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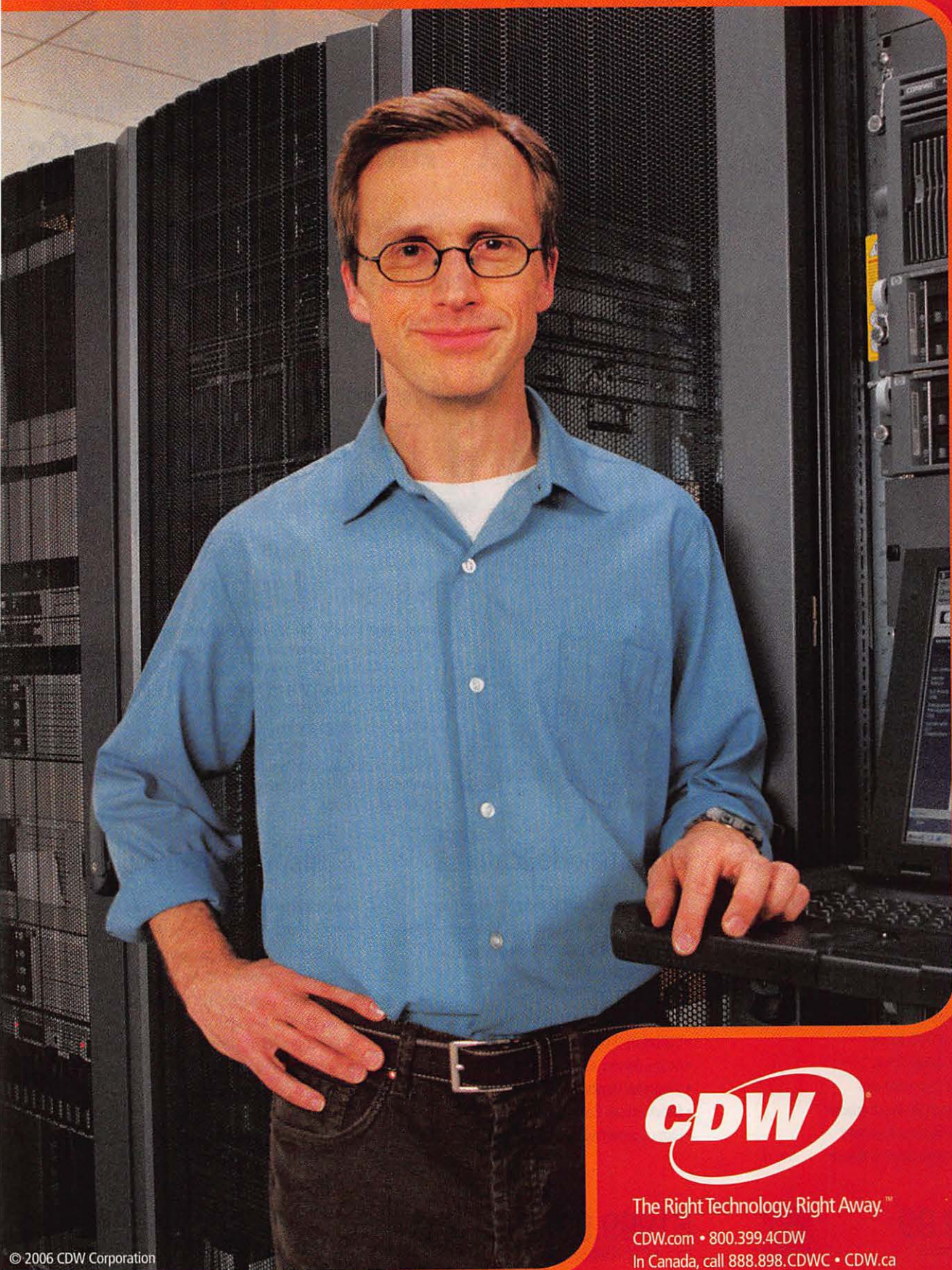
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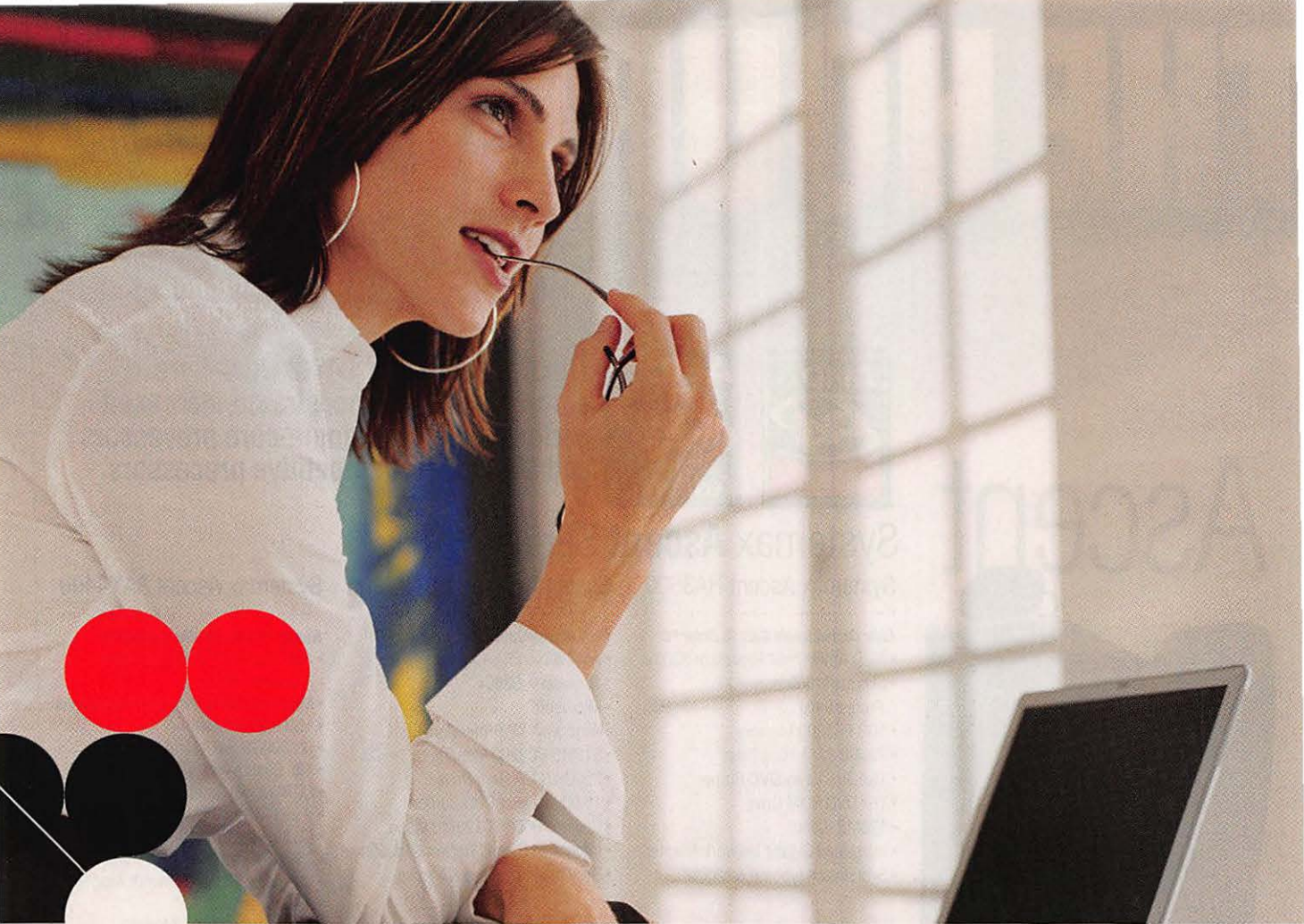
