

Buying An iPad? Here Are The Key Differences Between Models

We compared the features of each iPad to help you find the best value.

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An Apple iPad can be a great investment: You get a screen that's bigger than an iPhone's for watching videos or reading, it's more portable than a laptop and it can be used for drawing, writing, internet surfing and so much more. The downside? [The tablets don't come cheap](#), and with Apple releasing so many models it can be

confusing to figure out which one best fits your needs.

If you've been thinking about taking the plunge and [getting an iPad for yourself](#), we're here to help. We've broken down the key [differences among all the models](#) available to buy new from [Amazon](#), Target and Walmart. From the highlights of each version to the bottom line, take a look at our guidance below and find the iPad that will give you the most bang for your buck.

Spoiler alert: Right now, our pick is the [10th-generation iPad](#). It's currently on sale for the best value and has tons of useful features without the more expensive bells and whistles that most people probably don't need.

1

The crowd-pleasing 10th-generation iPad



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Highlights: Best price and value, no Apple Intelligence, offers smaller storage sizes, different color options than other models, less powerful A13 bionic chip processor

We think this one is a winner, and we're not alone. Not only has the [10th-generation iPad](#) earned a [high score and stamp of approval](#) from Consumer Reports, but [Wirecutter](#) named it [their top pick](#) for most people in 2024 — as did [Wired](#) and [CNET](#) in 2025.

The 10th-gen iPad is the lowest-priced model currently being manufactured. It has an A14 bionic chip, which is an [older and less efficient processor](#) than some of the

newer models' M-series chips, but should still be plenty usable for most people. This iPad also lacks [Apple Intelligence](#) features that use generative AI for things like ChatGPT integration, "Genmoji" and more. But considering [how much storage Apple Intelligence takes up](#), and the [ambivalence of many Apple customers](#), its absence may not be a dealbreaker (and is potentially even a plus). Meanwhile, you can still enjoy up to 10 hours of battery life on Wi-Fi, the USB-C port for fast charging and 4K video recording.

You can get the 10th-gen iPad in four colors and two storage sizes: 64GB or 256GB. It supports the Apple Magic Keyboard Folio, plus the USB-C and first-generation Apple Pencils (but not the second-generation Pencil).

Bottom line: At its current price (and even at its list price), this is probably the iPad with the most bang for your buck. If you plan to use the iPad for leisure, rather than as a professional creative, this model probably has everything you need.

2

The no-frills, discontinued ninth-generation iPad that's still a solid option



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Highlights: Last iPad with a headphone jack and home button, battery life equal to newer models, no Apple Intelligence, older camera, less powerful A13 bionic chip processor, limited color options

While it's now discontinued, you can still buy the [ninth-generation iPad](#) at third-party retailers. This model was a [favorite among HuffPost readers in 2024](#), and is another good budget pick (though we'd probably place the 10th-gen above this one, especially at their current prices).

This is the last iPad to be made with a touch ID home button and headphone jack (wired earphone

users, rejoice), and also doesn't have Apple Intelligence. The camera and processing chip are both older and less powerful than all the other iPad models, but the battery life is about equal at up to 10 hours on Wi-Fi. It comes in two sizes (64GB and 256GB) and in two colors. It supports the first-generation Apple Pencil only, and can work with Bluetooth keyboards but not the Apple Magic Keyboard. If you're not a "techie" and want a reliable iPad that's simple to use and less expensive, this could be the one.

Bottom line: This is generally a pretty solid budget iPad option for the average user. However, we'd wait for a deeper discount, since right now the 10th-gen model is about the same price with more upgrades.

3

The 2024 iPad Pro with a super-fast processor and more bells and whistles



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Highlights: Newest and fastest M4 processing chip, more vibrant display, more screen and storage sizes, Apple Intelligence, slightly lighter design, more advanced camera

On the other side of the iPad spectrum is the [latest version of the iPad Pro](#), which makes more sense for people who aren't on a budget and are looking for a tablet to lean on full-time for work, art creation or other more involved use cases. Equipped with the most efficient and powerful Apple processor, the M4 chip, the iPad Pro also has OLED technology for a more

accurate and vibrant display with an anti-reflective coating to reduce glare.

Apple Intelligence is included in this model, as is a more advanced rear camera with an [ambient light sensor that can help with scanning documents](#), among other things. The battery life is pretty even with other models at up to 10 hours on Wi-Fi.

One of the other big draws of the iPad Pro is the storage capacity and screen size options. You can get an 11-inch or 13-inch iPad Pro, and choose from capacities of 256GB, 512GB, 1TB or 2TB in two different colors. For the two largest capacities, you can also choose between a standard glass display or a matte, nano-texture display to reduce glare even further (though not everyone thinks [this is worth the extra cost](#)). The iPad Pro supports the USB-C Apple Pencil and Apple Pencil Pro, as well as the Magic Keyboard for iPad Pro.

Bottom line: The iPad Pro is the fastest, most powerful, most high-tech option among the models. But is it worth all those extra hundreds of dollars? If you plan to use all of the features all day, every day, it could be. But otherwise, this one may be excessive for the average consumer.

