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Laptop Buying Guide 2011

By Matt Smith



LAPTOP BUYING GUIDE 2011

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The Changing Laptop Market

Computer hardware is constantly changing, but it's not entirely unpredictable. There are often distinct trends, and today's laptop market is no different.

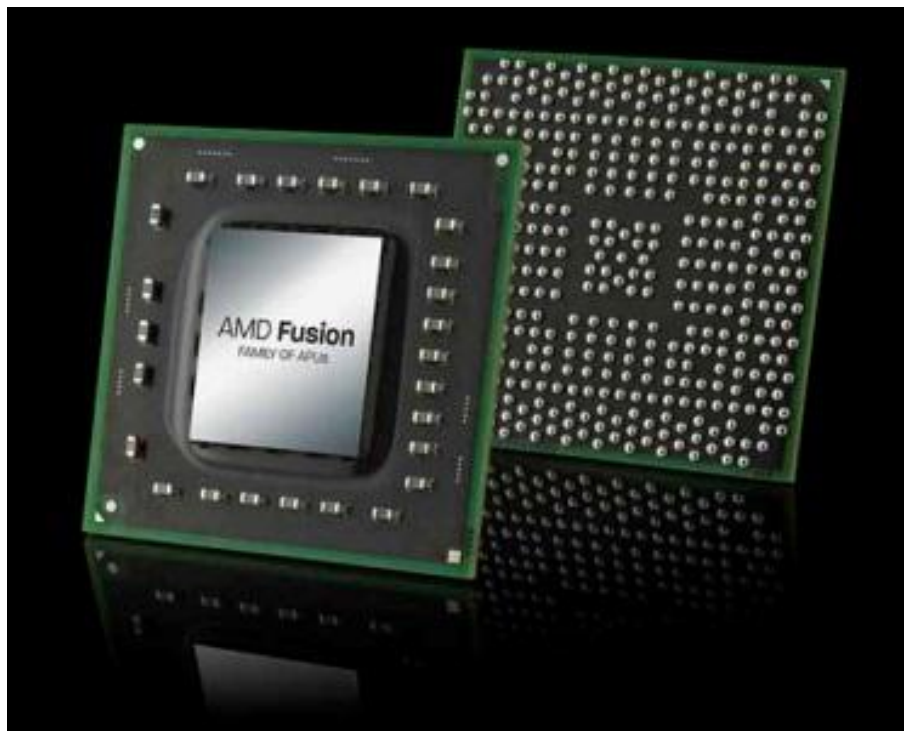
The [netbook](#) revolution has translated into a general groundswell of ultraportables and small laptops. There has never been a better time to buy a laptop with a display of 13 inches or smaller. The traditional 10.1" display netbook is still strong, but there are also a wide variety of options with displays between 10 and 13 inches. You can find a nice ultraportable no matter what your budget is. Three years ago, that statement wasn't true.

Graphics, a traditional weak spot of laptops, are heading in the right direction. Intel's second generation Core processors have a powerful GPU built straight into the processor architecture. AMD has released a similar processor ([they call the combination an APU](#)) that is targeted towards netbooks and ultraportable laptops, shoring up one of the biggest problems with small laptops.

Battery life also seems to be on the upswing. Intel's latest second-generation Core processors are extremely power efficient, so it's now possible to buy quad-core laptops that offer three or four hours of real-world battery life. This is a great improvement over what was available even a year ago, and further refinements should only enhance this new advantage.

Good News for Budget Buyers

The release of new processors from both Intel and AMD has highlighted the fact that high prices no longer need to be part of the laptop buying experience. The low-end market is currently being upset by not only AMD's new Fusion APUs but also Intel's Atom dual-core processors, both of which are extremely affordable. These new processors are closing up holes in the performance capabilities of the single-core Atom processors that used to make up almost the entire market for netbooks, and in doing so they're undermining the need for more expensive ultraportables based on low-voltage versions of normal Intel Core processors.



The performance of Intel's incredible Core processors is also great news for value. These processors are so quick that many users simply won't have need for anything more powerful than a Core i3. They're more power efficient as well, which means you'll be able to receive more battery endurance from any given battery size. This will also mean less expensive laptops in the future, as manufacturers will be able to put in smaller batteries without losing battery life.