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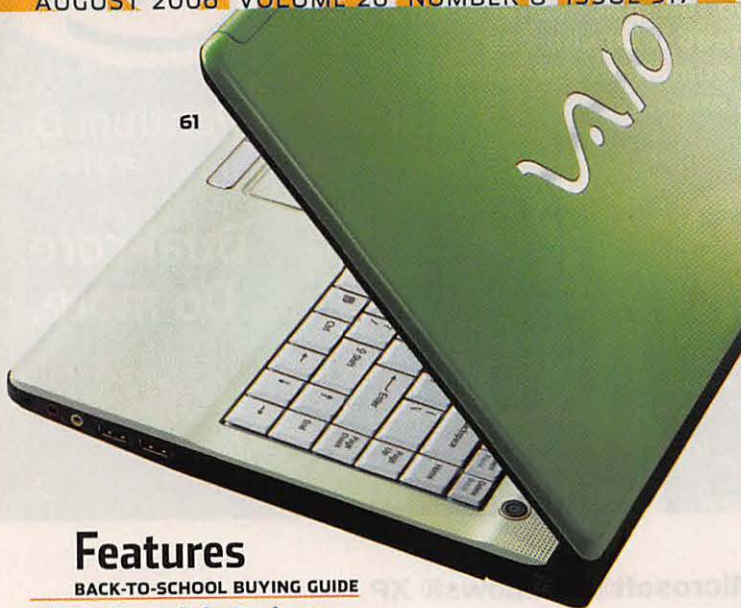
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61 Thrifty Tech for Students

