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# iPad 2 vs. Kindle Fire vs. Nook Tablet: specs showdown

Nov. 14, 2011 (9:15 am) By: [Will Shanklin](#)

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The Holiday 2011 tablet selection in your local electronics store is going to look much different than it was in 2010. Though few of the non-Apple tablets have managed to gain much traction yet, 2011 saw just about every electronics manufacturer you could think of releasing at least one tablet. You may find it a little surprising then that it's so very easy to pick out the top choices for the majority of customers. The Apple [iPad 2](#), the Amazon [Kindle Fire](#), and the Barnes & Noble [Nook Tablet](#) are easily going to be the cream of the crop for most people.

We're here to help with your buyer's dilemma by seeing how the tablets' specs compare.

## Design and Dimensions



Here we have two nearly identical 7-inch tablets, and one big 9.7-inch tablet. While customers have largely voted with their wallets for the iPad's larger screen, many also enjoy the smaller and lighter form-factor of the Kindle Fire and the Nook Tablet. It's no surprise that the companies whose roots are in selling books would have the more compact size. Smaller tablets are easy to hold in one hand and fit into a bag. The iPad, meanwhile, gives you a much more spacious display that the smaller ones can only dream of.

Though the iPad 2 is bigger and heavier than the other two, it is actually considerably thinner. It has a solid, well-built feel to it, as will the Kindle Fire. The Nook Tablet has a plastic bezel that is easy to grasp, but it actually creaks if you squeeze it and can feel a little flimsy next to the constructions of the other two tablets.

## Weight

**Kindle Fire**


**Nook Tablet**

**iPad 2**



**0.91 pounds  
(414g)**

**0.88 pounds  
(400g)**

**1.33 pounds  
(601g)** 

The iPad 2 is easily the heaviest of the three, thanks to its larger form and metal materials. The Nook Tablet is the lightest, but the Kindle Fire is only slightly heavier.

The two smaller slates will obviously be easier to hold in one hand, though the iPad 2 is also light enough for brief one-handed use.

**Display**

**Kindle Fire**


**Nook Tablet**

**iPad 2**



**7" IPS display  
1024x600 resolution  
169 pixels per inch**

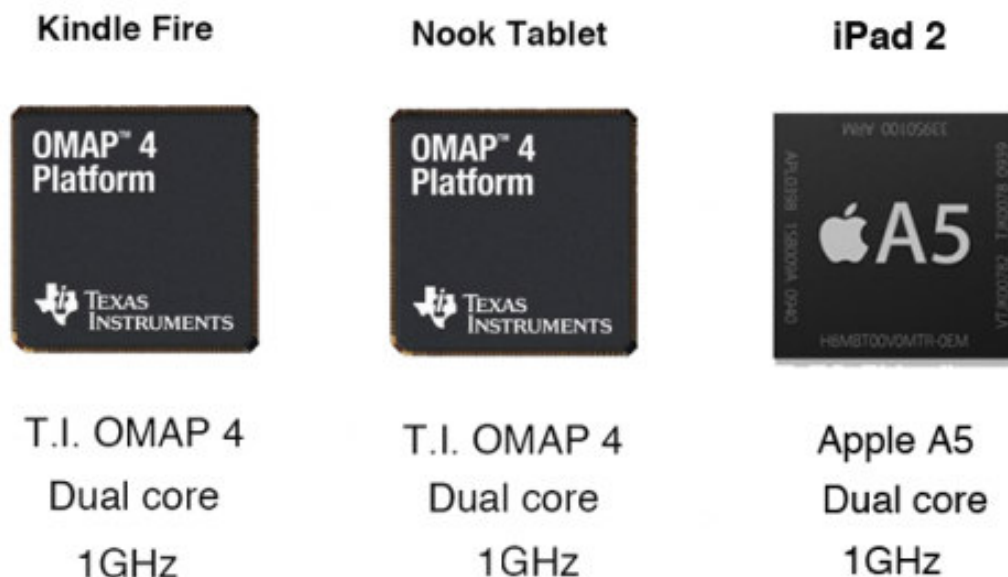
**7" IPS display  
1024x600 resolution  
169 pixels per inch**

