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Home Computer Buying Guide

Things to look out for when buying a new computer

Processor (CPU):

The processor is the brain of the computer - it controls how fast and efficiently your computer performs tasks.

Intel Core **i3** or **i5** - Perfect for everyday use. (**recommended**)

Intel Core i7 or i9 - Very powerful, but you'll likely be paying for power you don't need.

Tip: Try to get at least a 12th, 13th, 14th generation Intel processor or newer Intel Core Ultra models.

Alternative to **Intel Core i3** and **i5**. **AMD Ryzen 3** and **5** are perfectly fine alternatives and often match Intel performance for everyday tasks.

Storage (Hard Drive):

This is where your files, programs, and photos are stored. SSDs are faster; HDDs offer more space for the money.

256GB SSD - Fast and quiet with no moving parts. (Approx. 25,000 photos) (**recommended**)

512GB SSD - Even better if budget allows.

1TB HDD - More storage but much slower. (100,000+ photos. Boots in ~90 secs)

SSD is now the standard. If it doesn't say SSD, it's probably a slower spinning drive. **Check with the sales person that it is SSD.**

Memory (RAM):

RAM (Random Access Memory) temporarily stores data your computer is actively using. More RAM = faster and better multitasking.

8GB RAM is now the minimum you should look for. (**recommended**)

16GB RAM is ideal for multitasking or future-proofing.

Avoid 4GB machines - they're too slow for today's software.

Laptop Sizes:

Laptop screen size affects portability and comfort. Smaller = more portable, larger = better for watching or typing.

Most common are 14" and 15.6".

13" for portability; 17" still exist but are bulkier.

Touchscreens and foldable 2-in-1s are also available.



Desktop Computers:



Desktops are traditional computers with a separate screen and tower. They are powerful but take up more space.

Mainly now for gamers/professionals.

You may need to buy a screen separately.

All-in-One Computers:

These combine the computer and screen in one unit. Great for saving space and avoiding cables.

Computer and screen in one unit (from 21" up).

Fewer cables, great for tidy spaces.

Wireless keyboard/mouse sets cost about £30 if not included.



Pricing Guide (2025):

£300-£450 - Basic use.

£500-£650 - Better performance, more RAM/SSD.

£700+ - Premium models or power users.

Below £300 usually means compromises unless it's a special deal.

Manufacturers:

These are trusted brands that make reliable computers for home use.

Reliable: Dell, HP, Lenovo, Asus, Acer.

Dell is highly regarded (used by NHS and Police) and can be bought from www.dell.co.uk.

Outdated: Sony, Toshiba, IBM, Fujitsu.

Apple Computers (Macs):

Apple computers are stylish and fast, but very different from Windows and more expensive.

High quality, very different from Windows.

Steep learning curve and double the cost of a Windows PC.

Chromebooks:

These run Chrome OS instead of Windows. Fine for basic use but limited for file storage or running programs.

Run Chrome OS, **not Windows**.

Good for browsing, email, and cloud use.

Can't run Word or store photos unless online.

Warning: Don't confuse them with Windows laptops.

FINAL CHECKS

- Make sure you're buying **Windows** not Chrome OS
- Make sure you're buying a Solid State Drive (SSD)
- You don't need to buy the extra software or services that they try to sell you
- Essentially you only need to buy the device not the "extras".

Further Help:

If you need help choosing and setting up your new computer, I offer a complete setup service.

I accompany you to the stores (e.g., CURRYS), help you choose the right computer, then come to your home to set it up and transfer your data. The full process usually takes around 2 hours.

This guide is provided for general information only. Computer specifications, prices and suitability can change, and individual needs vary. Please contact John Watson for personalised advice.