Buying Smart

Advancing computer hardware is always great for consumers. This guide is not just about hardware, however – and for good reason. It's easy to become sucked up in technical mumbo-jumbo. Some retail outlets depend on it. The next thing you know, you've spent \$200 more than you'd budgeted and have a laptop that's twice as powerful as you need with a keyboard you don't want to spend more than five minutes typing on.

Laptops are different from desktops because they're not easy to upgrade, and many components are essentially set in stone. You can't change the keyboard, or the display, or touchpad without great effort. Even the processor is sometimes impossible to replace.



Since you don't have the flexibility to change parts whenever you'd like, certainty is critical. As important as the processor is, the quality of the keyboard and the reliability of the brand are also factors that must be considered. A laptop that is fast but feels like it is made out of recycled dollar-store action figures isn't likely to make you happy.

In this guide we'll be taking a look at laptops from many angles. This includes the hardware, the brand, and the experience you'll have after the laptop is home. By the end you will be prepared with all of the information needed to make a smart purchasing decision.

But before explaining the first thing about hardware, you must understand what it is *you need*. The answer may seem obvious, but don't be so sure. When netbooks hit

the market, they were widely coveted for their portability – [but a study found that most netbooks never left home](#).

Chapter 2: Discovering Your Needs

Why did so many consumers buy a netbook when they didn't actually need the portability? It'd be easy to chalk it up as "people are stupid," but it'd also be incorrect.

The problem is that buying is often emotional. Laptops are not cheap, and they're an important part of the lives of many people. Netbooks were sold to people who didn't need them because those people went into the store fascinated with the idea of new, portable, sexy laptops.

It's great to be excited when you buy, but it's also important not to buy just for the sake of buying. Taking a moment to understand what you *really* need will help prevent an expensive mistake.

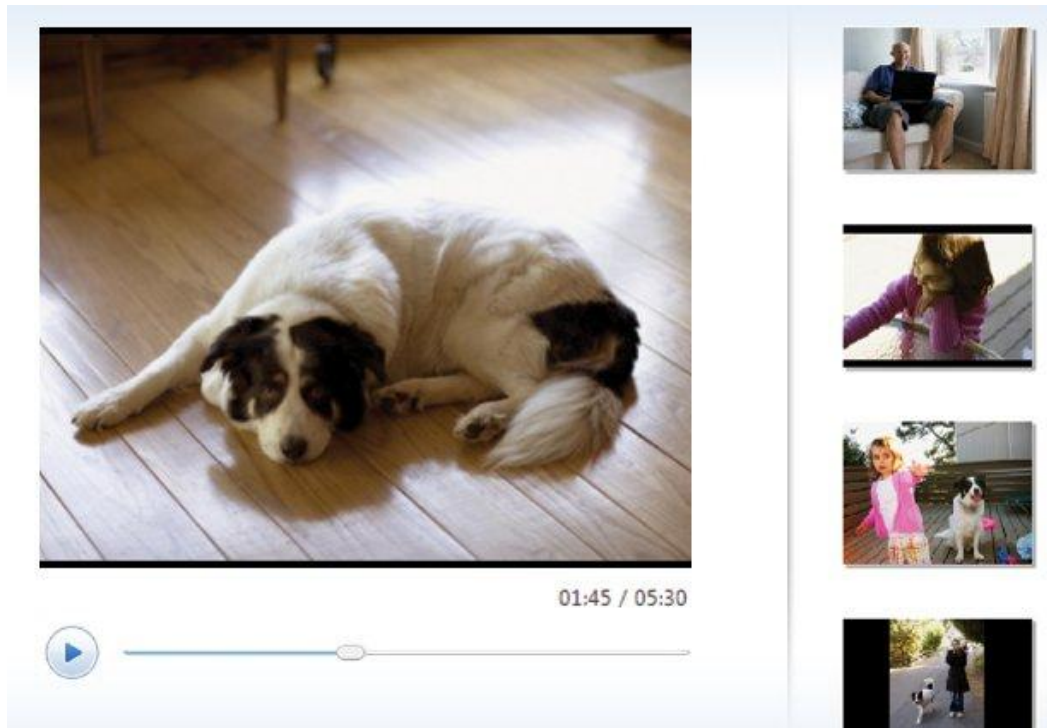
Deciding The Performance You Need



In the 1990s, when I was growing up and becoming acquainted with computers, performance was everything. A faster computer wasn't needed just to run games - buying a faster computer resulted in a noticeable performance improvement when running [MS Word](#) or browsing the web.

