

# iPad mini 2019 review roundup: The best compact tablet

BY [KILLIAN BELL](#) • 5:53 AM, MARCH 21, 2019 - Cult of Mac



Big features in a tiny form factor.  
Photo: Apple

The iPad mini got its first refresh in more than three years [this week](#). The newest, fifth-generation model ships with Apple's latest A12 Bionic processor, more RAM, and a True Tone display with more pixels than any other iPad. But is the new iPad mini worth your hard-earned cash? Here's what the early reviews have to say about it.

Not too long ago, we all assumed the iPad mini was dead. Its previous refresh came in September 2015, and despite still being available to purchase from the Apple Store, it wasn't worth its \$399 price tag.

But rather than putting its smallest slate out of its misery, Apple this week gave the device a powerful new processor, an even greater Retina display, and more. According to the first reviews, the iPad mini is back to its best.

## iPad mini 2019 review roundup

The iPad has all but wiped out rival tablets in recent years. The catalog of competitors continues to shrink, and most agree that if you want a great tablet, you choose one powered by iOS.

It's no surprise, then, that reviewers say the new iPad mini is the best compact tablet money can buy.

### Perfect performance

The iPad mini effortlessly handles anything you throw at it, found Rene Ritchie of [iMore](#). Its performance is “pretty much identical to iPhone XS and still a huge bump up from the A10 Fusion found in the 9.7-inch iPad, never mind the A8 or A8X in the old mini 4 or Air 2.”

“The performance of the new mini is absolutely top notch,” explains [TechCrunch](#). Its A12 chips “makes the mini a hugely powerful tiny tablet, clearly obliterating anything else in its size class.”

“Hardly anything I’ve done to the mini over the past few days has phased it, from flicking through multiple webpages at the same time in split-screen mode, to kicking back with Civilization 6 or Fortnite like I have late at night,” says *Engadget*.

“The biggest improvement iPad mini 4 owners will notice in the new model is probably the speed boost Apple’s A12 Bionic processor brings,” adds *Business Insider*. “Although I didn’t get to test Apple’s new iPad mini alongside the old one, I did find that both augmented reality games and graphically-intensive 3D games run just as smoothly on the new iPad mini as they do on the new-model iPhone Xr.”



The best iPad mini display.  
Photo: Apple

## A super-sharp screen

Aside from the new A12 chip, the new iPad mini's biggest selling point is its improved Retina display. It now boasts Apple's excellent True Tone technology, and wide color support that makes everything more dazzling.

The "colors are much more vibrant here [than in the previous iPad mini], and the addition of Apple's TrueTone technology means they look more accurate under different kinds of light," describes *Engadget*.

"The screen is super solid, with great color, nearly no air gap and only lacking tap-to-wake," says *TechCrunch*.

"Apart from adding Pencil support, the display is very nice, in the way that Apple LCDs are always very nice," adds *The Verge*. "It has wide color support, a respectable 500 nits of brightness, and it's laminated, unlike the cheapest iPad, so it looks like you're touching the pixels."

## Apple Pencil makes all the difference

The new iPad mini is the first to support Apple Pencil. Sadly, it only works with the original model — not the newer one — but it's still a nice addition.

"The Pencil itself works just like the first-gen Apple Pencil on any other iPad: it's fast and responsive, works great across apps that support it, and generally makes the iPad

feel like much more than just a consumption device, even if you don't use it a ton," writes *The Verge*.

"Sure, yeah, you're left charging it out the Lightning Port, like an animal. But I love it," says Ritchie. "I get that some people might not enjoy small canvases for art, but even so, everything from taking notes to marking up documents to freehanding productivity apps like Pages and Keynote works a treat."

"Using Apple Pencil is aces on the smaller mini, don't worry about the real estate being an issue if you like to scribble notes or make sketches," explains *TechCrunch*. "It's going to fall behind a larger iPad for a full time artist but as a portable scratch pad it's actually far less unwieldy or cumbersome than an iPad Pro or Air will be."

"The iPad mini is roughly the same size as my notebook or a clipboard, which makes it feel convenient and natural while using the Pencil," adds *Business Insider*. "It's the first time Apple's stylus has felt like a viable pen and paper alternative for me."



The first iPad mini with Apple Pencil support.  
Photo: Apple

## Improved cameras

Taking pictures with a tablet has never been a particularly great experience. But the iPad mini's smaller form factor means users are more likely to shoot with this model than its larger siblings. And they'll get *okay* results.

“I get we’re not paying Pro prices, and the cuts have to come from somewhere, but 8 MP f/2.4 and 1080p on the back just feels so five years ago,” says *iMore*. “The A12 image signal processor, which ties into the neural engine for features like Smart HDR, should still help make the older glass be all it can be.”

“On the back there’s the same old 8-megapixel f/2.4 camera, which takes at best medium-good photos,” notes *The Verge*.

## The verdict

The iPad mini certainly isn’t Apple’s best tablet, but it is the best compact tablet. If you want a slate that’s super-portable, offers great performance, and sports great design, there’s really only one option.

“There simply isn’t another tablet at this size that can compete: the Android tablet app ecosystem is far from great, small Android tablets usually have much slower processors and are really meant for watching videos anyway, and there just aren’t any good small Windows tablets aside from the Surface Go, which is considerably larger than the mini,” explains *The Verge*.

“But the decision to get an iPad mini is simple: do you want a small, capable tablet? If you do, the mini is obviously worth \$399 ... There’s just nothing else like it.

Let's just hope that next time we don't have to wait four years for Apple to remember it exists again."



iPad mini is the ultimate compact tablet.

Photo: Apple

The new iPad mini is "ideal for those in need of a super portable device that can handle some light productivity on the go, like note-taking or document annotating, and that don't mind paying a \$99 premium on top of the sticker price for the Apple Pencil stylus," concludes *Business Insider*.

"The mini starts at \$399 and the Air at \$499, which is the classic iPad price going all the way back to the original. And I think both deliver a lot of value for the money,"



writes Ritchie. “Especially to people who want Pro-like features without the Pro-like price tags.”

“Though still just as pricey (in comparison) as it was when it was introduced, the iPad mini remains a standout device,” says Matthew Panzarino for *TechCrunch*. “It’s small, sleek, now incredibly fast and well provisioned with storage. The smallness is a real advantage in my opinion.”

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