

# Should I buy a tablet with 4G LTE/5G connectivity or just WiFi?

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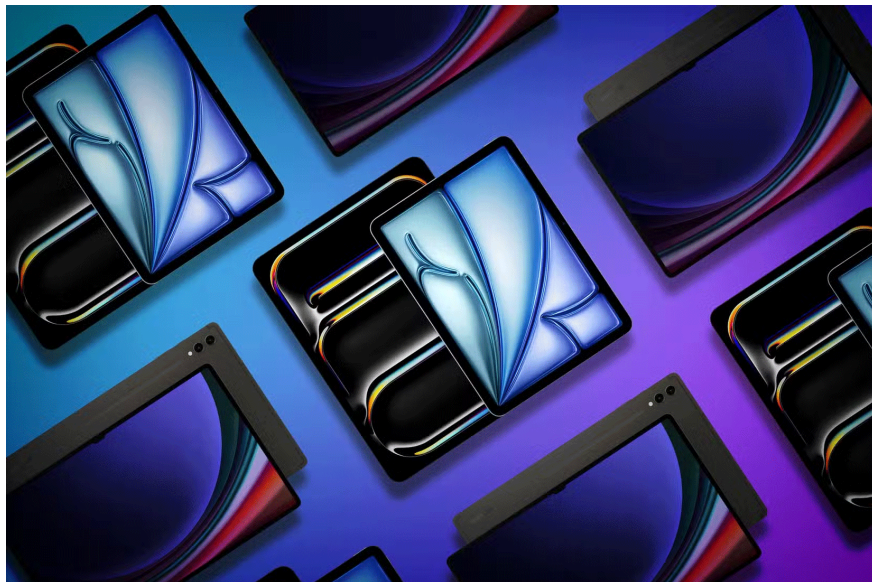
## Should I buy an LTE/5G and WiFi-only tablet?

In short, a WiFi-only tablet means you can only connect to the Internet via WiFi, while a cellular tablet supports both cellular and WiFi. That's the only difference between the two options. But which tablet should you buy? There are a number of different factors to consider, including retail price, availability of WiFi and LTE/5G, convenience and security, and more.

### 1. Availability of WiFi and LTE/5G connectivity

Since you also have WiFi on your cellular tablet, you can continue to use WiFi at home and only switch to cellular data when needed. This way, you get the best of both worlds when you buy a cellular tablet.

Mobile performance can be significantly faster in major cities, easily rivaling the speeds you'd get from a fixed broadband connection. Conversely, mobile coverage and speeds can be patchy in rural areas.



But there's no getting around the fact that when you need a data connection, you really need one. Your phone can support things like email, social media, and the web (to some extent). Plus, you can use your phone as a mobile hotspot, sharing your phone's data connection with your tablet.

However, not all data plans support connecting this way, and those that do often impose restrictions on your speed or the amount of data you can use. This is essentially a short-term solution rather than a long-term alternative.

## 2. Price of tablets with cellular connectivity vs. WiFi only

For many people, the most important factor when choosing between a cellular and WiFi-only tablet is price. Simply adding a cellular radio to a tablet often adds to the price of the device. For example, you pay \$200 more for the cellular-enabled 11-inch iPad Pro M4. For Samsung's Galaxy Tab S10+, it's \$150 more.

Even if you can afford it, you should consider whether you need cellular support or whether you should spend the money on a higher-spec model. For example, if you're eyeing the 11-inch iPad Air M2, you can get the WiFi-only version with 256GB of storage for \$50 less than the base model with cellular support.

## 3. Ongoing data costs

The screenshot shows the Verizon website's mobile data plan selection page. At the top, there are navigation links for 'Personal' and 'Business', and a search bar. Below the Verizon logo, there are links for 'Mobile', 'Home Internet', 'Shop', and 'Deals'. A yellow banner reads 'Verizon Prepaid | Fast, reliable, award-winning. Join Verizon's amazing network with no annual contract.' Below this, there are tabs for 'Verizon Prepaid', 'Phone plans', 'Smartwatch plans', 'Tablet & hotspot plans' (which is selected), 'Smartphones', 'Smartwatches', 'Bring your own device', 'Why Verizon Prepaid', and 'Deals'. Under 'Tablet & hotspot plans', there are two sub-tabs: 'Overview' and 'Compare plans'. The main content area displays four data plan options in a grid:

