

The Ultimate Laptop Buyers Guide



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About the Publisher

The Geeks Club (TGC) actively covers all news, developments, reviews, tips, hacks, information about Android phones and operating system, iPhone and the iOS operating system, iPad, Tablet PC's, Windows Phones and Gadgets in general. Over the time TGC moved on to cover Blogging and SEO tips, Socaill media, Computing tips and Web tips also on TGC to achieve their goal of making it a central information portal for geeks and general IT users.

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The Guide

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A. Introduction

I do indeed write on the road. My laptop goes with me everywhere.

Nora Roberts

Today's world is associated with a very fast pace in almost every aspect of life. And with the world being a 'Global Village', communication on the go is of primary concern. Every individual loves to connect to the World Wide Web while in motion rather than being stationary. With life changing in seconds, why lag behind? This where technology devices like smart phones, tablets, laptops etc. come handy and help in easing the life around.

In today's world, a laptop is considered as man's best friend. It can always be carried along as a second shadow and will willfully obey your orders without complaining. It helps in keeping you updated round the clock and its popularity can be widely seen in the tremendous consumer shift from desktops to laptops. It is through a laptop that you can challenge your tech-rival on the go by constructing and proving him your point through apps or coding etc., it is through a laptop that you can enjoy the full functionalities of a desktop sans a huge CPU, it is a laptop that keeps you connected and updated on the go.

Every laptop owner should work on a laptop that suits exactly him and not the market. Ever suffered from inferiority complex when the passenger beside you on the flight takes out his magnificent Dell XPS while you work on your Lenovo S Laptop? Ever thought that the laptop models used by antagonists in Die Hard 4.0 are the best ones in the industry and suit you the most? If yes, then you are WRONG! Because a laptop bought specifically suits the owner and may not be the best one for others.

A busy working executive may have a technology-oriented laptop while a college guy may sport a laptop rich in multimedia features. Both of them are correct in their laptop choice but the question is: **Are you correct in YOUR choice?** *If no; if you are still confused about which laptop to buy in this rich and vast market; if you want to know which laptop suits you the best, then read on. This eBook is especially for you.*



B. Features

A laptop has few important features which differentiate it from others and will help you tone down your laptop list. They are:

- Processor
- RAM
- Drives
- Screen Graphics
- Sound
- Battery Life
- Weight and Size
- Networking
- Additional Features

Processor:

Laptop computer processors are quite different from their desktop counterparts. The primary reason being the limited amount of power they need to run on when the laptop is not plugged into a power outlet. Less the power the laptop uses, longer will the system be able to run off the battery. To achieve this, manufacturers employ a large number of tricks namely CPU scaling where a processor scales its power usage (and thus performance) to the tasks at hand. Based on Processor format, there are five distinct categories into which laptop systems can be classified into:

Budget laptops, Ultra portables, Netbooks, Thin and light and desktop replacement

Budget laptops provide a functional portable computer at a low price point. They usually use a wide range of processors. Budget laptops are capable of performing basic computing tasks like web browsing, email, word processing and presentation, DVD playback etc. However they may not perform well at the gaming and high-end graphics applications sector. A few processors to look for in this range are:

- *AMD Athlon II N320 and Higher*
- *AMD Phenom II N830 and Higher*
- *AMD Turion II P520 and Higher*
- *Intel Core i3-330M and Higher*
- *Intel Pentium Dual-Core P6000 and Higher*

Ultraportable laptops are designed to be as light and compact as possible but yet powerful enough for the most common business applications and basic computing tasks. Such a genre of laptop is generally preferred by the travelling class people for whom portability is a major decision factor. A few processors found under this classification are:

- *AMD Athlon II Neo K125 and Higher*
- *AMD E-350 and Higher*
- *AMD Turion II Neo K625 and Higher*
- *AMD V105*
- *Intel Core i3-430UM and Higher*
- *Intel Core i5-520UM and Higher*
- *Intel Core i7-620UM and Higher*
- *Intel Pentium Dual-Core SU5400 and Higher*

Netbooks, a new classification of systems, tend to be a bit smaller than ultra-portables and a lot cheaper and they provide limited functionality through the removal of a few features. The processors here utilize very little power but are less performance-oriented. They are best suited as mobile internet systems than as full blown laptops. Below are common processors found in the netbooks:

- *AMD Athlon II Neo K325 and Higher*
- *AMD C-30 and Higher*
- *AMD E-240 and Higher*
- *AMD Turion II Neo K625 and Higher*
- *Intel Atom N550 and Higher*
- *Intel Atom Z550 and Higher*

A Thin and light laptop can perform any basic computing task in a satisfactorily manner. However these systems vary widely in terms of their price and performance but tend to perform a lot better than their counterparts in the value category. They are quite high on the portability factor too.

- *AMD Phenom II N830 and Higher*
- *AMD Turion II P520 and Higher*
- *Intel Core i3-330M and Higher*
- *Intel Core i5-520M and Higher*
- *Intel Core i7-720QM and Higher*

The Desktop replacement systems are designed to be a complete system that are equal in processing power and capability compared to a desktop system but available in a mobile package. They give the user the complete desktop experience while being portable at the same time. Desktop replacement systems are quite costly given their advantages over other contemporaries.

- *AMD Phenom II N930 and Higher*
- *AMD Phenom II X620 and Higher*
- *Intel Core i5-520M and Higher*
- *Intel Core i7-820QM and Higher*
- *Intel Core i7 Extreme i7-920XM and Higher*

I work on a laptop specifically so I can work in cafes and pretend I'm part of the human world.
Jonathan Lethem

Ram:

RAM or Random Access Memory is another important sector which determines the performance of a laptop. People tend to buy a laptop with the highest possible RAM with the notion that the amount of RAM memory is proportional to better functioning of the laptop. But the question here is: ***Is that amount of RAM memory apt for your needs? Or are you paying for more than what you actually require?*** All applications and Operating Systems have certain 'minimum' and 'recommended' specifications for RAM memory. Typically one would want to have more RAM than the highest minimum and ideally at least as much as the highest listed recommended requirement.

As per today's needs, the minimum amount of RAM storage a laptop should possess is 2GB. For optimal performance, 2GB is preferred while 8GB of RAM provides you the best of services from your applications and programs. However, if your laptop usage comprises mostly of basic computing tasks, 4GB of RAM is the best bet. For gamers playing high-end graphical games and artists working on advanced 3D technology etc., 8GB of RAM is suitable.

Many new laptops have switched to the faster DDR3 memory specification but there are a few budget based laptops that still use DDR2 memory. In addition to the type of memory installed, the speed of the memory also makes a difference to the performance. Below is a listing in the order of fastest to slowest memory types:

- *DDR3 1600 MHz*
- *DDR3 1333 MHz*
- *DDR3 1066 MHz*
- *DDR2 800 MHz*
- *DDR3 800 MHz*
- *DDR2 667 MHz*
- *DDR2 533 MHz*
- *DDR2 400 MHz*

So what is your checklist here? Firstly, find the maximum amount of memory available on the desired laptop. This helps you in calculating the upgrade potential the system has. For example, 4GB of memory can be configured as either a single 4GB module or two 2GB modules. The single memory module allows for better upgrade potential because by adding another module you are gaining more memory without sacrificing any current

Many laptops today have a small door on the underside of the system with access to the memory module slots. Through this, you can just purchase a memory upgrade and install it yourself without much trouble. A system without an external door or panel for memory access would require installation by a service technician leading to additional expense.

Drives:

Optical Drives

Imagine this: You are a very big Harry Potter fan and one day your friend gives you all the Harry Potter film series in DVD format. To your dismay you find out that your system doesn't have a DVD drive? What do you do? You either connect an external drive or change your laptop. However if you were a bit careful while buying the laptop in the first place, you would have saved time on this changing or connecting stuff and instead would have been enjoying Harry Potter and The Deathly Hallows on your comfortable couch with a chilled drink and popcorn.

So the question arises: ***What type of a drive should you prefer on your laptop?*** A basic CD-ROM drive would be sufficient for loading applications and playing audio CDs but one of the great advantages laptops carry with them is their ability to be used as portable DVD players. Moreover latest application discs are now shipped only in the DVD format so a DVD Drive is a must nowadays.

CD-RW (Re-writable) drives are not common these days due to the low cost of DVD burners. DVD writers are pretty much standard in the market these days for laptops. They can fully read and write both CD and DVD formats. This makes them extremely useful for those looking to watch DVD movies on the go or even editing together their own DVD movies. Dual layer drives have about twice the storage capacity (8.5GB) over traditional DVD media (4.7GB). Some drives also support burning labels directly to compatible media like Labelflash and LightScribe.

According to latest market standards, a Blu-ray drive has become the de-facto high definition standard with more and more laptops beginning to sport them. Blu-ray combo drives have all the features of a traditional DVD burner with the ability to play Blu-ray movies while Blu-ray writers add the ability to burn lots of data or video to the BD-R and BD-RE media.

A quick table below details the optical drive options and the tasks they are best suited for:

<i>Basic computing with DVD Playback</i>	<i>DVD-ROM (Production Discontinued)</i>
<i>CD Recording with DVD Playback</i>	<i>CD-RW/DVD Combo (Production Discontinued)</i>
<i>DVD Recording</i>	<i>DVD Writer</i>
<i>HD Video Playback</i>	<i>Blu-ray Combo</i>
<i>HD Video Recording</i>	<i>Blu-ray Writer</i>

However it should also be noted that laptop drives are generally much slower than the drives found in desktop systems. Optical drives play a more important role when purchasing a laptop PC. DVD burners are pretty much a standard feature supporting the dual layer media. Direct labeling features such as Label Flash and LightScribe are available. Blu-ray is available for viewing high definition video but is still fairly uncommon.

Hard Disk Drives

A hard disk drive (HDD) is a non-volatile, random access device for digital data. It features rotating rigid platters on a motor-driven spindle within a protective enclosure. Data is magnetically read from and written to the platter by read/write heads that float on a film of air above the platters.

A hard disk drive (HDD) is the mechanism that controls the positioning, reading, and writing of the hard disk, which furnishes the largest amount of data storage for the system. Although the hard disk drive (often shortened to "hard drive") and the hard disk are not the same thing, they are packaged as a unit and so either term is sometimes used to refer to the whole unit.

When you save data or install programs on your computer, the information is typically written to your hard disk. Because the data is stored magnetically, information recorded to the hard disk remains intact after you turn your computer off. This is an important distinction between the hard disk and RAM, which is reset when the computer's power is turned off.

A hard disk with high memory storage feature coupled with a low RAM renders your system/laptop a bit slow. Hence choose your RAM and Hard Disk Capacity wisely.

Currently, 500GB is considered as minimum required and if you are movie – music maniac then you must consider 1TB at least.

Solid State Drives

Announced at the CES 2007, a Solid State Drive refers to the primary storage medium in the computer that uses semiconductors rather than the magnetic media such as hard drives. A solid state drive resides inside the system and hence differs from the USB Flash drive. Many look upon the SSD's as viable replacements for the hard disk drives due to their many advantages.

