


A laptop by any other name is a laptop. Unless it's a tablet. Or a gaming laptop. Or a workstation. Or a hybrid. Or a 2-in-1. Now that we bring it up, all laptops are not made the same. They can be modified or configured to match any need, and can be as unique as the consumer who buys them.

What do you need your laptop for, some gaming? Maybe some light video editing (or even some heavy video editing)? Are you an art or design student who cannot live without Photoshop, or a photographer on the go who needs a laptop as a kind of digital assistant? Let's take a look at some scenarios and give you a simple breakdown that will help you select the right laptop for you (or as a gift for someone else).

Before we get into the nitty gritty, this chart will help you quickly determine the right laptop for your needs: [\\_](#)



## THE POWER USER

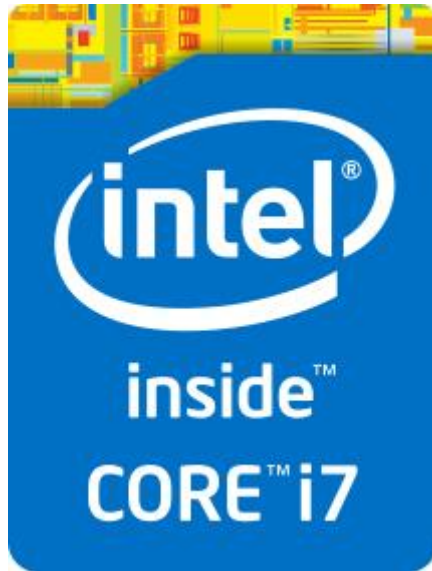
Laptop Model	Processor	RAM	Storage	Graphics
ZBOOK F2Q82UT	2.7 GHz i7	32GB	750GB	NVIDIA QUADRO
GS60 GHOST-003	2.5 GHz i7	16GB	1TB	NVIDIA GeForce

These are the alpha males/females. The doing-crunches-while-eating-a-scone super users; the laptop users you see on buses or trains who use their commute to get a report finished, or a

spreadsheet filled—not to watch last night’s *Scandal* while falling asleep. The laptop that matches these A-type personalities has to be lean and mean, just like their owners. They want power, not play time, and they’re looking for a processor that can handle PowerPoint presentations, Excel spreadsheets, and high-end database applications. Although they don’t necessarily need a high-end graphics solution, they just might want to look at an Autocad schematic, so they should have a machine that can handle it.

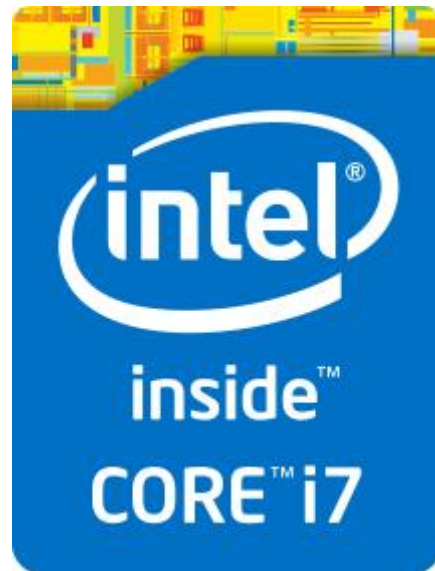
The [HP Zbook F2Q82UT Mobile 17.3" Workstation](#) has a little bit of all of that. At 17.3" with Full HD 1080p resolution, it can handle your high-end video playback, but it also includes an NVIDIA Quadro K4100M with 4GB of dedicated GDDR5 RAM—a powerhouse of a card for a mobile workstation. Cut some video, page through high-res digital photos, or view PowerPoint in all its glory. The 2.7GHz Intel® Core™ i7 processor gets things going with power to spare, and the RAM is more than you’ll need, with 32GB of 1600 MHz DDRL3. For storage, a standard 750GB 7200 rpm spindle drive is complemented by a super-fast 512GB solid-state drive. It harks back to its old-school roots with a SuperMulti DVD drive, but it brings things a generation forward with Thunderbolt connectivity.





