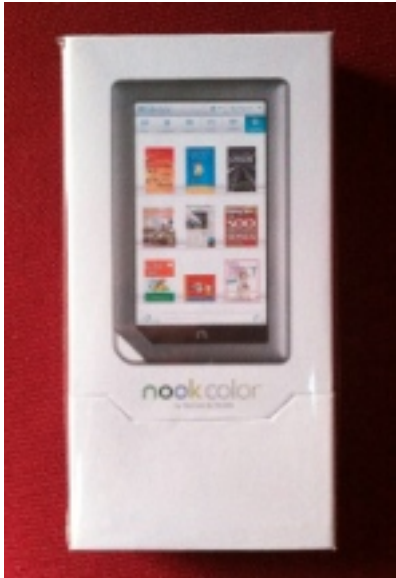


Written by Mark (Admin)

Saturday, 20 November 2010 13:12 - Last Updated Tuesday, 23 November 2010 23:38



I've had some time to play with my new nookColor and wanted to share my first impressions.

Packaging

I thought the "original" nook packaging was crazy. It was encased in a very special looking plastic box that required consulting the user guide to open it. B&N later changed over to a more common-sense packaging and the nookColor resembles it. The hinged magnetic bottom that holds the accessories is very nice. I'd say it's a nice balance between "special" and wasting a lot of time and money on a disposable case.

Initial Charge and Use

The nookColor, just like the nook, warns the user to "fully charge" before first use. Of course when you plug it in to charge it the device starts up so... So much for waiting. The first charge only took 20 minutes, it came mostly charged. The user experience of starting the nook for the first time includes an introductory video and a very straightforward setup/configuration wizard. Very nice and well done in my opinion.

Hardware

I'd have to say overall I like the device hardware. I'm a big fan of dark gray devices (love the look of the new graphite Kindle). The style cut out corner is "cute" but also serves as an easy access point for inserting an SD card. The device is very solid, thin, and I like the screen. The material quality is pretty decent and the back has a little bit of a grip to it so it shouldn't easily slide around. It's a quarter pound heavier than the nook - which is already a couple ounces heavier than the Kindle. I think it's at the max size and weight for comfortable single hand use.

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It seems to me the screen isn't as glossy as my iPad, which I think is a good thing. The single 'n' button at the bottom has a nice feel to it and is very unique. The side volume buttons work well and are easy to find and push. I'm not as huge of a fan of the power button. It's on the left hand side instead of the top and I think it's more awkward to shut off the device. Unlike the classic nook, the nookColor has no page turn buttons. While the screen click is sufficient, some may miss the tactile navigation. Page turns are instant.



nookColor Operation

As most of you know the nook runs the Android mobile operating system for its base software.

As I predicted when the nookColor was announced, the android OS is carefully hidden behind a book centric user interface

(which is smart for an eReader IMHO). The home screen has a list of your B&N books along the bottom (scrollable) and the page displays a custom set of book covers in user selected sizes (grab and pinch to adjust). The top has a history bar with the last read item and a drop down box of recent history. You might not even notice your options to run other programs on this capable device but the bottom arrow provides access to other features in a ribbon interface much like the original nook. The web browser is on the bottom ribbon, and the other apps (Chess, Contacts, Crossword, Gallery, LendMe, Music, Pandora, Sudoku) are all under the "Extras" selection.

The library application works much like the iPad or iPhone. It has all the books covers listed and you can scroll up and down to find books or search the library. People who are hard core book readers will likely just add the top couple books to the home page and pass on using the library application. If you want to manage your books and periodicals or switch often between a large number of books you're likely to use the library view more than the home page view.

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The games appear to be very well done. I was hoping for an email client and calendar application because I think that plus the browser may had been just enough for some folks that wanted some iPad like features in their eReader.

eReader Software

If you are using a device as an eReader you'll likely spend most your time in one program - the eReader application. There are no surprises here. The nookColor erReader app looks like a port of the iPad/iPhone/Android reader. It's very competent and if you use other nook apps you'll already be familiar with it. I thought the lookup options were nicely done and the new "sharing options" do not appear on the nook or nook apps on other devices. The share options allow you to recommend, rate/review, and post reading status to your facebook and twitter social network. I'm a bit mystified why there are only a handful of font options. I'm not nuts about a single one of them and it seems silly to not provide a dozen fonts here (Really? Trebuchet MS). The list is the same as the iPhone/iPad.

While the page turns are instant there is no animation. I found reading it a few times I was confused if the page turn had happened. Maybe a short animation would be useful!

