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Unitech PA500 Review

Product: PA500

Manufacturer: Unitech

Type: Handheld Mobile Computer

Support: 90 Day Warranty with optional extended service plan through Unitech; Lifetime Support through POSGuys.com

The Unitech PA500 mobile computer features a laser scan engine and 520 MHz Intel processor.

Typical uses and environments:

The PA500 best finds use in retail and light warehouse environments.

Unique Features & Advantages:

Unlike most mobile computers in its class, the PA500 ships with all the equipment necessary to get up and running, including charging/interface cable, drivers, and synthetic carrying case. This reduces the headaches and extended costs that occur when trying to ensure your mobile computer works properly with your PC.

Standard Features:

The PA500 ships with Windows Mobile 5.0 preinstalled on an 520 MHz Intel PXA270 processor with 64 MB of RAM and Flash ROM. Six hot keys on the face surround a navigation button, with two buttons on either side for triggering the scanner or other tasks. A red indicator LED above the screen indicates when the scanner is activated and flashes green upon successful scans. The accurate read tone is loud enough to hear over a noisy retail environment, and can be changed to any .wav file you can store on the PA500. For expansion, the PA500 features an SDIO card slot on the top of the unit, allowing for an extra 2GB of storage space on the unit.

Drawbacks:

The PA500 features a design intended to be used as more of a PDA than mobile data collector, as evident by the navigation buttons on the face rather than an alphanumeric keypad. This can cause problems if data manipulation is necessary during barcode data collection. Windows mobile does provide an on-screen keyboard, however.

When testing the PA500, we noticed the included interface/charging cable requires firm pressure to seat it properly in the base of the unit. Unfortunately, we learned this after the cable didn't plug in completely, which caused an electrical short, melting some of the plastic on the cable and the PA500 itself. As such, we recommend purchasing the charging cradle, as that should mitigate some of the issues.

Performance:

To determine the capabilities of the Unitech PA500, we ran it through a battery of tests designed to show ease of setup, barcode scanning capabilities, and battery life. We tested PA500-956ACG, which includes a 1D laser scanner, wifi, and Bluetooth connections. Our testing showed the PA500 to be an excellent mobile computer in its class.

Setting up the PA500 is very easy, requiring no driver installation. To promote proper conditioning of the battery, Unitech places a note on the screen telling users to charge the PA500 for at least 16 hours prior to first use. This ensures longer battery life and better overall use.



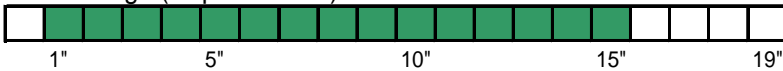
To test the battery and processor performance, we played a 20 minute video file encoded in XViD format with a video data rate of 148 kbps. The PA500 played it well on default settings, and only 10% of the battery life was used in order to play back.

The optimal scan range for the PA500 is from .5" to 15", excellent for scanning products that may be out of reach. It can scan barcodes as dense as 3.9 mil, making most standard barcode scanning a snap. For damaged and dirty barcodes, the PA500 was able to scan all of them with ease, showing off the prowess of the aggressive scan engine. The PA500 is fully light immune, excellent for outdoor barcode scanning. It was difficult to see the beam in bright light, but that would only prove troublesome with densely populated barcodes.

A breakdown of the Unitech PA500 capabilities is listed in table and graph form below.

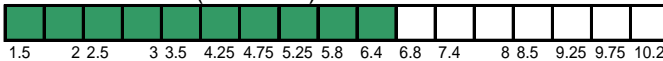
Scanner Performance Testing

Scan Range (Depth of Field)



Good scan range
for most environments

Wide Barcodes (In Inches)



Scans well above standard
retail/light industrial sizes

High Density Barcodes (In Mil)



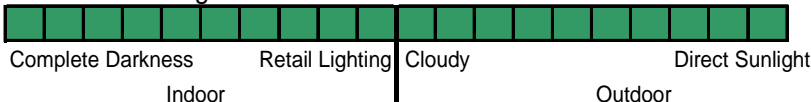
Excellent range for retail
and industrial barcode density

Poor Quality Barcodes*



Could read all damaged
barcodes. Excellent robustness

Resistance to Light



Excellent light resistance

1D Results

Highest Density Barcode Scanned	3.9mil	Average
Widest Barcode Scanned	88.9mm	Average
Shortest Barcode Scanned	38 mm	Good
Range Ideal Conditions (Standard 100% UPC-A)	.5 inches – 15 inches	Excellent
Scratched Barcode	3 of 3	Good
Worn Barcode	3 of 3	Good
Warped Barcode	2 of 2	Good
Curved Barcode	2 of 2	Good




Multiple Barcodes in close proximity	Relatively accurate, but dependent on distribution of barcodes relative to width of beam	Good
Scan through plastic layers	10 Layers	Good
Multicolored Barcodes Successfully Scanned	Blue, Grey	Good
Multicolored Barcodes Not Scanned	Red, Yellow, Black on Dark Grey	Average
Simulated Sunlight Test	Light Immune	Excellent

Conclusion:

The Unitech PA500 is an excellent choice for locations looking to go mobile and don't require a fully ruggedized industrial mobile computer. Though there can be issues when trying to plug in the interface cable, they are easily avoidable.

To Purchase this product, go to the [Unitech PA500](#) page.

For Additional Reviews, visit our [Product Reviews](#) page.

	Ideal Setting	Description
 PA500	Mobile retail, inventory management	With a 520MHz processor and incredibly aggressive laser scanner, the PA500 provides fast and efficient mobile data collection.
 PA600	Rough mobile retail, warehouse inventory management	The PA600 combines the features of the PA500 with a rugged design, providing greater shock resistance and an IP64 seal.
 PA962/PA963	Rough mobile retail, warehouse inventory management	Available as a handheld or gun-style design, the PA962/PA963 is a heavy duty mobile computer for the most demanding of environments.

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