

DEFINITION

mobile device

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A mobile device is essentially a handheld computer. Although the category of mobile device might seem to include any electronic device small enough to be carried around, the term implies [wireless](#) communications and the capacity for [general computing](#).

Currently, the most common examples of mobile devices are [tablets](#), [smartphones](#) and e-readers. Within the enterprise and in the context of mobile device management ([MDM](#)), [laptops](#) are also included in the category because they are portable, employees use them in similar out-of-office locations, and they involve similar oversight and security requirements to those of smaller devices. Outside of this context, however, the category of mobile device is generally confined to smaller [form factor](#) devices.

The first mobile device, in this sense, was the personal digital assistant ([PDA](#)). Popular in the 1990s and early 2000s, PDAs are considered the precursors to smartphones. However, because they could not make phone calls, they were more like a very small tablet. Most PDAs had a physical keyboard and limited software. Some had an electronically sensitive pad for written input.

The size of a mobile device necessarily involves compromise between the functionality of a larger interface and the ease of carrying a smaller device. The Phablet was designed larger than a smartphone for ease of input but smaller than most tablets, to fit in pockets and purses. The devices also include the phone function ordinarily lacking in tablets.