Another significant feature the nookColor eReader has over the mobile nook applications is the special in-store deals and the ability to read most books for free (for an hour) in any B&N store. B&N has been pretty good to nook owners with the perks and they generally these come only to the nook devices, not the nook apps.

There is no nookStudy integration into the nookColor. I would be shocked if that doesn't change in the next major firmware upgrade.

nookColor as a Tablet Device?

If you are hoping the nook is a dirt cheap tablet with eReader software you may be disappointed. The browser is decent, but not as dreamy as the iPhone or iPad. The ability to install apps is non-existent and the marketplace for nook applications isn't online yet. I suspect the nookColor will be rooted by Thanksgiving if history is any indication.

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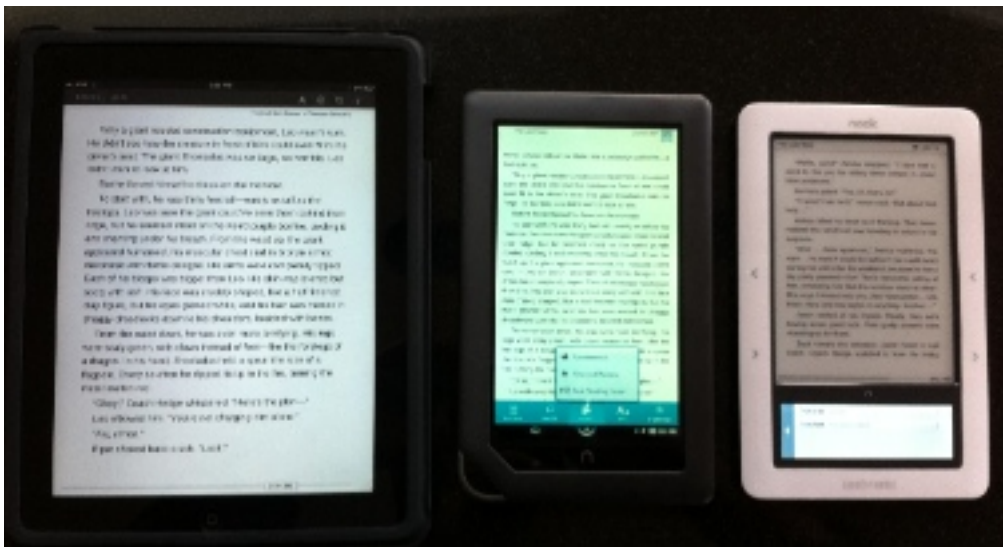
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Let's be clear, the nookColor is a tablet in most every respect - except that it's locked down tight to be used as an eReader. If you aren't primarily a book reader, but the nookColor interests you, it might be best to wait until the nook marketplace has applications or the nookColor is rooted and can install apps. **At \$250 it could be a great middle ground between the low price junk Android tablets and the "rock-star" \$600 [Samsung Galaxy Tablet](#)**

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iPad, nookColor, nook

I thought you might be interested just to see the size difference and base look of these three options. The camera picks up the screen refresh more on the nook, but my son and I agree - the nookColor looks nicer and has better reading contrast than the iPad. The screen sizes are 10", 7", and 6".



"First Look" Bottom Line

I'm a big fan of the elnk because of the readability. I think that comes from two factors - natural light and pixel density. While the nookColor has better pixel density than the iPad (pretty apparent side-by-side, or do math on pixels per inch) the backlight is still a bit of a distraction. I think the backlight of the nookColor may be a bit softer than the iPad in some way and handle glare better. The software on the nookColor kills the other nook platforms and I think the homepage concept is very well executed. Besides the location of the power button I generally like the hardware and it feels like a solid device.

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The weight of the nookColor is right at the limit for single handed reading (for me). I find my iPad is hard to hold for a long time.

The battery life might be six hours based on my usage - which is far less than my iPad. The elnk nook gets probably closer to 20 hours of use thanks to the power-sipping elnk screen. If you use it for web, chess, and other applications you'll be charging this thing every other day.

If you want to **read outside**, have a **dirt cheap** device you charge weekly, and like **very clear text** get a

refurb

nook 3G

for \$100 (or the new

[Kindle Graphite for \\$139](#)

)

If you want to **read at night**, like the idea of **tablet features**, and don't mind charging often get the [nookColor for \\$250](#)

If you want a **tablet** that can be used as an **eReader** with a great **battery** life get an **iPad** for \$499.