

The Kindle

After many attempts by various companies to launch a successful e-book reader, a new model hits the market. Will *Amazon's* new wireless Kindle finally change reading habits?

1 How often do you read? What do you read? Describe your reading habits to a partner. Use the words in the boxes.

often occasionally never
rarely hardly ever every day

novels newspapers magazines
blogs reports e-mails

2 Study the product information box. Scan the article below and complete the missing information (a–g).

Product information: Kindle		Cost:	(a)
Number of titles available in <i>Amazon's</i> store:	(b)	Number of books held on device:	(c)
Product weight:	(d)	Date product launched:	(e)
Number of font sizes available:	(f)	Length of time to buy / download:	(g)

Another E-book revolution? The first units of *Amazon's* new Kindle sold out in less than six hours when it was launched last November in the US. It costs just under \$400. This new e-book reader has been described as 'the iPod of reading'. The Kindle uses 'electronic paper' and, it is claimed, gives sharp on-screen text. Because the text is not backlit, it is easy to read; moreover, there are six font sizes to choose from.

Amazon's on-line store has over 100,000 titles available. Books are delivered wirelessly in less than one minute; *Amazon* pays the delivery charge. Users can download and read the first chapter of a book for free. The Kindle holds over 200 books, as well as newspapers and magazines like *Time*. Users can also access the online encyclopedia, *Wikipedia*. Mobility is an important feature – there is no need to connect to a computer; at just over 290 grams, it is light and portable. Reading on the go has never been easier.

Is this the start of a revolution in reading habits, or another false dawn? In Japan, half the best-selling novels in the second half of last year were actually released as page-per-day serials, sent directly to mobile phones. The next wave of software will allow phone authors to integrate sounds and images into their novels. This is the future: free distribution, negligible production costs. Publishers, it is envisaged, will still play a vital role, sorting out the good from the bad.

To some people, a page full of hyperlinks to *Wikipedia* or *Google* sounds like a nightmare. The idea of pulling up a movie or audio clip will kill what reading novels is all about: the power of the imagination. Many dread an era where readers can interact with content by making notes on-screen or texting the author with a complaint. There will probably always be a place for traditional books. But it seems likely that the e-book will change the way many of us read forever.

3 Read the whole article. What are the features and benefits of the Kindle? What does the future hold?

4 Find words in the article from their definitions below.

- | | |
|---|---------------|
| (a) clear and seen in a lot of detail | (paragraph 1) |
| (b) communicates using electrical signals, without the need for wires | (paragraph 2) |
| (c) easy to carry | (paragraph 2) |
| (d) very unimportant or small | (paragraph 3) |
| (e) feel very worried that something might happen | (paragraph 4) |
- (Definitions from or based on Macmillan English Dictionary Ed. 2 (2007) Text © A& C Black)

5 Discuss the following questions in small groups and then report your ideas to the class.

- Would you buy a Kindle? Justify your answer.
- What do you think will happen to reading habits in the future? Will the role of publishers change?
- Describe a new product you know well in five sentences.