

# Review: iPad Pro just might replace your laptop

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Every time a new iPad is introduced, I have the same conversation with myself.

"Maybe this one will replace my laptop," I muse.

But alas, each time I've been disappointed.

"Not yet," I mutter. "Maybe someday."

Third-party keyboard cases do a good job at helping the iPad look like a laptop, but a few basic things keep me from my dream.

For my writing, I need a comfortable keyboard, a decently fast processor and screen, and a way to easily move, copy, and paste among my writing program, a browser, and my email.

The iPad has been able to do most of these things, but recent iOS upgrades have added the ability to show two apps at once on the screen for the most recent iPads.

Late last year Apple introduced the iPad Pro, which looked very promising.

For the first time, Apple made an iPad with a bigger screen.

It also introduced a few accessories, like the Apple Pencil and the keyboard cover, that make it even more compelling.

Would this be the model to replace my MacBook Pro?

## BIG SCREEN

I'm still making that decision, but let me tell you how it's going so far.

The first thing you'll notice about the iPad Pro is its 12.9-inch screen.

This is an iPad on steroids.

Apple sells laptops with similarly sized screens.

My own iPad is a 7.9-inch iPad mini, so stepping up almost 5 inches in screen size feels quite luxurious.

The iPad Pro's screen has a resolution of 2,732 by 2,048 pixels (264 pixels per inch).

It runs Apple's A9X processor and has 4 gigabytes of RAM.

You can configure the iPad Pro with 32 or 128 gigabytes of internal storage. Pricing is \$799 for the 32GB model and \$949 for 128GB.

You can add a cellular radio to the 128GB model to bring it up to \$1,079.

Those prices are right in the range of the MacBook Air.

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## Camera and stylus

The main camera has an 8-megapixel sensor with a five-element f/2.4 lens.

The iPad Pro can record 1080p HD video at 30 frames per second and slow-mo video at 120 fps.

There is a 1.2-megapixel front-facing 720p HD camera for FaceTime.

The larger screen makes the iPad Pro a great movie viewer, and Apple

has placed two stereo speakers on either side of the display.

Apple released a new line of accessories for the iPad Pro, including a \$99 stylus called the Apple Pencil.

At a 2010 iPad event, former CEO Steve Jobs said of the competition's offerings, "If you see a stylus, they blew it."

Jobs was very vocally anti-stylus, but Apple is not afraid to reverse course and release products if it sees demand.

The artists I know have been champing at the bit to give the Apple Pencil a spin.

Sorry to say, the Pencil works only with the iPad Pro, which has better touch-screen technology.

The pressure-sensitive Pencil communicates with the iPad Pro at a rate of 240 times per second, for very precise drawing and no lag. It has an internal battery that's charged by plugging into the iPad's lightning port or a regular lightning charging cable.

Apple also took a page from the Microsoft Surface playbook and released a cover with a built-in keyboard.

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## Keyboard options

The Smart Keyboard for iPad Pro costs a hefty \$169. It combines a Smart Cover with a very thin keyboard that folds up to hold the iPad Pro at a very nice angle for typing.

The iPad Pro has a new connector on the side that allows peripherals like the Smart Keyboard to magnetically connect to provide for data and power.

Apple is also letting third parties use the connector, and there are other keyboards already available.

Apple also introduced a new \$29 SD card reader that connects via the iPad Pro's lightning port. The card reader lets users import photos or videos from their cameras directly to the iPad Pro.

I tested the [card reader](#), and it worked perfectly. It also works on other iOS devices with a lightning port.

The iPad has always been a good consumer gadget - meaning it's designed to consume information, like Internet surfing, email, watching videos and playing games.

What it has not done well in the past is create content.

There's no user addressable filing system, so each app has its own way of saving your data and sharing it.

It's easy enough to create a text document, but iPad keyboards are designed to the width of the iPad, which means the keys are crammed together and typing is slow and uncomfortable.

The iPad Pro's 12.9-inch screen means the Apple Smart Keyboard case is wide enough to comfortably type.

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Critique of reviewing

This is my first review typed entirely on an iPad, and I typed it as fast as I would on my regular keyboard.

This is the first iPad I've had that seemed big enough to show and use two apps at a time on the screen, although today very few apps are optimized to take advantage of the split-screen multitasking feature.

I had been using a free writing program called iA Writer for the iPad. When I launched it on the iPad Pro, I found it was not compatible with the iOS split-screen multitasking.

A quick trip to the iOS App Store showed the \$4.99 iA Writer Pro app was a nice step up, including the ability to go split screen.

The combination of typing on a keyboard and navigating a browser with my finger on a screen took a while to become comfortable.

I also found the iPad Pro the perfect way to read magazines and newspapers online. I subscribe to Time magazine, and the electronic edition looks great on the larger screen.

If I can toot my own horn, The Dallas Morning News' e-edition looks great on the iPad Pro as well.

I fired up Sling TV and the four speakers worked really well for watching videos.

As for the iPad Pro replacing my MacBook Pro? Almost, but not quite.

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What Mom thinks

I could use it to do my writing and Internet surfing, but at work, I have to use programs and log into systems that I can't do on an iPad just yet.

So while Jim the columnist could get along with an iPad Pro, Jim the IT guy still needs a laptop.

I took the iPad Pro home over the holidays and let my Mom try it out. She uses an iPad Air 2 as her only computer. While she loved the big screen of the iPad Pro, she found it a bit heavy. I also thought it was a bit heavy to hold, especially in portrait mode. Turning it on its side was much better.

When the iPad was introduced at \$499, it really was a cheaper way to get online.

With three sizes of iPad, Apple has a screen size (and price point) for everyone. I'm really happy with the iPad Pro, but the configuration Apple let me try costs \$1,347 for the iPad, Pencil and Smart Keyboard.

A 13-inch MacBook Air starts at \$999, so there really is a hard decision to be made.

I'm still thinking about it.

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Pros: Great screen, super fast, Pencil input, four speakers

Cons: Expensive

Bottom line: This is a high-end iPad aimed at users who don't mind paying a high-end price.

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