

# *Top Tips for Tablets*

Things You Need to Know about  
Choosing  
and  
Using  
Touchscreen Tablets



*iPads, Android & Windows*

# *Introduction*

Hello and welcome to this booklet.

It all started a little while ago, when my Dad told me he was thinking about buying a touchscreen tablet.

I took him and Mum into “PC World” and we had a look around at the different options... iPads, Android tablets like the Samsung Tab and so on and even touchscreen tablets running Windows, like the Surface.

But afterwards, I realised it’d be useful to him to have some of the most important things to know written down... after all, it’s hard to remember everything in one go.

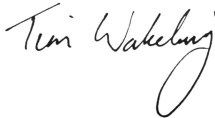
And there were some tips that I hadn’t mentioned. Things about how to use it once he got it, not just about choosing one.

So I jotted them down & sent them to him in an email.

But Dad’s not the only one who’s struggling to get the hang of using a touchscreen tablet... and that’s why I’ve put this booklet together – the same tips I gave Dad, but in a proper booklet form.

I hope you find it as useful as Dad tells me he did!

Yours

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tim Wakeling". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping 'T' and 'W'.

Tim Wakeling, the author

## ***First of all...***

What's a tablet? Is it the same as an iPad?

Well, not quite. A tablet or touchscreen tablet is any kind of hand held computer-like device that you can use for all sorts of things like emails, browsing the web, and so on. You control it by touching the screen (and sometimes in one or two other ways but touching the screen is the main one).

An iPad is one particular type of tablet, made by a company called Apple. They're very popular... but also one of the more expensive options.

Whatever type of tablet you're using, the main way to control it is with the touchscreen...

## ***Using a Touchscreen***

When you're using a modern touchscreen, it works using the electrical capacitance between your finger and the screen – so it needs to be your skin touching it. You need to use the fleshy part of the finger, not your fingernail.

You can also get a pen-like thing called a stylus that you can use on the screen. It's helpful if you need to touch exactly the right part of the screen as the point is much finer than your finger. But generally tablets are designed so you don't need to be too precise in what you touch. (Don't use a normal pen, by the way, even with the lid on – it won't work)

## ***How do you type on a tablet?***

Some tablets come with a keyboard... and for most others you can buy one. Sometimes it plugs in, sometimes it snaps on with a magnetic connector. Sometimes it uses “Bluetooth” to connect to the tablet without having to plug in. The bluetooth ones need their own battery, which needs to be kept charged up.

If you don't have a keyboard (or don't have it connected at the time), a keyboard will appear on the touchscreen when you need to type something, and you can type on that. It's a bit different from typing on a normal keyboard, as you can't feel the keys move, but most tablets make a slight click as you tap each key (or in some cases vibrate ever so slightly) so you can feel you're actually typing.

You might find you much prefer typing on a separate keyboard rather than on the screen, but my advice is to try the tablet without a separate keyboard first and see how you get on.

I personally quite like typing on the screen, though I didn't expect to when I first tried it. If you get on all right with it, fine. If not, you can always get a keyboard later.

By the way, when you use the on-screen keyboard, you “use up” some of the screen with the keyboard... so while you're typing, you can't see as much of the rest of it. If you're typing an email or whatever, though, that doesn't usually matter. And once you've finished typing, the keyboard goes away again, so you

can see the whole screen. It's not ideal for typing a long document, because you can only see a little bit of it at a time, but it's all right for most short things.

### ***Choosing a Keyboard***

For most tablets, you can't plug in a normal, PC keyboard. There are one or two (like the Microsoft Surface) where you can... but even then, you might not want to. After all, you've got a light, small tablet that's easy to move about... so you might not want a big, clumpy keyboard!

Instead, you can buy keyboards that are also protective cases for the tablet, that fold over the screen when you're not using them. In most cases you can also fold them right round to the back of the tablet when you don't want to use them, to get them out of the way.



If you do decide to get a keyboard, my big tip is to try several before you choose one. They can be quite different to type on. Some have proper moving keys (but very thin), others use the same kind of technology as a touchscreen and don't actually move... Some are very thin and don't add much to the size of the tablet,

others are a bit thicker and add a bit more.

Different people prefer different types, so it's worth trying them to see what's best for you.

***Tips when looking at a photo (or lots of other things, including webpages)***

You can usually zoom in for a closer look by touching the screen with two fingers and pulling them apart – like you're stretching the screen.



Then you can move around the photo by touching it with one finger and moving it around the screen. In some cases you can rotate it by touching with two fingers and rotating them... but not always. Oh, and you can zoom out to see the whole picture by touching with two fingers and moving them closer together again.

