

Wacom *Bamboo Fun* Pen & Touch Tablet

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When Wacom asked if I'd be interested in trying their newest product, a tablet that incorporates touch *and* the use of a pen/stylus, I was *very* excited. As a long-time user of the Wacom tablets, the idea of controlling my computer with my fingers was very appealing.

When my *Bamboo Fun* model arrived, I found it was a great addition to the line. During the day I leave and return to the computer countless times. I don't use a screen saver, my screen goes blank after a period of inactivity. Using the *Bamboo*, I can just touch a finger to the tablet's surface to wake it instead of first picking up the pen and then clicking on the tablet.

Say I want to see if I have new mail. I touch the tablet near the bottom edge of its active area and the cursor appears at the bottom of my monitor. My TaskBar launches and I can see if there's a flashing envelope or not. If so, using my finger I tap twice on the icon to check my mail.

Almost anything I can do with its accompanying pen can be done with my fingers. Except Erase. Turning the pen upside down to use its "top" activates the Erase function (like using the eraser at the top of a pencil) in that program. In *Word*, for instance, text selected with that end is deleted when the pen lifts from the tablet's surface. There's no equivalent for that feature with your fingers (yet).

The *Bamboo* has five different models (which you can review [here](#)). They come in different sizes, each with its own special features. Not all offer both pen and touch, so you can choose to work with either or both!

"Gestures" are supported by four of the *Bamboo* models. These are simple finger taps and hand gestures that allow you to Navigate, Click, Double-Click, Right-Click, go Forward/Back, Scroll, Select & Drag, Rotate and Zoom.

You "pinch" two fingers together to Zoom in. To Zoom out, push those two fingers apart. Need to double-click? Tap twice quickly in the same spot.

In programs that support the feature, rotating your work area (canvas, in painting programs) is done by "spinning" two fingers. Or so the manual says. I wasn't able to get that to work, but in all fairness my fingernail length may be the culprit.

You can map key actions to the buttons at one side of the tablet. The other side has a fabric sleeve for the stylus. I say "one side" and "the other side" because there's no "Right" or "Left" to the tablet. You establish that during installation, by turning it to place the buttons under the non-dominant hand. I'm right-handed so I use the tablet with the buttons on the left side. My right hand controls the pen, the left hand works the buttons.



By default the buttons are set to modifier keys – Shift, Control, Alt/Option, the spacebar, but you can define them any way you wish. You can define the buttons to work one way in one program, and then to call completely different functions in a different program. All you have to do is switch programs; the functions switch automatically.

(The clean silver-grey and white color(less) scheme whispered "Apple" to me, but I didn't notice any lack of functionality using it with a PC.)

I think this is a marvelous way for most people to learn about tablets. Many of us are quite used to touchpads on laptops, not to mention touchscreens in kiosks, etc. Reaching out is a natural response and the larger surface is both welcoming and functional.

For myself, I return to the pen when working in a drawing or illustration program. Partly because that's what I'm used to, but also because I feel the stylus' tip offers more control than my fingertip. When I introduced it to my 9-year-old grandson, however, he never once touched the pen even when working in several graphic programs. *Viva le difference!*

About: Wacom *Bamboo Fun* Pen & Touch Tablet

Manufacturer: Wacom
<http://www.wacom.com/bamboo/>

Price: \$69-\$199, depending on model