

# INTRODUCTION TO TABLET PCS



If you are interested in expanding your ability to write with your PC, then a Tablet PC is for you. The freedom of leaving your keyboard and touchpad behind was an appealing one for me—as I liked the idea of being able to fold my screen upright and use an electronic pen to capture my notes directly on my screen. Besides, I wanted to get away from having Carpal Tunnel Syndrome—so using a pen instead of a mouse was easier for my wrist.

Bridging the gap between the pen and the computer is achieved by allowing you to write notes directly onto your computer. However, these machines require a slightly modified version of Windows XP Pro called Windows XP Tablet PC Edition 2005 just to make things

work.

## **Features and Functionality**

The nicest functionality this device offers is that you can use it at home, the office, or even for school. Computers are difficult when it comes to design and creativity. If you don't see the value of using a Tablet PC, consider:

- . Write on the Windows Desktop
- . Literally handcraft your own greeting cards on the computer
- . Annotate and make notes on Web site pages
- . Instant message people in your own handwriting
- . Enter notes into Microsoft OneNote (a note taking application most often associated with features available on a Tablet PC)
- . Convert handwriting to text
- . Create personalized PowerPoint presentations
- . Hand-sign documents or e-mails

Some users will find it difficult to write on the screen of your monitor or laptop because it is somewhat awkward to use a virtual pen in place of a real one. It does take some practice, but if you are looking



for precision there is an included pen pad (mouse pad) that you can use as a writing surface that allows for clear and accurate writing.

### **Imitation is not the highest form of flattery**

You have to be careful of Tablet PC imitators. Some computers offer a touch screen that works with a stylus (just like a PocketPC)—but you don't want that! The reason is that your palm hangs down over the screen causing too many contact points making the mouse completely inaccurate. You have to hold the stylus in a perfectly upright position—which makes dragging across the screen far more difficult. A TabletPC, on the other hand, uses a special pen that communicates with the computer directly. Your hand does not cause any contact that would move the mouse across the screen—only the included pen can move items on the screen.

### **One Note**



Microsoft OneNote is a great application—especially for college and business users. This application interfaces directly with the pen capabilities of your TabletPC and allows you to take notes on the screen in your own handwriting. The program even has the capability to translate your handwriting into print—but like any optical recognition program—certain words are difficult to interpret.

### **Dexterity**

There are simple dexterity issues that only a pen can offer when dealing with graphic applications such as Adobe Photoshop and Illustrator. While a mouse allows you to control the screen, it offers limited precision. A mouse is like trying to thread a needle with a sledgehammer. A pen, however, allows you to control the movement (right on the screen) to introduce key movements and illustrations that are essential to your projects.

### **Screen Rotation**

One of the most advantageous features of the TabletPC is to have “instant screen rotation.” You can literally rotate the screen so that you can input in portrait mode vs. the standard landscape mode. This means the computer evolves from being on your lap to becoming a tool you can hold in a business environment. You can use portrait mode for taking notes, just like you would when writing on a pad of paper. Landscape mode is best when viewing presentations, graphics, or charts.

### **Is it worth it?**



So, the real question—is the few hundred dollars extra for the Tablet PC really worth it?

After dealing with computers for several years, I have to say yes! There isn't really any other alternative device that allows you to write directly on your computer screen. While graphic tablets and high precision mice offer better control—they will never equal the control you would get with a pen writing right where you need it.

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