## ***What on earth is Android? It's a bit confusing...***

Android it's what's called an "operating system" - the program that makes the device work. There are three popular ones for tablets:

Android (which is made by Google)

Windows 10 (a bit like you'd use on a PC)

iOS (which is made by Apple and only used on their products, like the iPad).

They all have similarities, but they all have differences, too. Some people find they prefer one over the others, but to be honest if you've never used a touchscreen tablet before, you're going to have to learn how to use it whichever you go for...

## ***But what's Marshmallow? Some tablets have that... or Nougat... or Oreo?***

Google made things a bit confusing: they named different versions of Android after various sweets.

In 2017 they brought out Oreo, the one before is Nougat and Marshmallow came before that. They do also give them numbers: Oreo is version 8.

So if someone tells you a tablet has "Oreo", they mean it uses Android... the Oreo version of Android.

## ***So what's different about Android, Windows 8 and iOS (on an iPad).***

I'll get a little bit more into how you actually use them

shortly, but here's what they look like:



***But it's even more confusing than that (sorry!)***

As well as there being different versions of Android, the makers of the actual tablets tend to customise it a bit... or a lot, depending on who they are. So if you buy an Android tablet from Samsung or Amazon, it'll be especially tweaked. Samsung do (in my opinion) a fairly good job of this so I wouldn't be put off one of theirs at all.

Amazon, though, deliberately try to stop you using any resources that they didn't create. For example they make it hard to use YouTube to watch videos. So I wouldn't buy a tablet made by them, e.g. the "Fire" tablet (which used to be called the Kindle Fire) unless I was sure I didn't want to use anything "non-Amazon".

*(If you're wondering why they do this it's simply to encourage you to use their own services... that way, when it's something you pay for, like watching a new film or reading a latest bestseller, you're paying them rather than someone else.)*



### ***But isn't the Kindle really popular?***

Yes... and this is another case where the way they've named it makes it confusing.

The Kindle is an ebook reader – it's really just for reading books on. And it's pretty good at it.

The Kindle Fire (just "Fire" these days) is a totally different device: a touchscreen tablet like the others, run by a very tweaked version of Android.

If you want an ebook reader, I'd probably recommend a Kindle (or Kindle paperwhite, which is similar with a better screen). I wouldn't generally recommend a Fire because it's a tablet that won't let you easily use non-Amazon stuff.

### ***What's the difference between an ebook reader and a tablet?***

OK - but you mentioned an ebook reader... what's the difference between that and a tablet... can't I read ebooks on a tablet? Yes, you can. I do, quite a bit! The difference is that an ebook reader can only really do that.

A tablet can do all sorts: email, search the web, read ebooks, watch online videos or TV, play games, write documents, even keep spreadsheets (and entertain small children on long car journeys from Cumbria to Plymouth once spot-the-yellow-car has got boring).

So if a tablet can do more than an ebook reader, why would you buy just an ebook reader?

Well, some people prefer the way an ebook reader

works. First of all, they often tend to be lighter – ideal for holding in your hand to read. Second, the battery often lasts longer between charging.

Most importantly the screen is different – it's not lots of tiny lights like a normal screen, it actually changes the surface so it reflects light in white or black. Some people find that easier on the eyes. I find it slightly frustrating because it takes slightly longer for it to “turn” the page. So personally I'm happy reading ebooks on a tablet. But if you are mainly after something to read ebooks on, I'd try both a dedicated ebook reader and a tablet and see which you prefer.

One last tip on reading ebooks on a tablet: I'd recommend trying changing the “paper” colour to sepia instead of white. I find it much more comfortable on the eyes.

## ***What about Windows... is it the same as I have on my PC?***

It might be, technically. Tablets with Windows on have Windows 8 or 10, which is very different from earlier versions like Vista, XP or 7.

So if your PC has Windows 10, it'll be similar. (If you're not sure what version you have, it usually appears on screen for a few seconds when you start the PC.

But even if you have the same version, using it on a tablet is quite different.

For a start you don't normally have a mouse... and might not have a separate keyboard.

So instead of controlling it that way, you touch the screen.

Instead of scrolling up and down a page with the mouse, you slide by touching the screen.

And if you are used to an earlier version of Windows, it looks very different. Instead of having icons and menus to choose what to do, you have rectangles called tiles to tap - like these:



Microsoft are very much pushing the idea that with Windows 8 and its descendants you can have the same system on your PC and your tablet, so you don't need to learn two systems and get confused when you swap between them. It's true, in a way, but you'll still be using them in a different way, so I wouldn't let it sway you too much.

(For the record, although Dad is used to Windows on his laptop, he went for an Android based tablet in the end, partly as he found it easier to use).

