



There are some basic decisions to make and things to understand.

General Concepts:

E-ink is used for the smaller grey scale readers. It works fine for reading books and the devices using it are lower cost, have much longer battery life and weigh less. Think of these as comparable to reading mass market paperbacks. They are convenient and easy but without real pizzazz. These are dedicated readers. Do not discount the value of lighter weight for reading. Though you can hold and read a hard cover leather bound book, it is a lot easier to hold a mass market paperback. It may not feel as good, but the weight makes a difference over the long run. The same is true of the heavier tablets. Each ounce counts.

7" Tablets are small enough to actually read books on, but they will also stream Netflix movies or other video, bring up YouTube videos, access thousands of news sites and download hundreds of thousands of small programs (called apps).

You can do E-mail, get directions, find restaurants, shop and read the latest news. You can view many websites and research just about anything. These are very cool new devices. They have very good book reader applications so you can read books, lookup words, and make notes. They are light enough to read with and big enough to watch some video on. I like this form factor a lot.

Ecosystems:

Both the readers and the tablets merge into a company ecosystem. If you buy Kindle products, then you will have great access to Amazon, and mediocre access to other systems. A Google Nexus gives you great access to Google's ecosystem, but less perfect access to Amazon. Barnes and Noble's Nook products merge into the Barnes and Noble ecosystem. Kobo's works best with the Kobo store.

They do vary in openness however. Google and Kobo are pretty open, Amazon pretty closed, and Barnes and Noble somewhere between. For books, Google, Barnes and Nobel Kobo and Sony (and many others), support the open Epub format. Amazon has its proprietary Kindle format.

DRM

Free E-books are fine, but most of us want to read books we buy or watch programs or movies we rented or bought. That means we need to deal with copy protection or **Digital Rights Management**. If you buy a book from Google or Amazon or Diesel, or Books on Board, or Kobo, or some other online bookstore, and have an account with them they

will let you download it again. Both Google and Amazon let you read the book on various devices you have. But, when you have to read **DRM** books from Amazon on a Google or Kobo device, or an Epub book on an Amazon device, then things become trickier.

Adobe makes the DRM for all these companies and they provide their own Epub and PDF reader and library manager. This allows you to buy books from many independent online stores and open them on your computer with Adobe's [Digital Editions](#). It will then send those books to your reader. For tablets, like the Nexus 7, you can simply copy the file to your device.

If you choose Amazon's proprietary system, then it will be very difficult to read protected books from non-Amazon sources on an E-Ink reader. I don't think it can be done without stripping the DRM from the book and breaking the law. That is something I'm not going to advocate openly. So, you need to examine which Ecosystem you want to live in, Amazon's or the rest of the world if you choose an E-Ink reader.

With the Kindle Fire HD you can break out of the Amazon System with a little work, say less than an hour. With the Nexus 7, you can install the Kindle App in just a few minutes and have access to both the Amazon and Google book environments.

If you are not going to live only in either the Amazon environment or the Google Environment or the Barnes and Nobel environment, and are not going to disable the DRM, then you need to install the [Aldiko](#) Reader. There are other apps, but they are not as good.

The Aldiko Reader app can be installed on either tablet to manage EPUB and PDF protected books. It will connect to your Adobe Digital Editions ID, which you must get first. If Adobe Digital Editions is managing your Digital rights on Epub or PDF books, then it will let you assign those rights to up to 6 devices. Most Digitally protected books you will buy from independent bookstores will use the Adobe Digital Editions to download the books and manage their copy protection.

Excellent E-Ink Readers

Amazon [Kindle](#):

- \$89 without advertising
- 6 ounces
- Uses Amazon's proprietary format
- Makes it very easy to buy books from Amazon
- For Amazon Prime Members access to 180,000 books to borrow.
- 6" screen, 167 pixels per inch
- Battery life: 4 weeks (based on 1/2 hour of reading per day)

Kindle [Paperwhite](#):

- \$139 without advertising
- 7.5 ounces

- Uses Amazon's proprietary format
- Makes it easy to buy books from Amazon
- For Amazon Prime Members access to 180,000 books to borrow.
- 6" screen, 212 pixels per inch
- Battery life: Up to 8 weeks
- Back light can be turned on to read in low (or no) light.

