

Review: Apple's newer, smaller iPad Pro a terrific tablet

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When Apple launched its first iPad Pro last fall, I was skeptical of the

jumbo-sized device.

I'm much more enthusiastic about tablet's smaller sibling, which Apple launched late last month. Apple has taken nearly all of the technology and advancements it included in the first iPad Pro model and shoehorned them into a tablet that's much more portable and affordable. Even better, it's added additional features that help the new iPad Pro outclasses its predecessor in significant ways.

My bottom line: The new iPad Pro represents a significant upgrade over previous mid-sized iPad models and is definitely worth considering whether you're shopping for your first tablet or looking to replace an older one.

When Apple released the jumbo iPad Pro last fall, the 12.9-inch device included numerous new features. Those features have now generally trickled down into the new 9.7-inch model.

Like the bigger iPad Pro, the new one is powered by Apple's super-speedy A9X chip, offers a four-speaker stereo sound system, and includes Apple's new "Smart Connector" technology, which allows you to attach and power a physical keyboard without any wires or messing with Bluetooth settings. In what will likely be the big draw for many prospective buyers, the new mid-sized model also supports Apple Pencil, the high-tech stylus the company introduced with the jumbo-sized iPad Pro.

There are still relatively few apps that work with Pencil. And I wish Apple offered wider support for the device within the iPad's operating system and built-in apps.

But Pencil is already becoming a worthy, if pricey, accessory. With certain apps you can use the stylus to take notes and sketch. You can also

use it to annotate email and documents, handwrite digital cards and letters, and design intricate page layouts or create architectural drawings.

And it's great that the new model supports Pencil. Because of its size, the 9.7-inch iPad Pro makes for a much more practical digital notepad than its bigger brother.

The new model also has better cameras in both front and back than the first iPad Pro, replicating what is found in the latest iPhone.

With the new cameras, you can shoot ultra-high definition 4K videos, take higher-resolution selfies, and capture what Apple calls "Live Photos," which are pictures that turn into short videos in a Harry Potter-like fashion when you touch your screen. The new iPad also is the first model to include a flash on the back and the ability to use the display as a flash for the front camera.

The new cameras could be a big boon to consumers who already use the tablet to edit photos and movies or create stop-motion animation. Instead of having to transfer photos they took on their smartphone to their tablet, they can now just shoot directly with the iPad Pro and get the same quality pictures and movies.

Apple has also improved the screen technology in the new iPad Pro. According to Apple, the screen is brighter, can display a significantly wider range of colors and is less reflective. When compared to my iPad Air 2, which was the last major update to Apple's midrange tablet line, the screen on the new iPad Pro was significantly brighter and the colors were less washed out.

Apple's [new model](#) also includes "True Tone," which automatically adjusts the display to the ambient light. As you go from a sunlit field to a room with incandescent light, the new iPad Pro is supposed to adjust its

colors as if it were white paper.

Comparing the new display to that on my iPad Air 2, the iPad Pro generally offered a warmer, yellower light indoors. It wasn't exactly the same tone as white paper in the same light, but it wasn't unpleasing. In fact, it made the screen on my own iPad look decidedly blue and less attractive.

The new device isn't perfect. For one thing, it's pricey. It may not be as expensive as the full-sized iPad Pro, but the base model of the new version still costs \$600, which is \$200 more than the starting price for the similarly sized iPad Air 2.

Apple has been touting the iPad Pro as a laptop replacement. But as capable as it is, it's not yet up to that task, because it lacks some basic PC features. You can't use a mouse with it, for example. You can't easily configure it for multiple users. And your ability to view more than one app at a time is pretty limited - and you can forget seeing more than two at once.

Of course, if you accept that the iPad is distinct from a laptop, that its role is different from that of a PC, these shortcomings will be less important. Tablets may be out of fashion, but I'm still a big fan. And overall, I really like the new iPad Pro. It's not going to replace my laptop, but it might just replace my notepad and pen.

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Troy's **RATING**

9.0 (Out of 10)

What: Apple iPad Pro 9.7-inch tablet

Likes: Thin and lightweight; same camera system as latest iPhone; able to shoot and edit 4K videos; speedy new chip; support for Apple Pencil makes it easier to sketch, take handwritten notes; brighter, more colorful, less-reflective display.

Dislikes: Expensive; doesn't support a mouse or other external tracking devices, limiting its use as a laptop replacement; keyboard accessory is cramped; very limited support for displaying more than one app at a time; no support for multiple user logins.

Specs: 64-bit A9X processor; 9.7-inch, 2048 x 1536 pixel screen; 5-megapixel front and 12-megapixel rear cameras.

Price: \$600 for 32-gigabyte model, \$750 for 128-gigabyte model and \$900 for 256-gigabyte model

Web: apple.com

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