

Review: Nook HD+ tablet a lightweight, if imperfect, bargain

April 19 2013, by Troy Wolverton



Nook HD and Nook HD Plus

If you're in the market for a full-sized tablet but don't want to shell out big bucks for an iPad, Barnes & Noble's Nook HD+ is worth a look.

I've long been a fan of Barnes & Noble's [Nook](#) products. They're generally inexpensive, work well, include compelling features, and offer perhaps the best selection of e-books, digital magazines and now catalogs from the likes of Pottery Barn and other retailers.

The Nook HD+ is the big brother to the Nook HD, which I reviewed in December. Its screen is 2 inches larger at the diagonal than the Nook HD, which allows the Nook HD+ to display high definition movies in full 1080p resolution. It also has a slightly faster processor and a battery that offers slightly less use per charge.

The base model of the Nook HD+ costs \$270, which is \$70 more than the entry-level Nook HD. But it includes 16 gigabytes of memory, twice that of the lowest-price Nook HD, and it also includes a \$50 credit that owners can use to buy e-books or rent movies from Barnes & Noble.

Another great thing about the bigger device is that it's very light. At 18 ounces, it's about 20 percent lighter than the [iPad](#). If you hold it for an extended period while reading or watching a movie, you'll appreciate the difference.

Like its smaller sibling, the Nook HD+ is focused on content as much as apps. At the top of the home screen is a virtual carousel on which icons of recently viewed books, magazines and movies as well as apps are displayed. At the bottom of the home screen is a "library" button that links to a virtual bookshelf on which users will find all the Nook content and apps they own.

Barnes & Noble has long offered a large selection of e-books and now has some 3 million on its virtual shelves, more than 1 million of which are free. The company also says it offers the 100 most popular digital magazines. And it has been bulking up its movie offerings. Of the top 20 movies offered on Apple's iTunes, 16 are available from Barnes & Noble's Nook store.

Since Barnes & Noble released the Nook HD last fall, it has added to its tablets support for widgets. Users can now start playing music from Pandora or Spotify from small programs placed on one side of their

[home screen](#), rather than having to launch the programs. They also can get a quick glance at their calendar or see the latest posts from people they follow on Twitter.

Like the Nook HD, the Nook HD+ offers something Apple's iPad line doesn't: support for multiple users. You can create separate areas on the device for yourself, your spouse and your kids. For each user, the Nook HD+ will remember bookmarks they've made or the page they left off in particular books.

But the profile feature doesn't work flawlessly. When I switched from one user account to another, I often saw what the last user was viewing, even when turning off the device first. And the Nook HD+ doesn't remember what users were last doing when they log back into their accounts if someone else has used the device in the interim. Users have to reopen books they were reading or relaunch apps they were using.

The Nook HD+ has other shortcomings. Although the Nook tablet line is based on Android, users don't have access to the wide variety of Android apps. Instead, they only have access to those approved by Barnes & Noble and available in the company's app store. And that selection is still spotty.

Unlike tablets from other companies, the Nook HD+ doesn't have any cameras. So you can't use it to take pictures or, more importantly, to make video calls to your family or friends.

And I found the device to be sluggish. When logging in to your account or going back to your home page, it takes several beats for the main home page and your carousel of content to reload.

Still, even with those shortcomings, the Nook HD+ is worth a look. For a full-sized tablet with a high-resolution screen and access to a wide

variety of content, it's a bargain at \$280.

BARNES & NOBLE NOOK HD+ TABLET:

-Troy's rating: 7.0 (out of 10)

-Likes: Relatively inexpensive; lightweight; offers access to a wide variety of books, magazines and movies; supports multiple user profiles

-Dislikes: Sluggish; offers spotty collection of apps; lacks cameras; multiple user feature incomplete

-Specs: 1.5 GHz dual-core processor; 9-inch, 1920 x 1280 pixel screen.

-Price: \$270 for model with 16 GB storage space; \$300 for 32 GB model

-Web: barnesandnoble.com

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