


TOP 10 PERSONAL DIGITAL ASSISTANTS

Details	Last month's position	First reviewed	Price (ex VAT)	Warranty	Dimensions (width x depth x height)	Weight	Operating system	Processor	RAM	Screen size (pixels)	Battery type	Claimed battery life	Word processor	Handwriting recognition	Spreadsheet	Diary	To-do list	Contact manager	Calculator	Email	Web browser	PC connection	
1 Toshiba Pocket PC e570 01932 828 828 www.toshiba.co.uk	NEW	Jan 02	£399	2-year	76x124x18mm	180g	Pocket PC 2002	206MHz/Intel StrongARM	64MB	240x320 colour	lithium-polymer	8 hours	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	USB
2 Palm m505 020 7365 9820 www.palm.com/europe	1	Aug 01	£339	1-year	79x114x10mm	128g	Palm OS 4.0	33MHz/Dragonball VZ	8MB	160x160 colour	lithium-polymer	up to 4 weeks	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	USB
3 Palm m125 020 7365 9820 www.microanvika.co.uk	NEW	Jan 02	£170	1-year	78x122x22mm	151g	Palm OS 4.0	33MHz Dragonball VZ	8MB	160x160 colour	AAA	6 weeks	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	USB
4 Handspring Visor Pro 020 7309 0134 www.handspring.co.uk	2	Dec 01	£229	2-year	76x112x18mm	161g	Palm OS 3.5.2H3	33MHz Dragonball VZ	16MB	160x160 mono	lithium-ion	2 months	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	USB
5 Palm m500 020 7365 9820 www.palm.com/europe	3	Aug 01	£272	1-year	79x114x10mm	113g	Palm OS 4.0	33MHz Dragonball VZ	8MB	160x160 colour	lithium-polymer	up to 4 weeks	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	USB
6 NEC PocketGear 0870 010 6326 www.nec-online.co.uk	NEW	Jan 02	£382	1-year	76x125x20mm	280g	Pocket PC 2002	206MHz/Intel StrongARM	32MB	240x320 colour	lithium-ion	14 hours	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	USB
7 Sony Clie N770 0870 511 1999 www.sony.com	NEW	Jan 02	£340	1-year	71x119x17mm	160g	Palm OS 4.1	33MHz Dragonball VZ	8MB	320x320 colour	lithium-ion	7.5 hours	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	USB
8 HP Jornada 568 0870 547 4747 www.hp.com	NEW	Jan 02	£467	1-year	77x132x17mm	173g	Pocket PC 2002	206MHz/Intel StrongARM	64MB	240x320 colour	lithium-polymer	14 hours	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	USB
9 Handspring Visor Neo 020 7309 0134 www.handspring.co.uk	4	Dec 01	£144	2-year	76x112x18mm	153g	Palm OS 3.5.2H3	33MHz Dragonball VZ	8MB	160x160 colour	AAA	2 months	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	USB
10 Handspring Visor Deluxe 020 7309 0134 www.handspring.co.uk	5	Sept 00	£128	2-year	76x122x18mm	153g	Palm OS 3.1H	16MHz Motorola	8MB	160x160 mono	AAA	2 months	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	USB

1 Toshiba Pocket PC e570

When the Pocket PC operating system was launched in early 2000, new devices were announced by the usual suspects. The launch of Pocket PC 2002, however, has seen products not just from the traditional manufacturers, but from new entrants to the PDA (personal digital assistant) market as well – with varying degrees of success.

Although Toshiba may seem late to market its PDA (compared to the likes of HP, Compaq and Casio) its decision to wait seems to have paid off. The Toshiba e570's excellent hardware setup, combined with the new features of Pocket PC 2002, produce a PDA that can do every task you could reasonably ask of it – and a few on top of that.

Starting with the software side of things, the Pocket PC 2002 OS offers a number of refinements over its predecessor. Quite why it's named 2002, when all other 2002 products are being called XP, however, remains a mystery to all but the Microsoft product naming department. First up, Graffiti fans will be pleased to know that Palm's handwriting recognition system now offers a similar input method, in addition to cursive handwriting recognition.

