

The Many Types of Mobile Devices

Once upon a time, there were mobile phones and PDAs. A mobile phone was just that: a handheld telephone you could take with you. The good ones had nice features such as a call log, an address book, and perhaps a crude game, but not much else. PDAs — *Personal Digital Assistants* — were little handheld computers designed to replace the old-fashioned Day-Timer books people used to carry around with them to keep track of their appointment calendars and address books.

All that changed when cellular providers began adding data capabilities to their networks. Now cellphones can have complete mobile Internet access. This fact has resulted in the addition of sophisticated PDA features to mobile phones and phone features to PDAs so that the distinctions are blurred.

A *mobile device* can be any one of a wide assortment of devices that you can hold in one hand and that are connected through a wireless network. The term *handheld* is a similar generic name for such devices. The following list describes some of the most common specifics of mobile devices:

- » **Mobile phone:** Primary purpose is to enable phone service. Most mobile phones also include text messaging, address books, appointment calendars, and games; they may also provide Internet access.
- » **Smartphone:** A smartphone is a cellphone that also functions as a handheld computer. Smartphones feature touchscreens instead of physical buttons or keys to press. Besides the features ordinarily found on a mobile phone, smartphones also offer email, calendar, contacts, task lists, and web access, as well as apps that can be purchased and installed on the phone.
- » **Android:** Android is an open-source operating system (OS) for smartphones, developed by Google. Android is far and away the most popular platform for smartphones, being used on more than 80 percent of the smartphones sold since 2015.
- » **iOS:** iOS is the OS used on Apple's popular iPhone and iPad mobile devices. Although outnumbered by Android devices, many people consider iOS devices to be more innovative than Android devices. The main thing that holds iOS back in market share is cost: Apple devices are considerably more expensive than their Android equivalents.
- » **BlackBerry:** BlackBerry was once the king of the smartphone game. For many years, BlackBerry had a virtual monopoly on the mobile devices market because it was the first mobile device that could synchronize well with Microsoft Exchange. Now that Android and Apple devices do that just