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Trek ThumbDrive 32MB
By [tachyon](#) Category : [Storage](#)

Approved by [Jimmy Tang](#) on Tuesday, 23rd of May, 2000
Rating : 3.5 out of 5 Stars. Price: S\$159

Trek ThumbDrive Specifications	
Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Fits standard USB port. ● No cables or PCMCIA card adapters required ● Conforms to USB mechanical specifications. ● Plug & Play. No battery or power source needed. ● Runs on Microsoft Windows 98 or later versions. ● Usable with desktops & notebooks. ● Storage capacities available from 8MB to 256MB.
Physical Specifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Size : 57mm (L) x 17mm (W) x 10mm (H) ● Weight : 30g

Introduction

Interesting as the name may sound, the Thumbdrive is indeed about as big as a thumb. It isn't really a drive as the name suggests, but the name brings to mind the mechanical versions which we are all familiar with. Instead it is a solid-state device employing flash memory commonly used in Compact Flash cards, SmartMedia, MMC, MemoryStick etc. The drive also uses the USB as the interface to the PC. The USB standard also

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classifies these devices under the storage class. This simplifies and standardises the protocol used to control and transfer data to and from the device.

It's all you need to get started.

It's a Stick of Gum

At first look, the Thumbdrive looks like a pack of 5 stick of gum except that it is packaged in black. At least the version that we received for the review was black in color. I believe the Thumbdrive also comes in different colors, even translucent colors like the iMac. It is quite a neat and compact package. To most people, it doesn't look like anything that resembles a PC peripheral let alone a drive. With the cap on, it neatly hides the USB connector from view making it look more like just a piece of black plastic. Kind of reminds me of those lead refill case for mechanical pencils, yeah, remember those ? That's what it looks like except a little fatter and thicker. At the other end of the USB connector, there is a little write protect switch in a small cavity which allows the user to protect the data in the Thumbdrive from being accidentally erased. Quite a neat feature much like the write protect tab of the regular floppy disk except that this switch is a little difficult to access with your fingers. The cavity is really quite small and it is quite impossible to use your fingers to access the switch. I could only do it with a pen tip.

The ThumbDrive plugged into the USB port.

Or, you can always plug it into the Microsoft Natural Keyboard Pro's built-in USB hub.

Hand me that Thumbdrive

Do not under estimate the Thumbdrive, it is capable of storing a whopping 256MB (that is the projected capacity for future versions). The version that we had for the review only had 32MB which isn't really too bad but a tad bit too small compared to a Zip disk. It certainly beats carrying a Zip disk though. You don't even need a drive to read the contents, just a USB host. At 32MB, I could store quite a number of JPEG images, approximately 30 minutes of MP3 music, numerous electronic books or files. The data transfer rate of the Thumbdrive is really limited by the USB. Reading from the Thumbdrive is quicker than writing to it since flash memory has limited writing speed while reading from it is as fast as reading from a ROM. The read speed averaged approximately 655KB/s while the write speed averaged about 350KB/s. The access speed is about 30ms. These numbers were obtained using WinBench Disk Inpection tests. I also did some manual timing tests to verify the accuracy of the test results on this rather unconventional drive. The results were almost the same.

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The ThumbDrive listed in the Device Manager as a Netac UFD drive.

Write protect tab to prevent accidental loss of data.

Final Thoughts

The Thumbdrive is certainly a pretty innovative and nifty product. The Thumbdrive tries to be unique and targets the PC users but with the already varied solid state memory products available in the market today for a multitude of consumer electronic products, users are not content with just able to transfer data from one PC to another using such a device as the Thumbdrive. They would want to be able to keep to one type of media like Compact Flash or MemoryStick and be able to use these media to exchange data with different devices which uses the same type of media. Although the Thumbdrive does away with the need of a reader or drive, it does require a USB host device to control and interface with it in order for it to work. In this case PCs are required for the Thumbdrive to work whereas devices such as digital cameras, PDAs, MP3 players etc does not and are usually client devices with respect to PCs. It is only made for the PC running Windows 98, and will not work under Windows 2000 or even the Macintosh. Let's hope they will have device drivers for other platforms in the future.

I would recommend the Thumbdrive if a convenient, reliable and compact media is required to transfer data between PCs where using the network is not an option. It is also ideal for sending data in a secure manner without going through the Internet. At S\$99 for 16MB and S\$159 for 32MB, it doesn't come cheap and the capacity is also quite low considering the hard disk that is available today comes in gigabytes. Hopefully the cost of flash memory lowers in the near future. Since flash memory is also widely used in many other similar type of memory products, the price is determined by the supply and demand in the market, pretty much like what we are seeing in the RAM market today. It probably doesn't make a lot of sense for the average computer user in terms of the cost involved but for the corporate and notebook user, it may be more convenient and efficient in the long run.



Test System configuration

CPU	Intel Pentium II 450MHz
Mainboard	ECS P6BX-A+
Memory	128MB PC100 SDRAM
Harddisk	Western Digital 20.5GB
Video Card	Creative TNT2
Operating System	Windows 98 Second Edition



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