



These days, it seems everyone has at least one i-something: an iPod, an iPhone, an iPad, an iTouch – help, what’s the difference between them?

the i-What?

“Mum, I’d like an iPod for Christmas,” my 8-year old said last holiday season.

My response was triggered automatically. “No way are you getting a mobile phone, Missy.”

The 8-year old looked down her nose at me, no mean feat considering she’s two heads shorter. “I said an i-POD, Mum. You know? Not an i-PHONE.”

I felt my age.

the musical iPod

The iPod is a fit-in-your-pocket device for playing music files such as MP3s. Ten years after its original launch, the iPod classic plays songs, movies, games and photo slideshows on its LCD screen, and also serves as a portable hard disk.

other models include:

- iPod touch, a touch-screen iPod that looks almost like an iPhone.
- iPod shuffle plays music but has no display for photos, games or movies.
- iPod nano plays songs and displays photos.

just how far the iPod has come, is best illustrated with its advertising campaign slogans:

- 1,000 songs in your pocket. (2001)
- 15,000 songs. 25,000 photos. 80 hours of video. (2005)
- Millions of songs. Thousands of videos. Hundreds of games. (2009)

Some iPods owners complain that the device is fragile, the repairs difficult and the battery requires frequent recharging. The full battery charge is often significantly less than advertised (e.g., 8 hours playback instead of 14 hours).

the smart iPhone

The iPhone comprises an online computer, a camera and a modern phone in one phone-size device. Advertised as “the internet in your pocket”, it is still seen by most users primarily as a mobile phone.

That’s probably the iPhone’s greatest pitfall. Most people safeguard their personal computers with passwords, anti-virus software and data-scrubbing rituals, yet those very same individuals don’t seem concerned about protecting their privacy

when it comes to the iPhone. And yet, what are you more likely to lose in the street: a phone or a desktop computer?

Because of the way data is stored on the iPhone, deleted emails and photos can be undeleted by hackers. Your Internet habits can be recorded and analysed. Your personal information, including your location and Facebook details, can be harvested by some apps and shared with other vendors.

Another danger of the iPhone is that it looks like a toy and every child wants one. Indeed, some of the iPhone educational software (as well as the not-so-educational games) look so good, we feel tempted to give in and let our kid have one, forgetting it’s still a mobile phone with all its cyber-bullying and endless talking potential.

Of course, iPhone 4 features the stuff science fiction was once made of: video phone calls (FaceTime). It’s only a matter of time before your child will turn this into a must-have feature, both for safety reasons and to stay in touch with Nana ...

the flat iPad

Experts are still baffled by its success. You can’t fit it in your pocket. You can’t phone with it. And it’s not even a fully-functional computer. Yet, it sells.

The iPad looks like a flat computer screen and performs many computer-like functions. It accesses the Internet wirelessly. It can run games, read e-books, display movies and play music. You can’t program with it, perform lengthy calculations or do fancy word processing tricks, although an app called iWork will let you create and edit a basic document.

Easy to use for toddlers and members of the Grey Power alike, the iPad has no mouse, joystick, tracker ball or keyboard. You control it using a no-smudge-no-scratch touch screen. The iPad responds to other input, too: a light sensor adjusts the screen’s brightness and an accelerometer detects the device’s orientation so that it can switch between portrait and landscape modes depending on how the user holds it. The

iPad 2 has a 3-axis gyroscope which can perceive the iPad’s every twist and turn, which means more control in action games.

Of the three i-Gadgets described here, this one is the most suitable for children’s use (and a trendy toy for the parents, too). It can teach your child counting, the alphabet, eye-hand coordination. It can read them books out loud or entertain them for hours with picture bingo and memory games.

As one parent put it: “Give them an iPad and you can drive from Auckland to Wellington without a single are-we-there-yet.”

However, the iPad can break if dropped, so make sure you put a hard case on it before you hand it over.

some educational apps for preschoolers:

- Drawing Pad - it has crayons, it has pencils, it has paintbrushes. It features more colours and erasers than you know what to do with. Best of all, it comes with virtual stickers to complete the artwork.
- Park Math - feed the hungry hippo the correct number of food items. A great introduction to numbers.
- Letters A to Z - get to know the alphabet.
- My Very First App - with artwork by Eric Carle (of The Very Hungry Caterpillar fame), this app teaches toddlers colours.

school children will be equally impressed by:

- Princess Math - with graphics and themes that appeal to girls, this app teaches the first three school years’ worth of addition and subtraction.
- Grammar Prep - a series of apps that allow your child to practice grammar concepts such as subjects and verbs, the use of commas, pronouns and modifiers.

While it may be tempting to let the children practice their sight words and spelling with iPad apps, bear in mind that the majority have been written for the USA market and use American spelling.

summary for busy adults

- iPod, iPad and iPhone are gadgets made by Apple.
- They are cool and “in”.
- Beautiful to look at.
- Expensive.
- Although a status symbol and a fashion accessory, they are surprisingly functional and very intuitive to operate.

i-glossary

- App - software that runs on your iPhone, iPad or iPod. It ranges from showing the news and navigating roads, to games and solving maths problems. One of Apple’s slogans promises: “There’s An App For Everything.”
- eBooks - an app that allows you to read electronic books. It allows you to change the font and size of the text, adjust the page brightness and search for words within the book. You turn the page by tapping or dragging the touch screen.
- iBookstore - where you purchase e-books for your iPhone or iPad.
- iChat - an instant messaging Mac application that allows the user to text and video friends. The recipient can be on a Mac or a PC.
- iLounge - <http://www.ilounge.com/> - where you find out the latest tricks about things iPod, iPad, iPhone and beyond.
- iMac - the all-in-one desktop computer with a built-in wireless technology.
- iSight - a camera hidden behind the glass display at the top of an iMac. You can use it with iChat.
- iTouch - iPod touch
- iTunes - launched as “a new spin on music”, it’s a free app for playing and organising digital music and videos on your computer.
- iQuit - a made-up word. It’s what a parent wants to scream having read all these definitions.