Computer Buying Guide

We're often asked for advice on buying a new computer for students. University-wide, there are no requirements for specific computers students must purchase. However, some academic programs may require students to have access to specific software. This guide is intended to give students (and parents) considerations for purchasing a new computer.

General Buying Advice

Most students will only need a computer for word processing, e-mail, the Internet, and a few simple class-specific programs. All of these tasks can be done on an older system, though if you are buying a new computer, you should consider one that will last them through college. The average computer can last about 5 years before it becomes outdated or starts developing serious problems. Since most students also like to play games, music, or movies, you probably should ask students what they want to do on their computer before buying a potentially underpowered system.

Mac or PC?

Both platforms will work equally well for the vast majority of computer uses at UGA. Budget and personal preference are the biggest factors when it comes to deciding which one to buy. Both Macs and PCs are supported at UGA.

Do I need a special computer for a specific major?

Most likely, no, but you should contact your department to be sure. In almost all cases, any program a class will require should work on any new computer and most old ones. Some departments, such as the Lamar Dodd School of Arts, may have programs with higher system requirements, but these programs also tend to be expensive, and on-campus computer labs are typically available for students who do not have their own copy.

Current Recommendations

Because technology changes and updates so frequently, it is difficult for us to provide specific advice about hardware and software that will remain relevant for more than a few months. We instead recommend that you have a rough idea of what you need out of a computer, then consider options such as:

- Laptop or Desktop
- PC or Mac
- Form factor
- Size
- Cost
- Specific classes' software requirements

With this knowledge, visit local retailers to see their offerings in person to get a hands-on impression of current options and form a general understanding of what computers might meet your needs. Pricing out a desired model from reputable online retailers may offer better savings, though buying from brick-and-mortar stores often offers better convenience for warranty service or returns.

Ultimately, personal preferences, needs, and budget are the deciding factors for computer purchases.

Supported Operating Systems

- Windows 10
- Mac OS High Sierra or newer

Do I need a router?

No. Actually, personal wireless routers are not allowed in residence halls with with PAWS-Secure coverage. Personal wireless routers interfere with PAWS-Secure. Do not bring your own router for the residence halls. Additional details are available on the EITS website.