For power users looking for something a little more portable, the black [GS60 Ghost-003 15.6" Notebook Computer](#), from MSI, sports a smaller 15.6" screen, but a 4th-generation Haswell Intel Core i7 processor. With Full HD resolution, the MSI uses an NVIDIA GeForce GTX 860M graphics controller with 2GB of dedicated RAM. It also upgrades the storage with a 1TB 7200 rpm hard drive, but then goes back down with a 128GB solid-state drive. It also cuts the RAM in half, to 16GB—still good, but not the 32GB the HP mobile workstation offers. While it does not offer a Thunderbolt port, it does provide a mini DisplayPort jack and 802.11 ac Wi-Fi. The bottom-line tradeoff? The MSI Ghost has a battery that will last longer, thanks to the Haswell processor.





## THE ARTIST



MACBOOK PRO  
RETINA



Processor	2.4GHz i7
RAM	16GB
Storage	1.128TB
Graphics	NVIDIA Ge

ZBOOK  
F2P51UT



Processor	2.7 GHz i7
RAM	16GB
Storage	782GB
Graphics	NVIDIA Qu

Okay, so you haven't graduated to power player just yet. You're on your way. And you're going to get to that status with a degree in art (which is like preparing for a career as a surgeon by playing the Milton Bradley game, Operation). Right now, you need a laptop that can handle your drawings, design work, and digital photographs.

Let's start with a standard. The [15.4" Apple MacBook Pro with Retina Display](#) is a good starting point. It uses a 2.5GHz Crystalwell Intel Core i7 processor, along with 16GB of onboard 1600 MHz DDR3L RAM. You're going to want to invest in an alternate peripheral hard drive, as the 512GB PCI-e flash-based storage on this unit wouldn't hold all of Van Gogh's letters to his brother, Theo, much less loads of high-res artwork or photos. The 2880 x 1800 resolution LED backlit IPS display is a game breaker, however, as is 802.11 ac Wi-Fi and Thunderbolt 2 connectivity. That's Thunderbolt 2, as in 20 Gbps of bi-directional transfer speeds. It also includes a dedicated NVIDIA GeForce GT750M graphics controller with 2GB of dedicated RAM—an oddity for such a slim laptop.



Not to be outdone, HP once again steps up with a mobile workstation that may match or exceed those specs. The [HP ZBook 15 F2P51UT 15" Mobile Workstation](#) doesn't offer Retina stats on resolution, but the DreamColor display is expertly calibrated for use with design programs and applications where color accuracy is a requisite. The 2.7GHz Haswell Intel Core i7 processor is ready to handle the hard stuff, and the battery life (like the MacBook) is something to bark about—the Haswell expands the battery life in your unit in ways the last generation of processors could not. The 750GB of hard-drive space and 32GB SSD seem like a lot, but again, invest in additional storage. It's not enough for most art projects. 16GB of RAM is nice, more would be nicer, but it matches up with the MacBook. The graphics controller is a dedicated NVIDIA Quadro K2100M with 2GB of RAM, and although I'm not going to compare benchmarks here, trust me, they're close enough in performance to make it an even split. As for extras, the absence of Thunderbolt 2 brings this down a notch. The only other amenity here is the inclusion of a Blu-ray player, but what are you doing watching Blu-ray movies when you have classes to attend? Oh, yeah, art student. I forgot. Everything is about how you view the world. OK.



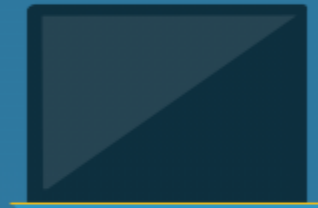




## THE GAMER



GS60  
GHOST PRO



Processor	2.5 GHz i7
RAM	16GB
Storage	1TB
Graphics	NVIDIA GeForce

G750JH-  
DB71



Processor	2.7 GHz i7
RAM	24GB
Storage	1.256TB
Graphics	GeForce GTX

I am an avid gamer. I love my Xbox One and my PS4, but I also love playing *Bioshock Infinite* on my PC. I get it. PC gaming will always be superior to console gaming. Except console

gaming is more convenient. No driver downloads, updating cards, or weird conflicts with your .dll library. So when you're ready to rock out on a gaming PC, you want it to be as easy to manage as your set-top box.



