Best cheap Wacom Cintiq alternative drawing tablets

You’re probably aware of Wacom’s new 24 and 32-inch Cintiq models by now, which are set to replace its popular Cintiq 27QHD favoured by many artists, illustrators and designers. Although this is exciting, and Wacom is usually the preferred tablet manufacturers for artists, it will cost £1,899 inc VAT/US$1,999/€2,149 for the standard version and even more for the Touch version. Some of you have already expressed how you would love to use a Wacom Cintiq, but the price is just out of the question. Financial restrictions should never be a reason to stop you from creating art. Luckily there are more affordable tablet options that exist for artists.

We’ve put together a list of alternative tablets to Wacom’s Cintiq models so you can be aware of less expensive options that still provide a quality digital drawing, sketching and painting experience for creative professionals, whether it’s for personal or commercial work.

When looking to buy a tablet, there are several specifications you’ll need to take into consideration, such as pressure sensitivity of the pen, size and screen quality. We mention this information as bullet points under each Wacom alternative in this list. We have decided to include Wacom’s 13-inch Cintiq Pro in the list because it’s less recognised but still stands as a more affordable option to Wacom’s 27-inch (or now 24 and 32-inch) Cintiq Pro.

These alternatives are purely tablets – not laptops or PCs. All are all pen display and need to be hooked up to your desktop computer or laptop to use. Almost all are compatible with Windows and Mac (with the exception of Dell Canvas) and can run Adobe apps such as Photoshop, Illustrator and most other professional software such as Maya, ZBrush and Painter.

Take a look at what’s on offer.

Wacom Cintiq Pro 13



- 8,192 levels of pressure sensitivity and tilt recognition
- Customisable keys
- 13-inch HD screen

Whether you’re right or left-handed, you can comfortably draw directly onto the screen of this Wacom tablet with the Wacom Pro Pen 2, which has 8192 levels pressure sensitivity. The pen responds to the slightest touch, and you can have complete control over brush width and opacity. Customisable keys, along with a ‘Rocker Ring’ and home button means you can create timesaving shortcuts of your choice. The 1920×1080 HD screen features Adobe RGB colour quality.

There’s also lag-free tracking, and you can connect the Cintiq

Pro straight to your Mac or PC with the included USB-C cable. It’s compatible with all versions of Windows and Mac OS, not to mention its lightweight and small design, making it compact to carry with you.

Dell Canvas



- 27-inch screen display
- Adobe RGB colour
- 20 points touch recognition
- Dial (or ‘Totem’) support
- Magnetic pen with 2,056 levels of pressure sensitivity

Although this is the most expensive tablet in the list, and only slightly cheaper than the new Wacom Cintiq standard models, it’s still worth mentioning as an alternative because it almost matches the Wacom Cintiq 27QHD feature-for-feature. There’s only one catch – you have to work with Windows 10 exclusively.

Boasting a 27-inch screen size with an Adobe RGB LCD panel,

Dell Canvas is a a hefty 15.6 grams, so not the most compact or portable tablet in this list. Along with the pen you can use a dial – which Dell calls a 'Totem' – to switch colours, brush size and more, much like Microsoft's Dial for the Surface Pro.

The Dell Canvas Pen has 2,056 levels of pressure sensitivity, tilt recognition and rotation – something none of the other pens offer besides Wacom – and works with an onscreen radial menu. The pen is actually based on Wacom's electro-magnetic resonance (EMR) technology.

Multi-touch is one area where the Canvas out-does the Cintiq 27QHD – as it supports up to 20 fingers to the Cintiq's 10. This lets two users work on it at once – so is probably more appropriate for home or office users than artists or designers.

Read our Dell Canvas review.

Ugee UG-2150



- 21.5-inch screen display
- 1920×1080 HD screen resolution
- 2,048 pen pressure sensitivity

The UG2150 tablet has a large 21.5-inch IPS screen, with 178-degree wide viewing angle and 1920×1080 screen resolution. The accompanying pen has industry-standard 2,048 levels of pressure sensitivity so you can control the thickness, transparency and colour of your line work.

This tablet has a USB port to be compatible with Windows and

Mac and industry standard graphic software such as Adobe CC, Corel Painter and Autodesk Maya. It also comes with a multi-angle adjustable stand, and two-finger glove to reduce the friction between your hand and the tablet surface.

This is an interactive display that has to be hooked up to a desktop computer or laptop to use. You can use it as a duplicate monitor, extended display, a second monitor, or have it take over as the only monitor.

Huion GT-221 Pro



- 21.5-inch screen display
- 1920×1080 HD screen resolution
- 8,192 levels of pressure sensitivity
- 10 customisable keys

This Huion tablet is the latest of the brand’s pen display range. Offering a large canvas size and an HD resolution screen with a 178-degree angle, this is an affordable alternative to Wacom. The screen has attributes you’d expect

from an artist’s tablet, such as anti-glare glass and wider colour gamut. Accompanied with a pen that helps you to draw lines or paint naturally with 8,192 levels of pressure sensitivity, this tablet is designed to work fast,with a 233 points/s reading speed. The pen weighs a light 16g and has 350 hours of battery life.

The design includes 10 customisable keys and a touch bar on both sides of the screen, so can be used by both right or left handed. The Huion GT-221 Pro also comes with a multi-adjustable stand and a narrow bezel design. Huion is compatible with both Windows and MacOS. It can run software such as Adobe CC, Corel painter, ZBrush and Clip Studio.

XP-PEN Artist22



- 21.5-inch screen display
- 1920×1080 pixels HD display resolution
- 2,048-level pressure sensitivity

The XP-Pen Artist22 (although is actually just short of 22 inches) has all the basic screen requirements for drawing, sketching and painting. The stylus comes with two buttons which let you switch between pen and eraser modes. A built-in auto-sleep functions stops it from chewing through loads of battery life.

The tablet comes with a flexible, detachable stand an a USB to hook up to any monitor, compatible for both Windows 10 and MacOS and most graphics apps such as Adobe Creative Cloud.

Parblo Coast 13



- 2,048 levels of pressure sensitivity
- Dual-monitor
- 8 customisable express keys + dial ring
- 13.3-inch display

This tablet has the basic requirements for using your favourite apps and software, such as Photoshop, Illustrator, Painter, Sketchbook and Maya. This Parblo tablet has improved since the previous version, with its colour gamut now to 72% NTSC, although it is of course, the least expensive on this list and its quality will reflect it. It has an IPS 1920×1080 HD screen and a wireless and battery-free pen.

The tablet features eight customisable keys along with one dial ring in the middle, however these appear on the left-hand side so the design is only built with right handers in mind. The screen size is a lot smaller than others mentioned in this list, but if you’re looking for a basic, portable device – this is almost half the price of the Wacom 13-inch.

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