New rumors of smaller Apple tablet continue to surface

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Tech industry writers and bloggers have been predicting a smaller-form tablet from Apple for over a year and a half—long before Tim Cook and company announced the latest full-sized, 9.7-inch “new iPad” early last month. As expected, in the weeks since the announcement rumor sites have continued to churn out hearsay articles detailing new specifications of this hypothetical, unconfirmed device.

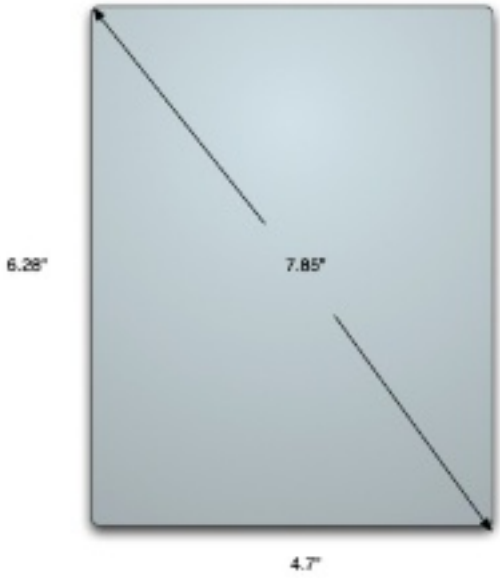
Stories about an “iPad mini” started receiving attention March 13 when *9to5Mac* posted [1] a link to a *Korea Times* report [2] in which an unnamed Samsung official told the newspaper that Apple will be building a 7.85-inch version of the iPad utilizing Samsung displays. This was contradicted in a short dispatch published two weeks later by Japanese blog *Macotakara* which claims [3] that Apple is working on a new product (not necessarily an iPad) with a 5-inch Retina-display with a resolution of 1,600 x 960 pixels or 1,200 x 960 pixels.

The tablet marketplace has been growing rapidly during the last five years, and in 2016, iSuppli expects [4] worldwide sales to surpass 300 million units. Some observers wonder if Apple might be compelled to start competing with Amazon’s smaller, cheaper Kindle Fire, which has a 7-inch screen and costs $200, or maybe come out with a product similar to the Samsung Galaxy Note, a tablet/smartphone hybrid with a 5.3-inch display costing costing $300 with a two-year wireless contract. These devices have seen respectable sales [5] and have form factors foreign to Apple’s current product line.

Although Apple’s late co-founder, Steve Jobs, did not believe a 7-inch peripheral [6] provided sufficient space to create tablet applications, many believe the success of the Kindle Fire proves the value of this display size. Others claim that such a tablet might be better suited for school-aged children, who sometimes find the 9.7-inch

iPad to be too cumbersome. The question remains whether or not textbooks and educational software can be integrated and effectively deployed on displays smaller than 9.7-inches.

The precise size, 7.85-inches, 7.1-inches, or even 5-inches, has been the subject of great debate in the Apple blogosphere. Some wonder if software developers would be forced to redesign applications, creating different versions of programs for new displays. Notwithstanding these software issues, a new, smaller tablet would be expected to have a price point considerably cheaper than that of the current iPad, so rough estimates are somewhere between $200 and $300. In that range, AppAdvice's A.T. Faust does not expect [7] the new device to have a Retina display, and says that a 7.85-inch screen with a resolution of 1024 x 768 works out to have the same pixel density as the pre-Retina iPhone display—163 pixels per inch.



$$\frac{1024 \text{ Pixels}}{6.28 \text{ Inches}} = 163 \text{ PPI}$$

Others in the industry believe all future iOS products will feature Retina displays.

Apple, as always, has kept its new product plans under close guard. And while no rumored specifications have been corroborated by any respected news sources, I believe Cupertino will announce a new addition to its product line at the end of the third quarter 2012 to be available just in time for the holiday season. I predict it will be a $250 tablet with a 7.85-inch display that will allow current iPad applications to run seamlessly on the new device.

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