

## TABLET COMPUTERS

Last month I wrote about laptop computers as an alternative to the traditional desktop variety. But there's a third option: tablets.

The earliest tablets were heavy and "typing" involved a chisel and rock instead of a keyboard. Editing was out of the question (I suppose you could use grout) and they were considered read-only devices.

Tablets have improved over the millennia. Your smart phone is a small tablet with a phone inside. Large smart phones (e.g. iPhone 6s) are sometimes referred to by the portmanteau "phablets." But I'm mostly concerned here with "pure" tablets, such as the iPad, Samsung Galaxy series, and Microsoft Surface, which represent the three common tablet flavors. (More about that about in a minute.)



Figure 2 - I drew this on my iPad Pro.

Tablets are ideal for reading stuff. For example, I use my iPad to read the New York Times, Wall Street Journal, The Economist, Astronomy magazine, and Kindle books. I also read and answer my E-mail, work crossword puzzles, and propel Angry Birds into brick walls. I can check my calendar and buy things from Amazon. I edit pictures (the iPad Pro is a fine photo editor) and draw things using my Apple Pencil. (See example at the left). Tablet applications number in the thousands.

Some argue that a tablet can replace a laptop computer. Indeed, I have tablet versions of Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, and Excel, but they're limited and I wouldn't want to write a policy manual on my iPad. On the other hand, when I go on a trip, I take my iPad, not my MacBook.

**Tech stuff.** Tablets use one of three operating systems: 1. Apple's iOS (iPads and iPhones), 2. Google's Android (Samsung, Asus, and a host of others), and 3. Microsoft's Windows 10 (Surface). Apple's tablets, smart phones, and laptop computers play very nicely together. Microsoft's Surface uses the same Windows 10 as PC's. But today, all three operating systems play nicely in the same sandbox. Most can print to a network printer via Wi-Fi in your home. Android and Windows tablets allow you to store documents on the device in conventional folders. Apple tablets don't have an internal, central file system *per se*, but you can store documents in their applications or in cloud storage such as iCloud or OneDrive.

**Summary:** Tablets excel in reading, Web surfing, E-mail, viewing and editing your photos, sketching (using a tablet pencil), and basic writing (wonderful for taking notes!), and are the ultimate in portability. Laptop or desktop computers are better for more complex composing, analyzing information with spreadsheets or databases, and preparing presentations. Laptop screens are usually bigger, too. My best advice is to try out whatever you want to buy.

If you need help with your tablet or laptop computer, just stop by the PSRC computer lab on Tuesday from 1 to 4 p.m. or Friday from 10 a.m. to noon.



Figure 1 - Early tablet.



Figure 3 - Typical tablet user.

**Ransomware Attacks.**

Article on ransomware next month. Keep your operating system up to date. (So far, does not affect Windows 10 or Mac.)