Pocket Outlook and Word have been updated, one of the most noticeable additions being that of an integrated spellchecker. The interface has been given a visual overhaul and the operating



system is now upgradeable, so patches and enhancements can be applied simply and easily. Although Pocket PC 2002 is not as groundbreaking as Pocket PC, the enhancements within this new OS are all welcome.

Moving on to the hardware, in terms of looks the Toshiba e570 certainly won't disappoint. The silver finish and sleek lines are impressive, and if the blue side strips don't take your fancy then they can be replaced to suit.

Internally, you couldn't ask for more – there's a 206MHz Intel StrongARM processor, a massive 64MB of RAM and a 240x320 16bit colour screen. If 64MB proves too little memory, then expansion shouldn't be a problem with two storage formats available – SD (secure digital) and CFII (CompactFlash II).

The CFII slot will happily take IBM's expansive Microdrive (offering up to 1GB of storage) and, although there's no eject mechanism, it is possible to get the drive out again afterwards. To cater for future connectivity, Toshiba has an SD Bluetooth card in the pipeline, leaving the CFII slot free for expansion.

The Toshiba e570 is an impressive package. The icing on the cake, however, is the price tag of £399. This may sound expensive, but if you compare it to the competition it's reasonable. If you've got the money to spend, and you want the most capable PDA on the market, then the e570 is the one to go for.

2 Palm m505

Palm's stylish m505 has finally given way to a new entry this month, after an impressive five months at the top of the chart. Almost identical to the m500 sitting in fifth place, the inclusion of a colour screen gives it an edge over its monochrome sibling.

Palm may have invented the keyboard-free PDA (personal digital assistant), but that's simply not enough to stay ahead in this highly competitive market. With the m505, though, Palm finally addressed two of the platform's major deficiencies – slow synchronisation and lack of expansion. It now communicates via USB, providing faster data transfer and simpler connectivity. On the expansion front there's an SD/MMC (secure digital/multimedia card) slot, so you can add extra storage should your built-in memory fill up.

A colour display may seem unnecessary on a PDA, but advancements in both screen and battery technology now make it a realistic proposition. Once you've seen the m505's display, you'd be hard pushed to go back to a boring old black-and-white one. Fortunately, it also hardly adds to the bulk of the unit.

The colour screen complements the impressive software bundle, which includes the latest Palm operating system, version



4.0, plus a preinstalled copy of the Mobile Internet Kit, MGI PhotoSuite Mobile Edition and DataViz's Documents to Go. All of this is packed into a unit that is just 1cm thick and tips the scales at a mere 128g. Overall, then, the Palm m505 sets the standard for the other Palm OS-based handhelds to beat, and is a worthy winner of our Recommended award.

3 Palm m125

While the m505 represents the top of the Palm range, the m125 slides neatly in the middle between the m500 and the m105. If you like the USB connectivity and the SD (secure digital) expansion capabilities of the m500, but weren't looking to spend quite so much, then the Palm m125 is the answer.

This Recommended PDA (personal digital assistant) retains the design of the m100 and m105, although the protective screen cover is now flexible, creating a better fit when closed. The changeable faceplates sported by its siblings are available, too, so if the standard metallic blue doesn't suit it's easily rectified.

The hardware is nothing new, offering the same 33MHz Dragonball VZ processor and 8MB of RAM as the m500 and m505. The operating system has been upgraded to version 4.0, which



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adds extras such as direct dialling from the phone book and better alarm management, plus support for hardware features such as USB connectivity. You'll find all the standard Palm applications onboard, plus new additions like MGI PhotoSuite Mobile Edition, DataViz Documents To Go and Palm Mobile Connectivity suite.

