



## What Computer Should I buy? 2007-08

As the summer comes to a close, a lot of us are thinking about a new computer for the school year for the kids. There is no one right answer to the "What computer should I buy?" question. It all depends on what you are going to use the computer for.

The first question to ask yourself is what are you going to use the computer for? Are you going to use it for email and web browsing? kids homework? work from home? entertainment, for video and photos?

You will then need to decide how to split your budget into three categories, Software, Hardware, and Accessories.

Your office may use commercial software such as Microsoft Word, Outlook, ...etc, but there are freely available software such as Thunderbird for email <http://www.mozilla.com/en-US/thunderbird/>, Google's Doc and Spread Sheet <https://www.google.com/accounts/ServiceLogin?service=writely&passive=true&continue=http%3A%2F%2Fdocs.google.com%2F&followup=http%3A%2F%2Fdocs.google.com%2F&itmpl=homepage&nui=1>. Using freely available software may take a little getting use to, but it will save lots of money! Keep in mind you will need to buy is an anti-virus software package, unless your online service provides them for free.

For the computer itself, follow this Questionnaire will walk you through the "what do I use the computer for" process. <http://compreviews.about.com/od/buyers/l/blcompqstart.htm> It will take you 10~15 min. If you are not familiar with computer terms, check out this article for explanations <http://compreviews.about.com/cs/desktops/bb/aabybdesktops.htm>.

The often overlooked accessories deserve your attention. Do you want a printer to print pictures? You will need the photo paper and quality ink to print sharp pictures. Keep in mind the replace cost of the ink when choosing a printer. Everyone should have a external hard drive (link to other articles) to backup their pictures, music, and other important stuff! Trust me, this will be money well spend. Think about what you are going to do with your computer and the accessories needed so you don't forget to budget money for them.

When you are ready to start shopping, look for bundled deals. Keep these two rules of thumb in mind,

1. Spend your money on RAM and Hard Drive capacity, not on CPU speed.
2. Use quality free software when you can

Besides the obvious of looking for a new PC, you can consider refurbished computer. You don't need the latest computer for anything, a 6month old model, will work well enough you won't notice the difference. For PCs, you can shop IBM. <http://www-132.ibm.com/webapp/wcs/stores/servlet/HelpDisplay?storeId=1&catalogId=-840&langId=-1&subject=2576394>. In the past 10 years, I have purchased 3 Thinkpad Notebooks from them. I had one notebook came in with a bad display and it was replaced free of charge. You will save money with a refurbished computer. Apple also sell refurbished Macs <http://store.apple.com/1-800-MY-APPLE/WebObjects/AppleStore.woa/6454002/wo/Mn2HtfjhEW3n3ezbrsE2mBSLSdf/3.0.0.28.7.5.5.1.1.1.1> as well as iPods!

After you decided on the computer to buy, sales people may try to sell you extended warranty. That is a personal choice to extend it or not. I usually don't for two reasons.



1. I would rather spend the money for the extended warranty on a higher quality product that may cost more.
2. unless you are very organized, one more piece of paper to keep track of .

Happy computing and lets try to save the energy by not forwarding unwanted junk emails!