

## Gymnastics Judging Choices on the iPad

By Jeri Foley, 2014

It can be a little intimidating to judge a gymnastics meet using the iPad or any other tablet device. The first question is which device do I choose? The factors could include cost, ease of use, do they have the ability to download the applications I need to use, and training—who has the best option for training?

There are many comparisons to look at online. The Apple iPad air takes the number one spot with a first ever five star rating from Techradar: *"It's not just Apple's best tablet, it's the only tablet you should be considering if you're keen on a larger screen."* While the Xperia Tablet Z is a brilliant tablet, the Air just takes things to the next level. *If you want the best tablet on the market then look no further. The iPad Air has reclaimed top spot for Apple.*

The iPad mini takes the number 2 spot. The mini may be a little small to judge on for some and it is a little higher in price than the Air.

PCMag.com has a great tablet comparison and has done some testing as well.

Once you make your choice of which tablet to buy, you will want to decide what specifications you need. I recommend 32 to 64 gigabytes of memory of course if you are going to take videos or do more than judge, you may want to consider 128 gigabytes. Most prices are quoted using 16 gigabytes and the price goes up \$100 each time you double the memory. The maximum battery run time is stated as 10 hours for the iPad air; tests indicate the battery actually lasts about 7 hours. This means you will have to charge your iPad during the breaks, or get a battery extender. Some other options may include a camera (still and video), warranty, wireless and Bluetooth availability. You also may want to opt for a data plan, that is a monthly charge.

For the rest of this article, I will be referencing the iPad. I have found the iPad to be easy to learn and use for judging and other activities. My 82-year-old mother and 91-year-old father both have iPads and are thinking about upgrading to the next generation. Yes, I do have to assist them once in a while, but they can send and receive e-mails, type documents and add pictures.

When I started judging on my iPad a few years ago, I spent a little while researching applications. I then had to decide what kind of stylus to use. I am going to share that information with you.

The first application I got was I Annotate. It is an excellent tool for downloading pdf files such as the rules and policies, technical minutes, judging sheets and some of the cheat sheets. You can mark them up, write on them, bookmark them and reference them easily. I find the library easy to manage. Branchfire's I Annotate costs 9.99 and has been through several iterations. However, if you are going to annotate your pdf and send the annotation to another application to work on, iannotate tends to lump words together, which were not lumped together in the original text. There is another application called GoodReader4, which will allow you to move annotations from one place to another with ease and without losing the format. GoodReader4 costs 6.99. Both applications can be purchased through iTunes.

For the actual judging, I tried several applications. I went into a gym and judged gymnasts at practice using the various applications to test them and to get comfortable judging on the iPad. The various applications I tried are:

Notability (4.99)- Notability has virtually every feature available in other notetaking apps (aside from text conversion) and they are virtually all implemented in a highly intuitive, user-friendly manner: pencil, highlighter, a palm rest that works, a zoom mode that advances the text as you type, a typing mode with extra keys on the keyboard and the ability to type in the body of the note, a voice recording function that syncs recordings to the text typed at the same time, import your judging sheets and autosync to Dropbox, any WebDAV server, or iDisk, an outline format, the option to turn and use any page in a notebook in Landscape or Portrait mode, pdf annotation, a left handed writing mode, and even the elimination of the need to turn the page by automatically adding a new page at the bottom of the last one. Your judging sheets can be added for use. My husband used this app to perform audits with his templates. The one hiccup is that it hasn't been updated for the new iPad yet, but the developers have announced that an update is imminent.

Evernote (Free)- The app has everything you need, from being able to organize information from notebooks to sharing them with others or uploading to your Mac or PC. iPad users can also record voice and audio notes, and sync all files. Evernote has native apps for most mobile and desktop platforms, so it can follow you wherever you go. It not only supports standard, typed notes but checklists, audio, and picture notes. You can organize your notes into notebooks and have tagging support. It is easy to add your judging sheets and to use them. You can upload up to 60MB worth of notes a month for free, and that can include plain text, check lists, media attachments, and more. Premium accounts are available for a monthly or yearly subscription fee.