An SSD on the outside looks almost no different than a traditional hard drive with the standard dimensions as a 1.8, 2.5 or 3.5-inch hard drive using the ATA or SATA drive interfaces.

Performance-wise, SSDs are considered to be 5x faster compared to HDDs and save a lot of precious time while booting up etc. An SSD smoothly handles multiple programs so you can crop photos and load game maps nearly 3x faster than an HDD.

They require less energy than a conventional HDD and can add an average of 30 minutes to the battery life. In short, being quick than the Hard Disk Drive, a Solid State Drive however is quite costly and is less on the memory capacity front compared to HDDs. But with new companies that specialize in flash memory announcing upcoming products that look to push the capacities of the solid state drives to be closer to that of a normal hard drive but at even lower prices than the current SSDs, the current scenario is set to change.

Screen Graphics:

The laptop screen is the most important output device on the system. Hence it is of primary importance that you focus on the Video quality of the laptop you intend to buy. A Laptop screen is usually a wide-screen or a regular screen. A Wide-screen is good for watching movies and playing games. Another variation is the glossy screen. Glossy screens are again good for movies and gaming since the images look richer with more vibrant colors and a more sharp contrast.

Three important factors govern here: the screen size, resolution and the graphics processor. Usually it's the screen size and the resolution that matters for most of the people. The specifications of the graphics processor are important for those who are mobile gamers or work around high definition videos etc.

Screen Size

Screen size of a laptop is generally measured diagonally in Inches from the lower screen corner to the opposite upper corner of the screen. The screen size that most laptops tend to have is 15.6 Inches. Larger screens provide an easy view and help in relaxing your eye muscles. But a large screen also means an exact size laptop body. For frequent travellers, it is recommended to opt for a laptop with the average screen size which will help them in their mobility. The below table shows the common laptop variants and their general screen size:

- *Netbook:* 12" or Less
- *Ultraportable:* 13.3" or Less
- *Thin and Light:* 14" to 16"
- *Desktop Replacement :* 17" to 19"
- *Luggable:* 20" and Higher

*Sometimes, when my wife and I were going out to dinner,
I would take my laptop with me and work in the car,
So as to take advantage of the half hour going and coming.
Thomas Friedman*

Resolution

Screen resolution is the number of pixels on the display console listed in the number across the screen by the number down the screen. In simple words, it means the number of pixels horizontally by the number of pixels vertically on the screen. High resolution configuration is usually preferred because it allows better clarity images and increased workspace on the display.

A drawback for choosing high resolution is that the fonts tend to be smaller and more difficult to read, thus affecting people with poor eye-sight. Running a laptop at a lower resolution creates either a reduced image on the screen with a black border or an extrapolated display. An extrapolated display tends to cause reduced image clarity as the system has to use multiple pixels to try and display how a single pixel would normally appear. A few acronyms that refer to resolutions are listed below:

- *WVGA:* 800x480
- *SVGA:* 800x600
- *XGA:* 1024x768
- *SXGA+:* 1400x1050
- *UXGA:* 1600x1200
- *WUXGA:* 1920x1080 or 1920x1200

Graphics Processor

Graphics processors are nowadays looked upon and extensively researched with the change in work actions. Graphics processors help in providing best available functionality for users in various activities like playing games especially 3D games, streaming high-definition media like Blu-Ray etc. 3D games require high end graphic options.

The two major suppliers of graphics processors for laptops are *ATI* and *NVIDIA*. *ATI* has been supplying graphics processors for laptops from past many years and has a proven track record when it comes to supplying powerful yet energy efficient graphic chips. *NVIDIA* is the desktop graphics powerhouse when it comes to 3D graphics acceleration and they were the first to bring many of these same features to the laptop realm.

The following chart lists few of the current crops of graphics processors for laptop PCs, being sorted in order of performance from highest to lowest.

- *NVIDIA GeForce GTX 485M*
- *AMD Radeon HD 6900M*
- *ATI Mobility Radeon HD 5870*
- *NVIDIA GeForce GTX 470M*
- *ATI Mobility Radeon HD 5850*
- *AMD Radeon HD 63700M*
- *NVIDIA GeForce GTX 415M*
- *AMD Radeon HD 6250M*
- *ATI Mobility Radeon HD 5165/5145*
- *NVIDIA GeForce 410M*

Also ATI and NVIDIA both have technologies that can allow certain graphics processors to run in pairs for additional performance. ATI's technology is referred to as CrossFireX while NVIDIA's is SLI. With the performance being increased, the battery life for such laptops will be greatly reduced due to the extra power consumption.

Sound:

James Bond's actions won't have that much of an effect if we cannot hear the proper sound of his action. For that, a laptop with great sound features is required. Almost all laptops come with basic and satisfactory sound options but for those who are movie buffs, DJ's, and multimedia-oriented, the basic sound features won't be enough. During a movie, the voice sometimes cranks up and disturbing vibrations happen. To avoid this, if you find your laptop sound options not adequate, go for a solid set of portable laptop speakers which give you that extra boost of audio clarity in a lightweight portable package.

Some laptops come with fantastic built-in audio systems like the HP ENVY Beats Edition but not all provide the same sound experience. You may even want to buy a set of external laptop speakers for excellent sound quality but this affects your portability and mobility in a big way. It is apt for those who use the laptop from a single place and do not travel much.

Speakers portable via the USB port run directly from the power feed on the laptops USB port, hence preventing the effort to be near a power source with less to carry around. A good set of USB portable laptop speakers are an easy and instant audio upgrade for your laptop. In terms of privacy, a solid set of headphones will be the best bet. A slew of headphones are available in the market today with great sound quality; both the USB headphones and the wireless Bluetooth compatible ones.

