

Microsoft makes cheaper version of Surface Pro 3 tablet

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This product image provided by Microsoft shows the company's new Surface 3 tablet. Microsoft is making the cheaper version of its Surface Pro 3 tablet computer in an effort to reach more people. (AP Photo/Microsoft)

Microsoft is making a cheaper version of its Surface Pro 3 tablet computer in an effort to reach students and budget-conscious families.

Graphic artists, engineers and finance professionals needing to run [complex software](#) might still want the company's higher-end Pro 3, said

Dennis Meinhardt, director of program management for Surface. But the Surface 3 should be good for everyday tasks, he said, and brings the Pro 3's premium feel to a device that will be affordable to more people.

Here's what you need to know.

PRICE

Priced at \$499 (vs \$799 to \$1,949 for the Pro 3), the new tablet has a slightly smaller screen—10.8 inches rather than 12—a slower processor, and less flexible kickstand—just three angles rather than unlimited positions.

A version with more storage and memory will cost \$599. A keyboard cover, one of the Surface's distinctive features, adds another \$129. Microsoft bills the Surface line as a laptop replacement when used with the cover. And Microsoft will sell a stylus separately for \$49. (It's included with the Pro 3.)

LOOKS

The new Surface model is thinner and lighter, partly because it gets rid of the fan—similar to Apple's new MacBook laptop. At 214 pixels per inch, the screen resolution is comparable to the Pro 3's.

Battery life is promised at 10 hours for video playback. The Surface 3 runs the regular version of Windows 8.1, just like the Pro 3. In the past, Microsoft has used a lightweight version called RT in its cheaper tablets. The Surface 3 also has a USB port, a feature that distinguishes the Surface line from most rival tablets.

AVAILABILITY

Microsoft Corp. expects to ship the new device around May 5, with advance orders starting immediately. Versions with LTE cellular access will sell for \$100 more at a later date through T-Mobile and Verizon in the U.S., with other carriers expected. Data plans cost extra.

Besides the U.S., the Surface 3 will be available in Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Hong Kong, Ireland, Italy, Korea, Luxembourg, Malaysia, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Singapore, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, Thailand and the United Kingdom.

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