

iPad as a Monitor

Written by George Faerber
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I use a program called MaxiVista on my Apple iPad and my Sony Windows 7 laptop. This application beams over monitor information to the iPad via my local WiFi connection, and lets me space out my working area on multiple displays.

Technically, I'm using it as a third monitor, as I have a small Dell 15 inch LCD display from a few years back that is also setup on my desk for my laptop.

Performance is acceptable as far as refresh / redraw goes ... video looks to run at about 5 to 10 frames per second (this means I can frequently type faster than the screen can update.)

What is really amazing however is how much crisper / legible the display is vs the actual LCD monitor from Dell. The iPad is brighter, sharper, and has the same resolution as my traditional external display.

From the perspective of creating an additional 'multipurpose' purpose for the iPad, this application is a complete win. If you have an iPad and have never used multiple monitors, give this app (about \$10) a shot. If you are familiar with multiple monitors (I currently use a 4 screen desktop setup but once for kicks had it up to 8) then this app (or the Mac compatible alternatives) should be a no brainer. You won't be playing video games on it, but it's a great place to dump an inbox or to read a news site. Some pixelation (appears similar to JPG compression) artifacts are present in some cases, but these are more than offset by the otherwise sharp rendition and bright colors.

The app works equally as well when the iPad is running on batteries or when it's plugged in.

There is no 'interaction' with the screen via the touch interface of the iPad ... your keyboard and mouse on the laptop / desktop are the only way to interact with the screen. This is quite different from, say LogMeIn Ignition or some of the VPN applications, where you can pinch to zoom and are otherwise interacting with the image on the screen directly.

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Score: 7.5 out of 10

Pros:

- Simple to use with a WiFi connection
- Use your iPad for more than browsing and music
- Cheaper than buying a new monitor if you already have the iPad
- More portable than an external monitor and battery powered
- Seamless switching if connection dies
- Sharp, clear, bright

Cons:

- WiFi connection is not as speedy as VGA, DVI, or HDMI connections
- Not great for video and some interactive site experiences will be diminished
- iPad doesn't yet support multitasking, so when it's a monitor, it's nothing else
- No touch interface or Zoom options

Other Thoughts:

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- I'm curious how this handles over different Wifi types. I'm using G today, but N should in theory allow for faster throughput
- I'm curious how various routers handle the data exchange. I have a Cradlepoint G router as well, I would expect it could provide the interface in a pinch
- I'm curious how well it would work over an ad-hoc network
- I'm curious if used with a device like a MiFi portable router if it uses any bandwidth (it shouldn't since it is LAN only, but who knows)
- I'm curious how it impairs performance of a device like an Android phone that's wifi-sharing. Can the device still take phone calls? Is monitor performance degraded?