

IBM/Lenovo x60 Tablet PC

Our latest demo tablet PC is the new Lenovo x60 series and it is definitely the thinnest and most fully featured tablet we have had to date. Weighing in at around 4 pounds and with a 12.1" screen size, it fits easily into a large tote bag or briefcase. I have never been a fan of the laptop having used a desktop for almost every hour of my 20 year career in the information technology industry. However, I dutifully toted my x60 to a week of EMR training to use all day everyday. I was pleasantly surprised by the end of the week as I realized the keyboard on this pint-sized tablet was very comfortable and natural and since the tablet was so thin it did not bother my wrists either. Apparently this model uses a full-size IBM keyboard and utilizes 'function' keys to make up the periphery keys necessary. The 'function' key works as a shift key so multiple combinations of characters are available on each keypad.

Mine has one gigabyte of RAM and this was more than adequate, but is expandable to two gigabytes. The screen is SXGA+, which stands for Super Extended Graphics Array, and means it is 1400 x 1050 pixels which is generally reserved for 14" or 15" laptops. In real life it means the screen is really crisp and easy to read. Also the handwriting recognition in the Windows XP tablet software seems to have improved from previous versions. There are also more handwriting applications available such as Microsoft's OneNote 2003, Alias Sketchbook, and Go Binder Lite. A new built-in accelerometer senses when the tablet has been physically tilted from portrait to landscape and changes the orientation on screen as well.

The x60 series also comes with built-in EV-DO, a wireless broadband data standard currently adopted by Verizon and Sprint networks. Currently, only the x60 and the Toshiba Portege M400 have this integrated cellular modem. It also has a wireless card that is 802.11n, and is of course backwards compatible but very forward thinking as 'n' is the direction that wireless is headed.

There are several battery options available and the standard on this one is a 9-cell, 65 watt unit. You can get two additional batteries that the specifications indicate will provide a total continuous charge time of 10.5 hours, but I have not tested this in real life. The tablet itself does get quite hot after about an hour of use and my standard battery does not last more than three hours maximum.

It comes with a built-in fingerprint reader and an embedded security chip. I imagine that if I had very valuable information stored on the hard drive I might be pleased by this feature. At this point it just means that it takes longer to start up, and that if my tablet goes to sleep I cannot just wiggle the mouse to wake it up; I have to scan my finger, wait, and then it checks the security chip and then it lets me to my desktop. It also remembers passwords for websites, etc. and can use the two methods together to get what is called 'two-factor authentication' (password plus fingerprint) when selected. Again, I imagine it will make some people feel very secure about their information when traveling, but I don't have that kind of information on my laptop.

Some other aspects to note are: 1.66Ghz Duo Core processor - this means you have two processors running at 1.66Ghz on your motherboard; built-in Bluetooth; a new digitizer pen; and an optional 'ultra-base'. The ultra-base is really a full-size docking station with an additional physical lock as well as your optical (meaning CD, DVD or combo) drive in it. Normally I leave this plugged in at the office and only carry the tablet around, and I do carry it around more and more. It really is an excellent laptop (or tablet) even for someone who never wanted a laptop. Pricing on the x60 for my configuration was around \$1,999, which is just a little bit more than a Toshiba or Fujitsu but I think it is well worth it.