

Many people regret buying iPad Air, because iPad (A16) is cheaper and better

Many people have done what countless students on social media and in their friend groups do – buy an iPad. However, deciding which iPad model to buy is not easy.

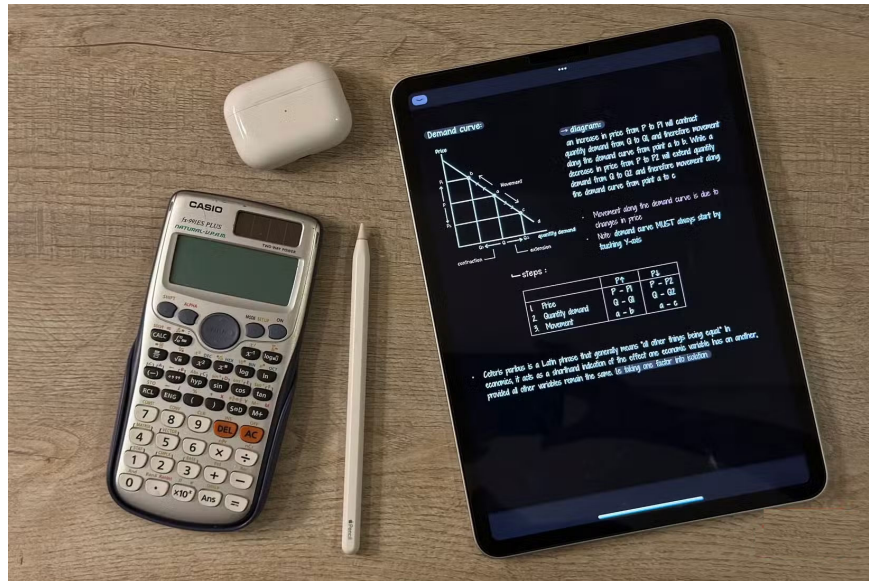
Lugging heavy textbooks across campus and juggling multiple notebooks and binders for each class is the last thing anyone wants to do in college. So many people do what countless students on social media and in their friend groups do: buy an iPad. But deciding which iPad model to buy isn't easy.

After consulting colleagues and friends who already had iPads, watching countless YouTube videos , and obsessively comparing specs, many people ended up going with the 5th-generation iPad Air. At the time, it seemed like the smartest choice. However, after recently reviewing a cheaper model, they realized they might have made the wrong decision.

iPad (A16) gives you double the storage for \$100 less

Who doesn't want to save money?

I bought my 5th generation iPad Air almost two years ago, and the base model started at \$599. The base model has 64GB of storage, and as a student on a tight budget, I decided to buy it anyway. The problem can be solved by moving most of my files to the cloud and keeping the iPad focused solely on schoolwork.



Of course, that didn't happen. Between downloading lecture slides, annotating PDFs, installing necessary apps, and occasionally storing offline videos for classes, the memory filled up faster than expected.

The performance difference is almost negligible

Fast chip doesn't matter if you're just using it for note taking

The biggest difference between the 5th-generation iPad Air and the iPad (A16) in terms of specs is the processor. The 5th-generation iPad Air is powered by Apple's M1 chip, the same chip found in some low-cost Macs, while the standard iPad runs on the newer A16 chip. I've been using the iPad (A16) for over a week, and I've been using the iPad Air for years, and there's no difference in performance between the two.

iPad (A16) ▼	iPad Air (5th generation) ▼
A16	M1
A16 chip	M1 chip
5-core CPU	8-core CPU
4-core GPU	8-core GPU
16-core Neural Engine	16-core Neural Engine

The battery life on the standard iPad is also excellent, easily getting you through a full day of use. According to Apple's specs for the M1 iPad Air and the standard iPad with the A16 chip, both can get up to 10 hours of web browsing on Wi-Fi and 9 hours on cellular. So while Apple may have placed these chips differently, you won't notice the difference in day-to-day use.

The Air is barely more portable than the budget iPad

Only a few grams thinner, almost unnoticeable

At this point, you're probably thinking - if there's no significant difference in performance, at least the Air makes up for it in portability. After all, the Air is supposed to be thinner and lighter than the rest. But like performance, the difference here is also barely noticeable.

The 5th-generation iPad Air weighs around 450g, while the iPad (A16) weighs 450g. That's about the same weight as a pencil, and you won't feel any weight carrying both around in your backpack. Admittedly, the standard iPad looks a lot thicker. However, many people don't mind the extra thickness, as it doesn't really cause any inconvenience.

The best Apple Pencils aren't compatible with the iPad (A16), but there are alternatives

Third-party styluses will be a lifesaver

While the first-generation Apple Pencil and the USB-C version were great, many people didn't like them. Having to plug the Pencil into the iPad port in such an awkward position felt outdated and inconvenient, especially since the new Apple Pencils can charge magnetically.

Unfortunately, while you'll find iPad Air models that support the newer Pencil Pro and the second-generation Apple Pencil, the standard iPad with the A16 chip only supports the older, unloved models. While that may sound like a drawback, luckily there are plenty of great third-party styluses that offer similar functionality at a fraction of the price.



Despite magnetically attaching to the iPad, the Baseus Smooth Writing PS4 still needs to be charged via USB-C. However, its battery life is excellent, and it only needs to be charged every two or three days.

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