

How to Buy and Dispose of a Computer

Excellent articles and web sites for buying a computer:

Noel found this excellent web site, authored by Bob Rankin:

http://www.askbobrankin.com/how_to_buy_a_computer.html

Bob Rankin, the author of the above article, has these pointers:

Windows or Mac?

Windows-based computers have 90% of the computer sales. Much competition for this large market results in low prices for Windows computers and components. Because Macs have a very small percentage of the computer sales, it may be more difficult to find technical or repair support for Macs.

If you're budget-minded, and you don't have any friends willing to help you with Mac issues, Bob Rankin (and I) suggest you go with a Windows-based PC. A good entry-level computer with monitor can be purchased for under \$500, and sometimes you even get a printer in the deal.

CPU speed

The CPU (central processing unit, or "processor" for short) is the brain of your computer. Entry-level machines start at about 1.5 GHz and are more than adequate for web surfing, email and word processing. Don't buy an old computer with a processor that has a speed specified in megahertz (MHz).

RAM memory

RAM is the temporary working memory that your computer uses to edit files. RAM is different from hard drive (file storage) space. The more RAM you have, the better your computer will perform. I recommend you have a minimum 512 megabytes (MB) of RAM for general use, but I recommend 1 gigabyte (GB) of RAM if you are going to edit digital photos.

Hard drive

The hard drive is for permanent file storage. All of your personal files, such as word processor documents, photos, music, and emails are stored here, in addition to software packages and the operating system. Most new PC's come with a hard drive that's 40 gigabytes (GB) or larger. I recommend you start with a hard drive of 80 GB or more. If you plan to keep lots of photos or music on your computer, then buy a hard drive with 160 to 300 GB of memory. If you are buying a laptop, you may be limited to 60 GB. For both desktop and laptop computers, you can buy external hard drives for additional storage.

Monitor

I recommend a 17-inch monitor for general use, or a 19-inch if you want to reduce the amount of scrolling and zooming. An LCD monitor costs more but is much lighter than a CRT monitor and takes much less space.

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Software

Most of the software you need will come pre-installed on your new PC. Windows comes with Internet Explorer (for web browsing) and Outlook Express (for email). Inexpensive PCs often do not include other software. "I suggest you purchase Microsoft Works **Suite**, which will give you MS Word, a spreadsheet similar to MS Excel, and other useful programs including Microsoft Picture It! Premium 10." It must be the **Suite** version of MS Works. Here's a web site about the products <http://www.microsoft.com/products/works/products.aspx>. The retail price on Works Suite 2005 is listed as \$99.95 with a \$20 rebate. Works Suite 2004 might still be on the shelves 'on sale' and be an even better buy. Anti-virus software is required. Either buy it with the PC or download the free AVG package. A quick check with Google found MS Works Suite 2005 at \$34.99 plus shipping, at <http://www.edirectsoftware.com/WorksSuite2005.html>. (CD only; no box). I have not used this company; I am only presenting search results.

Summary of my recommendations, based upon Bob Rankins's list:

- Windows XP-based PC with monitor for around \$500
- Processor: 1.5 GHz or better
- RAM memory: 512 MB or better
- Hard Drive: 80 GB or better
- Monitor: 17-inch or larger
- Software: Microsoft Works and AVG anti-virus

PC_World_top_cheap_PCs.pdf

<http://www.pcworld.com/reviews/article/0,aid,119494,00.asp>

guide_to_buying_a_ridiculously_cheap_PC.pdf

<http://www.savetz.com/cheappc/>

<http://www.savetz.com/cheappc/tips.php>

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Where to buy

Dell, on the web, at:

<http://www1.us.dell.com/content/default.aspx?c=us&cs=19&l=en&s=dhs>

CompUSA store, Staples, Office Depot, BestBuy

Custom built computers (called “white boxes”). At least two people in the Computer Club have gone that route.

Ehow.com web site: information on choosing a computer brand

http://www.ehow.com/how_3058_choose-computer-brand.html

Steps in choosing a computer brand:

1. Check the PC Magazine subscriber survey, published each July, for comprehensive information about reliability and customer satisfaction with individual brands.
2. Buy a brand with above-average reliability and customer satisfaction.
3. Be aware that manufacturers that have made personal computers for a shorter time will have misleadingly high scores.
4. Choose a brand that offers a three-year parts-and-labor limited warranty, if possible.
5. Select a brand that uses high-quality parts inside, unless price is your primary consideration.

Consumer Reports survey

http://www.consumerreports.org/main/detailv3.jsp?CONTENT%3C%3Ecnt_id%20=305449

Repairs are rated from lowest repair rate to highest repair rate.

Apple (lowest repair rate)

Dell

HP

IBM

Compaq

Gateway

Micron (highest repair rate)

Technical support is rated from best to worst.

