



Stump the PC Club is a free tech-advice column written by members of the North Orange County Computer Club, which has been in existence since 1976. Visit the club's site at noccc.org.

QUESTION: I'm trying to choose between a Netbook and an iPad, can you tell me the pro and cons of each. My needs are not excessive, just E-mail, Internet, opening and sending attachments and maybe typing up some notes while traveling.

PC CLUB: I'll try to point out some of the pros and cons as I see it to help you with your decision. By the way, after searching Google for "iPad versus Netbook" and reading a lot of the material, I've concluded there is no clear winner.

I looked at several Netbooks a few months back for the purpose of using while traveling and for some reason I just could not purchase one. My reasoning was this. I already owned a fairly light (3 pound) Notebook with plenty of power and I couldn't rationalize getting a Netbook just to save some weight. Recently, however, I decided to go with an iPad and never looked back.

How do I use it? Previously, when I wanted to sit outside and read a book I brought my Notebook also so I could check E-mail, do some writing and browse the Web. As you know, it takes a Notebook or any PC a few minutes to boot up but the iPad can go from standby to reading mail or browsing the Internet in roughly 12 seconds. I leave my iPad in standby all day unless I'm using it since it uses virtually no power in this mode. If I go to a bookstore or coffee shop, my iPad usually goes along.

On the other hand, if I wanted to use a Web cam or view Web sites that use Flash I couldn't depend on the iPad. One of the advantages of a Netbook is that you can easily share files with anyone on your network. However, I recently install a free application (there's an app for almost anything) called DropBox and it lets you share files between your iPad and virtually anyone else with an Internet connection.

Multitasking on an iPad cannot be done but if you're playing a video on a Netbook, it's using a lot of its resources and may struggle while multitasking. There's no substitute for using a Netbook's real keyboard and mouse while typing a long document but for casual use the iPad works fine.

If you're planning a trip and you have the 3G version of the iPad, you can use it as a GPS. If you like to Skype a lot, you have to do it without video since there is no camera on an iPad.

The iPad weighs less than half of most Netbooks and has twice the battery life. In addition, the experience of reading a book on an iPad is far superior to the Kindle or other book readers that I've tried. However, be prepared to pay more for an iPad than a Netbook or a Kindle. I've recently interviewed several Netbook users and they are unhappy with its performance would not purchase one again given the chance.

Buying an iPad does not mean that you can totally free yourself from a PC. You will still need to run a Windows or Mac PC since your iPad is useless without connecting it to iTunes.

I'm taking a trip shortly and here's what I plan to do with my iPad:

- Listen to music
- Read books
- Browse the Internet
- Do some light writing
- Check my E-mail
- Transfer pictures from my digital camera to the iPad, full size photos can be transferred to my PC when I get back.
- Post photos to Flickr
- Use as a GPS
- Play games (infrequently, of course)
- Watch movies

P.S. – just got back from our week trip to Alaska and I didn't miss my Laptop. In fact, I felt very comfortable taking my iPad to dinner frequently where I used several applications to plan our next day's journey.

In summary, for my particular use, the iPad is not only a productive device for many tasks but a neat entertainment device also. I have absolutely no regrets about buying an iPad. Be sure to go to my Web site and click the Contac Me menu to send me a question you'd like answered. - *Ed Schwartz, NOCCC member. View his Web site at www.edwardns.com.*