Today, performance has changed. While the difference between a single-core Atom and a quad-core Core i7 is noticeable even when web browsing, the gap is tolerable for some buyers. This makes it easy to convince yourself that buying a

cheap laptop with an inexpensive low-power processor will be fine. But before you do that, consider the following.



- Do you ever create YouTube videos, rip DVDs to your PC, or convert videos so that they are in a format readable by your smartphone? These tasks benefit from fast processors, so you can save a lot of time if you purchase a faster, more expensive system.
- Do you play video games? Games rely heavily on both CPU and GPU performance. Many inexpensive laptops won't play modern 3D games well.
- Do you edit large files, such as high-definition video or raw audio files? Buying a laptop with extra **RAM** will have a big impact on performance.
- Do you have to move files around your drive, or between drives, frequently? If so, you'll want to look for a laptop with a fast mechanical drive or a solid state hard drive.

These are not the only examples of why you might want to buy a high-end laptop rather than a budget model, but they're the most common. Remember - buying a fast laptop may be expensive, but the money will be well worth the frustration you avoid.

Portability and Battery Life: Exaggerations and Un-necessities

In the late 90s computers were often judged by the clock speed of their processor. Consumers always wanted the computer with the highest clock speed. 800 MHz is more than



700 Mhz, so it's better, right? What consumers missed was the fact that processors don't always have the same per-clock performance, and there is more to a computer than the processor.

Today, laptop battery life is causing a similar issue. Many companies are advertising laptops with battery life of six, eight, or even ten hours. But here's the problem: there is no industry standard for measuring battery life. These claims are tested in-house by each company and are not subject to independent verification. My cynical rule of thumb: assume a laptop's real-world battery life will be 75% of whatever the manufacturer claims.

The hype behind battery life also seems to be skewing consumer purchasing decisions. Eight hours of battery life sounds great – but do you really need it? The answer is probably a resounding “no!” If you've never taken your laptop out of the house before, it's probably because you don't have the need to, not because you don't have the right laptop for the job.

The Eyes Decide: Resolution and Screen Size



Display size is a hotly contested topic among geeks. If you ask a lot of self-proclaimed PC nerds what size of laptop they prefer, most will probably say something between 11 and 13 inches. But the average Joe continues to buy 15.6" laptops.

The geeks will point out that resolution is what determines the useable space on a laptop display. If you have a display 1366 pixels wide and 768 pixels tall it does not matter if the physical size of that display is two inches or two feet. It will display the same amount of information because PC graphics are rendered according to their size in pixels, not their size in inches. This means that many laptops with 15.6" displays have no more usable screen real estate than laptops with 11.6" displays.

But the average Joe has a point, as well. Rendering a given number of pixels over a larger physical display makes everything look bigger. This can reduce image sharpness, but it also makes everything easier to read. Sure, young geeks like me don't mind cramming a bunch of information onto a small display – but not everyone shares that enthusiasm.



This is a decision everyone should make for themselves; personally, I recommend going for the highest resolution possible on a given display, even if it means paying an extra \$100 for the better panel. Windows 7 has many features that can compensate for a high display resolution. The entire interface can be resized, and [ClearType](#) settings can be adjusted to ensure that text looks crisp. Remember: the display is a trait that is virtually impossible to swap out or upgrade, so make sure you purchase a laptop with a display you'll be happy with.

Chapter 3: Hardware Explained

Most users never see the hardware inside of their laptop, and honestly don't need to. What you should understand before buying, however, is what the function of each piece of hardware inside a prospective laptop does and how it impacts a laptop's overall performance. The unfortunate truth is that you can't count on a retail associate giving you straight information about what hardware you need. I'm not saying retail associates are bad people – what I am saying is that they're pressured to upsell customers into laptops they don't need.

Let's start at the heart of every laptop, and continue from there.

