

# TOOLS of the TRADE



## Sony Xperia Tablet Z

The new tablet from Sony is built on the principles of its award-winning Sony Z smartphone. The Xperia Tablet Z is a premium device that will be competing in the upper range for tablets when it's made available in the U.S. in the second quarter. The 10.1" tablet is the slimmest and lightest of all full-size tablets (0.27" thick and a weight of 17.5 oz.). It's also water resistant, with covers for its external parts. The Xperia runs on a Qualcomm Snapdragon quadcore processor, and the operating system is Android 4.1 Jelly Bean, with an automatic upgrade to 4.2 on release. The display is 10.1 HD, 1,920 x 1,200 pixels, with enhanced color reproduction. The S-Force

Front Surround pair of built-in speakers are channeled through four "speaker halls" on the left and right corners. One-touch connectivity with Near Field Communication (NFC) lets users transfer content from tablet to TV, tablet to speaker, or phone to tablet just by touching them together. There's an eight-megapixel rear camera and two-megapixel HD front camera, a Micro SD slot, and the tablet is available in black or white.

[www.sonymobile.com](http://www.sonymobile.com)

## HP Slate 7 Tablet

Along with Sony, HP also announced a new tablet at the recent Mobile World Congress. Its Slate 7 is an economy-priced 7" tablet that runs on

the Android 4.1 Jelly Bean operating system. Scheduled for release this month, the low price on this compact tablet (\$169) should make it competitive in the Nexus 7/Kindle Fire space. The HP Slate 7 has an ARM Dual Core 1.6 GHz processor, integrated wireless connectivity, a three-megapixel camera on the back, and a VGA camera on the front. The HP ePrint app lets users print while at home or on the go, and the exclusive native printing capability enables customers to print directly from most applications. There's a micro USB port for easy file transfer, and it will run any of the 700,000 apps offered at the Google Play store, as well as all Google services, such as Google Now, Search, Gmail, YouTube, Google Drive, and Google+ hangouts for multiperson video chat. The Slate 7 is the first

tablet with embedded Beats Audio for impressive sound in a small tablet. The design features a stainless steel frame and a gray or red back.

[www.hp.com/slate](http://www.hp.com/slate)

## TurboTax Deluxe

TurboTax Deluxe is designed to maximize personal deductions by searching more than 50 deductions and credits and explaining those for which you qualify. The ItsDeductible program does the work for you. The interview that helps create your return is in plain English, with results posted directly on the right forms, including 1040EZ, 1040A, and 1040. Automatic input of W-2 and 1099 data is available from more than 400,000 participating employers and financial institutions, and last year's data is automatically carried over. The Smart Check program reviews your return for mistakes before you file, and EasyGuide helps you formulate questions along the way, which are then directed to the TurboTax Live Community for answers. You can track your return with the Audit Risk Meter, which checks your return and provides advice about com-



# TECH FORUM

## Pocket Income Tax Apps

By Michael Castelluccio, Editor



mon triggers and ways to reduce your risk of an audit. As you work through the interview process, you can keep track of your refunds, both federal and state, on the Dual Refund Monitor. When you're done, a free federal e-file is included with the program. Information on the Deluxe and other TurboTax offerings is available at [www.turbotax.intuit.com](http://www.turbotax.intuit.com).

### Stick-N-Find Location Sticker

The StickNFind Technologies startup raised what it needed



on the crowd-funding platform at [IndieGoGo.com](http://IndieGoGo.com) to develop this clever miniaturized tracker. The Stick-N-Find sticker provides a tracking system that turns your smartphone into a radar-detection screen for lost keys, wallets, glasses, even your pets. The coin-sized sticker is adhered to whatever you have a habit of misplacing. The connection is via Bluetooth 4.0, and the range is about 100 feet within a line of sight. If the object isn't within range, you can activate a "find it" alert that will send a signal to your phone once you have moved within range. Another type of alarm will go off if the object is moved beyond a selected distance you set from the phone—laptop, tablet, attaché, whatever you have attached the concealable sticker to. The smartphone can be iOS or Android with Bluetooth 4.0. The battery lasts up to a year based on 30-minute-per-day use, and the stickers come in a variety of colors. StickNFind also offers BluTracker, a Bluetooth GPS locator with a range of more than half a mile. [www.StickNFind.com](http://www.StickNFind.com)

Tablets are designed for content consumption, and smartphones are too small to do any kind of work on—or so many would have you believe, especially PC manufacturers. But the handhelds are changing with more powerful processors, better OSs, exquisite screens, and overwhelming numbers of inexpensive software applications at the Apple and Android app stores.

