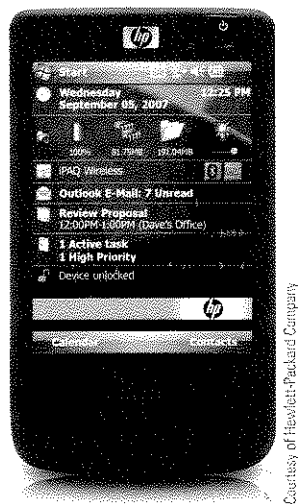- **Why should I consider a tablet computer?** A tablet computer is a portable computer that features a touch-sensitive screen. You can use this screen as a writing or a drawing pad. A tablet computer is similar in size to a notebook computer. The new mobile tablet computer is similar in size to a netbook computer. Most tablet computers can access the Internet or wireless networks. Most tablet computers are also configured to accept voice input. These capabilities are useful for people who use their computers while on the go.

- **What is a netbook?** A netbook computer offers more portability than a standard notebook computer. These small computers are scaled-down versions of standard clamshell-style notebook computers. They are typically only seven or eight inches wide and weigh about two pounds.

- **What if I just need a small portable computer that fits in my pocket?** Then, a handheld computer is just the answer. See Figure A-7. A handheld computer is one type of handheld digital device. There are a variety of hand-held digital devices. These devices vary in how they can be used. Although these devices can be classified as computers, they are usually referred to by function, for example, as mobile phones, e-readers, or portable media players. The most popular handheld digital device is the smartphone.

FIGURE A-7: Handheld computer

Handheld digital devices usually have features such as removable storage, email, Web access, voice communications, built-in camera, and GPS. Handheld digital devices run computer programs, but, typically, they run special scaled-down versions of these programs. With its slow processing speed and small screen, a handheld computer is not powerful enough to handle many of the tasks that can be accomplished using desktop, notebook, tablet, or even netbook computers.

- **What are some other categories of computers I should know about?** There are three more general categories of computers you might hear people talk about.
  - **Workstations** are usually powerful desktop computers designed for specialized tasks that require a lot of processing speed, such as medical imaging, full-motion video graphics, and computer-aided design. Most are designed for creating and displaying three-dimensional and animated graphics.
  - A **mainframe computer** is a large and expensive computer capable of simultaneously processing data for hundreds or thousands of users. Mainframes are generally used by businesses, universities, or governments to provide centralized storage, processing, and management of large amounts of data where reliability, data security, and centralized control are necessary.
  - A computer is categorized as a **supercomputer** if, at the time it is built, it is one of the fastest computers in the world. Supercomputers can tackle tasks that would not be practical for other computers such as breaking codes and modeling worldwide weather systems.

- **What does it mean when I hear, "The server is down?" Is a server another type of computer?** The purpose of a **server** is to serve computers on a network (such as the Internet or a home network) by supplying them with data. Just about any personal computer, workstation, mainframe, or supercomputer can be configured to perform the work of a server. When you hear that a server is down, it means a computer connected to that server can't access the programs and files on that server.

Video game consoles

A videogame console, such as Nintendo's Wii, Nintendo's 3DS, Sony's PlayStation, or Microsoft's Xbox, is not generally referred to as a personal computer. Videogame consoles originated as simple digital devices that connected to a TV set and provided only a pair of joysticks for input. Today's video-game consoles contain processors that are equivalent to any processor found in a fast personal computer. They produce graphics, including 3D graphics, that rival those on sophisticated workstations. Many consoles include built-in Wi-Fi for easy connection to the Internet. Consoles can be used to watch movies, send and receive email, and participate in online activities such as multiplayer games. Despite these features, videogame consoles are not considered a replacement for a personal computer.