

# Christmas is coming, time for a new computer?

**November 2020** by Steven Dunwell

It's that time of year again, thoughts turn to Christmas and treating yourself to a new computer, here are a few guidelines and things to look out for.

To start, think about what type of computer model would work best for you and consider the features that you would find important.

Here are a few computer styles to choose from:

**Tower:** One of the original forms of computers, the tower is one style of desktop computer that, because of its size, most people keep on the floor or near their table or desk.

**Compact desktop:** Roughly the size of a shoebox, they can easily sit on your tabletop. Compact desktops are ideal if you have limited space.

**All-in-one (AIO):** Another type of desktop computer where all the components and brains are stored in a casing within the screen, so the entire computer sits on your table.

**Laptop:** A portable computer that can weigh anywhere between 2 to 8 pounds. The screen, keyboard, mouse (in the form of a touchpad) and internal components are built into case of the laptop. Truly portable.

In addition to the type of computer you would like, also consider which features are most important to you:

**Memory:** Modern computers should have at least 4 to 8 gigabytes (GB) of memory (also known as RAM).

**Processor:** The processor or CPU is the main chip in a computer responsible for carrying out all tasks and telling all the other components in a computer what to do. The most common processors are made by Intel, which include their i3, i5, and i7 lines. The better the processor, the faster your computer can work with many applications.

**Battery life:** If you decide to choose a laptop and will you be using it away from a power socket, for example on a plane, look for a model with longer battery life (some laptops offer 10 hours or more).

**Keyboard:** If possible, try out the keyboard and make sure it feels comfortable to you, a small thing but it can make a huge difference.

**Screen:** Computer screens can range in size from 9 inches on smaller laptops up to 28-inch (and bigger) on desktop models. Consider getting a touchscreen to take advantage of all the features that Windows 10 offers.

**CD/DVD drive:** These days, CD or DVD drives are no longer provide as standard by most manufactures and are optional extras.

**Type of hard drive:** Computers use hard drives to store programs and data. In most modern computers a solid state (SSD) drive is used to store the information, if you need a computer which processes information very quickly look for one with a solid state drive.

**Wireless capability:** To connect to Wi-Fi your computer will need wireless compatibility built in.

**Included software:** Some computers come preinstalled with antivirus software or business software such as Microsoft Office. However, these tend to be short-term trial versions and you have to pay to buy the full version once the trial ends.

**A webcam:** If you need to call friends, family or you grandchildren over a service such as Skype or Zoom, it's useful to have a built-in webcam so that you see each other face to face. Most laptops today include a built-in webcam or if you want one for your tower computer, you can buy them at many local computer suppliers.