

New Computer Guidelines

Desktop versus Laptop

Desktop: A desktop computer may be the best type of computer to buy if you do not already have a computer. They now come in a compact size and with a Flat Panel Monitor take up very little room. They cost less and usually last longer than a laptop.

Laptop: A laptop costs more than a desktop and they can be more fragile. They are designed for working while away from home. The keyboard layout on a laptop is different than a regular keyboard and may take some time to learn to use. The touch pad mouse on the laptop may take some time to get used to since they can be very sensitive. You can buy a keyboard and mouse to use with a laptop. The monitor is usually smaller and the resolution is not as clear when you make the icons larger and easier to see, so you may want to buy a bigger monitor as well. A cooling pad helps keep a laptop cool if you are going to work on it for an extended period of time.

Windows XP versus Windows Vista Operating System

In January 2007 Microsoft will release their new operating system called Vista, it will be released in many different versions. One version will be a *light* version (without many of the new features of the full operating system). This version can be loaded on many of the newer XP computers now in use with very little upgrading needed (maybe a video card).

Vista: How well Vista will work remains to be seen, Microsoft has given it a completely new look. There will be more security built in and it is supposed to be more user friendly. Vista will have better graphic and video capabilities (to work with photos and movies). It apparently has better use of speech programming. A new computer with full capabilities will cost more, be faster and should last for at least 5 years

XP: Is a very good and stable operating system. As we get closer to the release of Vista there should be some great deals on this system. If you look for a Vista-ready computer; you should be able to upgrade without any problems, such as a new video card. A new computer with XP should be good for at least 5 years.

The following guidelines are for a computer with Windows XP:

Speed: Measured in GHz should be 2.66 or higher. Speed is not that important unless you are working with big graphics files or many large applications open at the same time or want to play high-end games.

Memory: Measured in Mega Bytes (MB). You should have at least 250MB but 512MB or more is better if you plan to work with quite a few photos. The more memory the more applications you can work with at the same time and the faster your programs will respond.

Hard Drive: Measured in Giga Bytes (GB). You will need at least an 80GB hard drive but a 120GB or better is preferred. The hard drive holds all of your programs and files. If you will be working with photos, movies or lots of music; the bigger the hard drive the better.

CD-RW: CDs are becoming old technology but can still be used to store your backup files and photos. Most new programs/applications are still coming on CDs but in the future they may be too small to hold enough information.

DVD+/-RW burner with double layer: Is the newer technology and holds more information than a CD, but will burn and read CDs as well as DVDs.

Speakers: You will want to have speakers to listen to music and computer sounds that alert you about something happening with your computer. You will need them for voice recording emails and on line video. There are good speakers available with a subwoofer for very little cost; great for listening to music CDs or on line radio.

Microphone: A microphone is good to have to record your voice to include in an e-mail or for CD slide presentations.

Sound Card: Sound is usually on the motherboard. You do not need to have a special sound card. unless you are going to work with speech recognition programs, work with lots of sound files, or use your computer with a home theater or special media.

Monitor: The new Flat Panel monitors cost more than the old CRT monitors but take up much less room, are easier on your eyes, are lighter in weight and better for the environment. A 17 inch is a good size monitor. A 15 inch Flat Panel has about the same viewing screen as a 17 inch CRT monitor. A 17 inch Flat Panel as much as a 19 inch CRT monitor.

Video Card: The video is usually on the motherboard and like the sound card you don't need a better sound card unless you play higher end games or work with a lot of graphic media.

Modem/Ethernet port: If you will connect to the internet using a dial up service you will need a modem. If you have a broadband connection (DSL, Cable, or Satellite) you will need an Ethernet Port

Front USB connections and Card Reader: If you are going to download digital photos, you will want one or both of these features.

Warranty: Most computers come with a 1 year warranty but you can usually buy an extended warranty.

Security Software: *You will need a good Virus protection program.* All new computers come with some type of protection good for 30 to 90 days, after that time you will need to buy a program.

Power Surge Proctor: Measured in *Joules*, the higher the number of joules, the better, (with phone line attachments). A good one costs \$30 to \$60 dollars

Printer: There are many types of printers to choose from. Most printers today do a good job of printing photos; you do not need to buy an expensive printer. Some printers are combined with a scanner/copier.

Check to see if the printer comes with a printer cord; if not you will need to buy one.

There are many good name brands to choose from Hewlett-Packard, Compaq, Dell, and Gateway are some of them. Its best to stay with a name brand PC already built than have one built for you.

Specifications to look for in a new computer.

Speed---not important 2.66 GHz or higher.

Memory---256 MB to 1 GB.

Hard Drive---80GB to 200GB.

CD-RW---OK but newer technology such as a DVD+/- burner with double layer is better.

DVD+/-RW burner with double layer---Holds more information than a CD_RW.

Monitor---15 to 17 inch Flat Panel best, or a 17 inch CRT

Speakers and Microphone---you will probably want to include in your purchase.

Sound and Video Cards---Probably not necessary.

Warranty—the purchase of an Extended Warranty is a personal choice.

Printer, scanner and Printer cord---your choice.

Power Surge Protector---a good one with phone outlets.

Security Software---One Care, Norton, McAfee, or one you may have researched or have a recommendation from a friend or family.

Notes: