

Product : Handy Steno USB Flash Drive (1GB)



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road test USB Storage Devices

Memory sticks are great for keeping files safe but you need to pick the right one, writes **Adam Turner**.

USB storage devices might seem the same but they come in all shapes and sizes, with a range of features and price tags to match.

The point of these little slabs of solid-state "flash" memory is to always be there when you need it, so look for something that you'll always remember to take with you as part of your "leaving the house" ritual.

Consider the things you never leave the house without — keys, phone, wallet or purse — and think how you might attach a USB device to one.

Some USB storage devices are sticks to hang from your keys or around your neck. Others are cards to slip in your wallet or mobile phone case.

Yet given the main advantage of a memory stick is portability and convenience, it's ironic that some USB devices are surprisingly inconvenient. If you're looking for one to hang from your key-

ring, make sure the stick itself attaches to your key ring, rather than the device's removable cap.

Otherwise you could one day find the cap dangling from your keys, but the memory stick is nowhere to be seen. Even if a memory stick does attach directly to your keyring, don't necessarily trust it to be safe as they're often flimsy.

Each of the four drives we tested this week are available in a 4GB version, although we stuck with testing the more affordable 1GB versions.

If security is important, look for a memory stick with a hidden area for "secret" files — these won't be visible to anyone else who may borrow it.

Take care when choosing a memory stick with security features if you intend to use it on computers you don't own.

Some of these drives require software to be installed on the computer before you can access the stick's contents.



Freecom USB CARD, \$38 (1GB), 4.5/5

www.expansys.com.au

This will slip into your wallet or purse, although if you keep your wallet in your back pocket, be wary of sitting on it. The USB connector pops out from the middle of the card, a flexible strip of plastic keeps it firmly attached. Software lets you divide the storage into public and private areas.

Apacer Handy Steno USB Flash Drive \$45 (1 GB), 3.5/5

www.apacer.com

The unique L-shape of the Handy Steno lets it hug the side of your computer rather than sticking out, reducing the risk of it being snapped off. It also works with Windows Vista's ReadyBoost function,

which lets the USB drive act as extra memory.

Stealth MXP \$250 (1GB), 4/5

prosecman.com.au

The pricey Stealth MXP incorporates a fingerprint reader and password-protected encryption to safeguard your data. As the security processing is all done on the drive itself users don't need to worry about which operating system they're using.

Sandisk Ultra II SD Plus Card, \$44 (1GB), 4.5/5

sandisk.com

Tiny memory cards are perfect for keeping in your pocket but you still need to lug around a card reader to access the files. SanDisk's Ultra II SD Plus card folds in half to reveal a USB connector, eliminating the need for a separate reader.