

## Buying a Computer

Are you buying a new laptop or desktop computer and wondering what specifications the computer should have to run the AristoCAT software? Well, the quick and simple answer is that any new computer that comes with Windows XP (Home, Professional or Media Edition) will have more than enough capabilities to run the AristoCAT software. However, many of the newer laptops and some desktops may not have all of the hardware features you may need.

For example, most new laptops and some desktops do not come with a built-in floppy disk drive. So you will also have to purchase an external USB floppy disk drive (or in the case of a desktop computer have a floppy drive installed by the computer store.) **Hint:** If you purchase a USB floppy drive, for about \$10 more, you can get a double speed drive (one that will read and write to a floppy diskette twice as fast.). If you use floppy diskettes a lot, the double speed will save you time.

Also most laptops do not have a built-in serial port and if you do real-time, you will also have to purchase a USB to Serial adapter. One end of a USB to Serial adapter will plug into a USB port on your computer and the other end will have the nine-pin connector for your real-time cable. And if you connect to a judge or attorneys, you will need to purchase two USB to Serial adapters, one for your writer and the other for the splitter cable to the attorneys. **Hint:** With all of these USB devices, are you running out of USB ports on your computer? If so, you can get a USB hub which typically adds four more USB ports.

Now here are some hints and ideas to consider when shopping for a new computer.

1. Most computer models have a market time of about three months before a newer model replaces it. Most the time, the newer model will have pretty much the same specifications as the older model, but with a slightly faster processor. What does this mean to you. Shop around and oftentimes you will find a model being discontinued and discounted in price. The computer will be new and will still have the same new warranty, but perhaps just a little slower processor. I have consistently see new desktops for less than \$400 (without monitor) and laptops for less than \$800. **Hint:** When buying a new desktop, you don't necessarily need a new monitor. You can always treat yourself to a new LCD monitor later.
2. Consider a factory-refurbished computer. We use factory-refurbished desktops in our office and you cannot tell them apart from a new computer and several of them are several years old and still running great. Generally they only come with a 90-day warranty, but for a small additional fee you can purchase an extended warranty. Go to the manufacturer's web site for refurbished and discontinued models.
3. Feel the need for speed? Get the fastest hard drive (7200 RPM and SATA controller) you can and then get more memory (RAM), in that order. Unless you choose to customize your computer, you will be stuck with the hard drive that comes with the computer. Do you need more RAM? If you are running several programs at once (ie: editing, printing, doing real-time and watching a DVD movie, all at the same

time) then you will want more RAM. 256Mb is the minimum, with 512Mb being ideal and 1Gb will allow you to walk on water.

4. Power User? Well, then go to the manufacturer's web site (or Costco) and customize your computer.

- For a desktop, consider dual hard drives with a RAID 1 controller. With this configuration, all of your files are written to both hard disks at the same time. What are the chances that both hard drives will fail at the same time? Slim. Does this mean you don't have to backup anymore? Of course not, what happens in the event of fire or theft (it has happened). Always keep a copy of everything off of premises.

- Remember just a short while ago when CD-RW burners were an option? Well now not only are DVD-RW (4.7Gb of storage) burners an inexpensive option, but dual layer DVD-RW (over 9Gb of storage) burners are available. There are two formats for DVD-RW burners, plus(+) and minus (-). Get a dual format DVD burner (both plus and minus. ie: DVD+/-RW).

5. Will you regularly be transferring files between your new computer and your old one? Then consider also purchasing a USB flash drive (see the information on our web site about flash drives.)

In summary, any new computer with Windows XP will run the AristoCAT software just fine. But you may also have to purchase a USB floppy disk drive and a USB serial \adapter. Happy shopping.

**Note:** We sell new Toshiba laptops and include a USB floppy drive and USB serial adapter in the purchase price. If your support contract is current we also preload the most current version of the AristoCAT software. Call for current prices and specifications.