Whether you're returning to campus or just looking for an excuse to upgrade your gear, our budget-minded roundup will get you back into the digital daily grind. This full selection of affordable desktops, notebooks, and hardware will please students and smart shoppers alike.

NINE ESSENTIAL PC UPGRADES

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Your dream PC doesn't have to remain a figment of your imagination any longer. Our guide to choosing the right upgrade parts will help you turn your humdrum desktop into a powerful, media-ready PC. The advice is good for a build-it-yourself project, too.

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Help & How-To

COMPUTER CURES

- 87** One reader seeks a printer that can resist freezing temperatures, another wants to project video onto two screens at once, while another needs to calm a crazy cursor. Our PC doc has cures for them all. Plus, see a tip to speed booting up your older PC.

WEEKEND PROJECT

90 Optical Addition

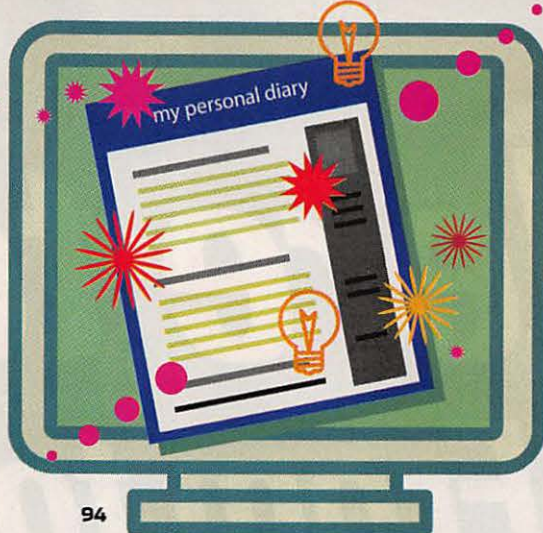
Installing an internal DVD burner requires a little tangling with cables and settings, but no need to get your IDE cables in a knot. Couple your aging CD drive with a new DVD burner in five easy steps.

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Have something to say? Don't settle for boring templates, copycat layouts, and zero traffic—get your blog noticed with these handy tips.

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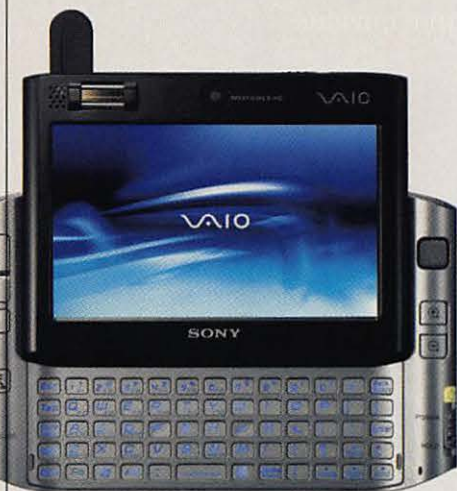
- 15** AMD unveils new CPUs and its future processor roadmap. Plus, Dell is opening physical stores without inventory, and now more than ever, trial software is cluttering the screens of new PCs.

