

The Kindle 3G+Special Offers edition



I just purchased a Kindle 3G+Special Offers ebook reader, and I have to say that it has far exceeded my expectations.

To me, when assessing a device like this, it is always important to put into perspective just exactly what such a device can and cannot do.

First, what the Kindle 3G is: First and foremost, it is an eBook reader. Its pearl E-ink display is stellar, and the screen, like several other eBook readers, is very hard to beat. It makes reading very easy, and as they say, the device really does â??disappearâ?• as you read, meaning you end up paying more attention to the content than to the device. Very cool.

The Kindle 3G is also very compact. I was surprised at how small it really is. Itâ??s about the size of a small to medium-sized paperback book, but definitely much thinner. Itâ??s only 8 oz. so itâ??s very light and easy to hold. Its construction is quite sturdy, not really flexing when stressed. It does not come with any case or cover, so thatâ??s the first thing Iâ??m going to purchase. (It could be easily damaged if dropped.) It has a nice feel with the back having a slightly â??grippyâ?• feel. Overall, itâ??s a solid little device.

The Kindle 3G also has some other side features, such as text to speech, automatic downloading of periodicals, and Web browsing capabilities. All of these are well-implemented, but not really the focus of its design. For example, Web browsing is certainly not as robust as you would find on a laptop or on many

tablets. I consider it a â??nice-to-haveâ?• add-on that definitely comes in handy when you need it, especially with the built-in 3G. Which leads me toâ?¦.

Unlimited free 3G is also included with the Kindle 3G, and there are no fees or contracts. You pay for the device, and it connects to 3G. It also includes Wi-Fi, so when you are in range of an access point, you can connect through that, improving speed. And it it auto-senses Wi-Fi, turning off 3G when it can successfully connect through Wi-Fi. It all happens in the background so seamlessly. Just remember that the Kindle devices are intended as eBook readers, not always-connected interactive Web devices. So constant Internet connectivity is certainly not essential. In fact, for most usage, I find that very little Internet connectivity is really needed. If you need or want an Internet device that has tons of bells and whistles, by all means look elsewhere.

As a side note, I see a trend with tablets and eBook readers: Newer eBook reader models (the Kindle 3G excluded) now do not come with 3G. And tablets that do include 3G require the purchase of a wireless data plan, so the overall cost goes way, way up. My speculation is that over time, â??freeâ?• 3G will likely be eliminated altogether and replaced by either exclusively Wi-Fi, or by 3G/4G requiring a paid plan subscription. I hope Iâ??m wrong on this point.

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OK, now to address what the Kindle 3G is not: The Kindle 3G is not a tablet computer. It is not a multi-media device (though it can play MP3 files.) It is not gaming platform (though it does have several games available.) It does not have a touch screen. Its screen is not color, nor is it backlit (if you want to read in low or no light, you must use a book light!)

So why buy such a limited device? Simply put, as an eBook reader, the Kindle 3G shines (even though the screen is not backlit.) Itâ??s just that some of these shortcomings prevent it from being much more. But is that really a problem?

Letâ??s address some of these perceived shortcomings and put them into perspective.

Con: Poor multi-media handling

You can play MP3 files in the background while you read, and you can have the text spoken to you in one of two voices. Itâ??s for reading books and viewing some pictures. Honestly, if you want a multi-media device, look into the iPad or Xoom.

Con: Games are mediocre at best

There are several games that are available for the Kindles. Theyâ??re simple, and using the keyboard for game play can often be tedious. The available games are really more for diversion from reading, and certainly not to satisfy the hardcore gamer. If you are a hardcore gamer, go get an iPad or a Xoom.

Con: No touch screen

Itâ??s an ebook reader, not a tablet. At first, I thought I would be seriously disappointed by not having a touch screen. But in practice, the only real navigation required is in selecting a book to read, and than

flipping pages while reading. The side page-turn buttons are nicely placed and comfortably there when you need them. And because Iâ??m not touching the screen, it stays clean.

Admittedly, navigating can be tedious at times, and there are times I wish I could just touch a selection instead of using the 4-way arrow pad to navigate. But honestly, such navigation is fairly infrequent, and when it is, it didnâ??t take long to get used to it. Frankly, I donâ??t miss the lack of a touch screen.

Con: Screen is not color

The Pearl E-Ink screen is absolutely stunning. In bright light, text and (grey-scale) images just pop off the screen. It really does look like print on paperâ??no it looks better than print on paper. And because most eBook content is text, color really isnâ??t necessary. A color E-Ink display would sure be nice.

Con: Screen is not backlit

The Pearl E-Ink screen is extremely readable in normal lighting, and it is very easy on the eyes. In a darker or dimmed room, it can be harder so see, but itâ??s really no different from printed material. At night, I just leave on a light for reading. Itâ??s dim enough that it doesnâ??t keep my wife up, yet itâ??s bright enough to make reading pleasant.

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Con: The â??Special Offersâ?• edition has ads!

Yep. And thatâ??s why it cost me 5o bucks less than the non-ad model. Yes, you do see ads on the Special Offers edition. But come on, this Kindle is $50 less than the model without ads! I personally wonâ??t pass up a $50 break. To be clear, ads appear only on the Home screen and as screensaversâ??you never see ads while reading. Dealing with ads really comes down to personal choice. For me, the $50 savings outweighs seeing a few ads here or there. You may disagree, so then spend the extra $50 to not see them. Iâ??ve actually looked at several of the offers, and they are decent, but sadly, none really applied to me. Maybe some will, maybe some wonâ??t.

Finally, the one feature that really sealed the deal for me is the free unlimited 3G access without any contracts or fees. No, I will not be using the Kindle 3G as my main Web surfing device. I have a laptop for that (or a CR-48 Chromebook.) But if I have my Kindle with me, I can be assured that I CAN get online pretty much anywhere I might be.

Anyway, Iâ??m very pleased, and I highly recommend you check them out.

Category

1. Kindle Tips

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