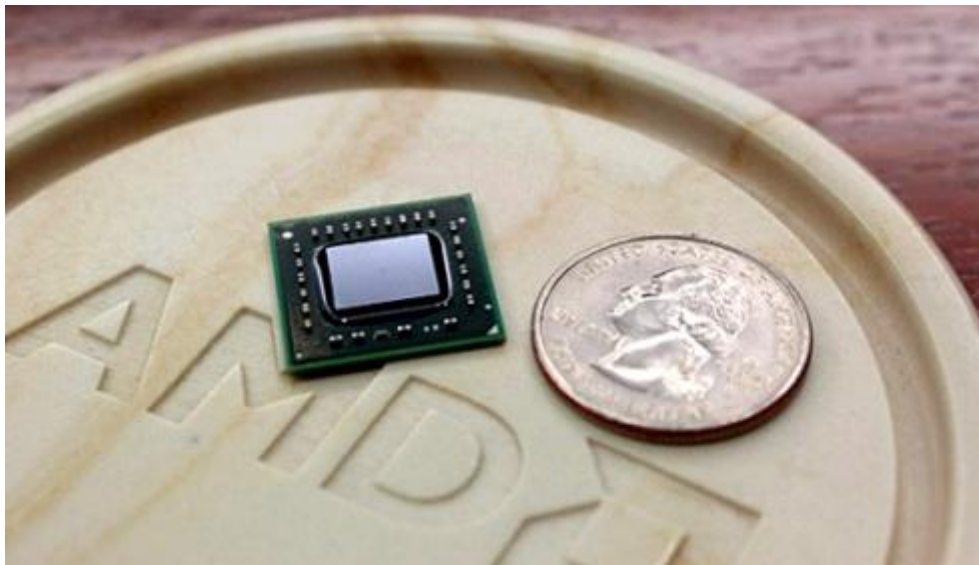
Central Processing Unit (CPU)

The CPU is the most important part of any computer. It is the component that does all of the mathematical heavy-lifting required to run computer applications. The CPU has an effect on the performance of almost everything you'll want to do with a laptop.

On the low end of the spectrum you will find netbook CPUs. These are single-core or dual-core models that have clock speeds below 2 GHz. The performance of these is well below what you'll find in a mid-range laptop, but the trade-off is excellent battery life and a low price.



Most laptops between \$500 and \$1000 will be powered by a dual-core processor between 2 GHz and 3 GHz. AMD Athlon X2 and Intel Core i3/i5 are examples of processors in this category. For most users, these processors are the best choice. They present a nice compromise between performance, portability and price.



Users who want power nearly on par with a desktop PC should consider a quad-core processor. These offer the fastest laptop experience, but they also tend to consume power and require a more aggressive cooling system, which is why laptops with quad-core processors are often large and heavy. Laptops with these processors are usually expensive as well, with most selling for over \$800.

Graphics Processor Unit (GPU)



Although CPUs are very powerful, they aren't best at everything. 3D graphics, for example, is a task best accomplished by a dedicated GPU.

All laptops will at least ship with an IGP, or Integrated Graphics Processor. All this term refers to is how the GPU's memory is handled. With an IGP, the video memory is shared with the system memory. A discrete GPU has its own memory that is entirely separate.

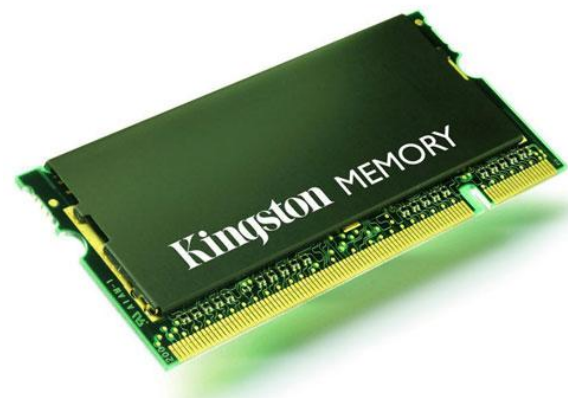
Until recently, IGPs were terrible, particularly those from Intel. That's changed, however, and today an IGP can handle basic 3D gaming and any HD video without trouble. If you don't plan to game frequently, or you don't mind playing at low resolutions and detail settings, an IGP will be fine.

