

I believe that all tech should work right out of the box. When it doesn't it can be so frustrating to get it to work that I feel like throwing it out of the nearest closed window. Other than unboxing the best part of getting a new "toy" is turning it on and using it. Notice I didn't say spending long hours talking to tech support. At that point, even if the problem has been solved my perception of my new device has



diminished. That said, I have come up with some pointers on choosing your first e-book reader. Certainly, this is a guide, so at the end story pick one that you like.

1. Dedicated or non-dedicated: A dedicated reader can be used only for reading. An example is the [Ebookwise 1150](#). So if you want to listen to music you'll have to lug around your mp3 player. If you want your calendar, contacts, to-do list, you have to have your PDA with you. So if you are a minimalist you may want to consider getting a non-dedicated device that has more built in functions. The functions include those listed about and most like email, web browsing, games, and other software. Examples of non-dedicated devices include the [Sony ereader](#) (only because it allows you to listen to audio files) and the [Palm TX](#) (which is a PDA).

2. Screen size: How big of a screen do you need? Screen sizes can vary from 2.5" to 10 inches. To decide, think about the screen size of gadgets you use on a daily basis. You know best about your optimal screen size needs. I have a Motorola RAZR cell phone and would dread reading on it, but you may find the screen adequate. Still, you would be constantly pressing the forward button if you are reading a novel. Of course the bigger the screen size the bigger the reading device will be.

3. Reading software choices: This is the software used to read your book. The major players are Microsoft Reader, Palm's Ereader, Mobipocket. Most dedicated e-book readers have only one choice and usually it is a proprietary application. This means that your choice of reading material is limited. You will not be able to buy e-books from any source, but the maker of your device. Why? Well other than keeping you coming back to them to spend your money, a lot of this is due to Digital Rights Management (DRM). DRM is their way of saying they don't trust you not to share your books with others.

4. Where you'll be using it: If you plan to read while you commute then think about the lighting on your train, bus, etc. If lighting is low you may not want to get an e-ink reader since there is no backlighting. The lack of back lighting can be solved with attaching a book light to the reader. By contrast, if you are planning to read outdoors or under well lighted conditions then backlighting features may not be that important. Either way, think about how much stuff you already carry with you. For example, the Cybook has a backlit large 10 inch screen, but it is somewhat bulky and heavy at 3 pounds. Three pounds doesn't seem like much now, but it will if you are already toting a laptop, purse...you get the idea. It would be like carry a large hardback book. If you plan to read at home a larger device may be more convenient.



5. Availability of reading material: If you like public domain classics then you're in luck. There's plenty of reading material available at places like [Project Gutenberg](#) and [Many Books](#). I like reading best sellers so I am more restricted. Before purchasing a reader look around the web at the various e-book resellers and make sure that they sell your genre of books. Take note of the formats available for download and verify that the reader you plan to get is capable of displaying the text. That's part 2. Final part to come...

6. How much money are you willing to put into it (Better known as Latest and greatest vs. older reader)? . Some people have to have the newest gadget as soon as it hits the streets. Being an early adopter comes with the burden of paying hefty prices and working out the bugs of new devices. Other folks are more patient and can wait until the price drops. Fortunately for e-book tech lovers we don't need or require the latest device. There are drawbacks. The drawbacks of legacy (older) devices is that tech support is often not available, replacement parts and accessories are scarce, and there are no updates to look forward to. For first time buyers I suggest getting a device that is still being manufactured and from a solid company. Doing so will at least give you some warranty protection and tech support. Either way decide beforehand how much you want to invest based on your individual needs. Prices range from \$100 to just under \$400. Remember there is no right or wrong here. Readers are for your enjoyment. If you are happy with it, that's what matters. Not what the guy or gal next to you is using. Look for online deals. Often there are specials or other discounts like a coupon for free books. If at all possible get your hands on a reader and try it out before you buy. The Sony reader is available in stores so you can at least play around with the display. This is also true with PDAs. For other readers try your local libraries. Ask if they have e-book readers available for check out. You may be pleasantly surprised.

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Finally, have fun and enjoy reading. In future posts I will go into detail about the various devices that can be used to read e-books. Even if it doesn't perform right out of the box, there is still a wealth of information that can help you make this an enjoyable experience and I will tell you how to access it.