

## My iPad Experience

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With the iPad 2 being recently released, I've updated an article from last year on the original iPad. A lot has happened in the past year and there's more to come with the iPad 2.

I've been a PC user for as long as there have been PCs. So it was with a bit of trepidation, I bought an Apple iPad last May. As I pulled the thin, very light device out of its box, I really wondered if it would be at all useful. There was no real manual and no physical keyboard. And since I use a BlackBerry, not an iPhone, I had little experience with Apple's touchscreen interface.

Why did I get an iPad? I've been a private pilot longer than I've been involved in the computer business. To be able to make landings in poor weather, there's the necessity to carry instrument approach information (they are called approach plates) for every airport that we fly to. This information is updated about every month and traditionally has been purchased via subscription from the FAA. The ones that I use come in bound volumes that are over a foot thick when piled together.

With the iPad, the costly subscription and hard copy books disappear and is replaced by an "app" that contains all the approaches for all airports in the US.

So, for this PC user, what's it been like:

## The Good

The overall design and screen are great. The screen is bright enough for daylight and can be dimmed for night usage.

- WiFi connectivity works great (I don't have the 3G version). The early reports of problems on certain WiFi networks appear to be unfounded. Those with 3G have had great connectivity as well.
- For those of us who read manuals, I've found several good reference eBooks for the iPad. A locally written book, "Take Control of iPad Basics" by Tonya Engst of TidBits fame is my favorite. It's well written, funny, full of great tips and techniques, and best of all it's FREE!!
- Even with my fat fingers, the touchscreen and virtual keyboard are much easier to use than expected.
- The aviation "apps" work GREAT. They are easy to use, inexpensive, and provide me with the information in the airplane that I need.
- There are thousands of "apps" for the iPad.. Some of the apps are really clever. For instance, the Wall Street Journal "app" is better than their website, has annotation built-in, and is incredibly easy to read. Also Google Earth looks amazing on the iPad- I can tell which cars were at The Computing Center the day the satellite photo was taken!
- Reading iBooks and Kindle books is fun, intuitive, and easier on the eyes that I expected!! (In my opinion, the days of physical books are numbered.) And regardless of what has been reported elsewhere, I read faster on the iPad than when I read a physical book.
- Listening to iTunes music and watching videos is both easy with excellent quality!
- So far, the battery life has been excellent. I'm getting upwards of 10 hours before a recharge is required. There has been no battery degradation in over nine months of use.

## The Bad

The file system (or lack thereof) sucks! There is no other way to put it. I have no idea what Apple is thinking about, but trying to deal with any edited document and move them to another computer, server, or other device is a lot more work than it should be. I know that there's a file system in there—Apple needs to make it accessible. There are several "apps" available for handling files. Each has its strengths. None appears to be a cure all - so far. The updated operating system helps, but it's still very annoying.

- Numbers (Apple's iPad spreadsheet) is pretty funky. Not very intuitive to this Excel user. On the other hand, Pages (word processor) seems to work fine if you ignore the fact that when you open and edit a document, the only easy way to get it to another computer is to email it to yourself!!
- The screen is NOT bright enough to read books in direct sunlight. For dedicated outside reading, a Kindle is much better. We'll see if the iPad 2 corrects this problem.
- I don't use Flash based applications much. But, they don't work. Apple and Adobe need to come to an agreement about this. So far - they haven't!!

## The Ugly

Fingerprints on the screen. I'm constantly wiping them off.

- Apple's iPad case also seems to attract dirt. I haven't found a really effective way to clean it. Microfiber towels sort of work. Don't they test these things??
- The Apple covers tend to get kind of crungy as well. Kensington, Targas, and a dozen others have really nice covers, cases and accessories for both the iPad and iPad 2.

So is the iPad perfect? - No, but it's way ahead of anything that is in the marketplace so far!