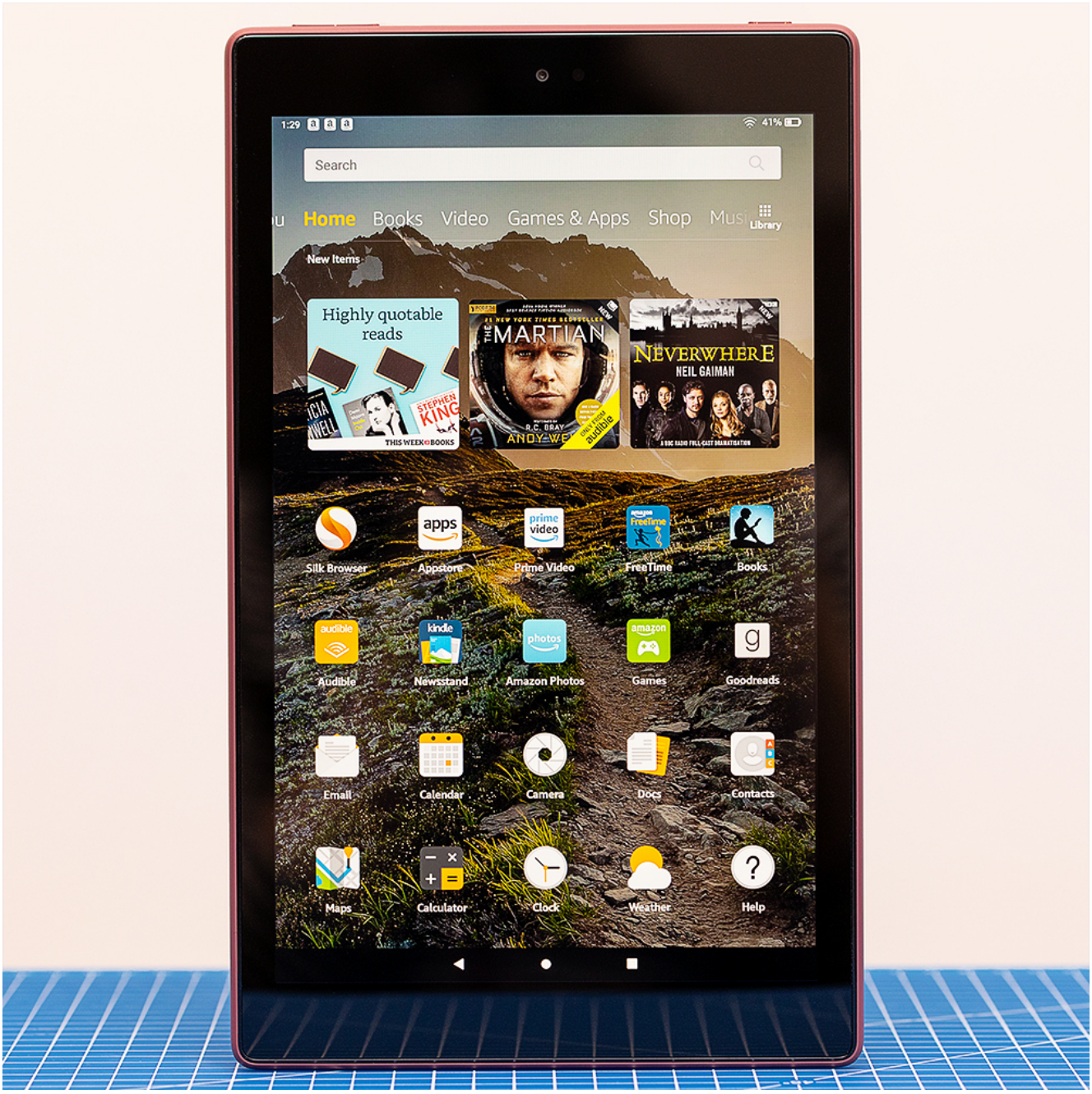
Amazon Fire HD 10 (2019) review: you get what you pay for

Is there still a market for a cheap tablet? For years, Amazon has argued that the answer is yes, with its consistent lineup of low-powered — and low priced — Fire tablets. The latest of these is the newly updated Fire HD 10, which looks to make the case that there's room in the market for a larger tablet that isn't an iPad. But does the $149 Fire HD 10 do enough to justify saving the money compared to Apple's increasingly cheap entry-level iPads?