Gamers will want a discrete GPU, however. The performance specifications of these changes quickly, so I am not going to recommend any specific models. Instead, I suggest checking out [Notebook Check's Laptop Video Card list](#). This source ranks all current laptop video cards and is updated frequently.

Be warned that a discrete GPU can impact battery life. Gaming laptops usually have poor battery life as a result. If you'd like to find a compromise between gaming performance and battery life, look for a laptop with "switchable graphics" such as Nvidia's Optimus. This feature turns the discrete GPU off when it isn't needed, which improves battery life significantly.

RAM

RAM, or Random Access Memory, is used as short-term storage for data pertaining to programs your



computer is currently using or has recently used. It impacts laptop performance because it's much quicker than a hard drive. If program data is currently stored in RAM, it can be accessed almost instantly.

Most mid-range laptops between \$500 and \$1000 ship with 4GB of RAM, and that's all most users will ever need. The minimum you should consider is 2GB, unless you're looking at an inexpensive netbook with a single-core processor.

Upgrading beyond 4GB of RAM is generally not recommended unless you already use a specific program that is known to be a memory hog.



Hard Drives

Mechanical hard drives still rule the roost and are found in most laptops. Your average laptop hard drive has a spindle speed of 5400RPM and isn't fast. It will do the job, but you may notice that programs don't load as quickly as you'd like, and large file transfers can take some time.

Upgrading to a 7200RPM hard drive can rectify these problems, and is often inexpensive. However, not everyone offers these upgrades, and in retail stores you won't have the option to customize. Obtaining a 7200RPM hard drive is nice, but not an absolute necessity.

Solid state drives, which are similar to RAM, offer the best performance by far. However, they're outrageously expensive, so you'll only find them in high-end laptops.

Connectivity



The internal hardware of a laptop receives much attention from savvy laptop shoppers, but one area sometimes missed is connectivity – the ports and

connections lining the outside of a laptop. Talking about ports isn't sexy, but it's necessary. You should go through this connection checklist before buying any laptop.

- Will the laptop be able to connect to my current portable hard drive, digital camera, etc?
- What video outputs are available? Are these compatible with the monitors and/or televisions I have at home?
- What network connections are available? Is the WiFi compatible with the router I have at home?
- Do I need an SD card reader? Does this laptop have one, and if so, what kind?

These mundane but essential questions will ensure you don't have to drop more cash on clunky adapters when you come home with your shiny new laptop.

Chapter 4: A Look at the Brands

It's common to find two laptops that are approximately the same size, with the same hardware and a similar price, but from different brands. At first glance it'd be easy to assume the two laptops would provide a similar experience, but that's not true. The brand of laptop you buy is likely the most important factor in your ownership experience. When you buy a laptop, you're not just buying the laptop – you're also buying their customer service department, their reliability, and their attention to detail.

Which brands are the best, and which are the worst? Let's have a look.

Acer/Gateway



Founded in 1976 (under the name Multitech), Acer is one of the world's oldest and most successful electronics companies. Gateway is now a part of Acer, and while it retains its brand name, Acer and Gateway are closely tied together.

Acer is all about value. This company can usually offer a given hardware configuration at a lower price than anyone else. In exchange, Acer laptops usually have unimpressive keyboards and touchpads and rarely look or feel luxurious. The reliability of Acer laptops is debatable. A 2009 report from SquareTrade placed Acer in the bottom three, but recent Consumer Reports surveys rank them as second best. Acer's tech support is considered poor due to a confusing customer support website and average (at best) phone support.

If

you're on a budget but want excellent hardware, Acer is a solid choice. Just keep aware of the trade-offs made to achieve the bargain.

Apple



I don't need to say much about Apple's reputation. Despite selling only a handful of different products, Apple is one of the most profitable companies in the world. That's because their products are generally excellent, and laptops are no exception. Reliability of Apple laptops is above average. Squaretrade ranked them as 4th more reliable, and Consumer Reports currently ranks them as the 3rd most reliable. Apple customer service is undoubtedly the best in the business and routinely receives praise.

Apple's laptops are pricey, and of course run Mac OS X. If neither of these facts are a problem for you, an Apple laptop may be in your future. [MacBooks](#) are particularly good for students, who will enjoy the long battery life combined with respectable performance, reliability and customer service.

