



# Archos

## Archos 5 Internet Media Tablet

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According to Archos, it's a triumph in mobile electronics. The Archos 5 portable video player, billed as an Internet Media Tablet is positively jammed with features. It offers a large, high-resolution touch-screen display, Wi-Fi, a music player, photo viewer, video player, game compatibility, a PDF reader, Mac and PC compatibility, a built-in speaker, integrated stand, and a host of options including a DVR, GPS, and 3G capabilities. Purely on specifications this device crushes the Apple iPod Touch. Reality is somewhat different.

Unlike the Archos 605 WiFi released last year (Sound and Vision, December 2007), the Archos 5 is controlled entirely by its touch screen, with the exception of the power button and volume control on the top edge of the device. The Archos 5 measures nearly 5 inches wide, 3 inches tall, and 0.5 inch thick (or 0.75 inch thick for the 120GB and 250GB versions). Archos was able to squeeze an extra half-inch of screen onto the model 5 by removing the mechanical control buttons found on the company's previous players and placing those functions on the touch screen – not all to a positive effect.

The overall performance of the Archos 5 user interface is vastly improved over the 604/605 predecessors, because of the 600MHz ARM Cortex™ processor inside.

It also offers improved on-board WiFi in 802.11 b and g formats and can function as a wireless filesaver. All that performance, however, does come at a price: battery life, while not bad at approximately 10 hours of mixed audio and video use is not quite up to the 22 hours of audio / 7 hours of video that Archos claims.

Applications now launch faster and the lag time of the touch-screen keyboard is noticeably improved. The Opera based Web browser and Flash 9 video media playback are noticeably quicker but still disappointing to a degree. Many Web sites and services remain incompatible. Testing revealed no consistencies --- Flash video from the YouTube site worked, Flash from ESPN did not. Many 'free' WiFi points, such as those found in fast food restaurants also employ a Flash entry screen that must be acknowledged before getting on the Web---again, not consistently handled by the Archos 5. Of course, by comparison, Apple does not offer Flash support on the iPhone or iPod Touch at all, so perhaps some inconsistency is better than nothing. The PDF viewer application offered on the Archos 5 reads PDF documents quite reliably, but does not always implement all PDF features, while the included Email application client, compatible with mail accounts supporting POP3 and IMAP services, was listed as 'beta' and did not work properly. A free firmware upgrade is promised by Archos.

Video, on the other hand, is the Archos 5's strongest feature. Out of the box, the Archos 5 offers support for AVI, WMV, MPEG4, DivX, XviD, and Flash video content with no re-coding necessary for videos sized at or below 640x480. For an additional investment, you can add modules to enhance the video options on the Archos 5. An extra \$20 will score the High-Definition software plug-in to enable playing HD movies (720x1280 at 24 fps). Another \$20 will net the Cinema plugin allowing 720p video playback of MPEG-2/VOB format with AC3 sound (5.1-surround sound via the SPDIF output on the optional DVR Station). Another \$20 on top of that will get the Podcast media plug-in allow h.264 video playback as well as AAC audio playback.

Video playback on the Archos 5 is eye-popping. The 4.8" TFT LCD screen with 16.7 M colors is amazing with the ultra sharp 800x480 resolution. Oddly, Archos has shifted away from the satin/matte screens of the 604/605 line in favor of a glossy screen, which is eye-catching, but a magnet for fingerprints invited by the touchscreen functions. Of course the Archos 5 continues to offer excellent photo viewer functions, natively handling images in JPEG, BMP, PNG, and GIF formats, which can be viewed individually or automatically via the built in a slideshow function.

Audio playback has been solid throughout the various Archos models going all the way back to its JukeBox line. The Archos 5 continues building on this strength. The music player supports MP3, WMA (including DRM-protected files), FLAC, Ogg, and WAV files. The Archos 5 can also stream music over Wi-Fi from nearby computers or stream conventional Internet radio stations. During playback, the Archos 5's screen displays album artwork (if loaded), allows for the music library to be sorted by ID3 tags, and allows for the ability to bookmark long files such as MP3-Audiobooks. A five-band graphic Equalizer is included, and sound output is through the built-in speaker or to a 3.5mm headphone output on the left edge.