To answer that, let's look at what's actually new here. It's been two years since Amazon last updated the Fire HD 10 tablet, but looking at the 2017 and 2019 models side by side, you'd be forgiven for getting them confused. With the exception of a new USB-C port (the first, and so far only, product Amazon has upgraded to the modern universal charging standard) and a few new colors, there are few external differences.

Verge Score 7 out of 10



Good Stuff

- Cheap
- Great screen for the price
- Good for consuming Amazon content
- USB-C!

Bad Stuff

- No Google services out of the box

- Feels as cheap as it costs
- Slow for a 2019 device

Internally, Amazon has made a few upgrades, though. The processor has been bumped to a new 2.0GHz octa-core processor (over the quad-core processor on the old model) that Amazon says is 30 percent faster. Battery life has been improved, with the company claiming up to 20 percent more screen time. The 2019 model supports up to 512GB of expandable microSD storage (up from 200GB). And there's "enhanced" Wi-Fi — in reality, a second antenna that allows the tablet to maintain a better signal regardless of whether you're holding it in portrait or landscape mode.

None of these are bad upgrades, although there's also nothing particularly groundbreaking (unless you, like me, are obsessive about what chargers your devices use.) If you own the 2017 Fire HD 10, there's little reason to upgrade here.



Photo by Amelia Holowaty Krales / The Verge

As for the experience of using a Fire HD 10 in 2019, it's

largely the same as it was back in 2017. The screen is still a nice big 10.1-inch 1080p display that looks far better than you'd expect for a $149 tablet. Given that 4K content is still somewhat rare on most streaming services, it works nicely for most TV and movie watching.

The actual hardware feels as cheap as before, with a toy-like plastic back that reminds you constantly that you're holding an $149 tablet. This does have the added benefit of making the Fire HD 10 lightweight, to the point that I didn't even notice the added bulk in my bag.

The bigger issue is that the Fire HD 10 just feels slow. It may very well be 30 percent faster than the 2017 model, but it turns out that a 30 percent increase on a budget tablet processor still leaves you with a slow processor at the end of the day. It's generally fine when you're actually *in* an app — scrolling and navigating to find something to watch is smooth. But it's slow to open apps. It's slow to switch between them. Swapping between the main parental profile and a restricted child's one is especially slow. It's something to be expected, given the budget hardware here, but don't expect to use the Fire HD 10 to play the latest and greatest games or as a laptop replacement.