ASUS



If it's electronic, ASUS probably makes something like it. This company is big not only in the laptop industry, but also in the manufacturing of hardware components like motherboards and video cards.

ASUS has a great reputation for reliability. They took first place in the SquareTrade report and are usually ranked highly by Consumer Reports, although currently they're not ranked due to lack of data. The company is taking advantage of this reliability by offering 2-year limited warranties on some laptops. Most brands offer no more than one year. ASUS tech support is solid, as well.

Most ASUS laptops are of high quality, and also competitively priced. If you're looking for a good jack-of-all-trades laptop or a netbook (ASUS's Eee PC line is still king in that market) then you should consider this brand. ASUS also offers two of the most affordable gaming laptops around, the G53 and G73.

Dell



After the glory years of "Dude, you're getting a Dell!" the company seemed to suffer a backlash of customer opinion. Dell is still one of the strongest brands however, and they stand out from the crowd because of the level of customization offered on their laptops. Ordering direct from Dell's website opens up a wealth of choices.

Dell's reliability is routinely average, although the latest Consumer Reports information placed them last, which will be bad news if it becomes a trend. Dell's tech support is reasonable, thanks to recent improvements in that department. Although some other brands offer better laptops, customization runs in Dell's favor. If you're unsatisfied by the pre-configured laptop available at retail you may find that Dell can satisfy your needs.

HP/Compaq



Currently among the world's largest computer manufacturers, HP has been working hard to improve its product line. Most of HP's current consumer laptops are stylish and offer solid hardware for the price. Buying at retail can help you save money on shipping, but the HP website lets you configure any laptop to your specific needs. Some Compaq branded laptops are still sold by HP, but they're generally low-end models that you shouldn't touch with a ten foot pole.

The main area of concern for HP is reliability. Squaretrade's report found HP to be the least reliable brand, and by no small margin. HP also ranks second to last in current Consumer Reports information, just ahead of Dell. Improvements in this area could be happening, but wouldn't become evident for several years. The tech support at least seems to be improving, as it was ranked second best in the recent Laptop Magazine brand report.

HP offers some very stylish and well equipped laptops at reasonable prices, but long-term reliability could be a deal-breaker. Consider another brand if it is important that your laptop last for many years.

Lenovo



Since buying the IBM PC division, Lenovo has been working hard to not only maintain but also improve the reputation of the well-known ThinkPad laptops. Lenovo has also introduced the IdeaPad consumer line, which now includes several stylish and affordable laptops.

Despite the ThinkPad reputation for durability, Lenovo doesn't have the best reliability. The SquareTrade report placed them 4th from last, behind Dell, and current Consumer Reports information ranks reliability as average. Customer support, on the other hand, is arguably the best of all the PC laptop brands.

One weakness worth noting is battery life – many, but not all, Lenovos lack endurance compared to the competition unless they're upgraded with an [extended battery](#). On the other hand, Lenovo's keyboards, touchpads and trackpointers are among the best, even in the consumer-oriented IdeaPad line.

MSI



Although MSI has been around for several years, they're still relatively new in the market. The company has been attempting to make a name for itself by offering powerful, often stylish laptops at low prices. Unfortunately, MSI's execution isn't always up to the company's aspirations.

Reliability is still an open question, as MSI hasn't been around long enough for any source to build data on this brand. The tech support has been consistently given low marks by Laptop Magazine. Unlike most brands, MSI doesn't offer 24/7 assistance.

MSI laptops often look like a great value, but caution is recommended before buying one. Be sure to read several reviews on the specific model you're considering to make sure it doesn't have any hidden flaws.

Samsung



You'd be hard pressed to go an entire day without running into a device made by Samsung. They're everywhere, but they've never made much headway into the laptop market. It's only recently that they've really tried, and while they'd have some success, there is still room for improvement.

Design and build quality tends to be in Samsung's favor. Most Samsung laptops feel robust and are nice to look at, and Samsung's cutting-edge products like the 9-Series challenge even Apple in the aesthetic arena.

However, Samsung customer service recently received an extremely poor score from Laptop Magazine, and reliability is still unknown due to insufficient data. These flaws rob the brand of some luster, but the company's mid-range products are still worth a look, as they're reasonably priced.

