Article published on December 28th 2011 | Hardware

The term may also apply to a variety of form factors that differ in position of the screen with respect to a keyboard. The standard form is called slate, which does not have an integrated keyboard but may be connected to one with a wireless link or a USB port. Convertiblenotebook computers have an integrated keyboard that can be hidden by a swivel joint or slide joint, exposing only the screen for touch operation. A laptop, also called a notebook, is a personal computer for mobile use. A laptop integrates most of the typical components of a desktop computer, including a display, a keyboard, a pointing device (a touchpad, also known as a track pad, and/or a pointing stick) and speakers into a single unit. A laptop is powered by mains electricity via an AC adapter, and can be used away from an outlet using a rechargeable battery.

Portable computers, originally monochrome CRT-based and developed into the modern laptops, and were originally considered to be a small niche market, mostly for specialized field applications such as the military, accountants and sales representatives. As portable computers became smaller, lighter, cheaper, more powerful and as screens became larger and of better quality, laptops became very widely used for all sorts of purposes.

Hybrids have a detachable keyboard so that the touch screen can be used as a stand-alone tablet. Booklets include two touch screens, and can be used as a notebook by displaying a virtual keyboard in one of them.

Early examples of the information tablet concept originated in the 19th and 20th centuries mainly as prototypes and concept ideas, the more prominent the Alan Kay's Dynabook. First commercial portable electronic devices based on the concept appeared at the end of the 20th century. During the 2000s Microsoft attempted a relatively unsuccessful product line with Microsoft Tablet PC, which carved a niche market at hospitals and outdoor businesses. In 2010 Apple released the iPod based on the technology developed in parallel with their previous iPhone, and reached worldwide commercial success.

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Article Keywords:
tablet pc,cheap tablet pc

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