

## How to select a PC for Purchase....

Research your options, but consider...

- What will you use it for over its lifetime?
- How long do you plan to keep it (lifetime)? You may plan for 3 years but with an option to upgrade.
- Decide on software first (Applications then Operating System) and check the minimum / recommended Hardware Spec. - If you intend to multi task perhaps you should add the minimums in a cumulative fashion.

Laptop v Desktop? Do you need portability - Laptop's cost more and are harder / expensive to repair (ie Damaged screen?) / upgrade. If yes to portability then size / weight (with battery) are issues. Too large and it is not really portable - too small and the screen keyboard will / may be a problem.

Screen - What physical size, shape (4:3 or 16:9) and resolution? Cheap Physical large screens tend to have low res or other negative features such as viewing angle and brightness / contrast problems. If possible view the screen in the planned operating environment (Dark bedroom / sunlight seat in garden)!

Backup: How protected are you for your data if your Hard disk dies? If you drop a laptop the screen and Hard drive are vulnerable. Your data might be more valuable than the machine itself - consider a large (USB2?) removable disk and/or DVD / Blu-Ray re-writer.

Brand or unbranded? Brand costs more and / or are less specified. Yet brands can offer re-assurances for quality of build.

Online / Mail / Telephone order V Shop? Shops are more expensive but you can take it back. Ebay items maybe hard to return, whilst other online companies Ebuyer / Dabs / Dell do have good return policies (yet do they work in practise - read the various blogs, but remember happy customers are less likely to blog than disgruntled ones!)

Read reviews - but if you find one you like insist it is the spec. reviewed. Some companies prepare machines specially to be reviewed but then sale a slightly different spec. claiming the components are newer or the old ones are no longer made. I am a bit cynical about this.

Having said that it comes back to square one what do you plan to use it for? Most machines today do the everyday tasks well, it is more the power Apps (3D games, Cad, Sound / Video processing) that put a machine through its paces. You might think you are not going to use any of these, then you later decide to buy a Digital TV USB adaptor to record your favourite TV programs etc. All of a sudden Hard Disc space is increased and so to is the power / ability of the graphics processor!

What do I do? Exactly as above! Results... The desktop machine I am writing this on I bought 2nd hand on ebay for £45's! Yet it does what I want it to do. OK I re-used Keyboards / Monitors from my old machine and added the Hard Drives. It is a Dell, why - because their website is excellent for downloading drivers - I also had to install all software including the OS and this takes time (and dare a say a small degree of skill to get the best out of it). My eldest Son has had 2 machines recently. The first an unbranded desktop from an online company that he had read a review about and met all his software needs. He also made sure it was future proofed – and has since upgrade to the ultimate version of Vista (good / genuine / cheap licences were available online). He did encounter one problem, which was when he added a widescreen monitor – only to find his graphics card would not cope – so he bought another card which improved his machines performance and gave him true widescreen! The second is a superb Laptop, but this was more of a risk being a branded re-furbished machine off ebay (Although it was supplied with the OS - Vista - perhaps a must for this type of purchase).

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