

Asus Eee PC 901 notebook

A worthy refresh of the 900?

by Stephen Patrick published on 17 June 2008

When Asus launched its Eee PC 900 back in May it was seen as a logical upgrade to the original 701 as it offered more memory, a larger screen and better webcam. Little did we know it would be superseded so soon by the Eee PC 901. So what are the differences?

The chassis has been given a slight overhaul, as the plastic is now glossy instead of matt and the design has a more rounded feel to it. It still feels as robust but the body now has a chunkier look to it.

However, the most obvious change is the switch to Intel's Atom N270 CPU. This chip runs at 1.6GHz but has been designed specifically for low-cost devices like the Eee PC. While it doesn't offer more in the way of performance over the Celeron M used in the 900, it uses less power overall, so battery life is better and the machine runs noticeably cooler for longer.

The remainder of the specification stays the same. So, you'll find 1024MB of memory fitted and depending on the OS option you'll find 12GB of SSD in the Windows XP version and 20GB in the Linux edition.

Our review unit was loaded with Linux and while the basic interface is still the same - six tabs that break down your applications into Internet, Work, Learn, Play as well as Settings and Favourites - but you'll now find extra features. The most versatile of which is YOSore, which offers up to 20GB of online backup space for free.

Asus made a mistake with the 900 by including a lower capacity battery but that has quickly been rectified here by the inclusion of a 6-cell battery pack that offered a battery life well in excess of 5 hours.

The downside to this is that the Eee PC 901 now



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weighs 1.2kg and while it's still light and portable it's starting to suffer from weight creep. To fit this larger battery pack the rear of the machine has been redesigned, so the 8.9-inch screen now sits a little higher and there is exposed plastic either side of the battery that may get caught if you're not careful.

We loved the 900 and in many respects this opinion is the same for the 901 but with so many similar machines now on offer Asus needs to work that little more to impress, which is why we're disappointed it hasn't overhauled the keyboard, which remains the same as we saw on the 900.

It is smaller than those seen on rival machines and to many is the weak-link in an otherwise great machine. True, it's not the greatest keyboard but once you're accustomed to it, it's highly usable. The touchpad is the same and still uses the intuitive zoom technology and Asus has added individual mouse buttons instead of the single strip, so usability is improved.

VERDICT

It's hard to get truly excited about the Asus Eee PC 901 as it's not so much a re-invention of the 900 but what should have been released in the first place. The improved battery life is tempered by the heavier weight and while the Asus Eee PC may no longer be as novel as we once thought, this is still a great machine.

At a glance

What is it?

Mini-notebook

Good

Better battery, uses Atom CPU, new trackpad and mouse buttons

Bad

Heavier, same keyboard as 900

Verdict

The Atom-powered mini-notebook is heavier than previously but now offers a better battery life and the same high-level of usability

Price £319

Our score

8/10

Your score

?/10