

# 10 Ways to Get the Most From Your Tablet

By Mike Olson, Contributor - [Tech Page One](#) 01/22/2013

By the year 2015, an estimated 82 million Americans will be using tablets, one-third of the entire online population. But if the state of the technology here in early 2013 is any indication, most of them won't be using these devices to their full potential.

Unfortunately, the tablet's nearly limitless capabilities are too often overshadowed by life's nearly endless distractions. Sure, it's fun to play [Bejeweled](#) in every room of the house or check your email at Starbucks, but a tablet has much, much more to offer. The most life-altering modern conveniences are just a download away for the savvy user – and they can turn your handheld device into everything from a cash register to a home security system.

Here are 10 uses for the tablet that are guaranteed to make it the most transcendent device in your house.

## As a second monitor

A [recent study by the University of Utah](#) revealed that, contrary to what you might expect, people who use two monitors at once are 44 percent more productive than those who use only one. With a simple download of [Air Display](#), [REDFLY ScreenSlider](#) or [MaxiVista](#), your tablet becomes a second monitor, allowing you to clear desktop clutter and focus on the task at hand. (Or take the lo-fi approach and sequester time-killing programs like Twitter or YouTube to your second screen.)

## As a remote control

No, not just for changing channels. If you're armed with the right applications, you can turn your tablet into a full home automation system, letting you hit the lights, adjust the heat or turn on music from anywhere in the house – or even on the drive home.

## As a security system

More so than a smart phone, the large display on a tablet is perfect for keeping the homestead safe and sound. With an app like [mydlink+](#), any homeowner can monitor four live video streams simultaneously, keeping an eye on how the baby is sleeping or whose car is pulling into the driveway without leaving the comfort of the couch.

## As a digital photo frame

When you have thousands of digital photographs on your camera, phone and other devices, why hang just one on the wall? Applications like [Photo Slides](#) and [Pix-Star Photos](#) turn any tablet into a nonstop slideshow. Simply prop it in a stand – or even mount it on the wall – and you have a practical, personalized decoration.

## As an in-dash navigation

With a visit to any certified mobile electronics installer you can integrate your tablet right in with your car's existing electronics. Still paying for satellite radio or that Garmin? Not anymore. Your music library and favorite navigation app will be at your fingertips. Though, as any parent will attest, the tablet's true calling may just be keeping antsy kids occupied during long (or short) car rides.

## As a digital recipe book

The days of finding a tasty recipe online only to have to print it out and bring it into the kitchen are over. Today, [tablets can double as handy recipe books](#) that hold all the dishes you can cook – and plenty that you can't. (Yes, you can buy a chef sleeve to keep splatters from becoming disasters.) Need to know how long that roast has been in the oven or how many tablespoons are in an ounce? Needless to say, there's an app that can help you.

## As a cash register

By now, nearly everyone has been to an establishment that uses a tablet as a cash register, confirming a payment by signing with a fingertip or punching in a PIN. But this option isn't only for the small business owner looking for a point-of-sale system to process credit cards. With the help of technology like [Square Register](#), you can settle debts with friends or throw the most high-tech garage sale in neighborhood history.

## As a lighting technique

Shooting a still life becomes half as difficult — and twice as artistic — when a tablet is used as a portable lighting system. Not only does it replace bulky lighting equipment, but an app like [SoftBox](#) allows you to emit light of different intensities, hues and even shapes, making for a perfect shot every time.

## As a carpenter's assistant

Your tablet is ready to lighten your toolbox. An application like [iHandy Carpenter](#) (also available, despite the name, in the Android marketplace) can turn any tablet into a plumb bob, surface or bubble level, ruler and protractor all in one, making your next home improvement project a snap. (Hardcore builders can go crazy and download a free version of [AutoCAD](#) to create their own designs.)

## As a health device

Sure, you can find an app to log how many miles you jogged or reps you completed, but the built-in camera on a tablet can be just as helpful. Amazingly, the [Vital Signs Camera](#) application uses said camera to measure your heart rate (by analyzing the color of your face) and breathing (the motion of your chest), meaning better health is just a few clicks away. Your doctor will thank you.