

The iPad

Last month, Apple finally unveiled the iPad. Will it change the face of computing, or will it fail to excite consumers?

1 Decide which of the following products are essential for you (E) and your family, which are desirable (D) and which are not necessary at all (NN). Compare and discuss your answer with a partner.

Mobile phone	Smartphone	Digital camera	E-book reader	Wii
Laptop / Netbook	mp3 player	Television	DVD player	Blu-ray player

2 Read the product information sheet. Scan paragraph one of the article and complete the missing data (a-d).

iPad					
Product: Touchscreen tablet	Colour: Black	Screen size: (a)	Weight: (b)	Thickness: (c)	US Cost, from: (d)

The iPad: to have or have not

Has there ever been as much hype about the launch of a new product? Would it be called the iSlate? Would it be called the iPad? The excitement before Steve Job's presentation in San Francisco at the end of last month reached fever-pitch. In a classic performance, the Apple CEO introduced the latest iconic product from his armchair: screen-size, 9.7", half an inch thick. So, not too small, not too big. Weight: 0.68 kg, or one and a half pounds. So, portable for executives. When Jobs announced the price, starting from \$499 in the US, the Apple share price shot up. Before the night was out, the iPad had its own page on Wikipedia. So, is it a must-have gadget?

Analysts are divided on this question. Some believe Apple is about to open a new era in the computer industry. They think this tablet computer with its 'sexy' touch screen will create a new 'third category', slotting nicely into the gap between a Smartphone and a laptop. It has been designed to watch films, play on-line games and browse the web. Moreover, with the simultaneous launch of iBooks, the

online book store, Apple sent a clear signal that it intends to revolutionise the publishing world in the same way that iTunes transformed the music industry. As an eBook reader, this device steals thunder from Amazon's Kindle. McGraw-Hill and Harper Collins are among publishers already signed up to produce e-books to enjoy on the iPad's colour screen.

Yet much reaction has been negative. The blogs were awash with comments like: "the device is just a large iPhone"; "over-rated"; "an over-priced netbook"; "there is no digital camera"; "underwhelming". It's ironic that on my own marketing course, we learnt about research, about knowing the consumer and projecting future sales. However, tech companies like Apple and Microsoft create products that consumers don't even know they want! What will the headlines be in a month's time when the iPad goes on sale? Will it change how we read and study? Is it only for entertainment, or can it also benefit the executive on the go? Or, at the end of the day, is it just all 'hype', destined to be owned by a handful of early adopters? Only time will tell.

3 Read the whole article. What do admirers of this product think? What do its critics say?

4 Decide if these words are **red** 3-star, 2-star, 1-star words, or **black** words from *The Macmillan English Dictionary*.

consumer(n)	portable (adj)	digital (adj)	tablet (n)	iconic (adj)
gadget (n)	browse (v)	laptop (n)	computer (n)	analyst (n)

*** - very frequent
 ** - quite frequent
 * - frequent
 No star - less frequent
 (Macmillan English Dictionary)

5 Complete the tasks in small groups. Be ready to report back your ideas to the class.

- (a) Will you buy an iPad? Why / why not?
- (b) Do you think this product will succeed or fail? Why / why not?
- (c) Can you identify 'a gap' in your market? If so, make notes on a product / service which could fill this gap.