Sony



Sony is one of the world's largest tech corporations, but its laptop presence has never dominated the market. Sony's brand seems to focus on a limited selection of high-quality products. Though often more expensive than competitors, Sony laptops have great keyboards and touchpads, and are available in outrageous colors.

Sony's reliability is average to above average. SquareTrade ranked the brand as third best, but Consumer Reports currently ranks the brand as below average, which is lower than it has in the past. Sony's tech support is quick, and bolstered by a solid online support.

If you care more about quality than value, Sony is likely a good pick. Be sure to comparison shop, however, as the company's laptops can occasionally be overpriced. Budget buyers should check out retailers instead of Sony's website, as Sony often provides retailers with inexpensive models that aren't listed on the official Sony store.

Toshiba



Offering a wide range of products, Toshiba has a strong presence in retailers across the globe. The company is sometimes seen as a budget brand due to its buffet of entry-level offerings, but buyers looking for high-end laptops should consider Toshiba's premium models.

Reliability is one of Toshiba's strongest traits. The SquareTrade reported placed this brand in second, just behind ASUS, and current Consumer Reports information gives Toshiba first place. Toshiba's tech support isn't excellent, but is about average. This is a brand well worth consideration by anyone looking to buy a reliable, reasonably priced laptop. Toshiba's are often not as visually attractive as those from companies like Dell and HP, but Toshiba's reliability redeems any aesthetic shortcomings.

Summary

Boy, that was a lot of information! Perhaps you'd like the short version? No problem. **Toshiba** and **ASUS** are excellent brands that I highly recommend to buyers who want an affordable, reliable, well-built laptop. **HP** and **Dell** are also options, and they offer custom configurations that Toshiba and ASUS can't match. Reliability, however, is a concern.

Apple remains in a class of its own thanks to outstanding laptop design, decent reliability and excellent customer support. **Sony** and **Lenovo** are the best alternatives for those who like the quality of Apple laptops but don't want to buy into the Apple craze. **Samsung** also offers great design, but at the price of customer service and unknown reliability.

If you're on a tight budget, **Acer/Gateway** and **MSI** might perk your interest. Just keep in mind that you aren't getting something for nothing – the quality of laptops from these brands lags behind, which is why they can offer fast hardware at a low price.

All of the information in this section is based off data from SquareTrade, Consumer Reports and Laptop Magazine, as well as my experience as a tech writer and laptop reviewer.

Chapter 6: Warranties



Major purchases, such as a laptop, are uncomfortable. No one wants to buy a brand new laptop only to drop it down a flight of stairs a week later. This fear has created a warranty business. When you purchase a laptop you'll surely be hit up by at least one extended warranty offer, and potentially several, depending on where you purchase.

But do you really need these warranties? And what does the manufacturer cover?

Most laptops sold come with a “1-year limited warranty.” The warranty is limited because it only covers certain scenarios, specifically those that are related to manufacturer defects. These 1-year limited warranties do not cover accidents of any form.

"Toshiba warrants that the Product (1) is free from defects in materials and workmanship and (2) conforms to the factory specifications in effect at the time the Product was manufactured."

"SONY ELECTRONICS INC. (for U.S. sales) or SONY OF CANADA LTD. (for Canadian Sales)

("SONY") warrants this product against defects in material or workmanship for the time periods and as set forth below. Pursuant to this Limited Warranty, SONY will, at its option, (i) repair the product using new or refurbished parts or (ii) replace the product with a new or refurbished product."

What these excerpts mean is that the manufacturer will cover a failure or defect in the product, and the manufacturer will also cover a defect that causes the product to work differently than it should, but only if these defects originated with the laptop itself. Everything else, including accidental damage, isn't the manufacturer's problem.

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– but it still functions fine – you're probably out of luck. Other exclusions include laptops that have had their serial numbers removed, damage due to modifications, and issues related to user installed software.

Most manufacturers sell extended warranties direct to their customers. Be sure to read these carefully. Some provide accidental coverage, but some don't. Also, be sure to read any warranty you receive with your laptop. The advice here is general, but manufacturers are free to make subtle changes to their warranties whenever they'd like.

