

Amazon slashes price, adds Alexa to new Fire tablet

September 8 2016, by Mae Anderson



This undated image provided by Amazon shows color options of the new Amazon Fire HD 8 tablet. Amazon has cut the price of its new Fire tablet almost in half and added its popular voice assistant, Alexa, in hopes of making it a hot

holiday item, despite a slump in overall tablet sales. (Amazon via AP)

Amazon wants to be under the Christmas tree this year. It's cut the price of its new Fire tablet almost in half and added its popular voice assistant, Alexa, in hopes of making it a hot holiday item, despite a slump in overall tablet sales.

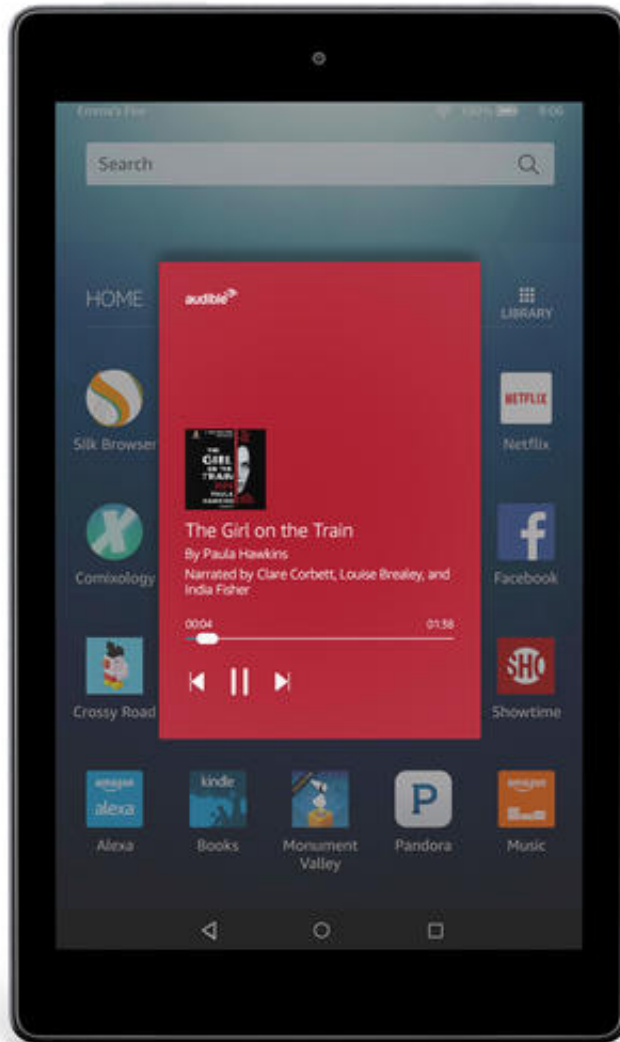
The new Fire HD8 tablet will cost \$90, down from \$150. Mixed-use battery life is up to 12 hours from 8, and the base storage is doubled to 16 gigabytes.

The biggest change is that the tablet will have Alexa functionality. That means that when users tap and hold the tablet's home button, they can ask the assistant for anything from weather reports to news queries, and also get the device do things like adjusting the lights or temperature on compatible smart-home devices.

The tablet market in general has been slumping. Most people have already bought one who wanted one and see little reason to upgrade. Worldwide tablet shipments fell 12.3 percent to 38.7 million in the second quarter, according to the International Data Corp.

But Seattle-based Amazon.com Inc. has managed to grow its share by slashing prices of its Fire tablet and encouraging people to buy more than one. Its base model, with few bells and whistles, costs just \$49.

The Fire HD price cut in particular makes it attractive to buyers, IDC research manager Jonathan Gaw said.



This undated image provided by Amazon shows a screenshot on the new Amazon Fire HD 8 tablet, demonstrating the Alexa experience. Amazon has cut the price of its new Fire tablet almost in half and added its popular voice assistant, Alexa, in hopes of making it a hot holiday item, despite a slump in overall tablet sales. (Amazon via AP)

"The rest of the tablet category has pretty much taken a dip, whereas Amazon has been able to increase their share," he said. "They are not necessarily out to make a great margin on the device itself so it works out pretty well for them."

Alexa voice-recognition software will be available on all the new tablets, as well as via a free over-the-air software update for Fire HD 8 tablets from last year. The software was originally part of Amazon's Echo \$180 smart speaker, which is activated by voice commands.

Third-party devices have begun to use it too. A home-intercom system called Nucleus and a portable speaker from Tribby also come with Alexa software built in.

On the tablets, users can see visual cards, similar to what's on the Amazon Echo app, for each query they make.

Kevin Keith, Amazon's general manager of Fire tablets said he expects tablet users to use Alexa mainly while using tablets for entertainment like movies and e-books.

"It's a way to enhance the entertainment experience," he said.

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