

Laptop Buying Guide (Students)

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Students should follow the recommendations below when purchasing a laptop to ensure it is optimized for the Wharton computing environment and course requirements.

Faculty purchasing laptops with departmental funds should contact their **Academic Representative**.

For **mobile device** recommendations see our **Mobile Device Buying Guide** as well as ISC's **smartphone hardware recommendations**.

Laptop Recommendations

Wharton Computing does not recommend specific laptops for students. These guidelines should help you determine which type of laptop will best suit your needs in our computing environment. Consider Penn Computing's **Laptop Purchasing Guide** for configuration suggestions.

Purchasing a laptop warranty is highly recommended. Warranties support the repair or replacement of your laptop in the event of accidents or technical problems.

Software Recommendations/Availability

	Windows	MacOS	Chromebook (2019+)	Chromebook (pre-2019) ¹
Recommended Operating System	Windows 10 Pro	MacOS Mojave 10.14	ChromeOS v77	Chrome OS v77
Productivity Software	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Microsoft Office² 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Microsoft Office² 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Office365 Apps G Suite Apps 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Office Online G Suite Apps
Security Software	Windows Defender <i>built-in antivirus</i>	Symantec Endpoint Protection 14.x	<i>Security features included on all Chromebooks</i>	<i>Security features included on all Chromebooks</i>
Printing?	✓	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> via Email Printing via Public Computer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> via Email Printing via Public Computer
Virtual Lab/Vmware?	✓	✓	✓	✗
Solstice Screencasting?	✓	✓	✓	✗
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Virtual 		

Virtualization for Windows	N/A	Lab/Vmware <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bootcamp³ • Parallels⁴ • VM Fusion⁴ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Virtual Lab/Vmware 	
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¹Some *pre-2019 Chromebooks* may have access to the Google Play Store and thus can install Android apps.

²We recommend using either Office 365 University (available for free to all Penn students) or Office 2019 ProPlus.

³We recommend that your Mac have at least 256GB of storage space if you plan to use Bootcamp.

⁴We recommend that your Mac have at least 8GB of RAM if you plan to install Microsoft Windows in VMware Fusion or Parallels.

Software Purchases

Software needed for "Whartonizing" your computer is free and is available via download using the directions in [Whartonizing Your Device](#).

Hardware Recommendations

When looking to purchase a new laptop, it may be hard to distinguish what makes one model better than another. In cases like these, it is often helpful to compare hardware specifications. See below for some tips on how to determine the difference in hardware specifications.

Hard-Drive (a.k.a. Storage)

Your hard-drive is where all your data is stored, from programs to personal files like documents and pictures. It also houses your Operating System (Windows or MacOS) which can sometimes take up to 30GB -- so keep this in mind when looking at storage sizes.

Hard-Drives also come in two types: HDDs and SSDs. SSDs are better with speed, durability, and longevity, but come at a higher cost. Our recommendation is to have at least a 256GB SSD. Use in conjunction with [Cloud Storage Options](#) to maximize productivity, performance, and durability of your data!

RAM (a.k.a. Memory)

RAM assists your computer's other hardware in order to run programs and especially helps if you plan to have multiple programs (or browser windows/tabs) open at once.

For RAM, the more the better. Our recommendation is to have a minimum of 8GB of RAM, but 16GB is preferable for improved performance.

CPU (a.k.a. Processor)

Your CPU handles all calculations your computer has to make, essentially making it the brain of your computer. CPU performance is measured by two factors: number of cores & clock speed (i.e. Dual Core @2.6GHz).

For CPU, the more cores the better. If you choose a CPU with more cores, it's okay if your clock speed is slower.

CPUs may also be listed by brand and model. In general, the higher model numbers are better (i.e. i7 > i5 > i3 or Ryzen 7 > Ryzen 5 > Ryzen 3).

Remote Work Considerations

Frequently Asked Questions

1. [Can I use my company computer?](#)
2. [Can I use my current computer?](#)
3. [Which Smartphone will work best at Wharton?](#)

Need More Purchasing Advice?

Wharton Computing and Information Technology supports research, instructional, student, and administrative computing at the Wharton School.

- Visit: 114 SH-DH or <https://computing.wharton.upenn.edu>
 - Call: (215) 898-8600 (support available 24/7)
 - Email: support@wharton.upenn.edu
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