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Lenovo ThinkPad X200 Tablet

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BOTTOM LINE:

If there's a tablet that can take the category mainstream, the Lenovo ThinkPad X200 Tablet is it.

PROS:

Lighter design than its predecessor. Superb keyboard and pointing stick. Bright LED screen. Multiple wireless antennas. Excellent battery life. Improved performance scores. Very good speakers.

CONS:

Still no internal optical drive.

COMPANY:

Lenovo

SPEC DATA

Price: \$2,323.00 Direct

Type: Ultraportable, Tablet, Business, Small Business

Operating System: Microsoft Windows Vista Business

Processor Name: Intel Core 2 Duo L9400

Processor Speed: 1.86 GHz

RAM: 2 GB

Weight: 4 lb

Screen Size: 12.1 inches

Screen Size Type: widescreen

Graphics Card: Intel Graphics Media Accelerator 4500MHD

Storage Capacity: 160 GB

Networking Options: 802.11n

Primary Optical Drive: External

EDITOR RATING: ●●●●●

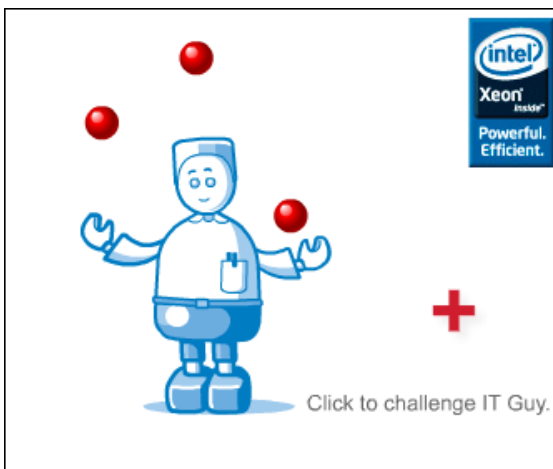
By [Cisco Cheng](#)

Lenovo's last remaining nearly square screen (with a 4:3 aspect ratio) is *finally* being replaced by the ubiquitous widescreen format. It had been almost a year since the company updated its beloved convertible tablet—the ThinkPad X61 Tablet. The ThinkPad X200 Tablet (\$2,323 direct) packs in many more refinements, such as a lighter chassis, a better speaker system, Intel Centrino 2 parts, and three choices of display panels offered in the widescreen format. It easily retains the Editor's Choice, held previously by the X61 Tablet.

Although you couldn't tell at first glance, the X200 Tablet is significantly lighter than its predecessor. At 4 pounds, with a similar 66-Wh battery, it's about half a pound lighter than the X61 Tablet. It's a featherweight compared with the Fujitsu LifeBook T5010 (4.8 pounds) and the Toshiba Portégé M700-S7002 (4.5 pounds), but you have

to remember that the latter two include internal optical drives. If you need an optical drive, the ThinkPad X200 relies on add-ons like an Ultrabase dock or a USB optical drive. Of course, the X200 Tablet could've been made lighter had Lenovo used carbon fiber in its lid as it did with the ThinkPad X301, but a magnesium-clad frame is sturdier and less expensive.

All three screen choices that Lenovo offers are Wacom display panels, meaning you'll need the included digitized pen in order to use the tablet functions. The review unit I have came with the brightest (285 cd/m2) display available. This LED screen is both thin and energy efficient. Your second option is an LED screen with both touch sensitivity and Wacom technology. That means you can use your fingers to navigate the screen, although adding an extra layer of touch decreases its brightness level to 235 cd/m2. With a touch panel, once the digitizer pen is within 2cm of the screen, Wacom



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kicks in and touch is automatically disabled. In my experience, touch sensitivity is valuable in vertical markets like the health-care industry but is not essential to the average tablet user. The third and least expensive option is the CCFL (fluorescent) screen, which has a brightness rating of 190 cd/m². All three displays are available only with a 1,280-by-800 resolution. (The brightest screen is available for \$75 more, and you can get the screen that adds touch sensitivity at a \$275 premium over the CCFL screen.)

Not only is the 12-inch widescreen display bright, but using it in tablet mode is as effortless as with its X61 Tablet predecessor. The included pen wrote smoothly on the screen, and it recognized all my scribbles and scratches when I wrote at varying speeds. The digitized pen is as thick as a standard pen, with a rubbery material lining the outside for a firm grip. Motion Computing boasts a Montblanc-like experience on its Motion Computing LE1700 [Tablet PC](#), as its pen is thicker. Still, the X200 Tablet's writing experience is as smooth, if not smoother, than that offered by both the LifeBook T5010 and the Portégé M700-S7002.

