Computer and Laptop Recommendations

Computer and Laptop Recommendations | Tech Tips Podcast by PcCG

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One of the most frequent questions we get is "what kind of computer should I buy"?

I will provide some general computer recommendations to try and assist anyone looking for a new computer. Obviously specifics are impossible as there are a wide range of different requirements, but the following recommendations should fit most people. A more detailed explination of the recommendations follows further down in the article.

If you find this overwhelming, or are unsure beyond this article as to what you should get - we are proud to offer PcComputerGuy's "One-Stop Shop" service [2]. You tell us what you do with your computer, and we'll do the shoping, purchase and delivery for you.

The benefits include 30 day return of the equipment if it's defective, our decades of experience with computers and computer components, our expertise and years of knowledge acquired about the different products, strengths and weaknesses. We often are able to find quality (vs. "cheap") computers at discounted rates that off-set part of the service charge. See our article on cheap computers [3] and avoid getting something you may regret.

We offer this service for $150, and have had a number of customers offer testimonials after attempting to navigate the sea of tech products alone.

Disclaimer: These recommendations are my preference. They are not endorsements and in no way is it to suggest these brands don't ever have issues.

Topics covered

Basic Recommendations

- **Brand:** Doesn't matter so long as it's not Acer or HP.
- **Operating System:** Windows 11
- **CPU:** Intel i5, i7 or AMD Ryzen Processor
- **Memory:** 8GB or MORE.
- **Hard Drive Size:** Usually Irrelevant.
- **Name Brand Monitor:** (Dell, LG, HP, Asus are my preference)
- **AntiVirus:** Windows Defender (Free with Windows).
- **Warranty:** I tend to avoid extended warranties. Almost always it's a losing bet. Even on non-

related computer items, my philosophy is the same.

Other Items:

Dual Monitor Support in a desktop is nice. Dual monitors is very nice.
Solid State Hard Drive – Make the computer even twice as fast!

Laptop Considerations:

Often overlooked are some important laptop considerations. I'll briefly cover things to look out for here.

- **Weight:** Lighter laptops are often better for portability. It's just easier to carry something light around rather than something bulky. A newer line of laptops called 'Ultrabooks' have become more common place that are super light machines. I love these machines.
- **Sound:** Laptop sound quality may suffer significantly with some brands. My Dell Inspiron 520 is one of the epic failures for sound loudness. Unless I'm in a perfectly quiet room, the laptop can't be heard even with the volume cranked. So check the sound out and try to test in a louder environment.
- **Battery life:** obviously longer is better.
- **Screen size:** This is entirely your preference. In my opinion anything bigger than a 15.4" screen is too large to comfortably carry around.

All in one desktops: Think twice.

These all-in-one machines are becoming more common. They are nicer to move around and generally have fewer wires than the traditional desktop. There are some major drawbacks to consider though. First, parts for these machines are proprietary. This means that they are not universally changeable with parts from other machines or parts found in stock in your stores. So repair of these machines often takes a week instead of a day – as we have to wait for the parts to arrive in the mail. Since they are proprietary they also cost more, sometimes significantly more since they are not subject to the standard supply and demand economy. The labor usually costs more as well since they do not open and disassemble in a standard way. Instead computer guys have to download service manuals and then follow instructions carefully to ensure things are done properly. This results in more time to fix many hardware items. I recently replaced a hard drive in an all-in-one machine that took a couple hours; the same replacement in a standard desktop takes about 15 minutes. Another example would be if the screen went bad. Instead of you just having the ability to run out to the store and buy a new screen, you have to call the computer guy who has to order the part then wait for it to arrive, then replace the screen by dismantling part (or all) of the computer. Items in all-in-ones are also more difficult or impossible to upgrade.

Why the recommended items?

The Brand: Some people love Dell, others hate Dell. The same applies for any of the manufacturers. I personally have no preference, as it's my opinion they all have similar life expectancies and quality. Tech support among all of them is equally horrible. The exception is Acer and HP. I see these computers more frequently than other brands and I think that's because they use cheaper parts. Often the best bang-for-buck comes from Lenovo or Asus computers, but not always.
Operating System: Windows 10 end of life as of writing is October 14, 2025. While we are not big fans of Windows 11, for the average user, it'll be best to get Windows 11.
Processors: Currently we recommend AMD Ryzen CPU's. If you get an Intel CPU, the i5 and i7 models are good routes.
Memory: 8GB is the baseline, fine for most average users. The more you can get the better. This memory is a primary factor in speed, up to a point. 16GB is typically more than enough for any normal computer use and you are unlikely to see any speed benefit beyond that.

Hard Drives: Almost all hard drives today are far bigger than the average person uses. They generally are at least 500GB, and often 1TB (1000GB) or more. Most people probably use about 100GB. A 1TB drive can store about 200,000 mp3s or pictures. On the flip side, the larger the hard drive it seems the faster the failure rate. Almost all hard drives come with a 1 year warranty instead of the 3 year warranty they came with last year. Keep this in mind. Modern hard drives fail more frequently. Have a backup plan in place if it's important to preserve data.
Monitor: Many times you can purchase the tower and the monitor separately. Perhaps you are looking just to upgrade your monitor without a new computer. Either way, these brands tend to have higher reliability than the off-brand products such as AOC. I'm also not a fan of Samsung products. They look nice, but my personal experience has been terrible with Samsung. Of 5 products, 4 were dead in less than 1 year. Make sure your computer and monitor support the same ports. If your computer has HDMI out, ensure your monitor has HDMI in. If your computer has VGA out (usually blue connector), ensure your monitor has VGA in. If your computer has VGA out, ensure your monitor has VGA in.
AntiVirus: If your new computer comes with a trial of McAfee or anything else, ditch it. The built in Windows Security does nearly as well as any of the paid ones, and is free.
Dual Monitor support: This is built in to MANY computers today. This is a great feature to have, and only costs as much as the additional monitor (usually around $130-$150). Going from single to dual monitors is like going from dialup to high speed internet. You'll never want to go back if you are a power user in any way. As I write this article, I have outlook open on my second monitor to keep an eye on it.
Solid State Hard Drive: Wow. Let me say that once again. Wow. That's the speed difference in a computer with a Solid State drive and a traditional (magnetic) hard drive. Speeds of SSD drives is between 5-10 times faster than traditional hard drives. You do have to give up something though – storage space. SSD drives are typically much smaller than magnetic drives. SSD drives come in 256, 500 and 1TB most commonly. If you can get a computer with a large SSD drive and don't need a lot of space, you'll be saying "wow." Just tossing out some estimates, but say a computer takes 2 minutes to boot with a traditional drive, it would take about 30 seconds with a SSD drive.

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