

## Review of the Acer Aspire One A150-Bb (Model ZG5)

Hi, and welcome to my first Technical Review. Everytime I get my hands on a new gadget, I will try my best to write a review of it and upload it for all to see.

Let's start with my latest toy - my **Acer Aspire One A150-Bb**.

The specifications are as follows:

CPU - Intel Atom N270 (1.6 GHz, 533 mhz FSB, 512 kb)

LCD - 8.9" CrystalBrite WSVGA (1024x600)

RAM - 1 GB DDR2 (512mb soldered, 512mb removable, maximum supported - 1.5 GB)

Graphics - Intel GMA 950 (128mb of shared memory)

Storage - Toshiba MK1652GSX 160GB 5400rpm SATA Hard Drive

Card reader - SD(HC) Reader for Storage Expansion and a Multi-in-1 Card Reader (SD/ (RS-)MMC/MSD/MSPRO/XD plus Mini/Micro SD with an adapter)

LAN - 10/100 Base T Ethernet

Wireless - 802.11.b/g

OS - Windows XP Home Edition SP3

I/O Interfaces - Three USB 2.0 ports

- External display (VGA) port

- Headphone/speaker/line-out jack

- Microphone-in jack

Battery - 24 W 2200 mAh 3-cell Li-ion battery pack

The general purpose of a netbook is a small computer, similar in design to a laptop, but to be used for basic tasks such as surfing the internet, word processing, and other light duties. Acer have taken the best components for the job and built their version of a machine suited for these duties.

The AA1 comes in 5 colours - Sapphire Blue (the one I bought), Seashell White, Pink, Brown and Black. The top of the unit is finished well, the smooth lid with it's pleasing blue colour, adorned with the white Acer logo.



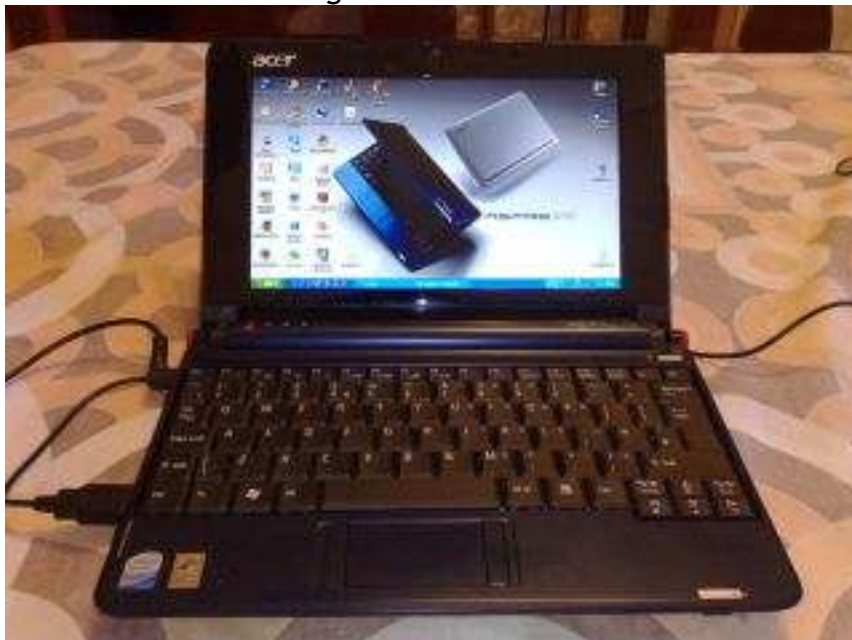
The next two images show the left and right sides of the unit with the various I/O ports. First the left hand side:



Ports from left to right - AC Power In, D-Sub Out, Output Fan, Ethernet port, 1 x USB 2.0 port and a SD Storage Expansion slot.



And on the right hand side of the unit we have (from left to right) - Mic In, Audio Out, 2 x USB 2.0 ports, Multi-In-1 Card reader and a Kensington lock slot.



Open the unit to find the 8.9" CrystalBrite screen, and a 0.3mp webcam and a microphone in the bezel that surrounds the screen, along with the excellent sounding speakers. In other reviews I have read, the speakers were put down as being tinny and lacking bass. I will say that the speakers are as good as any other laptop, they are much better than the speaker you get with a iPhone 3G/ iPod Touch 2<sup>nd</sup> Generation.

The keyboard is 89% of the size of a normal laptop keyboard, the keys themselves have good travel and have a nice feel to them with a good size. Obviously, with the size of netbook you won't have all the keys in the world, but the secondary functions are varied but overall useful, although a slight annoyance is the fact that to use the HOME and END keys, you have to press Fn + Pg Up/Down respectively.

The touchpad is a Synaptics pad, it is quite small when you compare it to other netbooks such as the Asus Eee range, Samsung NC10 and the MSI Wind. Another unusual feature is that the buttons are positioned to the sides of the pad, whereas pretty much all other netbooks have them underneath the pad like a standard laptop, the only exception to this is the HP 2133 Mini-Note.

Another problem is the 3 cell battery that comes with the Aspire One as standard. It is a 24 watt, 2200 mAh unit, which is only good for a maximum of 2 and a half hours with normal usage. With heavy usage (full brightness, Wi-fi on, multiple applications running) this will fall to a little over 60 minutes. If you have the Wi-fi switched off and the screen brightness turned down, and hardly use the unit, you might see 3 hours before it needs to be connected to the AC.

My Aspire One came with Windows XP Home (Service Pack 3) pre-installed, so all I needed to do was tell it where I was, what timezone I was in, and my name for the username. Then after a reboot, Acer's Launch program did it's stuff, installing some drivers and applications such as a Aspire One Screensaver!

Then came the big clearout.

I uninstalled the trial version of Microsoft Office 2007 Home and Student Edition, and replaced it with the excellent free and open source OpenOffice 3.1. Then I used IE 7 just the once to download Firefox 3.0.10, and then uninstalled the McAfee Security Center and replaced it with AVG Free v8.5 and the Windows Firewall.

Overall, the Acer Aspire One is a very good performer, with hardly any lag when running multiple applications. When writing this review, I have Firefox running as well as emesene (MSN client) and JetAudio (multimedia player) and the CPU usage is fluctuating between 8 and 18% with 360mb RAM free (this is due to Firefox being open for a while)

Now the most important part - running BVE!

Now, you don't buy a netbook for it's spectacular dedicated graphics that can run the latest games at 100fps! With the Aspire One utilising Intel's GMA 950 with 128mb of shared memory, it won't set the gaming world on fire. But, because Microsoft have extended XP licensing, the Aspire One will run BVE, as my screenshots below show.



Class 323 heading towards Birmingham New Street from Redditch.



Voyager 220006 at Whitminster on a service to Ludgate Hill.

As you can just about make out in the bottom left hand corner, the FPS figures make for fairly grim reading. I have tested different trains on different routes, and the average figures are 9-22 fps in a normal route such as NWM and Birmingham Cross City and 12-31fps in an underground route such as the Northern Line v4. Overall, I was expecting more stuttering, but with the settings set to 200m viewing distance and 16bit (with the fullscreen resolution customised to 1024x600 using the Reschanger tool) I was pleased with the results.

## Conclusion

Overall, I am very pleased with the Aspire One. Apart from the few minor problems with the trackpad, and the lack of a CD/DVD drive (the norm with all netbooks), it is a very good performer, very fast when doing basic tasks, but the major letdown is the battery life. Do not let this put you off buying a Aspire One, it's positives make up for the negatives.

SimulationExpress Rating: 85%

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