

Replace Laptop with Tablet

Laptops vs Tablets | Tech Tips Podcast by PcCG

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Replacing your laptop with a Tablet.

Frequently these days I'm asked "**should I replace my laptop with a tablet?**" The answer is "That depends."

The "depends" boils down to the question, "What do you want to use it for?" Your answer here determines if it would be suitable to replace a laptop with a tablet.

Tablet Weaknesses: This is the part that is often not apparent to people asking the question...

A sledge hammer, a finishing hammer and a jack hammer are all technically "hammers"; but they are designed differently because they serve different purposes. The same is true for tablets and computers. A tablet's primary focus is the output of information; by that I mean reading articles on the internet, checking bank accounts, reading emails. This is where the information is going from the tablet to the user. Tablets are not so good at the reverse, taking information from you and passing along via email, forums or many other activities. In essence, tablets are primarily a "one-way device". Most of us for example have not written page-long articles on a tablet, for good reason! It would be terrible at accomplishing that goal.

Tablets also have limited processing abilities and limited abilities to run software you may be used to. For example, you can't run photoshop on tablets or ipads. It's just not designed with the power or purpose of running photoshop... or Microsoft Office, Outlook, most games or Picasa or most of the other applications you use on a desktop.

While nice devices, tablets are NOT full-fledged computers. Most of them do not have USB Ports for example, which means if you want to use your wireless mouse - you can't. If you want to take your pictures from your DSLR camera and transfer them to facebook or upload them to SamsClub to print out - you'll have a hard time with a tablet.

Want to print a document? That works sometimes... provided you have the right type of printer and it is connected properly to your network.. but scanning a document you'll find much more difficult or impossible.

I personally have a strong attachment to my keyboard and if I'm doing a lot of work I'd like a mouse as well. Most tablets do allow the addition of keyboards (which is now just another thing you have to carry with you), but they are often smaller and more fragile-feeling than a standard keyboard.

Tablets also have no ability for upgrade or expansion of hardware in the future (except perhaps the adding of an SD chip). This is discussed in more detail later in the article.

The point of this is - tablets are not a suitable replacement for a computer, if you need it to function like your existing computer. Tablets however ARE convenient devices to have for certain tasks.

Tablet Strengths

1. Great for E-Books
2. Browsing of the web so long as you are not inputting lots of information.
3. Quick research while watching a football game
4. Receiving of emails so long as replies are short and attachments are not needed (i.e. excel, word etc).
5. Facebook and Twitter.
6. Less likely to get viruses.

If these items are what you want to do, and you will truly not want to expand further beyond those (or like-minded) items then a tablet is a great investment.

Personally I have a desktop, laptop and tablet, each serving different purposes.

My desktop is my “main base station”, it’s the hard worker. It’s setup with dual screens, a great sound-system and lots of power. It stores over 2.5TB of data (yeah I have lots of data!) and acts as a media server for my entire home.

My laptop is my tool when I want to do some decent work and need to be on the go, or if I want to sit outside while getting things done. I don’t do big projects on it, but it’s nice for watching movies on the go, or writing a paper here and there.

My tablet is used once in a while, when it’s within reach and I just want to pull up a quick piece of information or look up a wiki article. I use it for E-books and occasionally to check email.

As you can see, each tool has its strengths and weaknesses. Some people only have need for one of the above devices, and in such a case you should choose whatever works best for you. However the answer to the frequently asked question “can a tablet replace my laptop” is typically “no, not really.”

Microsoft’s Surface Pro 3

Somewhat an exception to the shortcomings of tablets is the Microsoft Surface Pro 3. Previous versions of the Surface suffered an expected fate for a number of reasons. The biggest reason is that it ran a “special” version of windows, called Windows RT – which only allowed for a few programs to be installed. The Surface Pro 3 however is much closer to a typical laptop in its architecture. It runs with a normal intel i5 processor, which means you are able to download and install anything you can on a typical computer. So you can actually run photoshop on this machine, as well as full office etc.

Hardware and Repair Considerations

The one bit of caution I would advise is that with all the components being integrated and proprietary for tablets – repairs will be much more costly and difficult if possible at all. For example if the wireless module goes bad, it will probably mean replacing the entire tablet. This is true for tablets as well as the Surface Pro 3; the difference being tablets are somewhat disposable devices whereas the Surface Pro 3 is an investment of over \$1000 as of the writing of this article. If my Lenovo K1 tablet breaks, it’ll suck – but I’ll just toss it and buy another.

It is also not possible to upgrade the hard drive, ram, graphics cards or anything else hardware related on tablets.

Conclusion

Tablets are great convenient devices – but they are no replacement for laptops or desktops. For the convenience you trade a lot of ability both in terms of software and hardware. If you meet the minimal requirements of “what you do with a computer”, then a tablet may be fine. For the average user however, trying to switch to a tablet exclusively will turn into a nightmare. Modern tablets are extensions of the computer, not replacements of the computer.



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