Battery Life:

Battery Life refers to the average amount of time a laptop can function without the need arising to charge it. Larger battery life indicates longer the time you wouldn't need to charge it. ***How good is a laptop if it shuts down every 30 minutes after a charge? Is it worth the buy?*** A major use of laptops is while travelling. Suppose you are entrusted to complete an important task on your laptop while travelling in a bus or train and you suddenly find your laptop shutting down due to poor battery life, then what'll be your next step? According to me, you'll only cuss about it and go to sleep with your soft blanket above, swearing not to buy such devices a second time. But why suffer the first time?

Such situations can be avoided if through investigation is done and a laptop with higher battery life is preferred over others. The battery life of an average laptop is 2 hours 13 minutes under normal conditions. It means after a full charge, your laptop can work for the prescribed time only, after which it'll shut down. With advancement in electrical technology, the battery life of many a laptops has considerably increased with some even boasting of 5 hours battery life. However, if you plan to buy a laptop in a good bargain, a battery life of 2-3 hours will be satisfactory. Usually 6 cell Li-On batteries are used. If you need extended time without plugging in for a charge, you can opt for laptops with media bays that can double as extra battery slots or have extended life batteries that can be purchased.

Size and Weight:

All laptops are designed to support portability to the maximum but how portable a laptop is for an individual comes down to the size and weight of the machine. No user wants to carry around a laptop weighing more he/she can carry which eventually poses as a burden to the user. The smaller and lighter a laptop is, the more portable it will be but shall possess lesser computing power and functionalities.

The five basic categories of laptops classifies based on their weight/size are:

- *Netbooks*
- *Ultra-portables*
- *Thin and light*
- *Desktop replacements*
- *Luggable*

Size refers to the external physical dimensions of the laptop. Netbooks do not contain a DVD drive and many ultra-portables also remove them to save on space. If ability is preferred, it means you may have to carry these external devices or a docking bay. Thin and light systems have swappable media bays to allow you to change between a DVD and a spare battery. In case

you need to recharge or power, power adapters also need to be carried along. The physical dimensions in particular refer to the width, depth and height or thickness. The width is the size of the laptop from the left of the keyboard to the right. Depth refers to the size of the system from the front of the laptop to the back panel hinge while Height or thickness refers to the size from the bottom of the laptop to the back of the display when closed.

Weight of a laptop is that important factor which directly affects portability. A heavy laptop causes fatigue and strain for the individual carrying it. If you are a frequent traveler, go for lighter systems that are much easier to bring along even if you are deprived of all the functionalities of a larger system. Hence Ultra-portables are quite popular among the business travelers while thin and light laptops are popular with college students. Sometimes the weight listed out by the manufacturer fails to include the weight of other items such as the power adapters that tend to add between one to three pounds to the laptop weight. Hence it is always recommended to check for the travel weight which clearly indicates the actual weight of a laptop with power adapters and possible media bays.

*If you take any world problem, any issue on the planet,
The solution to that problem certainly includes education.
In education, the roadblock is the laptop.
Nicholas Negroponte*

Networking:

Internet today rules our lives. We get to know about friend's birthdays through Facebook. We receive instant updates over a variety of topics through Twitter. But is it worth the buy if the laptop just bought doesn't support wireless Internet facility? If it doesn't, then its lot similar to a desktop. Hence laptops with excellent wireless networking options are the most sought after ones. Wireless internet laptop networking has made the leap from dream to reality. Wireless connectivity broadly means Bluetooth and Wi-Fi.

Wi-Fi, also known as 802.11, is the older and more established wireless standard. With a range of 300 feet and data transmission support of around 54Mbps, the latest version of Wi-Fi, 802.11g opens a vast dam of possibilities. Considered faster and more efficient than the Bluetooth, the Wi-Fi helps the laptop user browse the internet in any public area fitted with Wi-Fi antennas like airports, hotels, coffee shops etc. As more and more travelers and mobile professionals seek fast and secure Internet access wherever they are, Wi-Fi is a necessary in the laptop you intend to buy.

On the other hand, Bluetooth is meant for short-range jobs, such as connecting a PDA to a cell phone or vice-versa. Though being great in syncing address books and small files between devices, Bluetooth isn't well suited for data networking because of its limited range and lower

speed. Through it, you can transfer your files and data from your mobile device, tablet etc to the laptop without the need for a cable. In fact Bluetooth's aim is to get rid of these connecting wires. However, in case your laptop doesn't have in-built Bluetooth facility, you can go ahead with an external Bluetooth device and experience full functionality. It also helps in connecting various input/output devices like a mouse, keyboard, headsets etc to the laptop without inviting wires.

WiMAX is a relatively new long distance wireless networking system. It differs from Wi-Fi because it essentially is a replacement for DSL or Cable networking by providing long range high speed network connections without connection cables. Though being another WWAN technology, WiMAX has an interesting technology behind it. However it still is a fairly new standard that is not very common in current day laptops.

Additional Features to Look

Multi touch Trackpad

In computing, multi-touch refers to a touch sensing surface's (trackpad or touchscreen) ability to recognize the presence of two or more points of contact with the surface. This plural-point awareness is often used to implement advanced functionality such as pinch to zoom or activating predefined programs.

It is common for laptop manufacturers to include multi-touch trackpads on their laptops where the system/laptop acknowledges the user's multiple input point thru the trackpad. In short, Multi-touch technology in a laptop turns out to be quite advantageous for the user.