Ghostwriter (Free)- Ghostwriter was recently updated to support the new iPad. Although writing in Ghostwriter is fluid and responsive, the app is too structured and does not allow users to customize it to fit their needs. For example, the pencil tool can only be used in the full screen mode, and the ink tool can only be used in the zoomed writing mode. You can add in your own judging sheets as a picture and use them to write on. If Ghostwriter allowed a bit more tweaking, its many features (e.g., Dropbox and Evernote linking, table of contents in documents) might move it to the top for me.

Penultimate (Free)- Penultimate is a pure handwriting app. It links with Dropbox and Evernote and has multiple paper styles, line thickness, and color options. The writing engine is smooth, but the palm recognition is only adequate. However, Penultimate doesn't have the options to enter text via a keyboard or handwrite in a zoomed entry box. Adding your own judging sheets is difficult.

One of the things I would like to see is a better search feature inside the application. However, it is easy to get back to a previous routine (gymnast) quickly once you get familiar with your application of choice. There are other applications available; it just comes down to personal preference.

The next step is to purchase the right stylus. This may be a little more difficult than you think. I have tried three styli, but there are more. So, here are some tips about the three I have used:

Wacom Bamboo (\$30)- The shaft of the Bamboo is a touch wider than a Bic pen, but it's also about an inch or so shorter than a Bic. The Bamboo is light enough to toss in a pocket (or bag), but heavy enough to feel substantial. The tip of the Bamboo, which is smaller in diameter than its peers, is the best feature here. The Bamboo's smaller tip is removable, in case you need to replace it, and you will (this is my favorite feature, buy a package of nibs when you order the stylus). It's precise and more importantly the most predictable stylus.

AmazonBasics (\$10)- Amazon's stylus is actually pretty decent. It doesn't have nice details like the sense of weightiness, soft-touch grip, length, and pocket clip. It has a little longer rubber tip, which means you can hold the pen at a slighter angle while using it. Yet, this stylus' tip is not as firm as the one on the Wacom. This means it's less accurate when making precise marks on the screen.

Adonit Jot Pro (\$30)- this looks like a finely crafted industrial tool an architect might use. It's made out of aluminum and steel — one end is a tip attached to a plastic disc that glides across the surface of your iPad. The other end has a screw-off cap that covers the stylus' fragile tip when you're not writing or sketching. A couple other nice features include a rubber grip and magnetic insides that stick the stylus to the top of your iPad so it doesn't roll off the table. The magnetic cling bit is gimmicky, but it works.

The Jot Pro is about writing and drawing precisely. The transparent tip of the Jot Pro (which is replaceable if you break it) enables you to see down to the exact point where the stylus hits the screen — something no other stylus can boast — and also lets you hold the stylus at the angle you're accustomed to. Holding the stylus upright worked almost flawlessly, but holding it at an angle proved to impact where the stylus actually contacted the screen. It is precise but skews whichever direction the stylus is leaning in. The Bamboo is less precise, but is on average more even no matter which way you hold it. Still, the Adonit is unparalleled when it comes to making a mark exactly where you want to while drawing or writing.

The Jot Pro isn't for tapping around and using other apps like you might while using another stylus. In fact, the Jot Pro makes an audible tap on the screen whenever you press it down to the screen to write. It sounds almost like if you were to tap your fingernail on the iPad's screen. The Adonit is a quality piece of hardware that's tough to beat. NOTE: the Adonit forums complained about "skipping" — Adonit products not maintaining contact with their replaceable discs after a few days/weeks of use. Apparently, a new disc and/or "one small squirt in the swivel joint" of conductive grease from RadioShack fixes the problem.

Now you have information about your tablet choices, information about pdf storage, information about possible applications and information about stylus choices. The last thing to do is to go out and judge some practice meets to get more comfortable. Even though I have been doing this for a while, I still have a pen and notepad next to me (just in case).

Remember, the local Apple store has training classes available. There are tutorials on-line and your fellow judges can help.

Get started and have fun!