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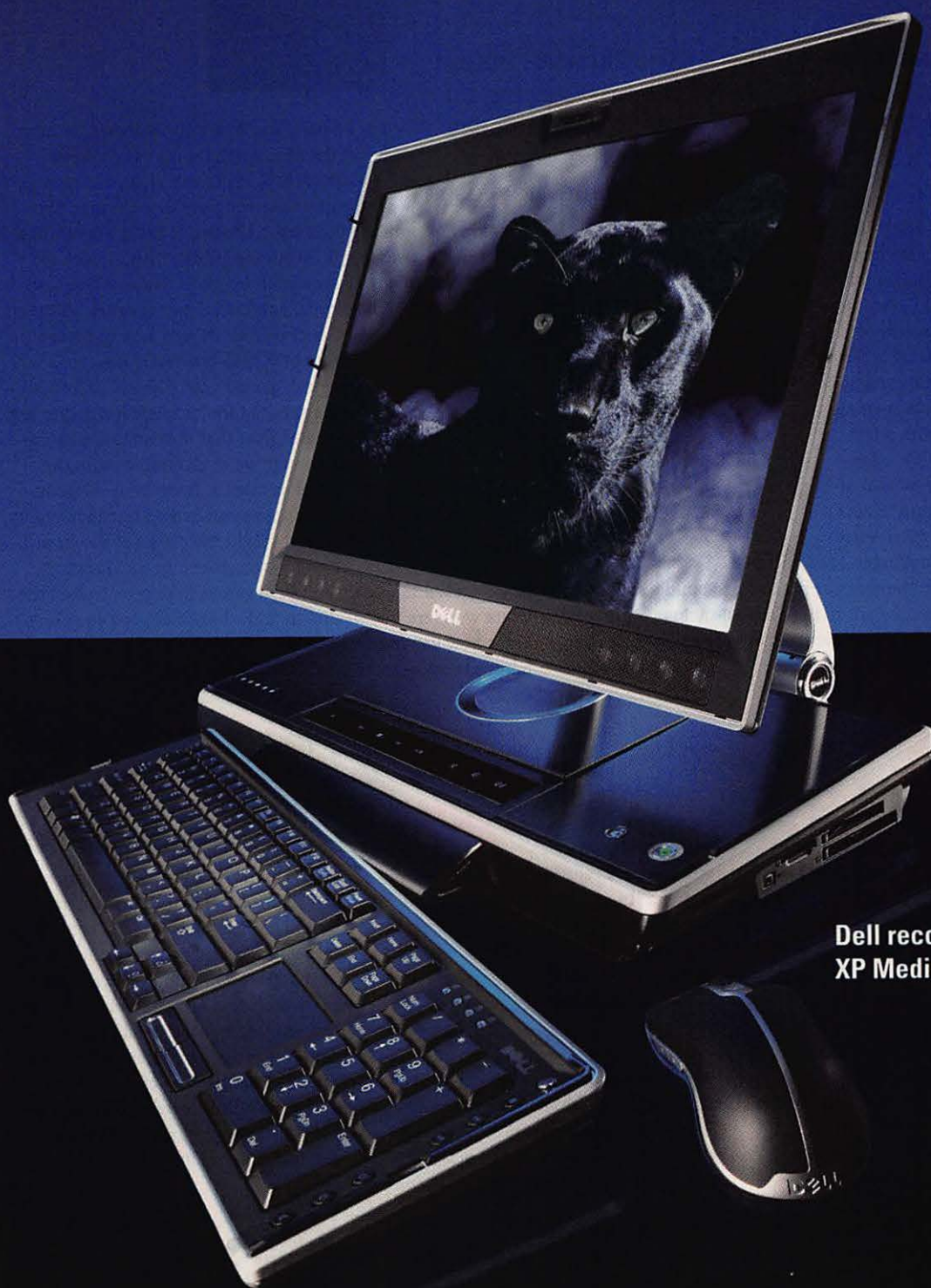


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I'VE WRITTEN HERE BEFORE about the affliction I inherited from my parents, which keeps me from getting rid of anything that might be of possible value "someday." For my mom, it's plastic containers; for me, it's old computers and computer parts. Closets and drawers in

both my home and work offices are stuffed with all sorts of outdated electronic detritus. But I'm turning over a new leaf. At work, I'm taking advantage of an office move to clear out anything I haven't touched in a year, and at home, I'm making use of my town's free computer and electronics recycling day. Having said that, there might be a PC or two that still has legs enough to be rejuvenated with a few strategic upgrades. It's a dangerous thought, I know, but after reading our feature "Power Parts" (p. 72), it's hard to resist.

Whether you're looking to speed up a PC that's getting long in the tooth or planning to build a speedster from scratch, you won't want to miss our all-inclusive guide to choosing components. Armed with expert advice on picking a new processor, motherboard, RAM module, hard drive, or other



tweaking or building your own, check out the great options in our back-to-school tech-buying guide, "Thrifty Tech for Students" (p. 61). We rounded up great deals in five categories: desktops, notebooks, peripherals, software, and PC accessories. All are sure to please students and deal-hunters alike.