Webcam

A webcam allows you to shoot pictures and videos and save them into your system or on your memory drive. In case of a laptop, it's always advisable to go for a laptop with an in-built webcam which reduces the effort of carrying an external webcam around. An in-built webcam basically comes with 1.3 to 1.5 MP cameras which allow you to capture your great moments of life while working on the laptop simultaneously.

Memory Card Reader

A Memory Card Reader allows the system to read into the data of your memory card and perform desired operations. It helps in connecting the Memory card with the system/laptop. Connected via the USB port, the card reader usually features a 2-1 card reading options while a few laptops also do have a 5-1 memory card reading options.

USB Ports on a Laptop

USB stands for Universal Serial Bus. A USB port allows a variety of devices to be attached to a laptop without needing a specific port or bulky connector. USB ports can connect printers, scanners, MP3 players, and a host of other peripherals, also supporting a vast array of devices. The USB port helps in making a lot of things much easier like inclusion of external hard drives, CD/R, DVD, and flash memory storage options, adding up of a network adapter via USB, ability to beam music between the laptop and the music player and lots more.

3D Technology

3D seems to be the new wave in laptop technology now. When we have 3D LED and LCD Screens, why shouldn't that be annexed to a laptop's screen? Well definitely it should and keeping this in mind, Acer displayed the world's first mainstream 3D laptop oddly named as Acer Aspire 5738PG. This device doesn't use hardware-based 3D acceleration like Nvidia's 3D Vision GPU but it rather relies on a software solution called Acer 3D CineReal and the TriDef suite where the software works in conjunction with a special 3D coating on the laptop's screen and a pair of polarized glasses, thus giving you the real cinematic 3D feel and experience. The TriDef Media Player within the CineReal software can also convert 2D videos and photos on-the-go. This underlines the growing importance of 3D in a laptop which is the new 'best' friend of man.

Cooling Pad (Extra Benefit)

Irritated and fuzzed out due to the continuous warm surface of your laptop with hot air flowing out? Try a cooling pad.

The cooling pad keeps your laptop cool and comfortable on your lap or at your desk with superior airflow, i.e. ability to pull more air in such that you get a better cooling experience with quieter operations. Cooling pads are usually preferred by those who need to work on their laptop frequently with longer sessions. A cooling pad covers the whole beneath surface area of a laptop, with the fan positioned directly under the CPU to pull heat away at the source and to let hot air flow up and away from the laptop.

C. Types of Users

While a laptop has become a ubiquitous accessory for modern life, its usage depends on the type of the user. A high end graphical laptop is required if the user is a gamer while a thin and light laptop will be the best choice for a frequent traveler. Below are a handful of typical user types; you may fall somewhere in between two or more of these archetypes so do research a lot and go for the best.

The Student:

Students are associated with basic computing tasks and they typically opt for low price laptops and high portability factor above all. A laptop that can easily fit in their bag and carried as they wish would be a good choice for students. Hence many turn to low-cost Net books, which are small, low-power systems but have small screens and generally use underpowered single-core CPUs. A 13-inch thin-and-light laptop would also be a preferred choice among students, providing better experience when sitting down to write papers and performing research options. These have dual-core CPUs and often include optical drives.

What to look for: At least 2GB of RAM; 320GB or larger HDD; 13-inch or smaller display.

The Business Traveller:

Those laptop users who swear by travelling and work on the go require a robust computing experience, a sturdy, rugged system to safeguard data, and often, access to security and management tools to satisfy the requirements of their IT departments. Lenovo's ThinkPad and Dell's Latitude Series are two popular examples of laptop lines made with the business traveler in mind. Both brands offer security features such as Intel's vPro platform and TPM chips, internal software and hardware components that work alongside your operating system.

What to look for: 2GB to 4GB of RAM; 160GB or larger HDD; 12 to 15 inch display; Windows Vista Professional or Windows 7 Professional; mobile broadband modem.

The Photographer or Videographer:

It's not only the gamers but also those who work with high-definition videos or high-resolution photographs who need powerful processors, discrete graphics, and massive, fast hard drives. A 17- or a 15-inch screen that runs at a high native resolution would be suggested.

What to look for: 4GB-8GB of RAM; 320GB or larger 7200 rpm HDD; 17-inch or larger display.

The Gamer:

Gaming laptops are considered to be the top-of-the line systems in the laptop market used by frequent gamers who need High Graphic Processors, Optimal Drives, superb battery backup, excellent cooling system and flexible upgradability. Intel's Core 2 Quad and Core i7 CPUs are recommended for 3D gaming. High-end brands such as Dell Alienware offer flashy, expensive laptops that can be customized with the latest components, while Gateway's P-series is a good example of a budget-minded 17-inch gaming laptop, with slightly older parts, but excellent overall value.

What to look for: 4GB to 8GB of RAM; 320GB or larger 7200rpm HDD; 17-inch or larger display; discrete graphics GPU.

The Home User:

Anyone who does not fall into one of the above categories is likely to fit in here. From parents and children gathered around the laptop at homework time to watching Hulu videos in bed, these are systems that typically stay anchored to one desk, den, or kitchen-perhaps taking the occasional road trip or moving around from room to room.

The traditional 15 inch laptop is still the most popular size, although 14 and 16 inch versions are becoming more common. Go for an Intel Core 2 Duo CPU, 2GB of RAM, a 250GB or larger hard drive, and a DVD burner. Usually such laptops are the most configurable ones where you can add extras including a Blu-ray drive or discrete graphics to many mainstream models.

What to look for: 2GB to 4GB of RAM; 250GB or larger HDD; 14- to 16-inch display; DVD burning optical drive.

