

# Samsung's new Galaxy Tab has much to like

May 26 2011, By Troy Wolverton

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When it comes to tablets, Apple's iPad so dominates the market that some analysts have wondered whether consumers will have an appetite for any other device.

Samsung is betting they will. The company was one of the first to market an [iPad](#) competitor when it released its original Galaxy Tab last year. Now it's getting ready to release a pair of successors, the Galaxy Tab

10.1 and the Galaxy Tab 8.9, the first of which will hit store shelves next month.

The original Galaxy Tab had a number of problems. It initially cost as much as the iPad, despite having a much smaller screen. It ran a version of Google's [Android](#) operating system that was designed for smaller [smartphone](#) screens and didn't take advantage of the Tab's extra display space. And its rectangular, blocky shape wasn't exactly sexy.

Samsung hasn't addressed the price issue - the larger of the new Tabs will cost the same as the iPad 2; the smaller one a little less - but it aims to answer many of the other complaints about the original Tab. They come with much bigger screens. They run Honeycomb, the version of Android that [Google](#) has developed specifically for tablets. They're also much sleeker devices that borrow shamelessly from the iPad's look and feel.

I've been playing with the larger version of the new tablets - 10.1, so named because it includes a 10.1-inch display - and have been generally impressed. Many of the iPad competitors released so far have felt like works in progress; the 10.1 feels more like a polished product. It's not an iPad-killer, but it's the closest thing yet.

The first thing you'll notice about the Galaxy Tab 10.1 is how thin and light it is. At 1.3 pounds, it's slightly lighter than the new iPad 2. At 11 millimeters, it's a bit thicker but significantly thinner than Motorola's [Xoom](#), which previously was the best Android tablet on the market.

The Tab 10.1's back tapers at the edges, so actually it feels thinner than it is. Regardless, it's a joy to hold.

Like the Xoom, the Tab 10.1 has a higher resolution screen than the iPad 2, and it does a great job of displaying pictures, movies and games. It

also has higher resolution front- and rear-facing cameras than the iPad 2 and unlike Apple's device, it includes a flash with its rear-facing camera, so you can take photos and videos in dark places.

One of the things I really appreciated about the Tab 10.1 was its battery. I was able to use it off and on for days on a single charge. It does a great job on standby; I never had to worry that after not picking it up for a while it suddenly would be out of power. Indeed, Samsung says the Tab 10.1's charge will last 75 days in standby mode and like the iPad 2, will endure 10 hours of constant use.

One of the problems with the Xoom when it launched was that there were almost no apps available in the Android Marketplace that were customized for its large screen. That's starting to change. There are still many more apps that have been customized for the iPad, but you can now find versions of popular apps such as "Angry Birds," Amazon's Kindle and Google Earth that have been designed specifically for tablets such as the Tab 10.1.

Many of the apps designed for Android smartphones will also run on the Tab 10.1, but they don't always look good.

The Tab 10.1 has some other features that distinguish it from the iPad that I didn't appreciate as much. Like the Xoom's screen, the Tab 10.1's is proportioned like a high-definition television. That can be good for displaying HD content, but in my experience, it can make using the device a bit awkward at times.

Trying to hold the device and type on it while in landscape mode can prove challenging, unless you've got extra-wide hands. And apps and Web pages that aren't formatted for the screen can display text that stretches all the way across it, which can make them ugly and daunting to use or read.

Unlike the iPad and the Xoom when it initially launched, the Tab 10.1 supports Adobe's Flash software. That's great if you want to pull up a Flash-enabled Web page or play a Flash game. But the trade-off is that you have to endure Flash-based ads, which can be even more annoying when they take over a tablet display than they are on a much bigger PC screen.



And there are things about the Tab 10.1 that still need to be worked on. It will ship with Android 3.0, which was the initial version of the [operating system](#) designed for tablets. Google has since released Android 3.1, which adds new features and seeks to address some of the bugs in the original version. That version will reportedly be available for the Tab 10.1 in coming weeks.

Regardless, the Android software could still use some work. It would be nice, for instance, if you could do more things with gestures rather than having to use virtual buttons whose purpose sometimes can be difficult to discern from their cryptic icons. Likewise, I found the built-in Gmail program frustrating to use; I had a difficult time figuring out how to move messages from my inbox to various folders within my account.

The Tab 10.1 has a dual-core processor much like that in the Xoom and in the iPad 2. But I found the Tab 10.1 to be like the Xoom: sluggish. Its graphic effects, such as switching between home screens or telescoping in and out of the apps folder, are neither speedy nor smooth.

Overall, though, the Tab 10.1 is fine device. I can't recommend it over the iPad, but if you're in the market for something other than Apple's device, it's a good choice.

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#### SAMSUNG [GALAXY TAB](#) 10.1:

-Troy's rating: 7.5 (out of 10)

-Likes: Thin and light case; high-resolution screen; long battery life

-Dislikes: Proportions can make it awkward to use; graphic effects sluggish; includes older version of Android

-Specs: 1-gigahertz dual-core processor; front- and rear-facing cameras; 10.1-inch wide-screen display; Wi-Fi connection to the Internet

-Price: \$500 with 16GB of storage; \$600 with 32GB

-Web: [samsung.com](http://samsung.com)

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