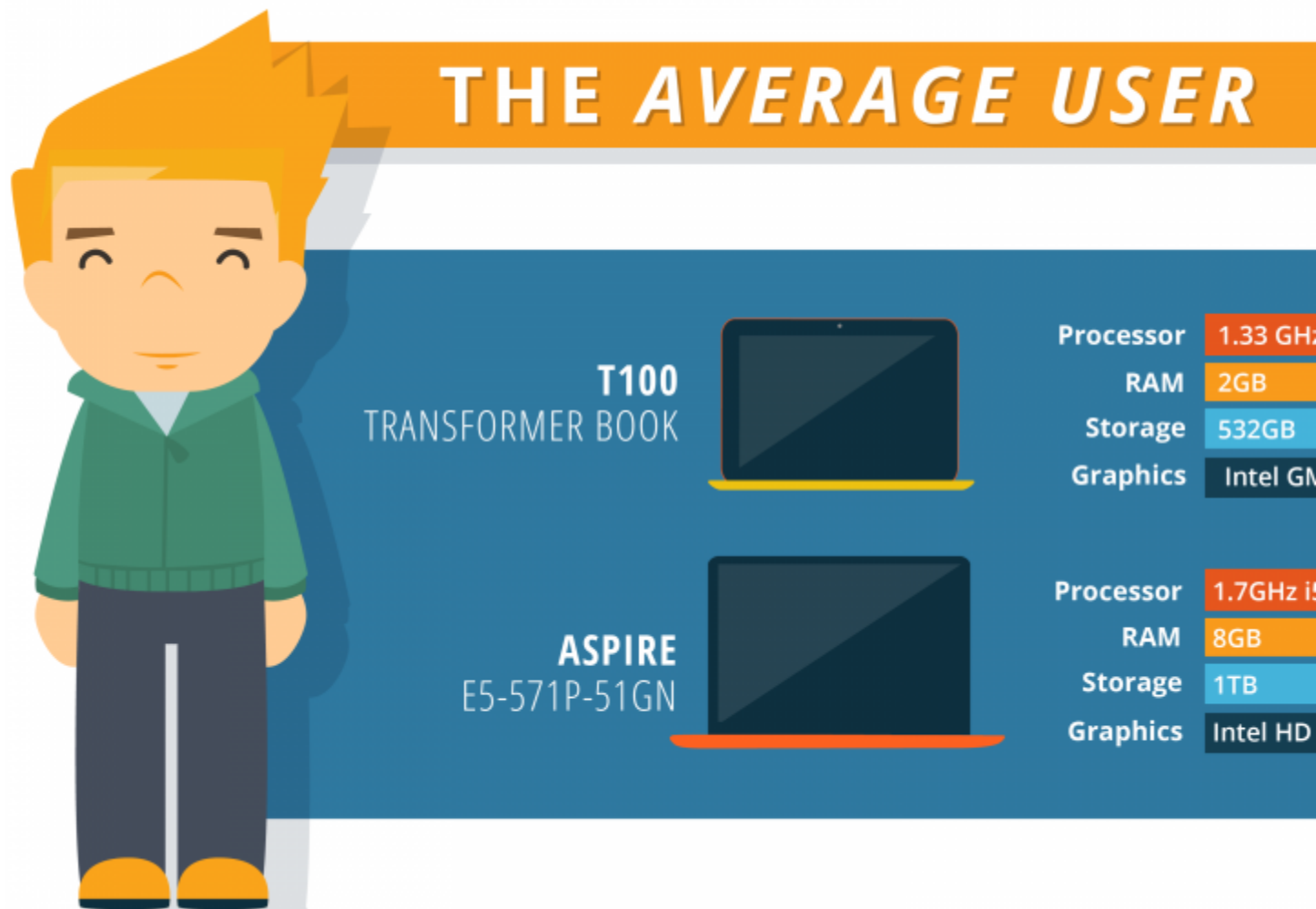


MSI brings on the thunder with the [GS60 Ghost Pro series](#) laptop. The GS60 made our power-user list above, and this one makes the gamer list, kind of. It's not what this laptop can do as much as what it's capable of doing. Hard stats: it has a 2.5GHz Intel Core i7 4710HQ processor, which is capable of getting up to 3.5GHz with Turbo Boost, and includes a respectable 16GB of RAM. It's a 15.6" Full HD 1920 x 1080p eDP wide-angle display, but it can support up to three external displays. It can also support 4K displays via the HDMI output. It comes standard with a 1TB 7200 rpm hard drive, but it *can* be configured with two M2 solid-state drives and a high-capacity hard drive, for RAID speeds that are 11 times faster than a normal hard drive. It can do this, and it can do that—that's more "cans" than a pantry can hold. What it does come with that you might consider a deal maker, is the NVIDIA GeForce GTX 970M graphics controller with 6GB of DDR5 RAM, which can showcase some pretty impressive graphics. Also, the MSI SteelSeries backlit keyboards are fully customizable for a variety of showy color options, if that's your thing. The extras here include its light weight and size—only 4.2 pounds and under an inch high when closed.





But what's this over here? Another powerhouse in PC laptop gaming, ASUS, offers the Republic of Gamers series, with the [G750JH-DB71 17.3" Notebook Computer](#). For starters, it's a 17.3" Full HD 1920 x 1080 resolution screen, with an NVIDIA GeForce GTX 780M with 4GB of RAM doing the real graphics work. Under the hood is a 2.4GHz Intel Core i7-4700HQ 4th-generation Haswell processor and 24GB of 1600 MHz DDR3L RAM (now that's what *I'm* talking about). For storage, there are three hard drives in this laptop: a 1TB 5400 rpm spindle drive, and two 128GB solid-state drives. Not much in the way of extras, unless you count the Blu-ray optical drive—but this does come with *Assassin's Creed IV: Black Flag*, and as you know, gamers always love a freebie.



