Purchasing your first iPad should be a fun and exciting experience for you. Compared to buying a full-fledged desktop or laptop computer, there aren’t as many options to complicate matters. The price tag on an iPad isn’t as daunting as that for an Apple MacBook Pro, so the impact to your wallet won’t be outrageous even if you don’t happen to make the perfect choice. In this chapter, you’ll discover what decisions you should make before either heading to your local Apple retail outlet or ordering an iPad online. You’ll learn what you need in addition to an iPad, what you can do if you’re not pleased with your purchase or get a faulty unit, and how to get your iPad ready for everyday use. Here are all the basic facts you need to select, buy, and set up your iPad.

Picking Your iPad

Especially at this early stage of the life cycle of the iPad, you have a relatively easy decision to make regarding which model of the device to purchase. There are never that many iPad models available at any particular time, since Apple does a good job of keeping its product lines small and up-to-date. The big questions you’ll have to ask yourself are whether you need 3G wireless capabilities and how much storage you want in your iPad. Let’s look into these two questions in more detail.

Wi-Fi or Wi-Fi + 3G?

The iPad is an Internet-connected device. Sure, it can work as an electronic book reader or a gaming device without an Internet connection, but an iPad without Internet is like a Porsche with a flat tire. Apple gives you two choices: Wi-Fi (wireless network connectivity) models and Wi-Fi + 3G (wireless network plus 3G mobile data connectivity) models. If you ever want an Internet connection away from a Wi-Fi hotspot, you’ll need to buy the Wi-Fi + 3G version of the iPad, because you cannot add the functionality to an iPad later.

The Wi-Fi + 3G models are slightly more expensive than the models with Wi-Fi only, to the tune of US$130 more than their Wi-Fi counterparts. What you’re paying for is built-in 3G circuitry, a Global Positioning Satellite (GPS) receiver, and an antenna, which is a
fancy way of saying that your iPad (with an optional subscription to a data plan with your local wireless carrier) can surf the Web, send and receive e-mail, and connect to the iBookstore from any location with 3G wireless service. Do you need 3G capabilities? Here are some questions you need to ask yourself:

- **Will you be using your iPad in places where there are no Wi-Fi hotspots?** If you plan on using your iPad around your Wi-Fi equipped home and office and if most of the locations that you visit (stores, libraries, coffee shops, airports, and hotels) provide free Wi-Fi, then you might not need the Wi-Fi + 3G model. However, if you often find yourself in need of an Internet connection when you’re in your car, on a soccer field, or at some other location without Wi-Fi, then the Wi-Fi + 3G iPad may be the correct choice for you.

- **Do you have another way to connect to a 3G network?** You may already have a different method of accessing a wide-area wireless network. If you have a 3G router such as the Sierra Wireless Overdrive 3G/4G or Novatel MiFi for use with a laptop, then you can use it and your existing wireless data plan to connect to the Internet.

- **Are you willing to pay extra for both your iPad and the 3G data plan?** To begin with, a Wi-Fi + 3G iPad costs $130 more than the corresponding model without 3G. That’s not the only additional cost you’ll incur, since your wireless carrier is going to charge you for a data plan. In the United States, AT&T provides 3G data service without a contract for $14.99 per month for 250MB of data, or $29.99 monthly for unlimited data. International carriers offer similar plans, so check with your carrier for details about the cost and capacity of data plans in your country.

- **Do you need to use apps that are aware of the location of the iPad?** The Wi-Fi iPad has the ability to determine its location through something called the Wi-Fi Positioning System. This service, provided in North America by Skyhook Wireless, uses the known location of Wi-Fi access points to approximate the location of an iPad. Although this can provide location data to within 20 to 30 meters in crowded population centers in the United States and Canada, it doesn’t work at all when the iPad is away from Wi-Fi. The Wi-Fi + 3G iPad contains a full Assisted GPS (A-GPS) receiver for pinpointing the location of the device using the GPS system. As a result, location can be determined almost anywhere on the planet provided that the Wi-Fi + 3G iPad can “see” the sky.

**How Much Storage?**

Once you’ve decided whether to purchase the Wi-Fi or Wi-Fi + 3G iPad, your next thought should be about the quantity of built-in storage you want in your iPad. Although the amount of working memory, or RAM, in the iPad is identical across the different models, the flash drives used for storing applications and data come in three different