

Asus launches Android-powered tablet

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A Taiwanese model displays an Asus Eee Pad Transformer during its new product media event, Friday, March 25, 2011, in Taipei, Taiwan. The Asus Eee Pad Transformer features a 10.1-inch touch screen, tablet with a detachable keyboard dock. It will go on the Taiwanese market at a price of NT\$17,999 (US\$ 611) for the 16GB model and NT\$19,999 (US\$ 679) for the 32GB model. (AP Photo/Chiang Ying-ying)

(AP) -- AsusTek Computer Inc. unveiled a sleek tablet computer on Friday, after the Taiwanese firm saw the sales of its once popular line of mini-laptops stall following the launch of Apple's hit iPad.

AsusTek says the EEE Pad Transformer, which runs on the [Android](#) 3.0 operating system, distinguishes itself with an optional keyboard that is

superior to docking options for other tablets because of its light weight and flexibility.

Its 10.1-inch screen with a front and rear camera can be detached from the keyboard to allow users on the move quick Web browsing and film viewing. Plugging it to the keyboard dock, the device can then be used as a full-fledged laptop.

"In our own pursuit of perfection, we offer users more options," AsusTek CEO Jerry Shen told The Associated Press. "They can get a full range of functions including 10-finger touch, Flash supported video viewing, e-book reading, and a physical keyboard so they don't have to deal with any inconveniences."

The EEE Pad Transformer, which became available for pre-order in Taiwan on Friday, goes on sale in the U.K. on March 30, to be followed by U.S. sales.

In Taiwan, the 16 GB version without the keyboard sells for 14,900 New Taiwan dollars (\$500), while the keyboard version costs NT\$17,900 (\$600). The company did not provide prices for other markets.

Another [Asus](#) tablet, the 12-inch e-Slate powered by the Microsoft [Windows operating system](#), went on sale in January, while two additional Asus tablet models will go on sale soon. Shen said he expected total sales of the four models to reach two million units in 2011.

Taiwan's Acer Inc., the world's third largest computer vendor, has already unveiled four tablet models, as well as a 4.8-inch smartphone that doubles as a tablet. The company says all will be on sale next month.

Shen acknowledged Apple Inc.'s current dominance in the rapidly expanding [tablet computer](#) market, but predicted that its market share

would fall to 50 percent by 2012, as devices run on Android and Microsoft systems pick up steam.

Asus pioneered netbooks - mini-laptops - to great fanfare in 2007. Once seen as a key to the company's growth, sales remained flat in 2010, Shen said, following the iPad's appearance in the marketplace.

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