As in, the rest of you. These are people who don't really care about flashy graphics or powerful processors. These people couldn't care less if the Haswell processor in the laptop extends your battery time; they just want a laptop that does the basics: web-surfing, web-shopping and Facebook updates. They might want a laptop to put in the kitchen to keep them company when cooking, or occasionally get in touch with a loved one via Skype. They are your grandparents, your soccer moms and dads, your technically oblivious consumers who still want to stay connected to the rest of us. Some of them may have aspirations to be power users or designers or gamers, but for now, they want a crisp screen and a computer that doesn't lag, and maybe a nice piece of tilapia for dinner.

They make mobile devices for these people. They are not powerful laptops, but they are dedicated to bringing the uninitiated into the technical fold. Like the [ASUS T100 Series Transformer Book](#). I love suggesting the Transformer Book T100, because I had one for a long time and it did an admirable job of keeping up with my writing workload. The Transformer Book is, in fact, a hybrid, meaning it can be a tablet when you need a tablet and a faux laptop when you need a faux laptop (the top detaches from the keyboard dock). It's powered by an Intel Baytrail quad-core processor; not a workhorse by any stretch of the imagination, but a nifty little processor that can handle word processing and light spreadsheet work like a pro. The 1.33GHz

processor speeds up and ramps down according to usage, so you may find it slightly faster or slower than you would expect, depending on what you're doing. It also contains 2GB of DDR3 memory (not upgradeable, and about the maximum a tablet like this can handle). The 10.1" HD (1366 x 768 resolution) touch display is not something that can handle high, middle, or low-end graphics with any aplomb. So don't expect to run anything resembling games or Photoshop on this. What does set it apart from earlier iterations of the Transformer line is a hefty 500GB hard drive and 32GB solid-state drive (earlier models only had flash memory and a memory card slot). Other amenities of this Windows 8.1 laptop include 11-hour battery life and full version of Microsoft Office.



