

Review: Prettier iPad retains familiar qualities

March 8 2012, By MICHAEL LIEDTKE , AP Technology Writer



A new Apple iPad is on display during an Apple event in San Francisco, Wednesday, March 7, 2012. The new iPad features a sharper screen and a faster processor. Apple says the new display will be even sharper than the high-definition television set in the living room. (AP Photo/Paul Sakuma)

I have grown fond of my iPad 2 during the past nine months. So, I was curious if I would like my tablet computer any less once I saw Apple's new and improved iPad.

The verdict: I won't be abandoning my iPad 2 for its sexier successor anytime soon.

Although Apple Inc.'s latest temptress may turn some heads, the new iPad isn't radically different from last year's model, based on the 15 minutes I was able to spend noodling with the device at the company's product launch Wednesday.

If you don't already own a [tablet computer](#), and want one, then the new iPad will be tough to resist - if you can afford it. The device, which goes on sale March 16 in the U.S., Canada and 10 other countries, will sell for \$499 to \$829. If you want to save some money, consider the iPad 2, which Apple will continue making and sell for as low as \$399.

The new iPad's alluring screen quality provides the main attraction. A higher-resolution screen called "Retina Display" makes everything - from vacation pictures to the text on a website - look crisper. By Apple's calculations, the new iPad offers four times the resolution of its predecessor.

For that reason, you're more likely to buy the new iPad if you are a shutterbug, a [video game](#) fanatic or someone who enjoys watching movies on a smaller but luscious screen.

Watching a few minutes of the movie "Hugo" proved to be even more lustrous on the new iPad than it on my 52-inch flat-panel TV at home. Apple says this should be a routine experience, given that the new iPad can accommodate about 1 million more pixels than even the best HDTVs currently on the market.

Video games look even more realistic, thanks in part to the quad-core [graphics chips](#) in the new iPad.

On the down side, an old video on YouTube looked even grainier on the iPad's higher-resolution screen. It reminded me a little of what happens when I mistakenly flip to a standard [television channel](#) on my [HDTV](#).

While the imagery can be quite mesmerizing, I am not convinced it's a compelling enough reason for most people to replace one iPad for another

When I just flipped through some photos of some recent trips to Kauai and Pittsburgh that I have stored on my iPad 2, I wasn't wishing I could see what the pictures would look like on a new iPad. I also watched a few minutes of "Lost In Translation" on my iPad 2 without wonder what Scarlett Johansson would look like if were watching the same movie on the new iPad.

Bottom line: None of the content you have on an iPad 2 will suddenly look fuzzier even after you've seen something on the new iPad. More importantly, other common iPad activities such as Web surfing, checking email and jumping on to Facebook or Twitter, seem to work the same on either the new or old model.

The new iPad includes one intriguing feature that I wish I could have tried. There's a new microphone icon on the iPad's virtual keyboard that can be pressed to dictate emails or other notes on the device. Just say a few sentences and the new iPad is supposed to automatically type up everything you said. Unfortunately, the room where Apple allowed reporters experiment with the new iPad on Wednesday was too loud for the dictation feature to work effectively.

It seems to me, though, that even the new dictation tool might leave some people pining for something more. Just consider how much more appealing the new [iPad](#) would be if Apple had added Siri, the automated personal assistant that has become one of the most popular features on the latest iPhone.

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