

TECHNOLOGY & YOU

THE HERALD'S GUIDE TO THE HI-TECH WORLD, POWERED BY WHATSYOURTECH.CA



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A buyer's guide to THE 10-INCH TABLET

From bargain basement to cutting edge



Apple's iPad2 with Smart Cover.

Courtesy, Apple

GADJO CARDENAS SEVILLE
WHATSYOURTECH.CA

Bargain Tablets (\$399 to \$499)

HP's TouchPad

On sale right now at \$399 for the 16GB version, HP's hoping its webOS tablet catches on. Sporting a 1.2GHz dual core processor, a 1.3 megapixel front-facing camera and more importantly an improved webOS touch experience in a tablet. The TouchPad also features powerful Beats Audio speakers and a robust feature set. Going forward, it should interface wirelessly with compatible webOS phones.

Acer Iconia Tab

The most affordable Android Honeycomb tablet right now is probably the Acer Iconia Tab (\$399 for 16GB) that presents a well-rounded feature set at an acceptable price. Acer has loaded this with a bright 10.1-inch, 1280 x 800 TFT LCD, mini HDMI port and a decent seven-hour bat-

tery life. Not the thinnest or the lightest, the Iconia Tab has proven to be one of the more powerful of the current batch of Androids.

Toshiba Thrive

An Android Honeycomb powered tablet (starting at \$429) that brings a lot of PC-focused features into the market. Nothing beats the Thrive in terms of ports and connectivity since it comes with a full sized SD Card Slot (SD, SDHC, MMC) Full Size USB 2.0, Mini USB, Full-Size HDMI, 1.5mm Standard Headphone Jack, Docking Connector, DC Input. This is the great king-computer tablet and in terms of connectivity options.

Motorola XOOM

Now selling at \$499 for the 32GB version, Motorola's XOOM WiFi tablet offers a powerful dual core processor, premium aluminum body and is one

of the fastest Honeycomb tablets we've tested. Premium look and feel as well as a stunning screen are the XOOM's most stunning features.

Cutting Edge Tablets (\$500 and up)

Samsung Galaxy Tab 10.1 4G

Samsung has produced the thinnest and lightest 10.1 tablet on any platform. With 4G data built in (price still unannounced), this is the most mobile 10.1 inch Honeycomb device around.

Aside from the basic Android tablet OS, Samsung has outfitted the Tab 10.1 with a file manager, unique and useful widgets and some curated apps and multimedia content. This is definitely the most complete Android tablet around and in terms of features.

The 4G version running



Motorola XOOM.

on Telus is fast to access data and media.

Apple iPad 2 Wi-Fi + 3G 64GB

The top-of-the-line iPad 2 (\$849) comes with Wi-Fi and 3G data access and 64GB of storage.

Thinner and lighter than the previous model, the iPad 2 is also at least twice as speedy and with better video and graphics performance.

Dual cameras for Face-Time video chats plus the new iMessage service will endow all iOS devices with BBM (BlackBerry Messenger) type device-to-device messaging for free come September.

Currently the gold standard in tablets, the iPad has the apps, the ecosystem and a large user base to ensure continued success.



Samsung Galaxy.

bits & bytes

Replace landline for \$30 a year

TED KRITSONS
WHATSYOURTECH.CA

If you've ever used Skype (link: <http://www.skype.com>) before, then you've gotten a taste of how VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol) works to give you cheap phone calls through the Internet instead of traditional phone lines.

Two devices — the netTalk Duo (www.nettalk.ca) and what's called a cable-jack Plus (www.themagicjack.ca) — go even further by taking the computer out of the equation. Both of these units are small modules with cables that plug directly into your broadband modem or router, along with a telephone.

Setup shouldn't take more than 10 minutes to get everything going.

Once you're all set and you begin using either service, you'll find that call quality is consistently solid. An added bonus is that you get to pick your phone number, and this can be a vanity one (which might cost a bit more) that spells out your name or something else specific, depending on availability. Small business owners might also like the idea of choosing a local number from another city in either Canada or the U.S. to make it easier for important contacts located there to call them.

If you're a student moving away to school, you can set it up to have a local area code from your hometown, so when friends and family call, it's a local number for them. Both of these gadgets offer free outgoing calls to anywhere in Canada and the U.S., regardless of whether they are land lines or mobile phones.

This applies to all travelers because both devices work the same way in other parts of the world, such as replacing a hotel room phone, for example. You can also opt to plug them in and use them through a Windows PC or Mac.

The netTalk Duo is \$79.95, which includes one year of service; it goes down to just \$30 for every year after that.

The magicJack Plus will sell in Canada for \$49.99, and each additional year of service is \$30.

Courtesy, netTALK
The netTALK duo.

We now have a marketplace for 10-inch tablets other than Apple's iPad. Most of the new models have bet the farm on Google's Android OS and are hoping that they will succeed as wildly and as quickly on the tablet space as they did in smartphones.

Samsung, Motorola and Toshiba are among the players in this space.

Like Apple, HP is pushing their own hardware and software platforms hoping that customers who want "something different," might subscribe to their approach and ecosystem.

Here's our quick guide to navigating this new and competitive space.

You can manage cellphone roaming charges

LEE RICKWOOD
WHATSYOURTECH.CA

The most expensive call I ever made should have been one of the cheapest.

It was to directory assistance, which in most cases is \$2 (it used to be totally free). But being on location, short some crucial information. On my cellphone. From Texas. Not a good idea. The call cost something like \$400.

That was a long time ago, yet up until very recently, I would have said it still serves as a meaningful warning.

But cellphone costs while travelling are going down, and the ways to manage roaming fees are going up.

The pressure's on cellphone providers now, with all those scary stories about people with tens of thousands of dollars in roaming

charges. Then, there's those international studies that say Canadians face excessively high cellphone bills.

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, for example, says the average global price for one MB of data (roughly like sending photos) is about \$9.50. Canadians pay more than \$24.

And the increased competition here has certainly helped, as it was intended and promised to do.

Startup Mobility is highlighting the issue with its recent 'Prove It' publicity tour, for example, during which the company president apparently racked up some 1,300 minutes to show how much less roaming fees were with his company, compared to the incumbents. And there's really no excuse for 'sticker shock' from that first post-vacation phone bill any more.

Lee Rickwood, What's Your Tech.ca
Wherever you're heading, there are new ways to manage roaming fees.

The three major providers have all adjusted their voice, data and text roaming rates or introduced new plans and services, such as international or U.S. travel plans, and daily or weekly 'passes'.

Roaming day passes from Rogers start at \$5 per day (small business included); Telus is offering roaming price plans start-

ing around \$1.50 per voice minute or \$10 per data MB.

Bell offers roaming bundles starting at \$15 for 15 minutes, or a cheaper 25 cents per minute if you buy \$100 worth (400 minutes).

Bell's plans do not include directory assistance calls, so it wouldn't have helped me.

What might have is the new 'early warning system' being offered. Channelling up an recommendation straight out of the OECD report, Bell, Rogers and Telus (and others) will provide SMS messages to roaming cellphone users about data usage and possible overages (service may be suspended, or an option to buy more is offered).

Most providers agree knowledge and education about roaming fees is needed across the board. There is now plenty of



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