iPad, Lam said.

In terms of battery life, the iPad, which runs for about 10 hours, may still have an edge, though this, too, depends on software and other factors. The iPad has two batteries that are each twice as big as the single battery in the Xoom, Lam said.

One of the Xoom's distinguishing features is that the tablet can be upgraded in the future to work on Verizon's speedy new "4G," or fourth-generation, network, which is expected to be available in nearly 40 cities by the end of this year. Lam said he was surprised to find out that Motorola didn't build the necessary 4G radios into the Xoom - instead, people will need to hand over their tablet for a hardware upgrade.

In addition to GPS, an accelerometer, a gyroscope and other sensors also found in Apple's newer gadgets, the [Xoom](#) has a built-in atmospheric pressure monitor that Lam thinks could be used to help people navigate large indoor spaces, because that could help figure out whether the user is on the first floor or the fifth, for example.

"What happened here is a perfect storm. Google came up with Android 3.0," Lam said, "and [Motorola](#) seized the moment to come up with high-end hardware."

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