The m125's main selling point, though, is its price. At £170 this PDA is targeted at the undecided user who's torn by the lack of upgradability on the m105 and higher price tag of the m500. If you're mainly after a device to organise your meetings and file your contacts, but want the speed and convenience of USB synchronisation and some future upgradability, then the Palm m125 fits the bill perfectly.

4 Handspring Visor Pro

The Visor Pro slots into the Handspring range alongside the Visor Edge and beneath the colour Visor Prism. It comes with 16MB of memory – twice the amount found on any of the other Palm OS palmtops currently available. How useful this is rather depends on what you do with your palmtop. For those who simply use it to manage contacts, calendar and to-do lists it's overkill. However, if you store images, games, web content and demanding applications then this extra memory will prove invaluable.

You might think that this large storage capacity would come at a high price, but Visor is sticking to what first made it popular and offers excellent value for money. The Visor Pro costs just £229, around £40 cheaper than the Palm m500 with its 8MB of memory.

The rest of the Visor Pro's hardware line-up is pretty similar to what's already on offer from the Visor Edge – it features a 33MHz DragonBall VZ processor, rechargeable lithium-ion battery, USB synchronisation cradle, 4bit backlit greyscale screen

and a Springboard slot. However, the Visor Pro is significantly bulkier at 1.8cm thick and weighing 161g.

The Handspring Visor Pro's finish is a combination of a similar silver to the Visor Platinum and a clear smoke plastic cover. This looks stylish, but both the Pro and the ninth-placed Neo suffer from the same problem – fingerprints. Within moments of taking them out of the box their shiny cases were covered in smears, which detracts from their good looks.

5 Palm m500

There's little to choose between the Palm m500 and the m505, but the latter's colour screen makes a world of difference. However, the m500 is still a neat package with plenty of features.

As far as the basic hardware is concerned it boasts much the same configuration as the competition, offering a 33MHz Motorola VZ processor twinned with 8MB of RAM.

The first change you'll notice from the Palm Vx is the new 'arctic mist' silvery-blue livery, and the slightly curvier design. As Palm products have never lagged behind in the looks stakes, though, users really wanted to see improvements with the technology. As with the m505, the m500 offers USB connectivity and SD/MMC (secure digital/multimedia card) upgradability.

The high-contrast mono screen does justice to the impressive software bundle, which includes the latest Palm operating system, version 4.0. All of this is packed into a unit that is just 1cm thick and weighs a sylph-like 99g.

6 NEC PocketGear

NEC is another new entrant to the palmtop market, spurred on by the release of Pocket PC 2002. The PocketGear is presented



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in matt metallic silver. It's not an ugly PDA (personal digital assistant), but it does seem to lack the style of some of the other devices in the chart.

The specifications are good, with a 206MHz Intel StrongARM processor and 32MB of RAM. The screen stretches to 240x320 with 16bit colour, although to get the best out of it requires a stronger backlight as it isn't the most vibrant available.

The standard applications are present, courtesy of Pocket PC 2002. NEC has added some custom applications, but these mainly run to customising some hardware settings and should really be in the Control Panel. In terms of expansion, like Toshiba, NEC has provided two options – CFII (CompactFlash II) and SD (secure digital). The CFII slot will happily accept IBM's MicroDrive, providing plenty of space.

On the whole, the PocketGear isn't a bad first attempt from NEC, but the strength of the competition means it settles for sixth place.

7 Sony Clie N770

Sony has updated its Palm OS-based Clie (reviewed August 01), with most of the effort going into the screen. Not only has Sony put in a 16bit colour display to the Clie N770, but it's also doubled the resolution. Standard Palm OS-based PDAs (personal digital assistants) only stretch to a resolution of 160x160, but the Clie has 320x320.

To cater for existing Palm applications, the Clie offers High Resolution Assist, so you can use your existing applications in high-resolution mode.

The Clie N770 also sports a MagicGate Memory Stick slot, so you can listen to your digital music safe in the knowledge that rights of copyright owners are well protected. There's also a bundled remote control, so you can leave your Clie in your pocket and control the AudioPlayer software.