Retail Extended Warranties



Given the limited coverage available from manufacturer warranties, it's understandable that you might want something extra. Retail stores are eager to provide that for you – sometime too eager. The last time I tried to purchase a laptop at Fry's (an electronics retailer in the United States) I was asked at least six times if I wanted an extended warranty, with increasing

pressure each time. I eventually left in frustration and bought the same laptop online.

These warranties can provide some protection, but it's important to understand that they, too, have limits. One great example is a [post on the Best Buy forums](#) from a person who dropped their laptop into a swimming pool. They had the Performance Service Plan with Accidental Damage from Handling so they're covered, right? Nope. That particular Accidental Damage warranty only covers damage from "normal" drops and spills. Pools are, apparently, abnormal. Other warranties, such as the [Walmart 2-year service plan](#), don't cover accidental coverage at all.

These limitations and problems bring up a question – [are retail extended warranties ever worthwhile](#)? They can be, but only in very limited circumstances. First, you'll need to make sure the warranty actually covers what you need it to – and that means reading it, which can be time consuming. Second, you'll need to make sure you're getting a good deal. I'd recommend against purchasing any warranty that's more than 20% of the purchase price of the laptop.

Third-Party Warranties

Another warranty option is a third-party warranty purchased from an insurance company. These warranties are not tied to the manufacturer or to the retailer. They're from companies that exist specifically to insure property.



Currently, [SquareTrade](#) is the most visible force in this market. They sell extended protection plans for various consumer electronics devices. If that name seems familiar, it may be because SquareTrade is also the company that produced the laptop reliability information referenced in the brands section.

Customer feedback about SquareTrade seems solid. Their warranties are sold on Amazon and almost always receive great customer reviews, and the company has also received positive ratings on [Epinions](#) and [ResellerRatings](#). The prices aren't bad, either. A 3-year warranty on a \$1000 laptop, for example, is \$159.99.

SquareTrade isn't the only company in the business. Other options include companies like [Safeware](#) and the [Worth Ave. Group](#). You should also consider the company that insures your home or apartment. State Farm, for example, will provide insurance for laptops under a Personal Articles policy.

Chapter 7: Conclusion



The laptop market is always shifting. New hardware arrives constantly, which means not only new features but also changing prices. Because of this, recommending laptops based on specific details is difficult. While I hope some of the detailed information in this guide was helpful to you, I also want readers to come away with a broad knowledge that will help with purchasing a laptop not only today, but three or five years ago.

Remember these steps, and you should be able to buy a laptop that fits your needs.

1. Be honest about your needs. Take a moment to think about how you use your current computer, and what you need your new laptop to do. Don't let yourself be caught up in the hype of a new laptop and buy just because you want the next big thing (unless you've no real concerns about money, I suppose). Laptops are what economists would call durable goods – they don't wear out quickly, and they prove their usefulness over time. Your goal is to buy a laptop that will be great to use for many years, not one that will become annoying after a week of gawking at its awesomeness.
2. Consider the hardware in the laptops you're looking to purchase carefully. Don't let a retail salesman talk you into purchasing what you don't need. Laptop reviews are always a good source for information. [Laptop Magazine](#), [Notebook Check](#) and [Notebook Review](#) are great sites to check out for detailed reviews on the latest models.
3. Keep the brand of the laptop you're considering in mind. Look for the latest ratings from sources like Laptop Magazine and Consumer Reports. If you are concerned about long-term reliability or customer service quality, be sure to buy from a brand that scores well in those areas, even if it means spending a few extra bucks.
4. Finally, once all is settled and you've picked a laptop, make sure you purchase a warranty that suits your taste for risk. Be careful buying accidental protection warranties, and be sure to read the terms of any additional warranty you buy with the laptop.

Of course, MakeUseOf provides some additional reading on the topic of laptops as well. The following articles are well worth a read if you're looking for still more information about laptops before making your purchase.

Additional Reading

[3 Best Laptops That Support Nvidia 3D Vision](#)
[5 Things To AVOID When Shopping For A Laptop](#)
[5 Ways To Improve Gaming Performance On Your Laptop\]](#)
[6 Things To Look For When Buying A Laptop In 2011](#)
[Choosing A Laptop: 9 Great Review Sites](#)
[Does Cooling The CPU In Laptops Make A Difference](#)
[How To Benchmark Your Laptop's Battery Life With Battery Eater](#)
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