

PRODUCT reviews

• LabQuest

LabQuest

By Jared Mader and Ben Smith

Vernier has really hit the mark with the LabQuest, a portable data-collection and analysis device that is both affordable (\$329) and powerful.

The device is an intuitive handheld interface that is approximately the size of a scientific calculator (16.5cm x 10cm x 4cm).

Built-in rechargeable batteries eliminate the need to keep alkalines or NiMH on hand, but do require users to keep the unit plugged in when not in use. The color view screen is approximately 7cm x 5.3cm (320 x 240), which is well sized for a portable device. Its handheld-like interactivity allows for simple touch-of-the-finger operation or easy use of the stylus that is kept onboard the device.

The probe's ports, power, and USB slots are easily accessible and in logical proximity to one another and to the natural location of experimental equipment. There is even an SD memory card slot to increase the internal storage capacity from the existing 40MB. This can be handy if you have a limited number of units. Students can take their data, pull the card, and pass it along. As a



LabQuest is tough in the field and versatile in the classroom.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF VERNIER SOFTWARE & TECHNOLOGY.

With the LabQuest, data is collected from standard Vernier probes, and menus allow for click-and-go real-time data collection.

stand-alone interface, the LabQuest is a cost-effective alternative to a computer for every student or even for every lab group. The screen is bright—even in outdoor viewing—clear, and scalable for the needs of every student. It includes 50 preloaded ex-

periments, a stopwatch, and a detailed periodic table. Data can be collected from standard Vernier probes, and easy-to-use menus allow for click-and-go real-time data collection. A USB port is integrated into each unit, allowing for plug-and-play printing (HP printing is the most supported).

LabQuest is well prepared for field use. It has a durable rubber sheathing

equipped with rugged ridges for easy handling even in the wettest of conditions. The unit is water resistant and includes a safety hook that allows users to fasten a wrist or neck strap to keep from dropping it. The unit is lightweight and portable, allowing it to be used in most field experiences.

As a computer peripheral, it serves very much like its older sibling, the LabPro Interface Box. If you still want the live, full-screen viewing of real-time data collection, the LabQuest can be used with Logger Pro, Vernier's flagship data-collection software. As with the LabPro, data can also be collected in the field and imported into Logger Pro at the touch of a button. Because the unit is fully functional both plugged in and on battery power, the LabQuest can be quickly moved to remote

locations without a single second of lost data.

The LabQuest is engaging, powerful, fast, and durable for use with any age group of students. It's ease of setup and use allows it to be the central data-collection device for elementary through university classrooms. It allows students to focus on the data they are collecting without being distracted by technology that is complicated or slow or that requires many other peripheral devices to function properly.

The LabQuest interface is a must-have for any district looking for a universal data-collection and analysis device for a reasonable price. We really liked the ease of use of the LabQuest. Both of us handed the unit to our kids (Ben's son is 8, and Jared's daughter is 4) and they were able to figure out how to take temperature measurements in a few minutes. This unit is a winner.

LabQuest

\$329 Vernier
www.vernier.com/mbl/index.html



Jared Mader has been a chemistry teacher for the past nine years and is now the director of technology at Red Lion Area Senior High School in Red Lion, Pennsylvania.



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Technology Innovators in Pennsylvania and have presented at NSTA and NECC.

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