Samsung takes on iPad Mini with Galaxy Note 8.0

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BARCELONA, Spain (AP) — Samsung Electronics is beefing up its tablet range with a competitor to Apple's iPad Mini that sports a pen for writing on the screen.

The Korean company announced on Sunday in B'arcelona that the Galaxy Note 8.0 will have an 8-inch screen, putting it very close in size to the Apple's tablet, which launched in November with a 7.9-inch screen. It's not the first time Samsung has

made a tablet that's in the Mini's size range: it's very first iPad competitor had a 7-inch screen, and it still makes a tablet of that size, but without a pen.

Samsung will start selling the new tablet in the April to June period, at an as yet undetermined price. It made the announcement ahead of Mobile World Congress, the wireless industry's annual trade show, which starts Monday in Barcelona, Spain.

The Note 8.0 fills a gap in Samsung's line-up of pen-equipped devices between the Galaxy Note II smartphone, with its 5.5-inch screen, and the Galaxy Note 10.1, a full-size tablet. Samsung has made the pen, or more properly the stylus, one of the tools it uses to chip away at Apple's dominance in both tablets and high-end smartphones. Apple doesn't make any devices that work with styluses, preferring to optimize its interfaces for fingers, mice and touchpads.

On Samsung's Note line, the pens can be used to write, highlight and draw. The screens also sense when the mouse hovers over the screen, providing an equivalent to the hovering mouse cursor on the PC. However, few third-party applications have been modified to take full advantage of the pens.

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