

My iPad Review

Almost magical!



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The iPad



First impressions

When I saw this iPad, my first reaction was, it's smaller than I thought. I wanted to get started right away, but for a nerve-wracking nine hours, it lay in the box waiting for my day's meetings to get over. When it finally came to life, I could not take my eyes off it. Stephen Fry's Time article refers to this "experience" factor that all Apple products incorporate. No review or unboxing video or image gallery can prepare you for the experience of operating an iPad. Really, I should just end this review here and you should head to the nearest Apple store to try the iPad experience. You will decide in a few minutes whether you want it for yourself or not. No logic or rationalising will prepare you for that decision.

I knew you would get to this page... we are too much of the analytical types, no? So let me try and summarise the key experience issues that you should try for yourself.

Books: you won't get this on a Kindle!



Over the last week or so, I have read three books (free classics) on iBooks. I have not used a Kindle, so I cannot compare the two but the integration of images and colours with text in the iPad offers a better reading experience than other e-readers like Kindle. Friends have asked me if it's a strain on the eye (e-ink and so on)... given that I spend 8-10 hours a day in front of a computer, I can't say this made much difference to me.

The books experience goes beyond iBooks. Try out the new, animated Alice in Wonderland app or the Disney Toy Story Book app that integrates reading, voice-over, music, painting and bright images (both available in the App Store; free/lite versions available) - you will realise that reading (and therefore, writing) will truly get transformed.

Productivity

Will the iPad replace your laptop or computer? No! But it will surely reduce the time you spend with your computer. For the last 24 hours, I have not started the Mail application on my desktop. I have read over a 100 mails, replied to over a dozen, reviewed a Powerpoint presentation and an Excel worksheet and edited a press release during this time.

Compared to the Blackberry or iPhone, the iPad offers the convenience of a large screen as well as keyboard, particularly when not "on the move". The advantage over the desktop/laptop was that I did not have to connect to the corporate VPN to access my office Exchange mail (when away from my desk). It's a niche thing, but for those that remote work and hate having to login to the VPN



frequently, the iPad mail is a great substitute.



The virtual keyboard takes a while to get used to but offers an almost full typing experience in landscape and better than smartphone speeds in portrait. For extended typing (2-3 pages or more), it is a bit inconvenient though; I am yet to figure out the most comfortable way

to position the iPad and optimise typing speed. I see myself getting one of those compact, Bluetooth keyboards for extended typing.

This document has been entirely created using the iPad without any external keyboard; I used Pages (\$9.99 in the App Store).

What I would like to see more/ different

1. A front facing camera to support web-conferencing would be a good addition. Or a web-cam accessory.
2. I am sure the 3G version offers a better connectivity experience on the move but a \$130 premium for a 3G chip is unjustified. The ability to use the iPhone's cellular connectivity, for example, would be great - we don't need to have multiple wireless data plans!
3. Many of the iPad apps are still quite buggy, but it should be a matter of time for them to get sorted. The iWork apps are good, but need enhancements to make them ready for corporate usage.

But, what's the point of this device, anyway?

Do you 'need' an iPad? Maybe yes, maybe no. Do you 'want' an iPad? Very likely, yes. If you use (or have considered using) an iPhone or a Kindle (or their equivalents), the iPad should be on your evaluation list for this year's bonus/ promotion / birthday gift / any other excuse. If not, do find a friend that has an iPad and is willing to let you experiment with it. I bet that by next year you will be buying an iPad or one of the six similar devices that will be launched by then.

Do let me know which way you swing!