Includes 5G Ultra Wideband	Includes 5G Ultra Wideband	Includes 5G Ultra Wideband	Includes 5G Ultra Wideband
<b>150 GB</b> Get the most data and turn your device into a data powerhouse so you can do it all.	<b>100 GB</b> For game and movie lovers, this plan gives you enough data to stream and game as much as you want.	<b>25 GB</b> Turn your device into a Wi-Fi connection and share your data with friends and family.	<b>5 GB</b> Stay connected with enough data to send emails, stream music and post on social.
<b>\$100/mo</b> \$70/mo for each additional line	<b>\$80/mo</b> \$50/mo for each additional line	<b>\$60/mo</b> \$30/mo for each additional line	<b>\$40/mo</b> \$10/mo for each additional line
<b>Plan features</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>5G Ultra Wideband</li><li>4K UHD streaming on 5G Ultra Wideband</li><li>HD-quality streaming on 5G and 4G LTE Data</li></ul>	<b>Plan features</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>5G Ultra Wideband</li><li>4K UHD streaming on 5G Ultra Wideband</li><li>HD-quality streaming on 5G and 4G LTE Data</li></ul>	<b>Plan features</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>HD-quality streaming</li></ul>	<b>Plan features</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>HD-quality streaming</li></ul>
<a href="#">See plan details</a>	<a href="#">See plan details</a>	<a href="#">See plan details</a>	<a href="#">See plan details</a>

At the bottom right of the plan grid, there is a button that says 'Connect with an expert'.

Price is just the beginning. There's no reason to have a cellular tablet without a cellular data plan to use it. Cellular data is expensive, and most plans have strict usage limits.

You can expect to pay over \$20/month for just a few gigabytes, which means you'll be paying double the price of a WiFi-only tablet.

## 5. Convenience



The biggest advantage of cellular tablets is convenience. As long as you are in an area with good network coverage, you will have seamless connectivity wherever you go.

Cellular acts as a backup connection, meaning your tablet will always default to WiFi whenever a connection is available. Now think about how often you might have access to WiFi: at home, at the office, at school, at a friend's house, at the local coffee shop, and countless other places.

Even trains and buses offer WiFi, so in hindsight, you may need a cellular connection less often than you think. There are some situations where a fixed data connection is essential for a tablet. For example, if you're working on a cloud-based document and step out of WiFi range before the sync is complete, or if you want to play one of the many games that require internet access.

Location services are also more effective on devices connected to cellular networks as this can help calculate an accurate location faster.

## 6. Battery life



Cellular data uses more power than WiFi, so the battery life on a cellular tablet is shorter than on a WiFi-only tablet. Whether you notice the difference is another matter entirely.

Apple's specs for the M4 iPad Pro indicate that the battery life on cellular is 11% shorter than on WiFi, but this only applies when using cellular data. When using WiFi, you'll continue to get WiFi battery drain.

You'll most likely only notice shorter battery life if you're a heavy tablet user and use mobile data a lot. Charging your tablet every two or three days really doesn't make much of a difference.

## 7. Security Considerations

The widespread availability of WiFi hotspots means that having a cellular connection on your tablet is less important than it once was. While this is convenient, there are still risks associated with logging onto public WiFi. There are no security risks associated with cellular connections. However, if certain services are important to you and you need to access them in public, then a cellular connection may be a safer option.

## Should I get a tablet with cellular connectivity or just WiFi?

Choosing between a cellular and WiFi-only tablet depends on all of the factors discussed. WiFi-only tablets are better if you are on a tight budget, as they are cheaper than the cellular version. Cellular tablets are more convenient and secure, as you can use your tablet anywhere as long as you have a cellular connection.

However, you can get the same convenience by using your smartphone to provide a WiFi-only connection to your tablet, if your cellular plan supports tethering. The difference in battery life is negligible, but using WiFi will give you better battery life.

The huge price difference means that while cellular support on tablets can be a great thing, you should only consider it if you really need it or have the budget to spare. Cellular data plans aren't great value, and even if you can afford the extra cost, you may find that investing in a higher-end device is the best solution. But don't just consider cellular and WiFi; there are other important specs to consider when buying a tablet.

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