

READY NET GO ... NEWS

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Tip of the Month

Choosing a Laptop by Lifestyle

Ultraportables

Are you a road warrior? Do you travel often? Do you want a laptop that won't aggravate your back problems? Will a small screen suit your needs?

Features: small screen, light weight, equipped with essentials for most home/business uses.

Budget / Value / Midsize

Are you looking for a budget laptop? Are you someone who won't mind extra weight? Do you need a larger keyboard? Do you want a larger screen but still want to be able to carry it around?

Features: Average screen and weight, equipped with essentials plus additional components for nearly all users.

Desktop Replacement

Are you a power user? Do you want a robust, responsive machine that includes a lot of features? Do you want the convenience of a laptop in that you can carry it around when you need it but plan on keeping it around the office or house most of the time? Do you want to watch DVD movies on long flights and don't mind the extra weight? *[For reference, a gallon of water weighs about 8 lbs.]*

Features: largest screen, tends to be heaviest in weight, most robust features in terms of video, hard drive, optical drive, and additional ports/bays for connectivity.

Tips for Purchasing a Laptop

Are you in the market for buying a laptop but confused about which one to get? Laptops are very popular and there are a lot of options on the market right now. In this newsletter, we'll discuss some of the things to consider when you're doing your research. The biggest obstacle to laptops is that they are not easily upgradeable so it pays to think about what your needs are, now and in the future, before making a decision.

Form Factor

The first thing to decide when you're interested in getting a laptop is what form factor you want. The form factor includes two important numbers: **screen width** and **weight**.

Ultraportables – are the smallest, fully functioning laptops; screen width is 11-13", weight 3 lbs. or less

Budget/Value – screen width is 14-15", weight 4-8 lbs.

Desktop Replacement – screen width is 16-21", weight 8+ lbs.

Mini-PCs (aka Netbooks) – **new budget ultraportables**. These devices are sub-laptops featuring a screen size 9-10", weight ~2 lbs. They have either Win XP or Linux as OS, 1GB RAM (max), hard drive (size varies depending on type of drive – anywhere from 1 to 4GB for solid state drives and up to 160GB for HDD), Ethernet, USB ports, sound card (possible: WiFi, Bluetooth, card reader).

Tablet PCs – most similar to Budget/Value laptops in size and weight. Unique features include: **articulated screen** swivels or detaches from the base making it useful for presentations; **touch screen** for input with fingers or a stylus. Some tablet PCs have keyboards.

WWW (Websites Worth Watching)

1. www.factchecked.org – Do you believe everything you hear or read? Check out this site to discern fact from fiction.
2. <http://www.nrdc.org/health/foodmiles/> - Learn which foods are in season right now. Choose your state and the season to get a list you can refer to now and throughout the year.

Other important factors

Hard drive – 2 options: **conventional** or **solid-state**. For conventional hard drives look for 250GB; for solid state drives (SSD), look for 64GB. SSDs have an advantage in that they are light weight, consume little power, are quiet, produce little heat and are rugged in that they have no moving parts like a conventional hard disk drive (similar to USB flash drives). SSDs are more expensive and come in smaller drive capacities but if you travel often, the extra protection may be worth it.

Optical drive – **DVD, DVD-RW, Blu-ray** – opt for a DVD drive even if you don't plan on watching movies. Many software programs are written to DVD now so look for an internal DVD drive or plan on getting an external model if weight is a concern.

RAM – 2GB is optimal – it's required for Vista and will help Windows XP run smoothly.

USB ports – the more the better, at least 3.

Ethernet – standard for all notebooks to connect to modems, routers, other computers, and networks via Ethernet cables.

Wireless – most laptops have wireless capabilities built-in in the form of **802.11 b/g/n, Bluetooth or WiFi**. Higher end models will include 2 wireless connections for greater variability in getting online. You can also look for an Express Card slot or PC Card slot for attaching wireless network adapters. Other options include: Wireless USB, Wireless Wide-Area Network (WWAN) or WiMAX. The last two require data plans from wireless carriers such as Verizon or AT&T. Wireless adapters allow you to connect to printers, keyboards, mice, headsets, and other peripherals without cables.

Battery – usually 2 options - 6 cell or 9 cell. The 9 cell holds twice the charge but is heavier. 6 cell batteries in the real world will hold their charge for 3-5 hours depending on usage. 9 cell batteries will give you 5-8 hours, again depending on your usage and laptop size. Look for **Lithium batteries** over NiMH or Ni-cad which are old technologies. Remember that lighter laptops with smaller screens will consume less battery power than desktop replacement laptops.

Graphics card – look for an integrated graphics card unless you plan on playing games or have MS Vista, in which case you'll want a dedicated graphics card with at least 256MB of RAM.

Warranty – opt for 3 year, on site – Protects the laptop against hardware failures. In addition you might want to opt for accidental damage coverage for laptops which covers spills, drops, etc. Dell, for instance, has a Complete Care option.

Backup – whether it be a hardware or software solution, **backing up your data is crucial**. Make a point to get on a regular backup schedule in 2009!

Security – laptop theft and loss are highly likely. Many people opt for a **laptop lock** which allows you to lock down your laptop in a public place to a secure device such as a table or any object that is too heavy to move or is bolted to the floor. LoJack or similar web based tracking devices can also be used to protect data against loss or theft.

Optional Features

- ◆ Built-in GPS
- ◆ Built-in HDTV tuner
- ◆ External mouse, keyboard, monitor
- ◆ Fingerprint Reader
- ◆ IEEE 1394 port (Firewire)
- ◆ LED backlit screen will save on battery life