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4 Reasons to Pass On the New iPad

Real Time Advice: Some experts say consumers poring over the extras of the new gadget might be better off saving their cash.

The new iPad may be sharper and faster (if a bit fatter) than previous models, but is it worth spending another \$500?

Apple enthusiasts point out the latest tablet, which CEO Tim Cook unveiled today in San Francisco, offers twice the screen resolution of prior models, four times the graphics power, a 5-megapixel camera, and voice dictation capability -- all for the same starting price. The screen-resolution -- which will now match the razor sharp image on the iPhone may be the biggest improvement. "It will be similar to going from a standard definition TV to an HDTV and believe me you'll notice it side by side," says Yung Trang, president of TechBargains.com.

But even some of the most ardent devotees concede that none of those upgrades make it a must-have gadget. For one, unlike computers or smartphones, iPads are not necessities for most people. And those determined to buy an iPad may want to consider the older iPad 2, released just last year. Apple's decision to shave \$100 off the iPad 2 to \$399, might make it the better deal.

In addition, Apple's competition in the tablet market, while still far behind, is racing to catch up. Android-based rival tablets offer many of the iPad's main features, but are often substantially cheaper. "Without significant upgrades, the door is wide open this year for a competitor, potentially Amazon, to really challenge Apple's crown for the market," says Jeff Haynes, editor of TechBargains.com.

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Reasons to Say, 'No Thanks, New iPad'

3:02 Some experts say consumers poring over the new iPad's new features might be better off saving their cash, Quentin Fottrell reports on digits. Photo: Apple.



Stick with the iPad 2

This is the third iPad in less than two years. The iPad 2 sold over 15 million units. Some experts contend that it doesn't make sense for most users to buy into each new incremental improvement, and instead they should aim for every other upgrade. The difference between the iPhone 4 and the 4S were minimal, for instance, but the jump from the 3G to the 4S was like two different phones. And even some of the headline-grabbing upgrades are unnecessary, says Louis Ramirez, senior features writer for DealNews.com. "The average consumer doesn't need a tablet that can push more pixels than their HDTV. It's like owning a refrigerator with built-in Wi-Fi: it's overkill."

And as SmartMoney.com [reported](#), shoppers already suffer from upgrade fatigue when it comes to new gadgets. Haynes says the new iPad is more of a "game-evolver" than a "game-changer." The iPad upgrades are purposefully designed with subtle upgrades and one headline-grabbing change, he says. Giving the new iPad a retina display with the same resolution as the [iPhone 4S](#) is a welcome improvement, but is by no means worth ditching the older model, he says.

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The iPad is pretty, but not tough

When the iPad 2 was released, some complained designers put the goal of pack all the components into a slimmer package at the expense of improved sturdiness. Apple says the new 1.4 pound iPad is heftier (1.4 pounds) and thicker (9.4 millimeters) than its predecessor, however it does not appear the new bulkiness was to beef up its armor, but to cram in a more powerful processor and a display with twice the resolution. Websites like iPadScreenRepair.com have popped up to help repair broken screens. Apple did not respond to a request for comment.

There's no data on the number of cracked iPad screens or damaged processors, but competitors have seized on the perceived delicateness of the tablets. [The Pantech Element](#), for instance, claims to be sturdier and more waterproof than the iPad. "A killer tablet should be able to defend itself," says Louis Ramirez, senior features writer for DealNews.com. dealnews.com "That means withstanding dirt and the occasional drop on the floor." The AppleCare insurance policy for the iPad does not cover accidental damage, so consumers would need to take out additional insurance for that.

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A tablet is not as useful as a laptop

There appears to be a largely unnoticed trend in the tablet market: they are slowly evolving into old-fashioned [laptop computers](#). Even the new iPad cannot escape its heritage: it has an attachable keyboard, which costs an [extra \\$69](#). The \$499 [Asus Eee Pad Transformer Prime](#) tablet comes with a detachable keyboard included in the price. Alternatively, \$500 will also buy a mainstream laptop that can do everything the new iPad can and more, especially in business, says Rick Singer, CEO of GreatApps.com. Ultrabooks – very lightweight laptops – may offer the best of both worlds, he says. They have longer battery life than typical laptops and are as fast and light as an iPad.

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There are less expensive options

For consumers on a tight budget, experts say there are better alternatives. As SmartMoney.com reported, Amazon's [Kindle Fire](#) and Barnes & Noble's Nook have advantages over the iPad 3 -- and price is chief among them. Unlike the iPad 3, the \$199 Kindle Fire has Flash Video capability and access to some 500,000 Android apps -- plus films, books, music on sale from Amazon. "This is the biggest competitor to the iPad's crown right now, and for good reason," Haynes says, though he notes that the sound/screen quality is better on the iPad. Ramirez says Amazon's stores often offer better deals on MP3s, video, and e-books than Apple's iTunes. Others, however, believe they have their work cut out to undercut the iPad 3: "Apple has proved that it can make devices that are so wildly sought after that people will pay whatever it demands," Haynes says.

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