



Buying a Laptop for College – Quick Tips

While it's nearly impossible to say exactly which laptop you should buy, we have taken the time to compile a list of tips that might help inform your decision making. These are “guidelines” at best, but we hope you find them helpful.

➤ ***Go “Pro”***

We've found that the “Professional” or “Business” line of laptops tend to hold up better over time, contain better features, and ultimately present the better value in the long-run, even though they may cost more up-front. Some examples of professional lines from manufacturers include the “ProBook” and “EliteBook” series from HP, and the “Latitude” and “Vostro” series from Dell.

➤ ***Protect Your Investment***

If your budget allows, it's actually not a bad idea to choose an extended warranty that adds “accidental damage protection” for additional peace of mind. The useful lifespan of a college student's laptop seems to be about 4-5 years on average, but accidents happen—and fairly often among college students.

➤ ***Serviceability***

NWC's Technicians are certified for HP Commercial desktops and notebooks, meaning if you buy a business-line HP laptop, we can perform warranty repair work for these computers on-site, decreasing turnaround time over sending the laptop in to the manufacturer for repairs. However, even with brands for which we are not certified, we will help facilitate in-warranty repairs, and perform repairs for only the cost of parts on computers with an expired warranty.

➤ ***Size and Weight Matter***

While it may be tempting to pick out a giant 17 inch laptop, consider the fact that you may be carrying it around a lot, and that your battery life will suffer due to the larger screen. On the other hand, that cute little 10-inch “NetBook” often uses an under-powered Atom processor and has a smaller keyboard. Many students find they prefer a 14” or 15” model because it provides a good balance between size, performance, and usability.

➤ ***We Provide the Antivirus Software***

And it's free of charge! In fact, it's mandatory that you use NWC's security software in order to access our network, so don't buy anything, as it would need to be uninstalled before the computer connects to our network in the fall. If you are using the computer before school starts, you can install a free antivirus such as Avast, Avira, or AVG Free to use in the meantime.

➤ ***Microsoft Office***

Starting in 2014, Northwestern College now provides Microsoft Office 2013 Pro Plus for our students, completely free of charge! Instructions will be provided which allow the students to easily load the software on up to five of their personal devices. Mac, PC, and Android versions will be available.

➤ ***A Note about Desktop PCs:***

Desktop PCs not only last longer than laptops, on average, but they also typically present more "bang for your buck" in terms of raw processing power. However, while we don't necessarily recommend against a desktop PC, most of our students have found that they prefer a laptop for portability reasons. Therefore the focus of this document has been primarily on laptops.

➤ ***We're here for YOU!***

If you have any questions, we'd love to hear from you! Feel free to email our staff, or call our help desk at (712) 707-7333 during normal business hours.

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