One tech gadget you're bound to find in many a college backpack (or briefcase, diaper bag, or designer handbag, for that matter) is the ubiquitous Apple iPod. Though we're all familiar with the iPod's built-in multimedia talents, fewer people realize that scads of third-party applets can extend its functionality. In "iProductivity" (p. 82), we highlight the cream of the crop, including office-productivity boosters, mapping and location-based tools and guides, and even games to play on those little white wonders. You're sure to find a bunch of apps you don't know how you lived without, as well as a handful of cool hardware add-ons, to boot.

janice.chen@computersshopper.com

LETTERS

NO LOVE FOR LINUX?

I have been a frequent *Computer Shopper* reader for more than 20 years. I noticed that the hardware and software products you feature in the latest issue are almost exclusively for Windows users. I switched to Linux about five years ago, and every year, more and more people are switching. Your magazine is great but would benefit from coverage that targets the growing number of Linux users in your readership.

Eddie Colon

APPLE'S SUPPORT IS SOLID

I disagree with your response to the reader inquiring about refurbished Apple products ("Ask the Editors," July, p. 84). You stated that while Apple's refurbished PCs offer great savings, "the downside is that these computers often come with only a 90-day warranty." While this may be true for other companies, Apple

provides a full year warranty on all refreshed and refurbished products. In addition, anyone can add the extended AppleCare Protection Plan to a purchase to get a full three years of coverage with full phone support. I would hardly call that a downside.

Eugene Orr

We mistakenly stated that Apple's refurbished notebooks feature a 90-day warranty—they in fact come with the same plan as new Apple products, which includes 90 days of phone support and a full year warranty. —Ed.

BEWARE THE BARGAIN CASE

You should have discussed issues other than physical appearance when explaining your choice of case in "Build a Bargain" (June, p. 64). I recently purchased a so-called "bargain" case for the same price



A Dell Inspiron 1300 Laptop

Go to computersshopper.com/survey. See sweepstakes rules on p. 110.

(\$32.99) as the one used in your article. After installation, the problems started immediately: My PC refused to boot up, and there was no video output. It turned out that the power supply had sunk into the motherboard and shorted it out, due to weak support brackets inside the case. The solution was to buy a different case, which added \$125 to the price of my self-built PC. Had I spent a little more on a better-quality case in the beginning, I probably would have saved money in the long run.

Richard Langenegger

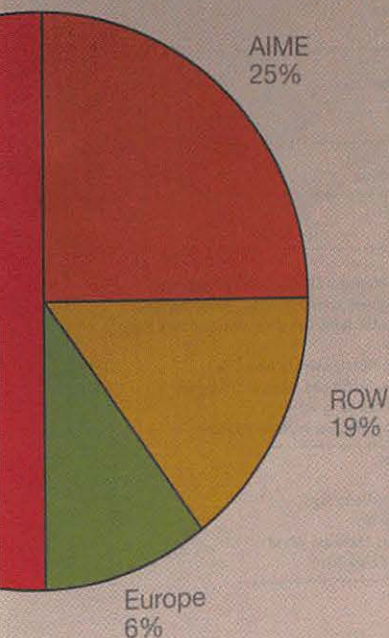
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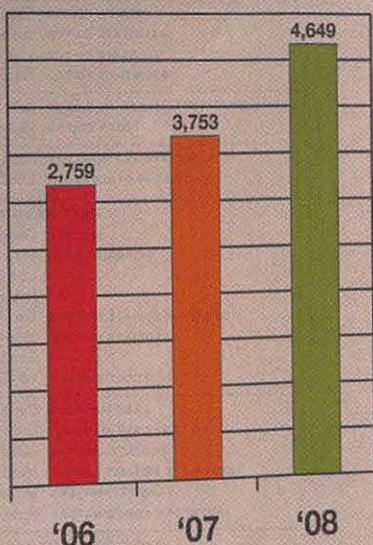
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The Big Picture

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Come along for our annual undercover foray into the PC world's "big box" retail stores. We hit the bricks (and mortar) to find out which superstore will deliver the best service experience when you shop for your next computer.

MICROSOFT VISTA PREVIEW

Microsoft is touting Vista as a secure, feature-packed successor to XP, but will the new OS live up to all the hype? Our prerelease sneak peek will show you what to expect before you take the plunge.