**9.7" IPS display  
1024x768 resolution  
132 pixels per inch** 

Here is another category where the Kindle Fire and Nook Tablet are equals (on paper), as both have identical display size and resolution. The iPad's larger screen actually has the same vertical resolution as the others, with only a slightly higher horizontal pixel count. That leads to less pixels per inch on Apple's slate, especially once you factor in the screen size.

Yet you don't hear many complaints about the iPad 2's resolution. Text and images on all three devices should then be plenty sharp and colorful for most people.

## Processor



You'll get speedy 1GHz dual-core chips on all three tablets. Nobody is likely to experience lag or have problems playing the latest games on any of the three.

## RAM

### Kindle Fire



**512MB**

### Nook Tablet



**1GB**

### iPad 2



**512MB**



The Nook Tablet doubles the [RAM](#) of its competitors. Will that mean that it performs faster and smoother than the other two? Probably not, but we'll look forward to testing the devices side-by-side.

### Storage

#### Kindle Fire



**8GB**

**No SD Card Slot**

#### Nook Tablet



**16GB**

**SD Card Slot**

#### iPad 2



**16GB, 32GB, or 64GB**

**No SD Card Slot**



The Kindle Fire has the least storage without any possibility for expansion. This appears to be a cost-cutting measure that Amazon took, using their cloud services as justification. They offer Amazon Prime for video streaming, Amazon Cloud for documents, and [Amazon MP3](#) (Cloud

Player) for music. From that perspective, 8GB should be enough for most people. Just don't expect to keep ten full Gameloft games installed at once.

The Nook Tablet doubles that to 16GB, and also has an SD card slot for expansion. The iPad 2 has no SD, but you can pay more for a 32GB or 64GB model.

## Battery Life

### Kindle Fire



8 hrs continuous reading,  
7.5 hrs video playback  
(with WiFi off)

### Nook Tablet



11.5 hrs reading  
9 hrs video playback  
(with WiFi off)

### iPad 2



10 hrs surfing the web,  
watching video, or playing music  
**(with WiFi on)**



When it comes to battery life, the iPad 2 is in another league altogether. Notice that the estimated times given by [Amazon](#) and [Barnes & Noble](#) are not only lower than Apple's, but they are with WiFi turned *off*. The iPad 2 gets several more hours, with WiFi *on*. This is a huge difference in battery life, and the iPad 2 is easily the best choice in this area.

Only testing will determine the true run time of the new tablets, but the iPad 2 has long been regarded as setting a benchmark for impressive tablet battery life. Most manufacturers are known to give the highest estimate that they can get away with, so don't expect any dramatic surprises from the Nook or Fire (at least not in a good way).

## Camera

**Kindle Fire**



**Nook Tablet**



**iPad 2**



**0.92 megapixels**



Are two crappy cameras better than none? That's the question in this category, as the iPad 2 is the only tablet to have cameras. It has front and rear shooters, but both are extremely underwhelming. However, it does make video chat possible, which isn't an option on either of the smaller tablets.

### Intangibles

**Kindle Fire**



**Nook Tablet**



**iPad 2**



While it's not quite as scientific as the other categories, this could be the most important. What are those extra perks that each piece of hardware brings to the table?

The Kindle Fire brings one of the best bonuses you could ask for: an extremely affordable price. At just \$200, this is the best tablet bang for your buck. Amazon is selling it either at cost or at a small loss because they know that they will generate extra sales from the digital content that's





prominently featured on the tablet. As long as you don't mind seeing a lot of Amazon services in your UI, this is a win for everyone. The pricier Nook Tablet is also subsidized by content at \$250, and the iPad 2 starts at \$500.