## ***So how do you actually use a tablet... (and what's an app?)***

As I've mentioned, different tablets work in slightly different ways. And I can't fit all the detail about each type into this booklet.

But I can give you a brief idea of how they work.

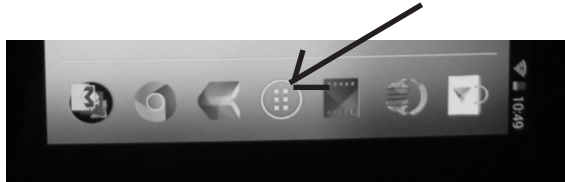
When you turn a tablet on, you usually get a "lock" first, to make sure you didn't knock the on switch by accident. You usually have to hold down a button or touch the screen and "drag" something: on an iPad you hold the Home button, in Windows 10 you drag the screen up and in some versions of Android you drag a padlock to the edge of a circle.

Then you get a home screen. With Windows and Apple devices, this usually has some of the most popular apps on it. If you're using an iPad or something else from Apple, there'll be little icons for everything. With something running Windows, it has what are called tiles - little rectangles. But they do much the same thing, you just tap one to start it. The advantage of tiles is they're a little bigger and some of them actually show you things before you've even started. For example a tile for the news app might run through current headlines, even if you don't tap it.

Generally, all the tiles or icons for the apps won't fit on the screen at once, so you can see more by touching the screen and sliding your finger to the left (called "swiping" to the left). It'll show you more... and you might be able to swipe again to see even more.

If you have an Android tablet, it's usually a little different. For example mine shows me the most popular things in my "library" instead of apps. It shows me ebooks I've been reading recently, any films I've watched on it or music I was listening to and I can just tap one to go back to it.

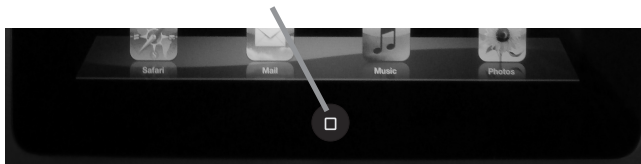
With Android, to get to the full list of apps, you usually look for an icon that looks like a small circle or square with several dots in it - like this:



Tap that and it'll give you a full list of all the apps, usually (but not always) in alphabetical order. They probably won't fit on one screen, so you might have to "swipe" to the side to see the rest.

### ***Closing an app... and starting another***

Once you've tapped an icon and used the app, you might want to go and start another one. To get back to the home screen, to see the other apps, on a Windows or Apple device, there should be a physical Home button to tap, to the edge of the screen:



Tap that and it should take you back to the home screen to start another app.

On an Android device, there isn't usually a physical button (though there just might be with some makes), but if you touch the screen at the bottom, you should get symbols like these:



This one takes you back to the home screen.

But I should mention that the methods I've just explained don't actually close down the app you had running before. It's still there, running in the background. That might not bother you, and usually if you turn the device off fully (as opposed to using stand by), it'll close the apps down then.

But if you want to close it down properly, here's how:

In Windows, while the app's on the screen, touch at the top of the screen, wait for a second, then drag it to the bottom, then let go.

Using an Apple device, press the button near the screen twice in quick succession. Then touch the app you want to close and swipe it to the top of the screen, like you're flicking it away from you!

Android is a bit similar, but you touch at the bottom of the screen and then tap this icon...



and then flick the app you want to close to the side, rather than the top.

## ***I hope that helps... BUT...***

Well, I'm just about out of space. I hope all that helped. But it's only very much a beginning. I wanted to give you an idea of what to think about when you're choosing a tablet and things you need to know to start out.

But it's not a full set of instructions. For example:

- I couldn't mention Siri (or its Google equivalent) and how they can actually do stuff for you, just by you actually speaking to the tablet.
- I didn't have space to tell you how to get new apps (or get rid of the ones you don't want any more).
- There was no room to talk about security, viruses and spam... and what to do about them (the answer is NOT to just ignore them!)
- You can use most tablets as a Sat Nav - but I didn't have space to say which ones or tell you how to do it.

And lots more about how to use it and get the most out of it... apps you might find helpful and so on.

I've written three books called "iPads One Step at a Time", "Android Tablets One Step at a Time" and "Get More From Your Tablet".

You can find out more about them on our website [www.helpfulbooks.co.uk](http://www.helpfulbooks.co.uk), give us a call on 01229 777606 and Emma, Jess or Stella will happily send you an "information pack".

Either way, if you struggle with modern technology, I'd recommend them.

# ***Top Tips for Tablets***

Things you need to know about choosing and using touchscreen tablets.

Covers iPads, tablets running Windows and tablets running Android.

The perfect starting place if you're a little confused, unsure or simply at your wits' end!

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