Amazon Fire 7 review: a budget tablet for the basics

After three years, Amazon's finally updated its most affordable tablet: the Fire 7. Starting at $59.99 ($74.99 without lockscreen ads), the new model costs slightly more than its predecessor but comes with increased RAM as well as battery life that matches the larger and considerably more expensive Fire HD 10's. It also gets USB-C, up to 32GB of built-in storage, and a more powerful processor.

But do those extra features make it a good buy? After spending a month testing the ad-free version of the Fire 7, I'd say yes. As long as you're only looking for a cheap entertainment tablet, this is a decent device, especially if you're already embedded in the Amazon ecosystem. Sure, you're going to have to be comfortable with some pretty big trade-offs — like a seriously low-resolution, pixelated screen — but at this price, nobody's expecting perfection.




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Amazon Fire 7 (2022)

$ 59.99

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The Bad

- No YouTube or Google Play Store
- Limited app selection
- Low-resolution display

- Poor video call quality and cameras
- Bad speakers
- Still pretty slow

Like all Fire tablets, the Fire 7 has a plastic body. Its edges are more curved than the 2019 model's, which makes it easier to hold with one hand. It's also half an ounce lighter than the 2019 model — 9.9 ounces instead of 10.4 — and is 7.11 inches tall, whereas the 2019 model was 7.55 inches. Slightly narrower bezels and a slightly wider screen make it easier to read and watch shows.

Unfortunately, the new Fire 7 still has a pixelated, grainy seven-inch display and only offers a paltry 1024 x 600-pixel resolution (171 ppi). It's the thing I disliked the most about the Fire 7. I don't expect a $59.99 tablet to have a high-resolution display like the one on an iPad or even a $149.99 Amazon Fire 10. But most people will buy this tablet for entertainment, like watching movies, reading, and (slowly) browsing social media, and the display is a core feature Amazon should have increased over, say, storage capacity — especially because the Fire 7 comes with a microSD card slot. The display's also not fingerprint-resistant, and it smudges easily. It's both glossy and dim, which makes it challenging to use outdoors when it's sunny.





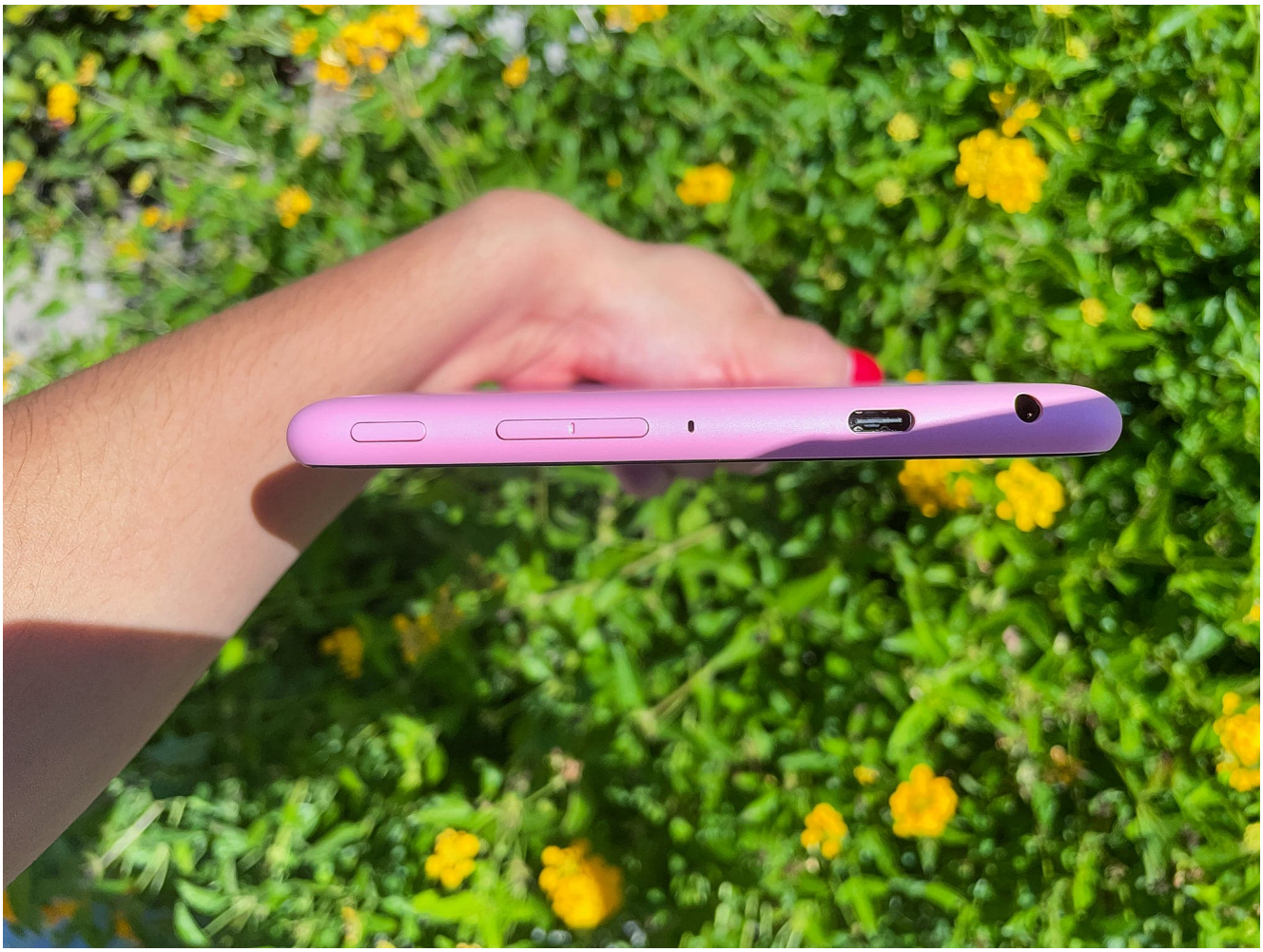
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All that said, I still managed to enjoy reading ebooks and watching shows on the Fire 7. Once absorbed in what I was reading or watching, I quickly forgot about the grainy screen, especially at night. That’s because the Fire 7 runs on the new Fire OS 8, a modified version of Android 11. With that new OS comes a few helpful user interface changes, like dark mode and a setting that minimizes blue light. You can even customize the menu a bit.