Another win for the Kindle Fire is Amazon Prime. Purchasers of the Fire get the service free for one month. After that, they can pay \$79 for a year's membership. Along with Netflix-like video streaming, Prime customers also get free book lending and free/discounted shipping on Amazon orders.

Finally, the Fire also has the speedy [Silk web browser](#). It integrates with Amazon's servers to accelerate page loading times, and should make browsing even quicker than it already would be with the dual-core processor.

The Nook Tablet is by far the weakest of the three in terms of extras. What fun perks does it bring that the others don't? It's cheap, but not as cheap as the Kindle Fire. It has Netflix and Hulu Plus (including some native integration), but [so do both other tablets](#). What's more, the Nook's overall app selection is weaker. That's not to say there's anything wrong with the Nook Tablet, but it doesn't have many unique bonuses.

One plus for the Nook Tablet is that it might be a little more hacker-friendly than the Fire. If it can boot from an SD card like the [Nook Color](#), then it will be able to run custom ROMs without even being rooted. More importantly, it has twice the internal storage of the Fire, and the option for more on the SD. If you're rooting it and installing [Cyanogenmod](#) and the [Android Market](#), it might be nice to have that extra space.

The iPad 2, meanwhile, is another powerhouse in terms of extras. The [App Store](#) is the most



obvious advantage, as it provides the best selection of mobile applications. In terms of games, Apple's library is still well ahead of Android's. [iOS](#) is also a more mature platform than the customized Android that the other two tablets are running. iOS 5's additions — like notifications, [iMessage](#), and [iCloud](#) — only sweeten the pot.

One last thing to consider is that the iPad 2 is the only one of these tablets to offer the option of 3G data. You pay an extra \$130 for the 3G-capable models, but the option is there. This will make the iPad 2 the only tablet option (at least out of these three) for some people who need to stay connected and don't want a MiFi or tethered connection.

## Summing up

The first questions you will want to ask are: whether you want a large or small tablet, and how much you're willing to pay. If you want the largest display and don't mind paying more for it, then the iPad it is. If you decide that you do want one of the smaller/cheaper slates, then you're still left with another decision.

The Kindle Fire may still be a better buy than the Nook Tablet. For most customers, the Fire's superior app selection, free month of Amazon Prime, and \$50 discount will cancel out the Nook's slightly better specs. Content-hoarders, hackers, and B&N faithful will prefer the Nook, but most others would be wise to dive into Amazon's superior overall ecosystem.

Still, we can recommend all we want, but the tablet you buy will ultimately come down to your personal taste. You can view test results, specs, and stats all day long, but each of these three devices offers something a little different. Half the fun is in finding out which feature set is best for you.

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synthmeister

Also missing from the Kindle Fire and Nook:

NO Bluetooth, gyros, accelerometers, compass, GPS or 3G options. These options are all exploited extensively by app developers, especially with games.

Fire has NO mic.

Also, remember that the screens of the Nook/Fire are 45% the size of the iPad.

And BTW, I love gyros, especially with that cucumber sauce.



**Ignatius T Foobar**

The "cucumber sauce" is called Tzatziki. Unfortunately it was banned from the Apple App Store because it gave Steve Jobs heartburn.



**Jonathan Boyd**

Nook Color has bluetooth and gyros. Not sure about accelerometers. All my games seem to run fine tilting the screen to turn, etc. GPS/3 or 4G are available through wifi tethering to an android phone (unfortunately I have an iPhone).



**Loonesta**

I think you refer to the Nook Tablet, since my Nook Color from December 2010 does not have any of these features. My Nook Color also gathers dust in my closet, while I use my e-ink Kindle and iPad2 every day.



**synthmeister**

I wasn't talking about the Nook Color, I was talking about the Nook Tablet since that is what the article is about. Sheesh.