D. Brands

Laptops are available in the market in various sizes and shapes from different manufacturers. All manufacturers or brands have certain unique characteristics related to laptop production. While Dell Inspiron laptops are famous for daily use, Sony produces its Vaio Series laptops known for their rich multimedia features and impressive display abilities. Here we shall take a tour of the important and dominant laptop manufacturers.

The Acer logo is displayed in a bold, green, lowercase sans-serif font. A large, faint watermark reading 'AKS CLUB' is visible in the background behind the logo.

Acer has been in the market for ages and commands industry reputation for its technological products. Acer laptops offer the best configuration at reasonable prices thereby suiting every man's requirements. Being in the race, Acer strives to provide quality laptops/notebooks as per the market trends complete with all notable technological advancements included. Acer laptops/notebooks are easy-to-use and come at reasonable budgets. With important features like flexibility, dependability, stylish design and uber-cool looks, and a wide range of designer laptops, Acer India has proved their mettle in the present competitive scenario.



Acer laptops/notebooks are broadly available under these series:

- **Travel mate series:** The Travel mate laptops/notebooks offered by Acer are lightweight, slim and appropriate for traveling people. Integrated with latest technology and features, the Travel mate series is the best for people who are always on tour.
- **Tablet PC series:** Complementing mobile technology, Acer tablet PC series of laptops/computers offer exceptional mobility giving you high performance, flexibility and great dependability. It has option of pen-input functionality. The configuration is best suited for high performance.
- **Aspire series:** The Aspire series aims to increase the productivity by adding more value to mobile computing. These Acer laptops offer you great flexibility and support to your needs.

*Let me be very honest and just say that if any airline would let me take
The violin and the laptop on board, I would fly that airline all the time.*

Lara St. John



Dell is one of the most famous and widely popular laptop brands worldwide. Dell laptops are considered to be trendy and technology-oriented piece of artworks customized to suit your best requirements and fulfill your needs. Dell laptops are high on performance, lightweight and powerful with high manufacturing compatibility. *Dell has a huge advantage: its variety.*

It almost has a laptop in every color with all possible configuration options measuring various sizes. It has a laptop for a businessperson, a gamer; a school student to an artist, Dell is always there.



Few popular Dell laptop series are as follows:

- **The Dell Latitude:** Dell Latitude laptops provide higher speed, great multimedia features, and more storage facility and are lightweight with commendable battery life. They are suitable for businessmen, traveling workers, tech-savvy individuals etc. The Dell Latitude laptops are notable for their high security features and are easy to use with great performance.
- **The Dell Inspiron:** The Dell Inspiron Laptops are a great selection. Available in 8 colors, these are highly trendy with a distinctive look. However they are not quite expandable as Dell Latitude but possess high speed and better storage options.
- **The Dell Precision:** The Dell Precision Laptops are more commonly used by artists and designers. They are highly tech-oriented with excellent usage of the Graphics card.

- **The Dell Studio:** The Dell Studio series of laptops are synonymous with self-expression and creative living. The Dell Studio products are highly expressive and personalized – inside and out – combining aesthetics and technology into a fresh approach to hi-definition mobile lifestyles.

These notebooks combine sleek designs, striking visual color elements and personalization options with features such as built-in webcam, touch media control buttons, slot load drives, and optional mercury-free LED displays with a built-in mobile broadband. The Dell Studio laptops answer the call for personalization, connectivity and simplicity.

- **The Dell XPS:** This was a laptop for hard core gamers, currently replaced by the Alienware brand. Though XPS Laptops are a bit pricey, they come with maximum graphical options and are highly tech-packed.
- **The Dell Alienware:** Dell Alienware laptops are for those people who love to see many flashlights in their laptop, i.e high-end games. The Dell Alienware M17x laptop is considered to be a gamer's dream and sets the universal standard for 17-inch laptops that enthusiast's worldwide love. Very recently, Dell decided to end the XPS gaming line and solely focus on Alienware laptops as gaming laptops.

Alienware laptops are more budget-friendly and are one of the best gaming systems in the world allowing users to benefit from the most innovative and immersive gaming experience. The Dell Alienware 14x, 17x and 18x are a few great gaming systems at present.



HCL is one of the best firms to buy laptops/notebook from. HCL laptops come with the latest technology and are stylish, jazzy and powerful. They are customized according to the general customer needs, emphasizing on appealing looks and feel. With great additional features and strong performance record, HCL is climbing up the stairs of recognition in the laptop sector. Their laptops/notebooks are based on three fundamental requirements:

1. Slim: HCL manufactures the slimmest laptops/notebook across the world.
2. Lightweight: HCL laptops are quite lightweight, hence adding color to the brand.
3. Power: HCL laptops are very much powerful and performance-oriented. They are up to date and highly technology oriented.

These three features when integrated together give HCL the advantage of producing laptops with attractive colors and designs, ravishing looks and best suited technology.

HCL ME Series: Endeavoring to deliver an ideal combination of top flight performance and snappy look, the HCL ME series of notebooks and netbooks are smartly designed and reflect the persona of the younger generation catering to their on-the-go lifestyle offering seamless connectivity to the practical world. The HCL ME series have got some eye-catching features like the Split ME feature, the Encrypt ME feature, the Lock ME feature and lots more. Priced around from INR 19,000 to 65,000, the ME series of notebooks are worth a buy.



HP is synonymous with speed and power. Also known as HP Compaq, it believes in heeding more to the consumer need by offering trendier and more technologically advanced laptop computers in the market. Making their mark in the Information Technology world, HP Compaq offers lightweight, powerful and user friendly laptops/note books.