The [Aspire E5-571P-51GN 15.6" Multi-Touch Notebook Computer](#) may not be a hybrid, but it has a few statistics that make it great for casual users. A respectable 4th-generation Intel Core i5-4210U processor and 8GB of DDR3L RAM will ensure you can use this for all your basics: word processing, web browsing, and social media, but the low-end 1366 x 768 HD graphics and integrated Intel HD Graphics 4400 GPU will mean you'll want to stay away from the heavy

graphics stuff. It includes a 15.6" LED backlit touchscreen display, 1 TB hard drive, and 802.11 ac Wi-Fi. These extras make it a more powerful machine than the Transformer book—but you'll pay a little extra for that power.







## THE *STUDENT*



MACBOOK  
AIR



Processor	1.4 GHz
RAM	4GB
Storage	256GB
Graphics	Intel HD

X555LA-  
DB71



Processor	2.0 GHz i
RAM	8GB
Storage	1TB
Graphics	Intel HD

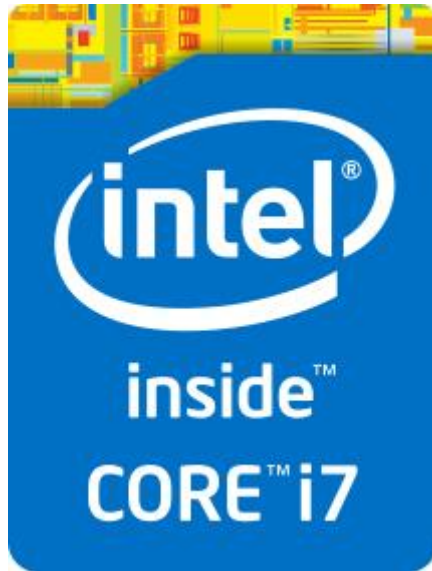
The last group for whom you may be hunting are the students in your life. Whether it's your little boy or girl, all grown up and hitting the books until Spring Break arrives, or a loved one getting ready to go back to school and earn a degree (until Spring Break arrives), these two laptops should be somewhere on your list.

The [Apple 13.3" MacBook Air Notebook Computer](#) (early 2014 model) is light, portable, and efficient. It has a more-than-suitable 4th-generation 1.4GHz Intel Core i5 Haswell processor, 4GB of RAM, and a 256GB PCIe-based solid-state drive. It uses a slightly sturdier Intel HD Graphics 5000 GPU but, for the most part, is still incapable of running anything heavier than *Cut the Rope*. It has an impressive 1440 x 900 native resolution display, and a Thunderbolt port, along with 802.11 ac Wi-Fi, but its lack of touchscreen seems, well, out of touch with today's laptops. But if you've been hearting your iPhone since it first came out, you may be pulled into the Apple tractor beam unwittingly. You have no say in the matter. These are not the 'droids you're looking for. Move on.



For a little less scratch, you can also consider the [ASUS X555LA-DB71 15.6" Notebook Computer](#), which keeps it real with a 2.0GHz Intel Core i7 Haswell processor, 8GB of RAM, and a 1TB 5400 rpm hard drive. The 15.6" screen only sports an HD 1366 x 768 resolution, and an integrated Intel HD 4400 GPU—again, not a gaming machine. It does include a SuperMulti DVD burner, but that's not enough to match the Thunderbolt connectivity of the Apple MacBook.





So there you have it—quick, down-and-dirty assessments of laptops with easy-to-read charts to make your comparisons. Certainly not the whole gamut of laptops available, but great choices for the specific scenarios we mentioned. If you have any questions, make sure to write in—I'll get to them ASAP, I promise.

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