

Buying The Right Notebook

The single most important reason anyone buys a notebook is for portability. This is something that you can take anywhere. If you frequently travel in your work, you need a notebook. If you are a student going back and forth to the university, you need a notebook. If you are a journalist traveling the world and submitting articles, you need a notebook. And today's notebooks can be as powerful as most desktops with dual processors, large capacity internal drives, and other attractive features. But which one is right for you? How do you determine what type of notebook will fit your current needs plus allow you to expand for the future?

And the first part of the answer to the question of which one is right for you leads to a half-answer: "It depends." It depends on what you are going to do with the computer. Are you going to use it for work or recreation? Is it something needed for your profession or are you a hobbyist? Do you play a lot of games? What level of internet access do you need? It is also important to remember that unlike desktop models, notebook computers cannot be upgraded easily. In fact, they usually have no upgrade path so you should take the time to get exactly what you need in terms of features and performance.

One characteristic of a notebook computer one should consider is the screen size. If you need to be able to have a lot of landscape for projects you are working on then consider a wider screen. Screen sizes usually can range from 10.4 inches to 17.1 inches. If you do a lot of work on an airliner in economy class, you are probably better off with a smaller screen size (because of the reclining seatbacks in front of you). Also a smaller notebook is just easier and lighter to carry around. Some who do presentations with their notebook computers will benefit from larger screen sizes such as those that use the newer WXGA technology. WXGA notebook screens can achieve resolutions up to 1366 by 768 pixels.

Battery life in your notebook computer is very important too. If you move around quite a bit, you might want to consider buying a notebook with not only a long lasting battery (most go 2-3 hours), but also one where buying a spare battery is not very expensive. One very inexpensive solution for the battery problem is to buy an external universal battery that can last up to 3-4 hours.

Another feature you need to consider when buying a notebook is internet connectivity. You will find that a popular way for people to work these days is with a wifi-enabled notebook at a wireless hotspot (such as in coffee shops, restaurants, libraries and airports). If you are buying an older used notebook, you may have to get an additional wifi-card if you want to have the mobile connectivity provided by this technology. Also, you will find that most hotels nowadays offer high-speed internet access but it is usually through a wifi connection.

And lastly, you need to consider what other options you want for your notebook computer. Do you want a CD writer or will you need to record DVDs? Do you need premium sound? How large of a disk drive do you need? When it comes to disk space, CD/DVD writers, sound cards, memory, and processor speed, it's best to get it now as opposed to get it later. Here's why: The upgrade path for most laptops and notebooks is not very long. This is because notebooks are probably replaced every 2-3 years. They are quick becoming just as expendable as a set of tires for your car. And if you do not maximize on memory and processor speed, your notebook may not be able to run efficiently the new application and game software. The more your notebook is adaptable to software upgrades, the longer it will be an effective tool for you.

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