The few important and famous HP laptop models are:

- **Compaq Presario:** The Compaq Presario range of laptop computers are high on technology orientation and used for daily computing works.
- **HP Pavilion:** The HP Pavilion laptops are more powerful and trendier, helping in big business forms and to traveling personnel. With great multimedia functions, these laptops are quite powerful and easy to use.
- **HP Pavilion Special edition:** Being entertainment-based, the HP Pavilion Special edition laptops entertain us in a secure environment with better sound options, high power and speed.
- **HP Envy Series:** HP redefined the premium notebook PC experience with the introduction of the HP ENVY sub-brand, which offers customers precision-crafted, high-performance models featuring HP Metal Etching with concierge service and support. The new HP ENVY 13 boasts the brightest display in its class, and the HP ENVY 15 is the company's fastest consumer notebook PC ever. With HP ENVY, the focus is on designing an entire premium experience to satisfy the most demanding customers – from the products to the packaging to the service and support. To offer consumers the best audio experience available on a notebook PC, HP partnered with Beats™ by Dr. Dre™ to develop a unique, high-performance audio software solution.

lenovo™

Lenovo is a brand associated with the youth and fun. It produces laptops which possess all the latest technology in them and are priced at a very reasonable rate, especially the Ideapad Series. Lenovo Laptops can be described as a colorful bouquet in terms of functionality, configuration, latest features and technology. Already creating waves in the laptop market, Lenovo laptops are available in stylish designs, jazzy looks while offering a wide range of colors and customizability at the same time. They offer the flexibility and dependability a user requires with improved performance and results. Lenovo Laptops consist of the following series:



- **Lenovo ThinkPad:** These laptops are more technology oriented and are considered a true value for your money. They sport perfect design features and increased security functions. Built to serve more speed and functionalities these can be used for everyday computing while providing premium performance at the same time.
- **Lenovo Ideapad:** The Lenovo Ideapad laptops are more entertainment-oriented with excellent multimedia options. Generally preferred by students, these laptops come at a very reasonable price and are worth the buy.



Sony needs no introduction being one of the oldest brands in the market. Sony offers Vaio Laptops which are considered to be one of the best in the market. Integrated with all the latest technology, the Sony Vaio laptops are much more technologically advanced than other laptop brands. Competitiveness, superior technology, quality product deliverance and latest configuration offerings are a few notable characteristics which make Sony Vaio stand out in the market.

Sony Vaio laptops are also high on the entertainment sector. They are ultra-portable, thin and light and are considered to be the multimedia powerhouses with optimum multimedia features.

SONY VAIO Series:

- EC Series – 17.3" middle-end multimedia range, configurable with Core i7 and 1 TB Hard Drive. Replaced the AR series CW.
- F Series – New Edition was released at CES 2011. The latest model includes 3d and Core i7 Sandy Bridge. 16.4" consumer entertainment range. There are options for a Blu-ray disc reader or burner, and an option for a Full HD widescreen. There are two versions currently sold, the 1st Generation i7 without 3d and the 2nd Generation with 3d. The notebook is the second largest in Sony's current range, after the VAIO EC series.
- CB Series – A 15.5" entry level laptop for home users. Successor to the NW and NS Series. Includes an HDMI port and a 16:9 display. The higher-end models include a Blu-ray Disc reader. New Colored Light version replaced the Sony Vaio NW series.
- CA Series – A 14" notebook that is customizable compared to the pre-built CB series. Successor to the NA series. Can be customized with up to a Core i5 2540M processor, 8 GB of DDR3 SDRAM, a Blu-ray burner, AMD graphics and 750 GB hard drive.
- SB Series – A 13.3" notebook that replaced the Z series and the SA series. Contains the latest i5 or i7 Sandy Bridge processor.
- TT Series – Ultra portable 11.1" professional notebook. Successor to the TZ Series and at 11 inches the smallest notebook computer to accommodate a Blu-ray Disc drive.
- SR Series – 13.3" ultraportable, for home and business use. (Replaces the low-end models of the SZ Series.)
- G Series – 11.1" ultra-portable notebook employing Trusted Platform Module technology and biometric fingerprint security features. Weighed only 1.1 kg and was made from CFRP and had an ultra-thin LED backlit screen.



Samsung, being one of the pioneers in technology and electronic products, offers its notebook computers to users with great features and multimedia options. With a sleek, lightweight body and extended battery life, the Samsung Netbook series keep you connected while on the go. Class-leading craftsmanship and an array of vibrant color options ensure that you look as smart as you feel with the Samsung notebook.

Count on Samsung to deliver a multimedia system powerful enough to handle all of your entertainment needs. With enhanced graphics and a state-of-the-art processor, these notebooks are designed to keep up with your busy lifestyle. Samsung Netbooks provide easy surfing while being an affordable mobile solution ideal for all your online needs keeping you digitally connected all the time.



- **Samsung R Series:** They provide an all-round convenience for more fun. High performance, hassle-free computing whenever and wherever you need it is what the R series of laptops are known for.
- **Samsung P Series:** Turn to Samsung as your trusted business partner for professional notebook quality at everyday notebook prices. Built for durability and backed by our industry-leading service, the new Samsung professional series notebooks are all pro with no cons.



Apple, a US-based multinational corporation develops laptops that outclass its contemporaries in performance, quality and design. Appreciated for their innovative applications and unmatched technology, Apple laptops are a treat to use.

They have the MacBook - a consumer notebook for basic computing needs; the MacBook Air - an ultrathin, ultraportable and stylish notebook that reflects radiance all along; and MacBook Pro - a professional notebook efficiently designed to deliver outstanding performance, especially for the business class.



