

# Tablet tour

There are more tablets available than you might think



## PROS

Hardware performance is a match for any tablet on the market.

## CONS

Reduced portability and a larger price tag make it less desirable than Samsung's Galaxy Tab 10.1 and Apple iPad 2.

## VERDICT

If you buy the Xoom you won't be disappointed. The snag is Samsung has produced an identically specified, thinner, lighter and cheaper alternative.

## Motorola Xoom

From £499.99 • 10.1in screen • WiFi + 3G or WiFi only

In truth, market awareness means the iPad is untouchable for at least another tech generation, so the bigger contest will be between iPad rivals – and few are fighting harder than Motorola.

Just like Samsung with its Galaxy Tab 10.1, Motorola has chosen Google's Android Honeycomb operating system. Motorola will hope Google gets the software right, because it has done an excellent job with the hardware. You will find a dual core processor, 2MP front and 5MP rear cameras, a 1280 x 800 pixel 10.1in-screen and up to 32GB of storage which can be expanded by another 64GB via microSD. Where the Xoom struggles, however, is its size. At 708g (Wi-Fi only) and measuring 12.9mm thick, it is noticeably less portable than both its main rivals, the Galaxy Tab 10.1 and the iPad 2, and more expensive too.



## iPad 2

From £399 • 9.7in screen • WiFi + 3G or WiFi only

Tablets only caught the public's imagination with the launch of the iPad in 2010, and the iPad 2 continues the good work of its predecessor. In terms of design, Apple has managed to make it far more portable than the first incarnation. Weight is down from the 730g of the iPad 1 (WiFi+3G) to just 613g and thickness has been cut from 13.4mm to just 8.8mm.

The hardware changes are equally impressive. Apple has replaced the single core Apple A4 processor of the iPad with a dual core Apple A5. The other significant change is the addition of a front camera for video calling and a rear camera for pictures and video. Still, the changes are evolutionary rather than revolutionary. Storage options are unchanged (16/32/64GB), as is the relatively low resolution of the screen (1024x 768) and the iPad 2's software is identical to that of its older sibling.



## PROS

The operating system is still the best on the market, and the range of apps is way above that of any rival.

## CONS

The iPad 2's improvements have little impact on day-to-day life. The added cameras are of low quality, the screen has not been updated and pricing quickly escalates on 3G models.

## VERDICT

The iPad 2 is still the tablet to own, but only if you don't already have an iPad 1.

## PROS

A beautifully made, ultraportable tablet with a slick new operating system.

## CONS

The PlayBook's software is unfinished and lacks core features. At the time of going to press, this had yet to be addressed.

## VERDICT

The PlayBook cannot be taken seriously until RIM fixes its omissions, but the promise is there for all to see. One to watch.



## RIM BlackBerry Playbook

From £359.99 • 7in screen • WiFi only

The first thing to notice about the PlayBook is that it weighs just 425g and this is due to RIM opting for a reduced 7in screen. There is power too with a dual core processor, 16GB, 32GB and 64GB storage options and dual cameras: 3MP on the front and 5MP on the rear.

Sadly there are cracks. The BlackBerry comes with a new RIM operating system called QNX. On the surface it is slick and intuitive, but dig down and it is unfinished. Remarkably calendar, contacts, messaging and email apps were all absent from launch and were still absent at the time of going to press. These can be accessed by connecting the PlayBook to a BlackBerry phone, but they should be natively available. Compounding this is price: £359.99 for the 16GB edition is fine, but without microSD expansion, the 32GB and 64GB options are more appealing. The trouble is their prices jump to £479 and £559 respectively and for a 7in tablet, this is high.