Smartphones are getting bigger, some now come with a stylus and are called "notes," and tablets are getting more mobile, having added midsize options like the iPad mini and an expanding list of 7" portables. And the number of apps in the productivity departments of the app stores is impressive. In the Apple App Store, the "Productivity" section contains 47 pages of just "New and Noteworthy" apps. Android currently lists 120 new "Productivity" apps in its Play Store. Add to those the apps listed separately in the "Business" category, and there seems to be a pile of empirical proof contradicting the claim that tablets and smartphones aren't for work.

This year's tax season brought a number of apps to help in the ever more complicated task of filing your income tax return. Intuit, maker of the TurboTax suite, reports that "last year [Intuit's] mobile apps were downloaded more than 2.5 million times, and so far this season, downloads have tripled versus the same period last year."

There are four TurboTax mobile apps written for iPhone, Android phones and tablets, and iPad tablets. SnapTax offers a very convenient way to file simple tax returns. You snap a photo of your W-2 with your smartphone camera, answer a few questions, and then review, pay, and e-file over a secure line on your phone, or go on the TurboTax website and file there. Intuit says about 88% of taxpayers filing 1040EZ and 1040A can file with SnapTax. The SnapTax app for iOS and Android is free.

TurboTax for iPad can be downloaded free from the Apple App Store. An interview process takes you through your taxes, state and federal, *continued on next page*

and then it double-checks looking for other deductions or credits. You then pay for the federal and state returns and file online.

The **TurboTax TaxCaster** will give you a quick estimate of how big your tax refund is going to be. You plug in your income and deductions, and the app will generate a summary and the estimate. It's free for iPhone and Android devices.

The **MyTaxRefund** is a free app from TurboTax for iPhone, iPad, or Android smartphone, and it provides any taxpayer who has e-filed a way to check on the status of his or her federal return. MyTaxRefund will let you know if your return has been accepted by the IRS, and it also uses information from the Service to estimate when your refund will be available.

**IRS2Go** is from the IRS mothership itself. Although it has drawn some criticism for its clunkiness, it has the advantage of being very close to the primary sources. The app offers the latest IRS news and will let you get your tax record, your refund status, automatic tax updates and daily tips, and even videos through your iPhone or Android smartphone.

**H&R Block Central** will provide answers to tax questions, estimate your taxes, and get product information and news. You can use the app to find an H&R Block office, and you can use it to schedule an appointment.

The **Bloomberg BNA Quick Tax Reference** app has page after page of tax information for 2011-2013, including standard mileage rates, corporate tax rate schedule, individual rate schedule, standard deductions and personal exemptions, capital gains and dividends taxed as net capital gain, tax rates for estates, gift taxes, ERISA, tax code pension, retirement plan limits, and more.

Need help with foreign taxes? There are tax calculator apps for the Philippines, Pakistan, Malaysia, Nepal, Spain, China, Cyprus, and so on. Search "calculators free," and you'll get 17,067 results.

Just a few words about buying apps: Whether you're in the Apple App Store or Google's Play Store, you'll be look-



ing at more than half a million offerings on the shelves, so it's worth taking advice from either site. It's a crude indicator, but the number of times the app has been downloaded can be useful, and be sure to look at the ratings (by number of stars) and the comments. You might think that at the prices apps are sold, you can hardly go wrong trying one or several within the limits of what you need. That might be true if the time it takes you to try out a list of similar apps was only worth \$0.99 or nothing. With 700,000+ choices in either store, you might want to limit the selection up front.

If you find the search function at the store lacking, try stepping outside and Googling "the best (list the app type) app for (list the platform, iPhone or Android)." Read some of the descriptions, reviews, and suggestions, and then go back to the store.

One final footnote: If you prefer working with numbers by writing your calculations on paper, and you have a stylus for your phone or tablet, check out the MyScript Calculator. It's really clever. Cross-outs erase your mistakes, and your scribbles get turned into typed numbers and functions. It does algebraic calculations as well as basic math functions and gives new meaning to back-of-the-envelope calculations. It's available for iOS and Android, and it's free. **SF**