

Laptop vs. Desktop: Which is the One for You?

When it comes time for you to buy a new computer, you may find yourself torn between a desktop computer and a laptop. There are good reasons for both, so the final decision should be based on the specific needs of your household. Consider the following factors when doing your shopping.

Price

Generally speaking, you're going to pay more for a laptop than a comparable desktop computer. Smaller components are more expensive and you will see that reflected in your price. If you utilize the computer mainly for word processing and Internet use, a laptop might be a practical choice. However, video games, video editing and even desktop publishing require additional memory, storage and possibly high-end video and sound cards. Each of these will increase the cost and the weight of the machine. The bottom line regarding price: you get more bang for the buck by investing in a desktop.

Portability

Laptops are obviously more portable than desktops, so the more important question is whether or not you need portability. If you don't have a dedicated space in your home for the computer, or if you will want to use the computer in different rooms, a laptop is an ideal option. If you plan to move the computer infrequently, a desktop is a better buy for your money.

Upgrades/Repairs

Although there are some things that can be upgraded/replaced in a laptop, it is just not as easy to keep up-to-date and in good repair as a desktop machine. This may or may not be a concern for you. As desktop prices come down, it may actually be more cost effective to purchase a new computer, rather than trying to keep an older machine current. That said, if your laptop screen cracks or someone spills juice on the keyboard, it's much more serious than similar damage on a desktop.

Ergonomics

Ergonomics refers to the design of a workspace so that it allows for a comfortable and safe experience for the user. In this case, there are specific attributes a computer workstation should have in order to minimize strain on the eyes, neck/back, wrists/hands, etc. Although it is possible to set a laptop up in such a way to be ergonomically sound, people rarely do so. It would involve, at the very least, an additional keyboard and a stationary workstation, which might defeat the purpose of having a laptop in your home.

Space

Desktop computers are getting smaller and smaller, while laptops get bigger. Still, a laptop will require a smaller footprint in your home. You can even tuck it away when you need more free counter or table space. When free space is at a premium, a laptop is a great option.

Internet Connection

Without access to the Internet, there are very few reasons, if any, to have a computer. Therefore, if you have a laptop you will need to have a router attached to your modem in order to have a wireless connection. Without a wireless router, you would have to connect your laptop directly to the modem and this would defeat the mobility advantage.

Heat is a computer's worse enemy

Because of its small size compared to a desktop's tower, there is a much greater likelihood that your laptop will be damaged by heat. The small fans and tiny vents in a laptop make the dissipation of heat from inside the case a much greater challenge. Many laptop owners will invest in an inexpensive "cooling pad" that sits underneath the case to keep the internal parts as cool as possible. Another heat producer that comes with a laptop that you will not find in a desktop is the battery pack. The charging of a battery pack generates its own heat. Some people remove the battery pack and run on house power, but this reduces the flexibility of having a computer that can be moved from location to location.