

# EXTRA! EXTRA!

## (E)-READ ALL ABOUT IT!

Today's e-readers speak volumes—as in, you can pack hundreds of books into one sleek gadget. Thanks to significant price cuts, the time to buy is now. BY CHRISTINA TYNAN-WOOD

**I**n the past my purse was always too packed to hold the books that could have made the hours I spend sitting outside school waiting for my kids, cooling my heels in doctors' offices or riding trains less mind-numbing. Then I got an e-reader. Now when I have downtime I can get lost in a mystery or novel, or relax with a current magazine. Also gone are the days of having to drop \$400 or more on one of these babies, because some cost less than half that. In the end using one may not save a ton of money versus buying books—unless you love classics, which can often be had for free—but it can make it easier to squeeze the joy of reading into a busy life. Time for a crash course.



### Win a 16 GB iPad!

Want an iPad? (Who doesn't?) Life would be good—you'd always have something to read, and even better, thanks to a free Netflix app available at iTunes, you could instantly watch TV episodes and movies streamed from Netflix, provided you're a member. For your shot at one of two 16 GB Apple iPads or one of three Nintendo Wii video game consoles, go to [momster.com/fc/ereader](http://momster.com/fc/ereader) and enter for a chance to win. For rules, see page 106.





## Kindle

Amazon

**Overall dimensions:**  
7.5" x 4.8" x 0.335"

**Screen size (for all units measured diagonally):** 6"  
**Weight:** 8.7 ounces

At \$139, the latest generation Wi-Fi-only Kindle is a supersweet deal—provided that you typically hover in Wi-Fi range. If you don't, you probably want to spring for the 3G model, \$189, which lets you search and download via a high-speed data network at no charge, even when there's no Wi-Fi around for miles. Either way, the newest Kindle is so sleek and light—scarcely more than half a pound—that you can toss it into even a smallish bag and have enough reading material to last a lifetime.

The unit is trimmer and lighter than previous generations, and one good charge on the battery will hold you for a while, up to a month. The screen is uncanny in its resemblance to genuine paper, thanks to a painstakingly calibrated contrast. Useful extras galore include the ability to post articles from periodicals to Facebook right from your device. In fact, it's hard to think of a reason not to get one of these—even if you cling like a mollusk to the experience of reading printed, bound books. (I know, me too.)

**To buy:** amazon.com or Staples stores nationwide



## Nook

Barnes & Noble

**Overall dimensions:**  
7.7" x 4.9" x .5"

**Screen size:** 6" display for reading; 3.5" LCD for navigation  
**Weight:** 12 ounces

Barnes & Noble's answer to the Kindle is especially nifty if you like to hang out at your local B&N store. There are two wireless offerings—\$149 for Wi-Fi only, \$199 for 3G and Wi-Fi, both with a small touchscreen for navigating the high-contrast e-ink screen above it. This is also how you stock your virtual bookshelves—simply tap the Shop button and off you zip to the online store, where you can buy books, find free tomes and subscribe to magazines and newspapers. (Though the selection is not quite as vast as Amazon's.) If your friends also have a Nook, you can lend them books right from yours; the device will retrieve them when the loan period is up. In-store, your Nook will get free access to Wi-Fi and a constantly changing array of content that's available only while you are on-site. But be forewarned: If you enjoy playing sudoku, like me, having a Nook may mean you are constantly tempted to ignore work deadlines—or your kids.

**To buy:** Barnes & Noble retail stores nationwide or nook.com



## Reader

(Daily Edition) Sony

**Overall dimensions:**  
7.87" x 5.04" x 0.38"  
**Screen size:** 7"  
**Weight:** 12.75 ounces

When it comes to scratching the itch to curl up with a book, the Sony Reader gets the tactile sensation right—it has just about the same heft in the hand, and the screen-only design provides a book-like experience. The e-ink screen looks like paper, with slightly more glass-like glare than the Kindle or Nook. (A company rep says the newest version of the Daily Edition, not available for testing at press time, has a more paper-like look due to an e-ink tech update.)