Apple (best technical support)

Dell

Gateway

Sony

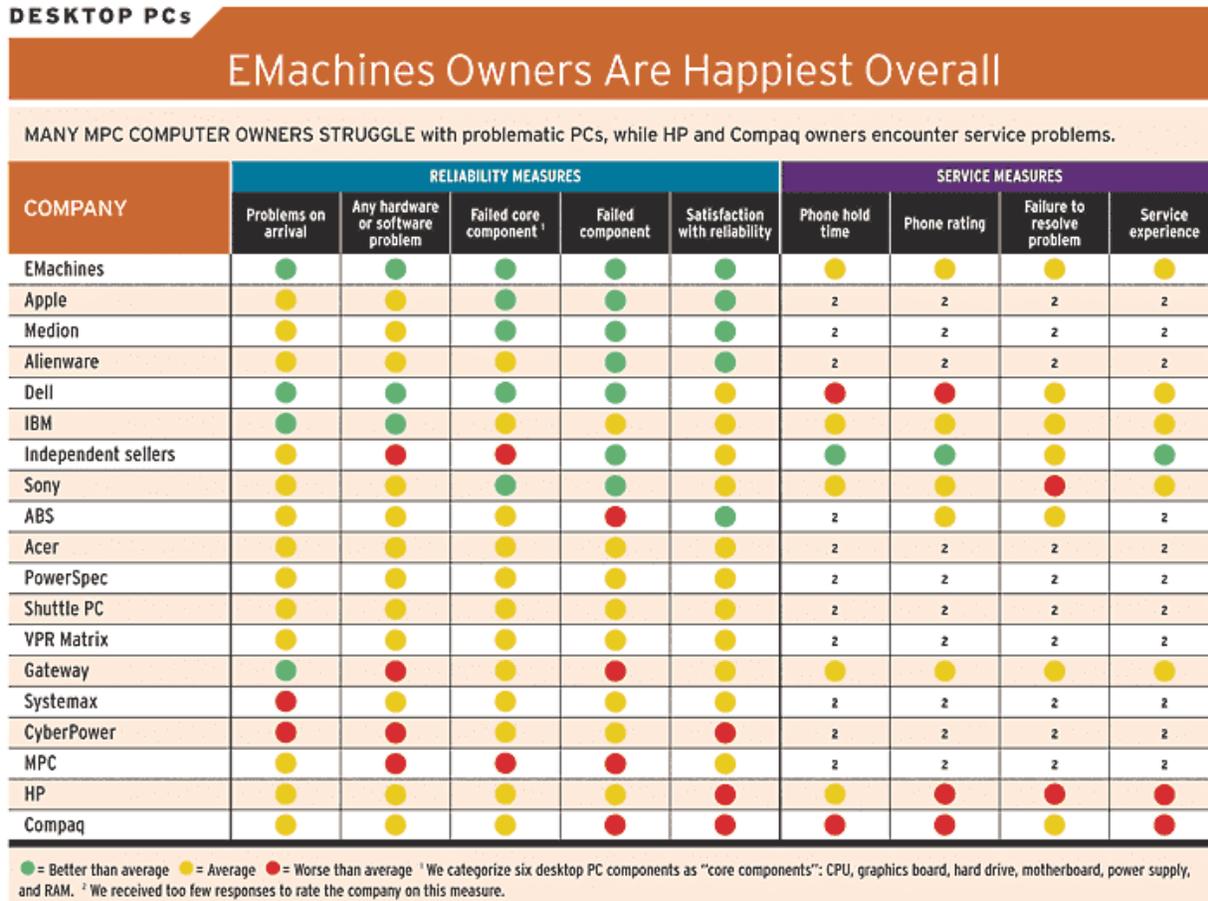
HP

Compaq (worst technical support)

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PC World survey of readers using desktop computers

<http://www.pcworld.com/reviews/article/0,aid,118514,pg,3,00.asp>



PC Magazine survey of readers

http://www.pcmag.com/print_article2/0,1217,a=158566,00.asp

Survey results, of a combination of reliability, technical support, and repairs:

<http://www.pcmag.com/article2/0,1895,1851349,00.asp>

See the above web site for the full table of survey results.

Summary of survey results, listed from most satisfied to least satisfied

Alienware (most satisfied)

Apple

Dell

EMachines

Gateway

HP/Compaq

Micron

Sony

Clone

Self-built (least satisfied)

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Excellent web sites for information on disposing of a computer:

dispose_of_PCs_Google.pdf

<http://www.google.com/search?ie=UTF-8&q=dispose%20pc>

Delaware County Residential Computer Recycling and Household Hazardous Waste Collection:

<http://www.co.delaware.pa.us/recycle/computrecycle.html>

<http://www.co.delaware.pa.us/recycle/hhw.html>

The next collection event is Friday, September 30, 2005, from 9:00am to 3:00pm, at

[Rose Tree Park](#)

1521 N. Providence Road

Media, PA 19063

Additional options for disposing of computers may be donating to Goodwill and or Easter Seals. They sometimes accept computers and peripherals. Call the donation center before bringing in a computer or monitor, to inquire if it will be accepted.