I particularly liked using the tablet to read. The display is slightly sharper than the e-ink screen on the base Kindle, which offers a very low 167ppi resolution. That could be a perk if you use tablets as secondary e-readers, especially as the Fire 7 is $30 cheaper than the Kindle.

While the bad speaker gave off a tinny sound that is neither

full nor clear, I quickly forgot about them, too, thanks to the 3.5mm audio jack. This is something newer tablets often lack and, combined with Bluetooth support, means you can connect it to a wide range of headphones and speakers. That improves sound quality considerably, whether you’re listening to audiobooks via Audible, tuning out to music, or streaming a show.



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I was pleasantly surprised by the improved battery life. Amazon claims it takes about four hours to fully charge the slate with the included five-watt charging brick and USB-C charging cable, which I found accurate. The company also claims up to 10 hours of battery life, which matches my experience. That puts it on par with the more expensive Amazon

Fire HD 10. It was nearly a week before I needed to recharge the tablet, whereas its predecessor only lasted us about two days. To illustrate just how much better the battery is, watching a 25-minute documentary lowered the battery by about five percent (at 70 percent brightness, I might add). In comparison, my colleague Cameron Faulkner found watching a 23-minute episode dropped the battery on the last model by 20 percent.

Storage options are also better this time around. While it still only comes with 16GB or 32GB of built-in storage, the new model can support microSD cards up to 1TB. Its predecessor maxed out at 512GB.



a:hover]:text-black [&>a]:shadow-underline-gray-13 [&>a:hover]:shadow-underline-black text-gray-13″>The back of the plastic Amazon Fire 7 in the lavender colorway.

If you're deeply embedded in the Amazon ecosystem and, say, are a Prime member or own Alexa smart speakers, the Fire 7 (like other Amazon tablets) offer a lot of value for your money. It can run Alexa – I was able to use it to turn my smart lights on and off using just my voice without a problem. I, like many, also pay $139 per year for an Amazon Prime membership, which grants me free access to TV shows like *The Boys*, movies, books for my Kindle through Prime Reads, and Amazon's ad-free Prime Music service. The selection of free books and music selection is admittedly rather limited, but I was still able to find some stuff I liked.

The Fire 7 is also a decent device if you want to keep your kids occupied on a long car ride or an airplane journey. It's inexpensive and, when you create a kid's profile, comes with parental control options. You can filter what your child can see and set time limits via Amazon's Parent Dashboard, which you can access via the tablet, your smartphone, or PC.

Amazon also sells a $109.99 Fire 7 Kids Edition tablet, which comes with a durable case featuring a built-in stand, a two-year damage protection plan, and a year of Amazon Kids Plus – a sort of a kid version of Amazon Prime with a curated selection of books, games, and videos. Kids Plus is $4.99 a month for Prime members, so if you're considering the Fire 7 for a young child who might break it, or you're interested in the Kids Plus service, the Kids Edition – although I haven't tested it – may be the better option.

While the Fire 7 is great for consuming Amazon content, I was disappointed in Amazon's app store offerings. The selection still leaves a lot to be desired – you can download several popular apps and games like Netflix, Hulu, Instagram, Spotify, and Amazon's Luna subscription gaming service. However, you still can't download Google apps like YouTube, Google Drive, or the Play Store. You can sideload Google apps, true, but that's a relatively complicated process with security implications. Plus, while you can download Microsoft Office

applications, many popular work and productivity apps like Slack, Airtable, and Asana are nowhere to be found — and actually using, say, Microsoft Word to type out a document is frustratingly slow. Don’t buy this expecting anything but an entertainment machine.