I can find no reference to those features on the upcoming Nook Tablet, especially on the B&N website.

Connecting the device to another expensive device to get a feature doesn't really count.



**Jonathan Boyd**

Many of those features are likely present even if they are not mentioned (in both the Fire and Tablet). Bluetooth in the NC has to be unlocked by rooting, it may be similar for the Tablet and Fire. Both of the tablets will likely have gyros since they're useful for orientation as well as gaming (which both the Fire and Tablet will have). Here's the gyro listed for the Fire <http://gadgetian.com/24836/ama...> I'd rather connect my tablet to an expensive device (that pretty much everyone already owns anyway) than pay \$30/month for limited data.



**Loonesta**

Those "features" (BlueTooth, etc.) are not natively available right out of the box. You presume that most people want to fiddle like some 1990's-era PC-builder on their multi-hundred-dollar-tablet-investment (although in the case of Nook-anything, I use the term 'investment' loosely) by rooting their device or some other warranty-voiding technique.



**Jeff McNeill**

Not presuming that most people would want to, just that some do. In fact entire teams of developers have been developing a plethora of roms for tablets and mobiles for years now.



**Johndoe**

he's just a hater....



**Mike Cat**

People buy tablets for games?



**Cobravision**

I would say that the extra 8GB of internal storage, extra 512MB of RAM, and SD port are worth the extra \$50 to get the Nook Tablet over the Fire. But that's assuming you care about those things and the Nook Tablet gets root. If they can somehow prevent you from rooting (which seems unlikely) the Nook is clearly the worst option simply because of the very limited app market. If you can root it and get Android Market and Amazon App Store, then it's clearly the better choice/value.



**Hodar**

A lot of criticism I'm reading elsewhere on the Kindle Fire include 'jerkiness' and unregistered touches. The comments are not flattering, saying the Fire lacks the touch and polish that people have come to expect from items like the iPad2. Granted, at less than half the cost, I'm inclined to be a bit more forgiving - you pay for what you get, generally.

The Nook got rave reviews on the screen, and on paper the two displays are equivalent - I wonder if they are in real life? And, I wonder how the responsiveness of the Nook compares to the Fire? With the Nook sporting double the RAM, I'm inclined to believe that it may be a much smoother running device than the Fire. Lots fo reviewers telling folks to wait for the Fire2.

Still, neither looks to be a real replacement for the iPad2, which is a shame. I love the iPad1, and the iPad2 is just more 'goodness' on an already excellant platform. But, at \$599 for a size I would recommend (I wouldn't encourage the 16 Gig version to my 80 yr old parents - it's just too small to be fully usefull), I'd like to see some decent competition with less polish, but still useable in the \$200-300 price point.

At this juncture, I'm inclined to agree with Wired, ZDNet, and the New York Times; and hold off for the iPad2 (especially with the iPad3 rumored to drop 1Q12) and grab it when the price drops.



**Guest**

I have somewhat the same problem with my nook on the unregistered touches. all you have to do is wipe the screen with a damp cloth, dry whatever moisture is on it, and it'll be good as new



**Theodore Ellis**

Nook the weakest? Hmm, just buy an "official" Nook2Android card on Amazon (cough, cough),insert it in the handy dandy SD slot on the back, start it up and POOF you've got full scale Android tablet. What could be simpler??



**Loonesta**

What could be simpler?? Having a product with a warranty. With B&N, you'll need one.



**Jonathan Boyd**

Or spend 5min at XDA and learn how to make your own. ;) Though there remains the possibility that B&N will disable boot from SD on the Tablet.



**Roger**

Hopefully not though; honestly I can't see B&N doing that, since they



have to realize that a lot of the interest in their devices so far has come from the mod community that enjoys and appreciates how friendly the Color has been to customization. Here's hoping they keep with that trend... if they do they'll certainly be keeping me as a continuing customer.



