

Title:

Buying A Laptop On A Budget - Five Important Things That You Must Consider First

Word Count:

838

Summary:

Laptop computers are getting smaller and more advanced every day. Fortunately, prices have been coming down as well. While that is great news for consumers, it doesn't change the fact that for most shoppers, a new laptop represents a large purchase - and most large purchases are made on a strict budget. Fortunately, it's fairly simple to get the most bang for your buck while making sure that your new laptop has all the features that you need and doesn't become quickly outdate...

Keywords:

laptop, laptops, notebook, notebooks, dell, alienware, toshiba, hp, apple, networking, buy

Article Body:

Laptop computers are getting smaller and more advanced every day. Fortunately, prices have been coming down as well. While that is great news for consumers, it doesn't change the fact that for most shoppers, a new laptop represents a large purchase - and most large purchases are made on a strict budget. Fortunately, it's fairly simple to get the most bang for your buck while making sure that your new laptop has all the features that you need and doesn't become quickly outdated. The key to buying a laptop on a budget is weighing needs versus wants in five main areas: size, screen, GPU, CPU, and RAM.

Size

For most shoppers laptop size is a matter of personal preference, but when buying a laptop on a budget, size can be a major deal-breaker because a specific size preference may not be in the budget - no matter which features you give up. The most economical laptops weigh in the 6- to 8-pound range. Laptops outside of this range are usually specifically designed to meet other criteria (like an ultra portable at 3 pounds, or a desktop replacement that rivals the power of a desktop), and thus they carry a premium. Stick to the mid-sized laptops, and your small budget will stretch that much further for the other components.

Screen

Screen size and laptop size are fairly dependent on each other, so if you stick to mid-sized laptops, there won't be many options for the LCD screen. While that may not seem like great news, the 15-inch screen that comes on most mid-sized laptops is more than adequate for most uses; and if this is not sufficient, then for stationary usage it is usually possible to attach a standard desktop monitor to the laptop to increase your screen real estate. If you have a desktop already (as most people do), you probably have a very capable monitor already on your desk; make sure to confirm with your retailer that using a separate monitor is possible on the laptop that you have chosen.

GPU

The video card (or GPU - graphics processing unit) is the component that actually renders the images that appear on the screen. There are generally only two options for this component, but when buying a laptop on a budget you really only have one choice - shared video. Now certainly the other option, a dedicated video card, produces far better results under demanding conditions; but shared video, where the video card actually shares the RAM of the computer versus having its own, is perfectly fine for daily use and is certainly more affordable. It is important to note that a shared video card generally will not play current computer video games, so if that is important to you, it's probably best to wait until you have more money; or instead use your laptop budget to buy a more affordable desktop that can handle playing a graphics-intensive game.

CPU

The CPU is one area where you can really save some money! Don't get caught up in the hype of the newest processor on the market; it's easy to feel pressure to buy the latest and greatest technology so your laptop isn't obsolete the day after purchase, but with the central processing unit, or CPU, you can safely go a few steps down from the current processor to save some major cash. You likely won't even notice that you have made a compromise, and this will give you some money to put into other areas of the laptop.

RAM

The RAM, or random access memory, gives your laptop thinking power. If you have ever experienced delays when accessing programs, or annoying freezes when trying to do too many things at once, you have witnessed a computer begging for more RAM. Mid-range laptops often come with 256 MB of RAM. With this was once sufficient, 1 GB is now more suitable due to more advanced applications. But don't worry - RAM is one area that you can usually upgrade later. If adding the

RAM to your system during the shopping process doesn't make economic sense, you might consider buying more RAM later either online or at a local box store - simply make your laptop purchase now, and save up to add more RAM later. Either way, adding more RAM will generally give you a better overall experience, and you won't feel as if you bought a budget-conscious laptop after all.

The laptop-buying experience should be fun and exciting, but if you are buying on a budget, unless you shop carefully you could wind up feeling as if you bought an inferior, outdated product. It's easy to avoid these feelings by simply making sure that you get the things that you really need, and avoiding some of the more expensive but nonessential 'wants.' Most importantly, take your time, do your research, and feel very comfortable with your final purchase. A budget-priced laptop can take you well into the future, without leaving you with an empty wallet!