

# I mocked the Apple Pencil. Now my iPad productivity depends on it

Optimized for the iPad Pro, this \$99 accessory is not just for artists. From note taking and document signing to image editing and drawing, the Apple Pencil has proven itself to be one of my most invaluable tools.



By [Matthew Miller](#) for [The Mobile Gadgeteer](#) | July 31, 2017 -- 15:32 GMT (08:32 PDT) | Topic: [Mobility](#)

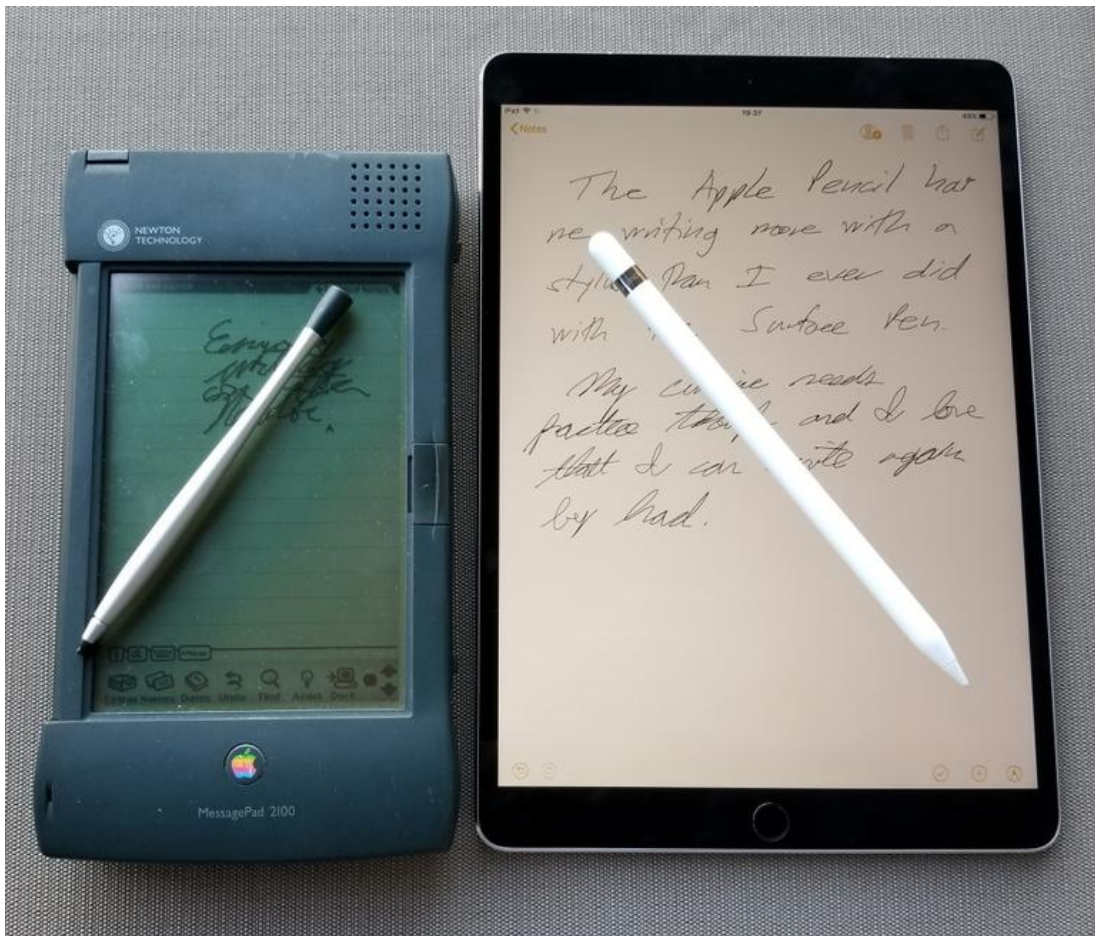
I last used a stylus regularly with an Apple product about 20 years ago (and this weekend I put in freshly charged AA batteries to test out my Newton MessagePad 2100).

It wasn't until this year's [Apple iPad Pro 10.5](#) that I decided to try out an iPad Pro and purchase an Apple Pencil to see if there was any value in the stylus. With the [ZAGG Rugged Messenger case](#) holding the Apple Pencil with the iPad Pro, I find myself using the Apple Pencil more than I ever used the Surface Pen with any of my Microsoft Surface Pro devices.