Photo by Amelia Holowaty Krales / The Verge

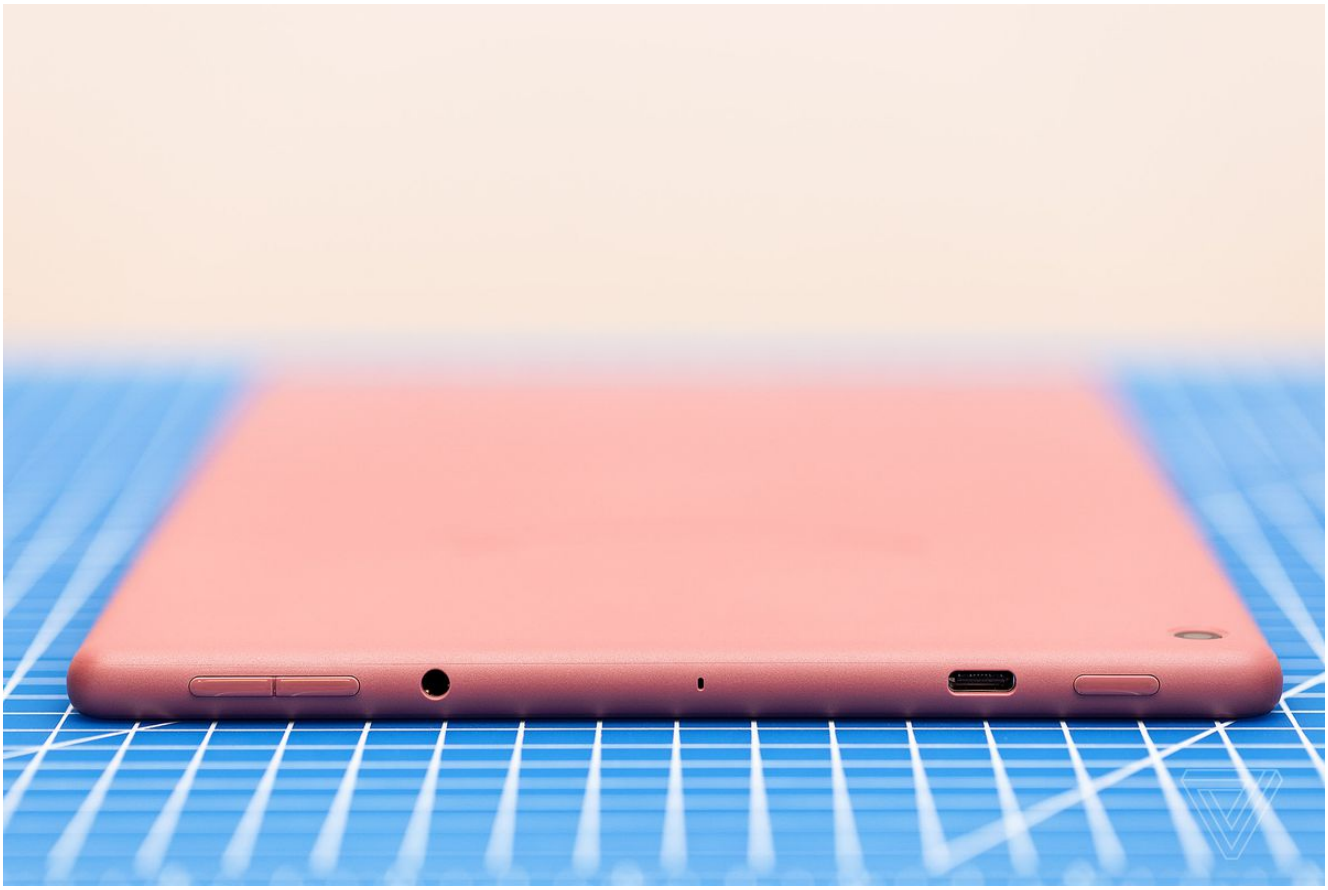


Photo by Amelia Holowaty Krales / The Verge

As with all the other Fire tablets, the 2019 HD 10 still runs

Android, albeit Amazon's forked, Fire OS version. That means Google services — Google Play Store, YouTube, Chrome, Gmail, and more — aren't installed by default. You can get them back if you're willing to jump through some hoops, but a Google tablet this isn't. The rest of the basic apps are there: Hulu and Netflix and HBO and Disney+ and all the other major streaming apps are present and accounted for, but the overall selection is far more limited than Apple or Google's app stores. *(Editor's note: One particular annoyance for me is the lack of the LastPass app, which means logging in to any of the streaming services I use requires me to juggle my phone and the tablet at the same time. -Dan)*

The more Amazon services you use and subscribe to, though, the better the Fire HD 10 is. Are you a Prime member? There's more video content to watch. Pay for HBO or Starz through Prime Video Channels? They'll show up too. Subscribe to Amazon's Kindle Unlimited book subscription? More books. Amazon's FreeTime Unlimited subscription? Tons of child-approved content and parental controls to manage it.

Compared to an iPad, the experience isn't even close. Apple's entry-level tablet is dramatically faster, features a far better selection of apps, and doesn't feel like a toy. The one big advantage Amazon has is still its best-in-class parental control and multi-user support. Unlike an iPad, the Fire HD 10 lets you add other accounts for children to use, complete with content restrictions and time limits. Add in Amazon's FreeTime Unlimited service, which grants access to a library of games, apps, movies, TV shows, and books — all whitelisted to be age appropriate and without in-app purchases — and it's even more compelling as a family device.

For what you're paying, and the almost total lack of meaningful competition at the price point, it's easy to call the Fire HD 10 the best $150 tablet around. But in a world where Apple's entry-level iPad is better and cheaper than ever before, the question starts to become: at what price point

will Apple’s tablet cost before it’s no longer worth dealing with the Fire HD 10’s limitations? And with the relatively lackluster upgrades in the 2019 Fire HD 10, combined with early Black Friday sales dropping the 10.2-inch iPad down to $250 already, it’s possible we might already be there.

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