THE BEST BUDGET PCs

Back in June, we built what we deemed the best bang-for-your-buck desktop. Now it's time to see what PC vendors can come up with to compete with our home-grown budget box.



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There are places
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FIRST PRODUCTS COMING SOON

Information brought to you by the USB Implementers Forum

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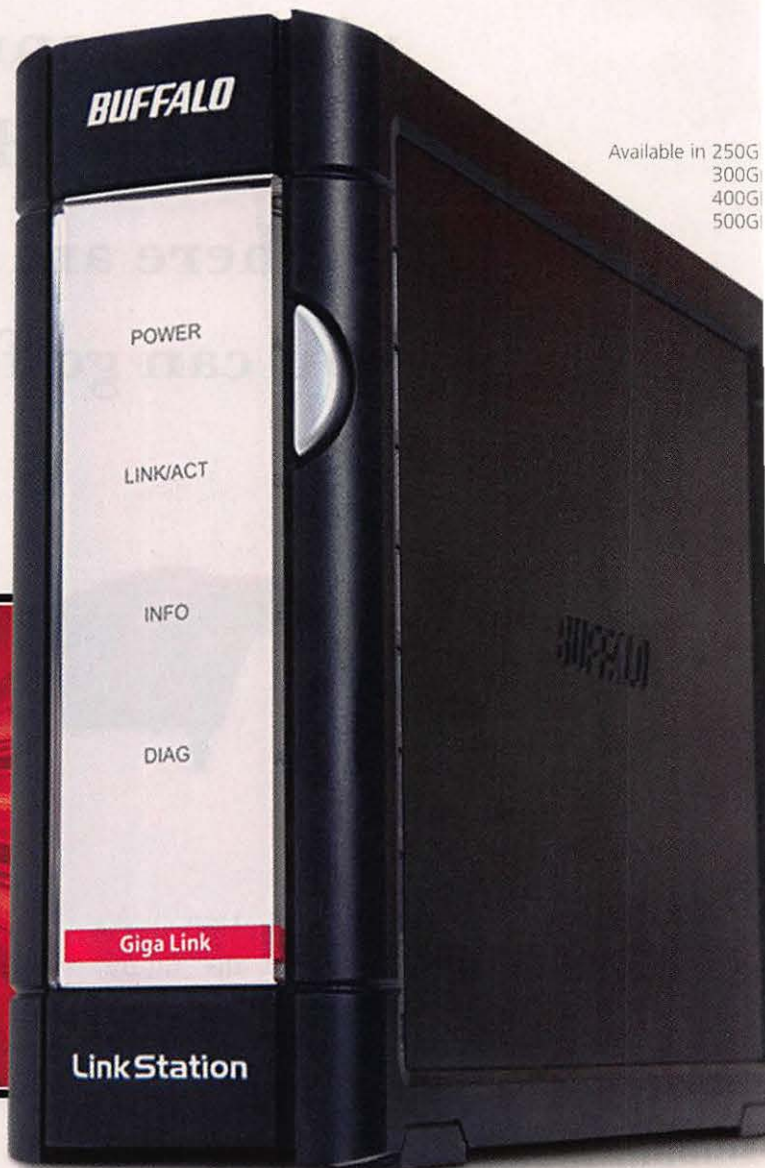
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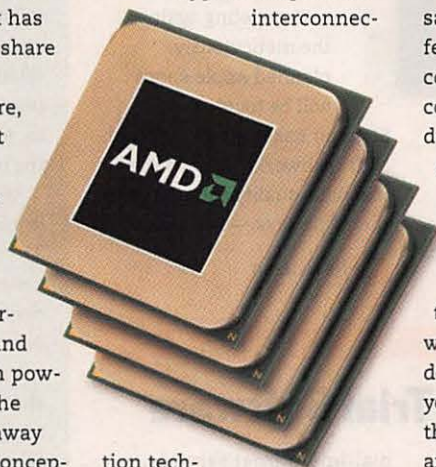
AMD's 2007 PC Chips Promise To Put Four Cores to the Floor

ADVANCED MICRO Devices will come out with a new chip architecture next year, and it's not deviating from the basic formula that has helped it take market share away from Intel.