Nook [Simple Touch](#)

- \$99
- 7.5 ounces
- 6" screen
- Can read standard Epub books and Nooks special Epub format
- Makes it very easy to buy books from B&N stores
- 2 month battery life based on 1/2 hour a day.

Nook with [GlowLight](#)

- ~~\$139~~ \$119
- Up to 2 months with wifi off
- 6"
- Standard Epub
- 7 ounces

Kobo [Touch](#) (Glo "coming soon")

- \$99.99
- 6" screen
- 6.5 ounces
- Battery life one month
- Epub
- Kobo store and any other ebooks.

Color Tablets

There are currently only two contenders.

- Amazon [Kindle Fire HD](#)
- Google [Nexus 7](#)

There are older tablets and some of this information will apply. Also Apple is promising an I-Pad 7. But, as of today (September 21, 2012) these are the two in competition as new devices.

Both have beautiful 7" screens with 1280x800 pixels so they can stream 720p HD content. They both offer about 10 hours battery life. They both have fantastic fast quad core processors. They both provide excellent E-book reading experiences. They are both built on the Android operating system and are real computers capable of browsing the web, downloading and installing programs, doing E-mail, doing simple spreadsheets and word processing. They both sell for \$199.

So, what is the difference?

Petty Stuff

Amazon makes you pay \$15 extra if you don't want it to show you advertising and they charge \$10 if you buy a charger (accessory) with the tablet, otherwise the charger is \$20. Without the charger you need to use a computer with a USB link to very slowly charge your Fire. The base Fire has 16GB of memory, versus 8 for the Nexus 7. This is not important unless you are going to store video on the machine itself. The Nexus 7 does not offer an external SD card for more memory, but few people will actually need it since you won't be storing a lot of stuff on the tablet itself. It'll hold a few hundred pictures and a hundred books and 50 apps without pushing the 8 Gig standard.

Important Stuff

The Kindle Fire is an integrated part of the Amazon Ecosystem but has been opened up. It is excellent if you are an Amazon Prime member and intend to stream video onto your Fire from Amazon. It is designed to be a media streaming and book reading portal to Amazon. However they have opened themselves up to being able to install an Epub reader to read books purchased from anywhere. You can download thousands of apps. You can browse the web. You can stream Netflix video. Share notes to Evernote. You can do most things most people would like to do. The Amazon store is the best single source for books and video.

The Nexus 7 is a full fledged computer and is meant to be open and do anything. Instead of thousands of apps, they have hundreds of thousands at the Google store, which the Kindle Fire does not access. You can install the Kindle Reader app and connect it to your Amazon account and buy and read Amazon books in addition to access to all of Google's books and video. You can also use a general purpose reader like Aldiko to read any Epub book. You can stream Netflix and buy and view movies and TV from the ever growing (but not as big as Amazon) Google video store.

As an open system from Google, you will have the latest Android operating system with all its new features, like voice activated directions and information and integration with Google Docs and Google contacts and Google Calendar You can also sync your contacts and calendar with your phone and/or computer.

One thing you cannot do is stream movies from Amazon. This is because Amazon continues to use Flash which Adobe has abandoned on mobile devices and neither Google nor Apple will use because of their security issues.

The Nexus 7 is 2 ounces lighter than the Kindle Fire HD.

Conclusion

A good example of their different approaches is the other major and important

distinction that is seldom mentioned. The Kindle Fire HD has an HDMI port out so you could stream to a high definition monitor or TV, the Nexus 7 does not. However the Nexus 7 has bluetooth support, so you can use, for example, an external keyboard.

If you are an Amazon Prime member and will mostly read and stream video, then the Fire HD might be a better choice. If you want to do that and also have a little more freedom with a more open machine, then the Nexus 7 is the better choice. I have a hard time seeing how anyone would not fall in love and be blown away by either one.

Disclosure: I have a Google Nexus 7 Tablet and a Sony PRS 950 7" E-Ink reader and love them both.

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