All in all the Clie N770, like other Sony devices, is sleek, stylish and desirable. Unfortunately, it also inherits another Sony trademark – it's expensive. If you've got the money to spend, then the Clie is one of the nicest Palm OS machines out there. But if you want value for money then look elsewhere.

8 HP Jornada 568

HP has been a Windows CE fan for a long time, so it's no surprise it's quick off the mark with a Pocket PC 2002 device. At first look, the styling of the HP Jornada 568 seems to have altered little from the Jornada 545. However, the 568 has a couple of tricks up its sleeve.



HP has opted for a lithium-polymer battery, which makes for a smaller, lighter design. On the expansion side, HP obviously couldn't make a decision between CFI (CompactFlash I) and CFII (CompactFlash II) and so has created a CF Type I extended slot. This basically means you can remove the back of the slot to accommodate larger cards, however it won't take a Microdrive.

The hardware line-up is competent, with a 206MHz Intel StrongARM processor, 64MB of RAM and a good quality 240x320 resolution, 16bit colour screen. The main thing that lets the HP Jornada 568 down is its price. At £467 it's the most expensive device in the chart.

9 Handspring Visor Neo

This second entry from Handspring's Visor range is more of a budget unit than the Visor Pro at number four. The Visor Neo falls neatly into place below the Visor Platinum, but above the basic Visor and the Deluxe. The Neo doesn't offer anything that's not already available on other Visors, but it does provide many of the high-end features at a low-end price.

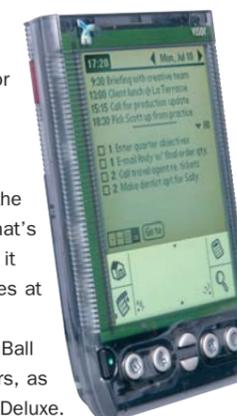
The Neo has the same 33MHz DragonBall VZ processor as the top-of-the-range Visors, as opposed to the 16MHz chip found in the Deluxe. It also has a 4bit greyscale display, 8MB of memory, USB synchronisation cradle and runs off two AAA batteries.

If you like your PDA (personal digital assistant) to match your outfit, then you'll be happy to know the Visor Neo has a number of options, from a sensible blue, daring red or mysterious smoke finish.

The Neo may have been relegated to ninth place this month by the flashy new entries, but if all you're after is a basic organiser and don't want to pay megabucks then the Neo is still a sensible option.

10 Handspring Visor Deluxe

After an astonishing 16 months in the chart, the Visor Deluxe just hangs in at the bottom in tenth place. When released, its specifications certainly gave the competition something to think about and, although basic in comparison to our higher-placed palmtops, if all you're after is a value-for-money electronic organiser, you can't go far wrong with the Visor Deluxe. It has a generous 8MB of RAM, USB synchronisation and a Springboard expansion slot. When compared to the better specified Visor Neo, however, which is just £17 more, the Deluxe is hard to recommend.



Handspring Treo

Personal digital assistant/mobile phone combos are nothing new. However, like many devices that try to do more than one thing, they usually cater for neither aspect particularly well. Handspring has decided the time is right to launch its own interpretation of the combination device on to the market.

Offering the same functionality you'd expect from a Visor, the Treo covers the PDA (personal digital assistant) side adequately. In terms of a phone, it would have been nice to see an internal aerial – but other than that Handspring seems to have got it right. At 6.9x11x1.8cm it's small enough to make it convenient to carry around, but large enough to give a decent display. The fold-over cover also protects the device when you just want to use the phone device.

In addition to a Graffiti handwriting recognition version, there's also a keyboard model available. At first glance this seems like a silly idea on a device so small, but it is actually very usable. The key placement and shape means that mistypes are unlikely and it's definitely easier to use than a phone keypad – even with predictive text.

In general, combo devices tend to come with a price premium – even when mobile phone subsidies are taken into account. If Handspring can get the pricing right, however, it should have a success on its hands.