It helps that the iPad Pro 10.5 is a much sleeker and lighter tablet than the Surface Pro 4, but I also find the

Pencil more ergonomic to hold and I prefer the larger solid tip of the Pencil over the mushy small tip of the Surface Pen. It is also the software experience on the iPad Pro that helps make my Pencil usage more enjoyable than the Surface Pen.

Many websites and advertisements show some pretty amazing Apple Pencil creations, primarily from artists who have talent and skill. I am a professional engineer, not an artist, and I struggle to draw stick people. I was hesitant to purchase an Apple Pencil because I couldn't see how I would use it.



## NOTE TAKING

Thankfully, there is much more you can do with an Apple Pencil than draw pictures, create cartoons, and develop electronic masterpieces. One of the first things for those of us with no artistic bent, is to start taking handwritten notes. I find it a bit rude and distracting when people bring laptops into meetings and start typing away on the keyboard while a speaker is talking. I personally focus more when I take handwritten notes on a medium that is resting on a table or on my lap. At the last four conferences I attended, I used my Surface Pro and OneNote to capture notes during the event and never once felt I was blocking the speaker or getting distracted by other notifications and applications.

There are a large number of note taking apps for the Apple iPad Pro, including the greatly improved Apple Notes app in iOS 11. I am running iOS 11 beta on my iPad Pro so am able to take advantage of the Instant Notes function where you tap your Apple Pencil on the lock screen to jump into Notes, search for your handwritten text, and sketch with the Apple Pencil right in the body of your note.

I've spent years bouncing between Evernote and OneNote, but think I may finally be settling into OneNote as my primary cross platform notes app due to the better support for editing and marking up a number of different formatted items within the note, and better Apple Pencil integration. I've come to enjoy using OneNote on the iPad Pro 10.5 and with my engineering firm using OneNote to

capture and share more important engineering and project information it is the app that has earned a place on my dock.

Even though I don't have any artistic ability when it comes to drawing things, I do have preferences when it comes to images and enjoy simple editing on the iPad Pro. Color Splash and Affinity Photo are two of my favorite apps for editing images. Without the Apple Pencil, you could never achieve the same results in these apps thanks to the fine selections you can make with the Pencil tip. There are a ton of tools in Affinity Photo and many are optimized for the Apple Pencil, even taking advantage of the angle you tilt the Pencil and the pressure you place on the display with the Pencil. It's rather stunning, actually, and you may find yourself spending hours editing images with Affinity Photo and the Apple Pencil.

## **ENGINEERING DRAWINGS AND CALCULATIONS**

I've been working as a professional naval architect for more than 20 years and my role today is to review and perform quality control on drawings and calculations. The Apple Pencil helps with these tasks when reviewing and annotating drawings in AutoCad on the iPad Pro. I haven't yet created any original drawings on the iPad Pro, but have looked over a few and added some comments for the designer.

While the Apple Pencil is not essential for looking over Excel spreadsheets, I discovered Microsoft Excel has a Draw tab that works very well with the Apple Pencil. You can perform the same actions in Excel as you can in OneNote, which can help you annotate spreadsheets or draw in simple drawings to further enhance spreadsheets. I found it helpful to insert a photo of a piece of structure on a ship and then annotate that photo within the Excel spreadsheet so that clients get a clear understanding of what the calculation is related to on their vessel.

## **DOCUMENT SIGNING AND MARKUP**

Over the last few years I have been signing documents electronically and with the Apple iPad Pro and Apple Pencil, it is quick and easy to sign documents. My signature with the Apple Pencil looks just about the same as my signature with a standard pen or pencil. I hate trying to sign things with my finger on a touch screen device and am very pleased to see Apple add digital signature support to the Apple iPad Pro.

In addition to signing documents, my role as an engineering manager also has me marking up Word and PDF documents during the review process. At the office I use track changes in Word to make many suggestions early in the review process, but if I am on the road or need to make suggestions later in the development process I am often making notes in PDF. Handwritten notes with

indicators and direct call-outs is easier with an Apple Pencil and apps like PDFReader Pro.

There is no doubt in my mind that the Apple Pencil is a very useful instrument, for both artists and those of us that cannot draw well.

original article:

[http://www.zdnet.com/article/apple-pencil-proves-itself-as-valuable-tool-for-productivity-and-efficiency/?loc=newsletter\\_small\\_thumb&ftag=TRec64629f&bhid=23405847687286447375579737817622](http://www.zdnet.com/article/apple-pencil-proves-itself-as-valuable-tool-for-productivity-and-efficiency/?loc=newsletter_small_thumb&ftag=TRec64629f&bhid=23405847687286447375579737817622)