

New iPad cellular models have Apple SIM flexibility

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Cellular-enabled iPad models are under a new paradigm, said AppleInsider, regarding the Apple SIM. Apple's newest iPad models with cellular connectivity use a SIM card which tech sites said could eventually spell changes in the carrier business and in pricing for customers.

The Apple SIM is a card that allows the cellular models to switch between multiple mobile carriers without having to change the actual

card; in other words, users get to choose among several short-term wireless plans from UK and U.S. carriers, thanks to Apple's SIM card. That's the key point that had many tech sites buzzing by the end of the week: Unlike today's SIM cards, it is not locked to a single carrier. "You will be able to use a setting in iOS to quickly switch from carrier to carrier right on the iPad, if you are using a pay-as-you-go plan, rather than swapping out the card for each [switch](#) as you usually would," explained Rachel Metz, senior editor, mobile, in MIT Technology Review. Carrier choices are AT&T, T-Mobile, and Sprint in the U.S. and EE in the UK. TechCrunch said that "So far, those are the only carriers who have signed on, but Apple is likely hoping more follow suit once they see customers [appreciate](#) a choice in short-term data providers."

Considering the reason why some users will switch raises the question of how switching will affect carrier pricing. After all, one can choose among carriers based on the price being offered for the data needed without having to swap out the card. Commented AppleInsider: "Users have always been able to insert a new SIM into their iPad when moving around, but the process is tedious and the ability to start-and-stop data service from the tablet's settings menu is lost. The Apple SIM should [rectify](#) that for users traveling to countries with participating carrier partners." The potential impact on pricing becomes clear. "If you see that a carrier that's supported by your Apple SIM is having a sale on a short-term data plan, you might switch to that carrier for a bit. Then, when another carrier has a good deal, you might move over to them, and so on. That could force wireless providers to be more competitive," said Metz.

Things could get even more interesting, she said, if the Apple SIM is eventually added to the iPhone and perhaps flexible SIMs appear for other smartphones as well. Such events could make prices more affordable for people all over the world to communicate.

The debut of this new iPad capability was largely welcomed in the tech news sites as good news but a number of tech watchers found it odd that the feature was "quietly" added and not trumpeted among the comments when the new iPads were introduced. Nonetheless, they did not voice complaints over the Apple SIM. "Simplifying the product line instead of shipping carrier-specific versions of iPhones and iPads seems like the right move for Apple to make; let's hope [carriers](#) continue to climb on board," said Andrew Cunningham, senior products specialist, Ars Technica.

"Starting with a more flexible version of the existing hardware SIM that works only with data-limited devices like the iPad is a [good](#) way for Apple to get its feet wet with similar ambitions," said Darrell Etherington of TechCrunch.

Apple said on its page about the iPad Air 2: "One SIM. Many options." The Apple SIM provides flexibility, said the company, to choose from a variety of short-term plans from select carriers in the U.S. and UK, so you can choose the plan that works best for you with no long-term commitments. "And when you travel, you may also be able to choose a data plan from a local carrier for the duration of your trip."

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