

Title:

Laptop Accessories You Can't Live Without

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Summary:

Now that you've spent several hundred dollars or more on your laptop, it's time to look into accessories and add-ons that you shouldn't be caught without. Some are necessary for your computer's well being, while others simplify your life through ergonomics or another means of simplifying things.

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Keywords:

Article Body:

Now that you've spent several hundred dollars or more on your laptop, it's time to look into accessories and add-ons that you shouldn't be caught without. Some are necessary for your computer's well being, while others simplify your life through ergonomics or another means of simplifying things.

You could spend a few hundred dollars on these accessories and add-ons, but that's okay. Depending on how you use your laptop, this additional investment could actually make you more productive, thus giving you an increased earning potential - or at least a little more free time to spend with the family.

- Internet security software. This is vital for high-speed connections, especially those of the wireless variety. They are the most vulnerable to hackers and data thieves, so pick a reliable and trustworthy security suite.

Firewalls or all-in-one package products are both good options, but if you go with the former you should complement it with antivirus and spyware protection. Either way, you're reducing intrusions of all kinds, which will give you more freedom to enjoy your portable Internet connection.

- Data backup solutions. The CD burner that came with your laptop is a good way to save multiple copies of your important data, but there are faster and more

portable options.

One option is to buy and use a flash drive. Most use USB 2.0, which means that they save and retrieve data as fast as you need them to read and write. They're basically tiny hard drives that can fit into your pocket or on a keychain.

Another good choice is an external hard drive. This can be left at home or the office so that you can back up all of your data once a week or so and leave it there. You'll appreciate not having all of your data in the same place if something catastrophic, like a flood or fire, happens.

- Accident coverage insurance. Okay, so YOU might be the world's most cautious and conscientious person, who's never had any sort of accident with any electronic product, but what about the people around you? Not everything is within your control, but with accident insurance you won't have to worry about the consequences of your daughter-in-law accidentally knocking your brand-new laptop off the kitchen counter.

Most insurance is offered when you purchase your computer, but third-party coverage can be found for a reasonable price. Do Web searches or ask your laptop-enabled friends and coworkers: odds are someone will know what you need.

- Warranty coverage. This should be purchased when you get the laptop. It'll cover just about anything that goes wrong, from broken keyboards to display problems.

Before you buy the warranty, though, you should make sure that you are familiar with its terms as well as any options that you might have. It's important to know how long the manufacturer's original warranty is in place as well as what differs between its coverage and that of the extended warranty that you're thinking of buying. You should also know what you'll have to go through to make a claim as well as how much, if anything, you'll have to pay of your own money.

- A security system if you travel with the laptop. These can be found at any computer store or online. The price range is very broad, so research before you buy. You need to know exactly what sort of locking/security system you need to keep your laptop from being stolen. It's worth the investment even if your insurance covers theft. Even if you have replacement coverage, your warranty won't replace the data on the stolen computer. It's best to protect it as much as possible.

- A padded travel case. This is important if you travel anywhere with the laptop. It helps protect it from exterior scratches and provides a little

padding if you accidentally drop it. This won't do much good if it falls down eight flights of stairs and hits a cement floor at the bottom, of course, but a smaller and less horrifying accident can be made less traumatic with a little padding. And with the case, you also have a convenient place to store other computer stuff, like your extra battery and the charger.

- A cooling pad if you intend to use your laptop as an actual laptop. If your computer is on your lap, odds are you'll have nicely toasted upper legs when you're finished. Even with today's technology, portable computers can become very warm to say the least. A cooling pad or stand will provide a buffer between your legs and the computer. It'll also give you another sweet accessory to brag about in computer forums and company meetings.

- An external keyboard to plug in to a USB port. This is important if you're stationed in, say, your home office with the laptop and want to do lots of typing. Most laptop keyboards can become uncomfortable after long-time use, but a "regular" ergonomic keyboard will offer plenty of comfort. You'll also have the advantage of picking out an external keyboard with Internet hot keys and other features that the laptop's model won't give you. And your laptop's keyboard will last longer if you don't use it when you can use the external one.

- Better yet, invest in a docking station so that your laptop can become a desktop when you're at home or in the office. You'll have to buy a desktop monitor to go with it, but you'll appreciate not having to hunch over the laptop the entire workday. You can also position the desktop monitor basically wherever you want for improved comfort and visibility. Or, if you're busy with an online poker tournament when you're supposed to be working, you can arrange your docked desktop so that your boss can't see it.

- Retractable USB cables. These are great for people who don't want to trip over a tangle of cords when they have three or four USB devices hooked up to the computer. These cords are also very easy to store (say, in your nice leather traveling case) because they compact easily.

- A better battery. This is especially important for traveling users. Many of the batteries that come with laptops will only work for 45 minutes to one hour. Invest in a larger, better battery so that you won't have to run around in circles looking for a power outlet.

With the above accessories, however, you'll be able to relax and play or work with your computer - instead of having to constantly worry about what-if situations. There are countless other accessories on the market, with new ideas and technologies emerging almost every day. You should keep up to date with

trends and new designs by visiting computer forums or reading computer magazines on a fairly regular basis. You might find some new accessory that you can't live without.