As with all convertible tablets, you get the benefits of both pen and keyboard. Since the dawn of ThinkPads, Lenovo has had what is arguably the best keyboard in the [laptop](#) industry. (Dell is a close second.) Moving to a widescreen format lets the X200 Tablet accommodate a full-size keyboard, while the TrackPoint pointing stick is unquestionably the best of its breed. Touchpad lovers, unfortunately, won't find one here. Alternatively, both the LifeBook T5010 and the Portégé M700-S7002 are touchpad-equipped tablets. One of the biggest improvements that I noticed with the X200 Tablet is the speaker quality. Video chatting, with the combination of Skype and the built-in webcam, sounded spectacular, as did music and YouTube videos. The dual-array microphones, with the rotating hinge situated in between, registered my voice as well as that of a person on the other side of the table, loudly and clearly.

The X200 Tablet's only disadvantage is the lack of an integrated DVD burner. The LifeBook T5010, on the other hand, offers one in a modular bay so that you can swap the optical drive out in favor of an extra battery or [hard drive](#). Lenovo went without an optical drive to minimize the frame's weight and its burden on tablet users' forearms.

Every other feature satisfies both business and consumer needs. There are three USB ports, an SD slot, and an ExpressCard slot. A great thing about Lenovo laptops is that generally, every [wireless](#) technology available is built in, and the X200 Tablet is no exception. The little jut on top of the screen covers WWAN, Centrino 2 Wi-Fi, WiMAX, UWB (wireless USB, which has a range of about 10 meters), Bluetooth, and GPS functions. Not many tablets, let alone business ultraportables, can claim to have this broad range. As for storage options, both spinning and non-spinning drives (64GB and 128GB solid-state drives, or SSDs) are available.

The processor structure of Lenovo's ultraportables hasn't changed much. The ThinkPad X200 (non-tablet) supports standard-voltage parts, whereas the X200s (review coming shortly) and the X200 Tablet run ultra-low-voltage (ULV) and low-voltage processors. My configuration comes with a 1.86-GHz Intel Core 2 Duo L9400, with the "L" denoting low voltage. Technically, it's not as fast as the "P" series processor in the LifeBook T5010 or the "T" series one in the Portégé M700-S7002. The X200 Tablet and the LifeBook T5010 are the only tablets right now that have transitioned to DDR3 memory: Each has a Centrino 2 specification and 2GB of RAM.

The tablet's SYSmark 2007 Preview Overall score wasn't stellar, but it surpassed that of the LifeBook T5010 by 13 percent and came within 2 percent of the Portégé M700-S7002. That's because SYSmark encompasses a wide range of applications, which favored the X200 Tablet, with its fast (7,200-rpm) hard drive. (Both the LifeBook T5010 and the Portégé M700-S7002 have slower, 5,400-rpm drives.) Lenovo also offers 64GB and 128GB SSDs, which theoretically should fare even better than the spinning ones in this particular test. Video encoding, a processor-intensive test, was not a high point on the X200 Tablet. Its 1 minute 28 second score trailed that of the LifeBook T5010 by 24 percent.

The X200 Tablet's [battery life](#) is superior, however. The combination of lower-voltage processor and 66-Wh battery yielded a score of 5 hours 29 minutes—about 2 hours better than either the LifeBook T5010 or the Portégé M700-S7002. A four-cell battery option brings the weight down to 3.5 pounds, but I can't recommend it if battery life is near the top of your priority list.

Thanks to its low-voltage processor, the X200 Tablet easily met *PC Magazine's* requirements for low power consumption. Using a P3 International Kill A Watt meter, the system consumed 13W in idle state, a watt below Energy Star's maximum allowance. The Portégé M700-S7002 had a more impressive showing, as it has a standard-voltage processor and is still able to meet our energy requirements. The X200 Tablet runs the gamut of environmental certifications, including EPEAT Gold, Energy Star 4.0, and RoHS. (If you opt for a CCFL instead of an LED screen, it receives only an EPEAT Silver rating.) Either way, the X200 Tablet is worthy of the *PC Magazine* GreenTech award.

Tablets in general haven't had a big presence in the mainstream market, as they tend to cost more than a comparable non-tablet laptop. They've enjoyed their biggest success in vertical markets like the health-care and education sectors. But if there's a tablet that can take the category mainstream, the Lenovo ThinkPad X200 Tablet is it.

Check out the Lenovo ThinkPad X200 Tablet's performance test results.

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