Among the several Sony options, the Daily Edition, \$249, is the only one that delivers periodicals wirelessly the way the Nook and Kindle do. Tap its touchscreen to navigate, shop, highlight passages or jot notes with the cool included notebook app. A big plus is that you can check books out from the library over the Internet, though you have to connect the Reader to a computer to complete the transaction. However, you'd have to do that quite a few times to make up the difference in price between the Reader Daily Edition and the Kindle or Nook.

**To buy:** sonystyle.com



## iPad

Apple

**Overall dimensions:**  
9.56" x 7.47" x .5"  
**Screen size:** 9.7"  
**Weight:** 1.5 pounds

Calling the iPad an e-reader is like saying denim is just for jeans—both are gross understatements. But if you're considering investing in an e-book, think about whether spending a lot more to get an iPad makes sense for you. (The price differential depends on the model you choose, but iPads start at \$499 for 16 GB.) The iTunes App store boasts tons of newspapers and magazines, with more being added all the time. You can buy e-books at iTunes or from Amazon by installing the free Kindle app. There are also apps to manage your health records, to-do list and hundreds of other things. The iPad allows you to stream video from Netflix and tote the Google Maps-based navigation system wherever you go.

In other words, this unit is almost a full-featured computer, though you'll have to poke at an on-screen keyboard or spend more cash on a full-size one. The crisp touchscreen is slick, though not high-contrast like the Kindle, Nook or Reader—meaning you won't want to read on it in bright light. But all the other bells and whistles may render that a moot point.

**To buy:** Apple stores nationwide or apple.com

## Alex Spring Design

**Overall dimensions:**  
8 7/8" x 4 3/4" x 3/8"

**Screen size:** 6"; 3.5" touchscreen  
for navigation below

**Weight:** 11 ounces

The news to use here is that the smaller touch-LCD below the e-ink screen runs on the popular-and-getting-more-so Android operating system—almost like a Droid smartphone without the calls or cellular fees. The browser means you can go anywhere you want on the Web: Facebook, Twitter, shopping for books at Kobo.com or BooksOnBoard.com. Like most Android mobile devices, it can wirelessly access the Android Market via the 3G network, where users just tap an icon to easily snap up apps that do just about everything but walk the dog or physically put dinner in the oven. But let's not forget the books. Buying them isn't as simple as on the other devices here, but reading them on the 6" e-ink screen is surprisingly comfortable. In short, this may be the answer for people who are willing to pay a premium (the unit runs \$399) for the privilege of being on the cutting edge because the Android operating system makes the Alex nicely expandable over time.

**To buy:** [springdesign.com](http://springdesign.com)



## Word Up!

According to a 2010 Harris Poll, over half of e-reader owners (53%) say they read more now than they did six months ago, compared with 18% of nonusers.



## Novel Pandigital

**Overall dimensions:** 8" x 10" x .5"

**Screen size:** 7"

**Weight:** 1.5 pounds

Despite its cool name and on-screen bookstore, the Novel is more like a poor-man's iPad than the other e-readers here. The color touchscreen LCD isn't as wow-worthy as the iPad, but hey, at \$179, it won't set you back nearly as much financially. Like the Nook, the Novel connects to Barnes & Noble via Wi-Fi (no 3G) for books, newspapers and magazines, and has a Web browser, alarm clock and calendar. Check your e-mail, hit Facebook, reserve a hotel room or go shopping. Bottom line: This unit is useful for much more than just reading, but while the color screen makes Web surfing pleasant, it also limits your reading options about as much as any other LCD: You'll have a hard time if you're lazing about someplace sunny. Of course, you could probably happily listen to books or music in that situation.

**To buy:** [pandigital.net/](http://pandigital.net/)  
[pandigitalnovel](http://pandigitalnovel.com) ●