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Screen Size Recommendations for Tablet Assessments

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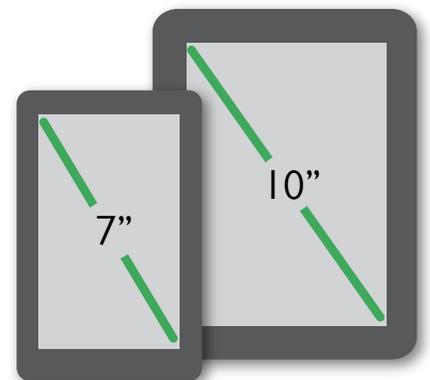
At Pearson, we're committed to supporting student assessment on tablet devices in ways that optimize student experience and enhance measurement. In doing so it is important to consider the specific assessment goals, the uses of the test scores, and issues of fairness when students will be using different types of computers and tablets to take tests. The following recommendations are based on a series of research studies conducted by Pearson researchers to evaluate the usability of tablet devices as tools for assessment. Read the complete white paper from our November 2012 study [on the research hub at Pearson.com](#).

Student Experience

In this study, Pearson researchers sat down with students and asked them to take some sample test questions on two different sized tablets to better understand the effect of screen size on students' test-taking activities.

Students generally found the 10" tablet to be acceptable for viewing and working with test content, but found the smaller 7" tablet to be more challenging. Some questions were difficult for students to complete because the size of objects they were trying to interact with may have been smaller than the students' fingers. Also, many said that they thought they would have difficulty using the smaller tablet for reading longer passages without increasing the size of the text.

Students also remarked on the use of smaller devices for high-stakes testing, with comments such as "[the smaller device] seems less serious" than the 10-inch tablet and that it "might be okay for taking a quiz, but not a test."





Is Bigger Better?

Pearson has previously looked at screen size issues with netbooks and determined that 10" screen sizes are supportable for student testing. This suggests that bigger is not necessarily better and that there seems to be little difference between a range of screen sizes until you dip below the 10" point. Similarly, the Partnership for Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) and Smarter-Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) have both specified a minimum screen size of 9.5" for tablets to be used in consortia assessments. The results of this study suggest that tablets that meet these recommended screen sizes would generally be appropriate for a high-stakes testing situation so long as touch-screen interactions are considered in the user interface design and question specifications.

While the bigger screen size offered the better experience to students in this study, smaller screen sizes should not be counted out entirely.

Possible uses for smaller devices:

- For short quizzes or knowledge checks
- As reading device (ideally with adjustable font size) such as the Kindle or Nook
- Tests limited to question types that do not require high degrees of precision in moving or selecting objects, assuming they are low stakes or that all students are using similar-sized devices

Design with Size in Mind

Assessment designers should consider the range of computer and tablet technology to which tests will be delivered. Any button, control, drag-able or tap-able object, text element, or detailed image must be evaluated for acceptability on the minimum screen size. As an added safeguard, controls for enlarging should also be provided either for all students or, at the very least, on tablets where the screen size may be smaller.



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