

## E-book Reader Shopping Tips

When shopping for an ebook reader, first consider how you will be using the e-reader. What types of books will you read? Do you also want to download magazines, newspapers and RSS feeds, or browse the web? Do you want to use Library eBooks? Considering your needs and how you'll use your ebook reader can help you identify which e-reader will be best for you. Here are the top features to consider:

- **Size:** E-readers vary in size from only slightly larger than a thin paperback to 8.5-by-11-inch tablets. Smaller devices are more portable, but also have smaller screens. . A 6-inch screen offers a good combination of adequate size and moderate price for most people. It will be small and light enough to slip into a handbag or briefcase.
- **Display technology:** E Ink Corp. is the leading manufacturer of e-reader displays, and its electronic paper is designed to look like text on real paper. Good contrast and crisp text make for easier reading. Sixteen-level grayscale delivers more tones for sharp, clear text, graphics and photos, while four-level grayscale will be comparatively dull and struggle to render detailed images clearly. Unlike a computer screen, E Ink screens aren't backlit, so you'll need a book light to read in a dark room. Many reviewers say E Ink screens cause less eyestrain than a backlit screen, but some ophthalmologists say there's no difference. On the other hand LCD screens allow you to read in bed at night without an additional light.
- **Navigation and user interface:** Consider the positioning of buttons and other navigation controls. Left-handed users may struggle with landscape mode on models where control buttons are on the right. Toggle and joystick controls are easy to use, but typically take more time than interacting directly with the device via a touch screen. Capacity touch screens are more responsive than Resistive touch screens.
- **Ebook access and file compatibility:** Amazon.com and Barnes & Noble have the largest ebook stores, and each company boasts over one million free and for-purchase books, periodicals and other files. Sony has its own ebook store, and its e-readers are compatible with thousands of free public domain books from Google. Additional ebook retailers offer books in text, PDF, Microsoft Word or other file formats. Library eBooks (except for Kindle) require the e-reader to be able to use PDF or ePub formats with DRM (Digital Rights Management). You will need to use a computer to transfer the eBooks to the ereader. Kindle eReaders require the computer only to send the eBook to the Amazon Cloud. Once in the Cloud, the Kindle needs to be connected to a WiFi (not a 3G) network in order to sync the eBook to the Kindle. (Note: free WiFi is available at a variety of local locations including all LVCCLD libraries).
- **Wireless connectivity:** Experts say the easiest e-readers to use are those with wireless connectivity (WiFi) because ebooks can be purchased and downloaded on demand. Readers without wireless capabilities require a USB connection to a computer to download ebooks. Most major e-readers are compatible with both Macs and PCs, but check before you buy. Library eBooks require the use of computer to download books and then transfer to the device even if they have wireless Wi-Fi. A model with wireless 3G access offers the most flexibility for obtaining new content for the reader, but models with Wi-Fi-only access generally cost less. E-readers that must be connected to a computer can be the least convenient to use, but they are likely to be the lowest-priced. You'll have to choose between cost and convenience. In any case, don't expect to use 3G or Wi-Fi access to the Internet for much except downloading content from the e-reader's dedicated store. At best, readers have Web browsers that are very limited and most to be virtually unusable.
- **Memory:** Memory on eBook readers varies, but they usually have space for at least 1,000 ebooks. Some have expansion slots that allow users to save titles to memory cards, helping to free space on the device itself.
- **Battery life:** Most e-readers will last as long as two weeks between charges with minimal usage, or two to three days with regular usage. A few -- those that rely on the battery to power lights, interactive touch screens and other features -- need to be charged more often, as frequently as every day.
- **Multimedia and other features:** Some e-readers have basic music players, annotation programs, document sharing, text-to-voice capability, handwriting recognition, web browsing and games. Generally speaking, the greater the number of extra features, the higher the price.
- **iPads, Tablets and Smartphones:** People who read a lot of ebooks would probably be happiest with a dedicated eBook reader. However, for those who want a more versatile device and don't want to connect to a computer to get eBooks, an Apple iPad (\$500 to \$900), iTouch and iPhone as well as android tablets and smartphones. All have a free OverDrive app which allows the user to download ePUB (eBook) & MP3 (eAudio book) formatted books directly to the device, no computer needed.
- **Compatible Devices:** Visit <http://www.overdrive.com/resources/drc/> for a list of devices which will work with eBooks from the library before you purchase a device.