The biggest attraction of the Archos 5 is also its biggest flaw: you'll need to pay extra money to activate or acquire many of the player's most desirable options. As noted, the afore-mentioned Video and Audio plug-ins can add a sizable investment to a somewhat expensive initial purchase price.



With the model 5, Archos continues to utilize a proprietary USB (2.0) interface for charging and transferring content. While one cable is included, be prepared to spend another \$15 for an extra. While many of the other accessories for the Archos 5 are carried over in name from the 605 line, Archos has again chosen to make all but the in-car GPS cradle incompatible, so those that are upgrading from a 604 or 605 will have to re-buy all the accessories. Archos offers an articulated windshield mount that converts the model 5 into a full-featured in-car GPS system for an extra \$129. The DVR dock will cost another \$99, and those looking for the Helmet Camcorder will need to throw in another \$129.

### BOTTOM LINE

The Archos 5 is the latest in sleek, versatile, Portable...errr...Internet Media Tablets from this manufacturer. The Archos 5 sports a great number of improvements over the 605 line, but some of its publicized features, like its touch screen display, are also drawbacks. The Archos 5 would also receive our highest recommendation if it weren't for the pricing strategy that all but forces buyer to pony up an additional \$100 to take advantage of its true potential.

## Tech Specs

**Display:** High resolution screen, 800x480 pixels, 4.8" TFT LCD, 16 million colors

**Processor(s):** Main processor: ARM Cortex™-A8, 32 bit, In-order, dual-issue, superscalar core @ 600 MHz; Additional processor: 32 bit DSP @ 430 MHz

**RAM memory:** 128 MB SDRAM

**Mass storage memory:** Internal Hard drive  
- 60 GB, 120 GB and 250 GB versions

**Operating system:** Linux

**Connectivity:** On board WiFi (802.11 b/g), USB 2.0 host with optional accessories

**PC accessories:** USB PC accessories (keyboard, mouse, memory key, memory cards reader, camera and other future computer accessories)

**Video playback:** MPEG-4 (ASP@L5 AVI, up to DVD resolution) WMV (MP@ML, up to DVD resolution) included WMV protected files, M-JPEG (in QVGA resolution)

With optional software plug-in:

HD support: MPEG-4 (ASP 720p) & WMV HD (MP 720p)

MPEG-2 MP@ML up to 10 Mbps (up to DVD resolution) and AC3 stereo sound (5.1)

H.264 up to DVD resolution with AAC

**Audio playback:** Stereo MP3 decoding @ 30-320 Kbits/s CBR & VBR, WMA, Protected WMA, WMA pro 5.1, WAV (PCM/ADPCM). AC3 stereo audio and 5.1 sound files (via SPDIF output of DVR Station), Flac and OGG Vorbis audio files

With optional software plug-in: AAC and AAC+ stereo audio

**Photo viewer:** JPEG, BMP, PNG, GIF PDF viewer: Reads PDF documents

**Video recording:** Via the optional DVR Station or DVR Snap-on. Records NTSC/PAL/SECAM in MPEG-4 AVI format with stereo sound, VGA resolution (640 x 480) @ 30 or 25 f/s

**Audio recording:** Via the optional DVR Station or DVR Snap-on: Stereo line-in, WAV (IMA ADPCM or PCM) format  
Voice recording via the optional FM remote and its built-in microphone in WAV format (IMA ADPCM)

**Email client:** Compatible with Email accounts supporting POP3 and IMAP services Import/export of vCard contacts

**Interfaces:** USB 2.0 High-Speed Device: Mass Storage Class (MSC) and Media Transport Protocol (MTP).

**Connections:** WiFi (802.11 b/g) connection. Web Browser (Opera® Web browser with Adobe Flash® 9 video support), 3.5 mm mini jack for headphones, Accessory connectors to connect to the DVR Station and other ARCHOS accessories

**Miscellaneous:** Built-in speaker, Built-in leg stand

**Battery life:** Music playback time: up to 22 hours;  
Video playback time: up to 7 hours

**Power source:** Internal: Lithium Polymer battery  
Device charges via computer USB port  
External: Power adapter/charger (via optional accessories)

**Dimensions & weight:** Approx 4.8 x 3.2 x .5 in (for 60GB model) - 11 oz

**Minimum system requirements:** Microsoft® Windows® Vista, XP, ME, 2000 or higher  
MAC OS X and Linux (with Mass Storage Device Support)  
USB 2.0 interface