

# Review: Google Nexus 7 nice, but content lacking

July 14 2012, By Troy Wolverton

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If you want a tablet but can't afford an iPad, Google's new Nexus 7 is not a bad choice.

It's got a beautiful screen, a refined interface and, at \$200, a compelling price. It also has a front camera and a zippy quad-[core processor](#), features that the similarly priced [Amazon Kindle](#) Fire lacks.

But I'm not ready to call it the next-best thing to the iPad, much less an iPad killer. That's because when it comes to games, movies and TV shows - some of the things you're most likely to want on a tablet - the [Nexus](#) 7 comes up short, not only to the iPad but also to the Kindle Fire.

Like the Fire, the Nexus 7 sports a 7-inch screen and puts movies, books and music front and center. Like Amazon, [Google](#) has also tried to closely tie its tablet to its media and app store. Not only will you find a link to the Google Play marketplace in the [taskbar](#), but each of the media apps provides links to related sections of the Google store. Taken as a whole, these apps and links offer the kind of seamless experience that users have found on the iPad or on the Fire.

But Google clearly was trying to surpass the Kindle Fire. Unlike that tablet, the Nexus 7 has a forward-facing camera that can be used to make video calls. And it has the latest in [mobile computer](#) brains, in this case a chip that sports four [processor cores](#) for heavy duty tasks and an extra, efficient fifth processor that can be used for background and non-intensive tasks.

What's likely to be more important to consumers, though, is that the Nexus 7 has a much higher resolution screen than the Fire. It's not a "retina" display - as Apple dubs the super-high-resolution screen on the new iPad - but it does display much clearer images and text than its [rivals](#). Thanks to that screen and its small size compared to the iPad, it makes a great device for reading e-books.

Unlike the Kindle Fire, which runs a heavily customized version of Android, the Nexus 7 runs a "pure" version of the operating system, one

free of pre-installed "junkware" apps that no one wants or uses and sporting Google's own interface. It also runs the latest flavor of Android, version 4.1, nicknamed "Jelly Bean."

For users, one of the best parts of the new operating system is its responsiveness. I've long found Android tablets to be sluggish. The Nexus 7, by contrast, is much, much smoother.

Another cool feature in Jelly Bean is Google Now, which is Google's take on Apple's Siri virtual assistant feature. As you can with Siri, you can search for information on Google Now by simply asking it a question aloud. You can ask it to tell you the score of last night's Giants game, for example, or to give the square root of 81 or to show you nearby Vietnamese restaurants. Google Now responds quickly with the information you want, at least most of the time.

Other things to like about the Nexus 7 are that it feels solidly built. Its rubberized back makes it easy to grip and hold. And Google claims that its battery will last 10 hours, which is longer than the Fire. I didn't specifically test that claim, but I was able to use the Nexus 7 off and on over the course of three days before I needed to recharge it.

The Nexus 7 is by no means perfect. You can't get a version of the device that can connect to the Internet via the cellphone network, so you may have a tough time going online if you are away from home. The largest amount of storage you can get on the device is 16 gigabytes - and that's on the \$250 version of the gadget - which may not be enough to store all the songs, movies or apps you want to watch or use. And it lacks a rear camera, which can be useful not only for video chats but also for taking pictures.

And it has an even more important shortcoming: the amount of content.

Take games, for example. Of the top 20 paid games on the [iPad](#), 14 aren't available for the Nexus 7, either because they aren't available on Android or because they haven't been customized for the device. Among them are "FIFA Soccer 12," "Lego Harry Potter," "Mass Effect: Infiltrator" and an authorized version of "Tetris." Many of these games will likely become available after the Nexus 7 launches, as developers tweak them for the new device, but at least some won't be available on launch day.

And users face similar problems with Google's selection of movie and TV shows. While Google does a reasonable job of offering the most popular movies, its selection is sparse outside of them. Of the top 10 science-fiction movies on iTunes, four aren't available from Google Play. Of the top 15 TV shows sold on iTunes, five are unavailable from Google, including "Game of Thrones," "Mad Men" and "Sherlock."

Because it is dependent on the Android ecosystem, the Kindle Fire faces similar problems as the Nexus 7 when it comes to games. But thanks to its ties to Amazon, which has an extensive digital video store, the Fire has a much better selection of movies and TV shows.

That's why, even with all of the Nexus 7's nifty design and features, you may be better off with a [Kindle Fire](#).

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## GOOGLE NEXUS 7:

-Likes: Bright, high-resolution screen; front camera for video chats; smooth, responsive interface; Siri-like Google Now feature; solid build; low price

-Dislikes: No rear camera; no 3G or 4G option; limited storage; paucity

of available games, movies and TV shows

-Specs: Quad-core processor with fifth, low-energy core; 7-inch, 1280 x 800 pixel display; 1.2 megapixel front camera; up to 16GB of storage

-Info: \$200, for 8-gigabyte model; \$250 for 16-gigabyte version;  
[www.google.com/nexus](http://www.google.com/nexus)

**More information:** Troy Wolverton is a technology columnist for the San Jose Mercury News.

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