The 2024 iPad Air, a happy medium between the 10th-gen and Pro



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Highlights: M2 processing chip, two screen sizes, 128GB storage option (plus three others), Apple Intelligence, pastel colors available, close to the Pro in terms of features but without the price tag

Want something a bit newer with more features than the 10th-gen, but can't quite stomach the commitment to the Pro? Enter [the 2024 iPad Air](#). It's not quite the Pro — it runs on a less powerful M2 chip and has a less advanced camera and more standard LED display, among other things — but it's still a noticeable upgrade on the basic iPad. Enjoy an anti-reflective coating on the display, 4K video recording, fast USB-C charging and Apple Intelligence features for a comparatively mid-range price and equal 10-hour battery life. Consumer Reports [gave this model perfect](#)

[marks](#) on convenience, performance, display and photo and video, for reference.

Unlike the ninth-gen, 10th-gen and Pro, **this iPad also offers a 128GB storage size.** (Wirecutter [noted the lack of a 128GB option as a flaw](#) of the 10th-gen, because 64GB might be too little but 256GB too much.) That's in addition to 256GB, 512GB and 1TB options. You can get the iPad Air in an [11-inch](#) or [13-inch size](#) in four colors, including two pastels. It supports the USB-C Apple Pencil, Apple Pencil Pro and Magic Keyboard.

Bottom line: The iPad Air is a nice Goldilocks option if you want more than the basic models have to offer and you're willing to shell out a little more money — but not over \$1,000.

The 2024 iPad Mini for a smaller and more portable experience



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Highlights: Smaller and lighter design (but still thicker than the iPad Pro) that's good for travel or kids, A17 Pro processing chip, Apple Intelligence, 128GB storage option, pastel colors available

At only 8.3 inches, the petite dimensions of the [2024 iPad Mini](#)'s screen certainly stand out from the pack, and **can be a draw if carrying around a larger tablet isn't as convenient for you.** Beyond this distinguishing factor, the location of the front camera (at the top in portrait mode rather than landscape) and the A17 Pro chip, **the Mini is otherwise quite similar to the iPad Air** in the previous slide. That means it has Apple Intelligence features, a Liquid Retina display with an anti-reflective coating, 10-hour battery life, 4K video recording and USB-C charging.

The A17 Pro chip is newer and faster than the 10th-gen's A14 but slower than any of the M-series chips. You can get the iPad Mini in four colors, including two pastels, and three storage capacities (128GB, 256GB and 512GB). It supports the USB-C Apple Pencil and Apple Pencil Pro, as well as Bluetooth keyboards — but notably not the Apple Magic Keyboard (this could be due to its smaller size, which doesn't make as much sense with a keyboard as the larger iPads).

Bottom line: Travelers, commuters, kids and anyone who'd like to have a screen bigger than a phone but smaller than a laptop can enjoy the Mini. But if size isn't a dealbreaker, this is pretty similar to the Air, which is about the same price on sale right now with a faster processing chip and other goodies.

The discontinued fifth-generation iPad Mini



Target

Highlights: A15 bionic chip, no Apple Intelligence, option for 64GB storage, pastel colors including pink available

There aren't too many differences between the 2024 iPad Mini and [this discontinued 2021 model](#). They have the same camera, very similar Liquid Retina displays, USB-C charging and a 10-hour battery life.

One major difference is the processing chip, since this model has an older A15 chip that isn't as efficient. Other differences include a lack of Apple Intelligence features, and different storage capacities and colors. Storage on the 2024 Mini starts at 128GB, so the 2021 Mini's 64GB option could be appealing, especially if you don't plan to store much on here. This generation also offers a pink iPad Mini, which the newer one does

not (it replaced the pink with pastel blue). It supports the USB-C and second-generation Apple Pencils, and like the 2024 Mini, only supports third-party Bluetooth keyboards.

Right now, we can't recommend the 2021 Mini. This is mostly because many of the color and capacity options are not in stock, and the price is too high to justify when compared to the 2024 Mini. If your heart is set on this one, you'll probably want to wait until there's a restock and a major sale.

Bottom line: If you specifically want a pink miniature iPad with 64GB of storage and no more, the 2021 Mini can fit your needs like no other model can... but you'll have to wait for it to come back in stock. Otherwise, this model is currently very expensive, so you might as well upgrade to the 2024 iPad Mini for something better and cheaper.

The discontinued fifth-generation iPad Air



Target

Highlights: Older M1 chip, more color options but fewer storage capacity and screen size options, Apple Intelligence, not a great price right now

You can still buy the discontinued [fifth-generation iPad Air](#), the last one released before the 2024 model, at Target and Walmart — but we don't recommend it, especially because right now it's more expensive by a substantial amount.

This model runs on the older M1 chip, and has a lot of the features that the current iPad Air does: Apple Intelligence, the Liquid Retina display, USB-C charging, a 10-hour battery life and the same camera (though the front camera is at the top of the fifth-gen iPad, whereas the 2024 model has it centered on the

side so you can take video calls in landscape mode, attached to an Apple Magic Keyboard).

There's both less and more choice with this model, too. It comes in one more color than the 2024 Air (pink) but is only made in one size with a 10.9-inch screen. The storage capacity is similarly limited to either 64GB or 256GB (note that [the price at Walmart](#) is so much higher because the 64GB capacity is currently out of stock). This model supports the USB-C and second-generation Apple Pencils, plus the Magic Keyboard and Smart Keyboard Folio.

Bottom line: Considering this older model is currently more expensive than the newer iPad Air, get the new one instead.

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