Now, you can just get a laptop, get some software, put a microphone on it and make a record. You have to know how to do it. It does help if you've had 35 or 40 years of experience in the studio. But, it still levels the playing field so artists can record their own stuff.

- **Apple Macbook:** Being around just 1.08 inches and weighing only 4.7 pounds, the Apple Macbook features a sleek, sturdy unibody design that slips easily into your bag or backpack. It's new High Performance NVIDIA graphics bring more speed and efficiency to just about everything you do on a Macbook.

Its built-in battery lasts up to 7 hours on a single charge by which you enjoy longer online and unplugged stay. The Apple Macbook features a spacious trackpad that gives you plenty of room to navigate, use Multi-touch gestures and move up and down pages smoothly with inertial scrolling.

- **Apple Macbook Pro:** Featuring the latest Intel i3, i5 and i7 processors, the Apple macbook Pro series of laptops are twice as fast with the new Thunderbolt technology which lets you connect high performance peripherals and high resolution displays to a single port with data transfer rate ranging up to 10Gbps.

- **Apple Macbook Air:** The Apple Macbook Air is a notebook built around flash storage that's thin, light, fast and wakes up from sleep in an instant. Sporting the Multi-touch technology, the Macbook Air features a spacious, smooth glass trackpad that lets you tap, pinch, drag, swipe and rotate with ease. With a resolution display being so crisp and vibrant, it has got a big screen feel in a small screen form.

Google

Netbooks from Google, called as Chromebook are built and optimized for the web, where you already spend most of your computing time. So you get a faster, simpler and more secure experience without all the headaches of ordinary computers.

It's easy to get connected anytime and anywhere with built-in Wi-Fi and 3G. As your Chromebook boots up, it quickly connects to your favorite wireless network so you're on the web right from the start. Your apps, documents, and settings are stored safely in the cloud. So even if you lose your computer, you can just log in to another Chromebook and get right back to work.

Every Chromebook runs millions of web apps, from games to spreadsheets to photo editors. Thanks to the power of HTML5, many apps keep working even in those rare moments when you're not connected.

Chromebooks are easy to share with family and friends. They can log in to experience all of their own Chrome settings, apps, and extensions, or use Guest Mode to browse privately. Your Chromebook gets better and better over time, unlike a traditional PC. When you turn it on, it updates itself.

The Chromebooks will be manufacture by Samsung and Acer. The price of the Chromebook will be marked between \$349 and \$499. Both companies offers different price range, the Samsung basic Wi-Fi model will cost \$430 and 3G model will cost you \$499. The Acer Chromebooks will starts at \$350.



SAMSUNG



acer

E. Suggestion Chart

I have created a chart to list some of the best laptop models available from popular manufacturers, categorized according to their price tag.

Brands	Entry-Level (Under \$500)	Economic-Level (Under \$800)	Mid-Level (Under \$1000)	High-End (Under \$1500)	Luxury-Models (Above \$1500)
Dell	Inspiron 14R, Inspiron Mini 10	Inspiron15R (N5110), Vostro 3450/3550	XPS 17 3D, XPS 15	XPS 15z, Precision M4600, Latitude E6320	Alienware M17x, Precision M6600, Latitude E6410 ATG
Acer	Aspire AS5252- V476, Aspire AS5252- V476	Aspire TimelineX AS5830T-6862, Travel MateTM4750- 6458	Travelmate TimelineX TM8572- 6752	Aspire Ethos AS8943G-9319	Aspire Ethos AS8943G- 9429
Samsung	N220 Plus 10.1", RV 510	R540, P400B5B	RV711 RV 730	RF 780 RF 580	RF 712 3D, Q530, Series 9
Lenovo	Ideapad S10, Essential G570	Ideapad G430, Thinkpad Edge 420s, Ipedpad U460	Ideapad Y560p, Thinkpad Edge 220s	Thinkpad T420s, Thinkpad X1	Thinkpad T Series
Sony VAIO	VPCYB15AG/P	VPCEB45FG/L, VPCYA17GG/B	VPCEB46FG/B	VPCCB17FG/B, VPCEB3AGG/BI	VPCSB19GG/B
HP	HP Mini 210, HP g6x Series	HP Pavilion dv6t, HP Pavilion dm4x	HP Envy 14 Series HP Pavilion dv7t	HP Envy 14 Beats HP Envy 17 Series	HP Envy 17 3D Series
Apple			MacBook 13"	MacBook Air 11" MacBook Pro 13"	MacBook Air 13" MacBook Pro 17", 15"

*Prices & Models may vary from Country to Country.

Finally as last words, I put forth my recommendation as to what type of a laptop will I opt for. Starting with the Processor, a *Second generation Intel Core processor* would do the work for me with a *screen size of not more than 15.6"*. I wouldn't go for a 13" screen because that strains my eyes out, leading to a complex and packed visible environment. An internal RAM of 3 GB will be good along with a *hard disk space of 500 GB* for that allows me to hold up my loads of movies, music files, and project files along with the same time permitting me to play my favorite games effortlessly. When it comes to battery backup, I would prefer a laptop which provides around 3 hours of backup upon a single charge because not only me but almost everybody hates working on the laptop with your charger on all the time. Extra features which I would look for are *Dedicated Graphics card 1GB HD, Wi-Fi, Bluetooth 3.0, Webcam, 5-1 Card reader, Backlit Keyboard, LED HD Display Screen 1366x768 resolution, HDMI Port and must weigh less than 1.8 KG.*

Have a Happy Laptop Shopping! If you have any sort of query or want to take personal suggestions, then visit our Website www.thegeeksclub.com or our Facebook Page. Our Panel of experts is always there to help you out! More in-depth Laptop reviews available [here](#).

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