**John Go**

Double the RAM of Nook Tablet will definitely have a lot of performance impact when more than one app is open. Everyone who actually held Kindle Fire and Nook Tablet in their hands noted that Nook's screen is much better and brighter besides being laminated for reduced glare (not on Kindle or iPad). Nook Tablet is \$224 if sign up for Barnes & Noble membership. 16 GB Nook's content capacity plus 32 GB via microSD card vs. 8 GB capacity of Kindle Fire with no expansion slot IS a big deal - and don't start with that Cloud talk, it won't be available while traveling or where Wi-Fi is not available. Portable tablets are all about doing things on the go. Cloud is way overrated - good for an occasional backup but not for content usage on Wi-Fi-only tablet on the go. Reading 11.5 hours battery life and 9 hours of video playback time vs. 8 hours for reading and 7.5 hours of video playback on Kindle Fire (even that 7.5 hours will? not hold trues in tests, video playback drains battery much more than reading).



**chronik**

Since I favor customization in the things I own, especially computers/electronics, the Nook seems like the best of the three by far. Only Apple's battery life makes me envious.



**TripAdkins2**

I'm a huge fan of the iPad 2, I tried out the Kindle Fire and was not at all impressed. They have a long way to go before the touchscreen functions are in the same league as the iPad.



**Yforshhamilton**

Thank you for an unbiased review for us non-techies.



**Lilshranks**

A Kindle Fire is the Best ....just sayin(:



**Flamingo Land**

i have a question about reading....so you buy/get books, what happens when the thing croaks or you change platforms/buy a different product? in real life, these devices do not live forever, yet my books are my shelf here at home if i choose to re read one of them, and in all honesty, that's very rare (other than some of my steven king books....) and something you didn't mention, though the Nook tablet comes with 13GB content, 12GB is reserved for B&N content according to the fine print



**Louis Cyphere**

How can they say the Kindle is cheaper when it requires \$79 for a year's membership? Sorry but selling a tablet for \$50 less but charging \$79 a year for membership is NOT cheaper... even with the first month free (give me a break!).

The Nook tablet seems like the obvious choice for a low cost system. Especially since Amazon wants all your content to be stored on their cloud? what if don't have access to wifi... I don't get to read my books or listen to my music?



**Ccbernese**

This is the most compelling argument NOT to go for the kindle- I was wondering the same- whether subscription was required for either of the others... At this rate,- at the end of the year, I could have paid for a nook and an iPad! ;-)  
Last thing I want is another bill! THANKS!



Guest

The nook is pretty good. I used to always call my nook the 'Poor mans Ipad', but i think the kindle is going to get that name. I think it all comes down whether you do it for the apps.



tablet\_wars

Why is there no Lenovo A1 in the comparison charts ?



Guest

Its probably not as popular as these other tablets. sorry



Jack

B&N claims the Nook Tablet's processor at 1.2 GHz not at 1.0 Ghz as many sites had assumed. Source: Engadget photo scans of B&N competitive spec sheets.



synthmeister

Sorry folks about the latest reviews of the Fire:

The Verge reviews Amazon's Kindle Fire: Uninspired, confusing, incredibly unoriginal

## Wired reviews Amazon's Kindle Fire: Web browsing sucks, emotionally draining, makes reading a chore



guest

The Verge concludes: "Still, there's no question that the Fire is a really terrific tablet for its price. The amount of content you have access to — and the ease of getting to that content — is notable to say the least. The device is decently designed, and the software — while lacking some polish — is still excellent compared to pretty much anything in this range (and that includes the Nook Color). It's a well thought out tablet that can only get better as the company refines the software. It's not perfect, but it's a great start, and at \$200, that may be all Amazon needs this holiday shopping season."

<http://www.theverge.com/2011/1...>



Cyber Slammer

Yes most idiots will settle for subpar technology. I will not.



Buddy1222112

That was your first of many mistakes which was assuming you're not an idiot. Let's clear that up.

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