The new architecture, currently dubbed Next Generation Processor Technology, enhances the design underlying the current Opteron, Turion, and Athlon 64 chips. Performance will increase, and AMD will keep a lid on power consumption, but the company has veered away from making radical conceptual changes in the overall blueprint. Processors built under the new design will debut in 2007.

The new chips will feature four processing cores; AMD's best CPUs currently have

two. Processors built under the new architecture will feature a faster version of HyperTransport, an interconnect-



tion technology featured on AMD chips. Each core will now share a third memory cache, in addition to having two dedicated caches.

The upcoming AMD chips will curb power consump-

tion by allowing the memory controller or the processor core to independently power down during idle periods, says Chuck Moore, a senior fellow at AMD. The memory controller and processing cores currently slow down during slow periods, but only when both are relatively idle.

In comparison, Intel is overhauling the basic architecture of its chips in the second half of 2006 and will follow with incremental design changes in subsequent years. The company asserts that processors based on the architecture—Merom, Conroe, and Woodcrest—will substantially outperform current AMD chips by 20 percent, while also reducing power consumption. —Michael Kanellios

cnet News.com

• TRENDSPOTTING

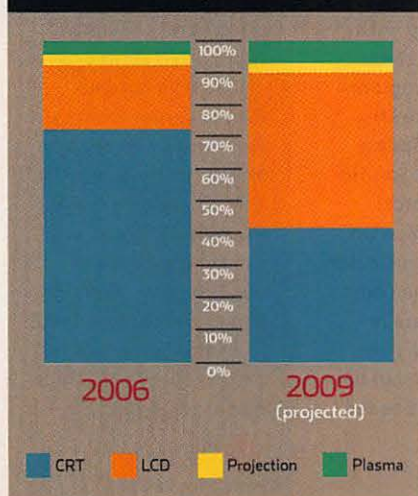
Royal Philips Electronics recently showcased advances in 3D displays that won't require viewers to wear those goofy glasses.

The displays are based on the company's WOWvx technology, which addresses many of the issues surrounding 3D viewing. In addition to not requiring special glasses or filters, the 42-inch panels allow multiple users to view 3D images simultaneously and can play content in 2D or 3D mode.

Philips' first 3D displays will be for commercial applications, such as digital signage. Consumer displays will follow, but the company hasn't provided a timetable for their release. —Sean Portnoy

Down the Tubes

Worldwide TV Shipments by Type



Source: iSuppli

Samsung's New Drive Boots in a Flash

Samsung has launched a hybrid hard drive that includes a flash-memory chip that stores data and applications for faster bootups. The drive should also extend battery life for notebook PCs.

The company is currently offering the drive in its Q1 ultraportable computer and its Q30 laptop PC, both available only in Korea. PCs using the hybrid drive will be available in the United States in 2007.

The new drive decreases startup time because applications can be retrieved from much speedier flash memory, instead of from the slower hard drive.

The data-retrieval process also allows the hard drive—which, in an ordinary computer, spins constantly—to stay asleep most of the time. Spinning drives are one of the biggest power draws in a computer, so allowing them to idle will lead to about an extra half-hour of battery life for a notebook, says Don Barnetson, Samsung's director of flash-memory marketing.

Samsung's hybrid drives, which will work with Microsoft's forthcoming Vista OS, will be marketed under the moniker "ReadyDrive," a Microsoft brand name. —M.K.

cnet News.com

Dell Goes Shopping at Upscale Malls

DELL IS OPENING two physical stores this year—with-out any inventory on hand.

The first was slated to open in July in Dallas' North-Park Center, while the second is planned for the Palisades Center in West Nyack, N.Y. Instead of direct sales, the shops will allow customers to order products through Dell's Web site after trying out the display models, says Venancio Figueroa, a company spokesman.

Dell has been experimenting with kiosks inside retail shopping malls and Sears

stores for several years. Kiosks can't hold much more than a few items, however. Figueroa says the 3,000-square-foot stores will allow




Dell to set up a mock living room full of its products, where customers can learn more about PCs, digital televisions, and other electronic equipment.

Dell's stores should do better than Gateway's defunct retail operations, because Dell is focusing on high-traffic upscale shop-

ping malls, whereas Gateway built many of its stores in strip malls. Dell, however, will be going head-to-head with Apple Computer stores in the same facilities in both Texas and New York.

Competing against the meticulously planned Apple shops will be tough, says

Stephen Baker, an analyst with NPD Techworld. "It has to be a real high-quality experience in there," he says. —Tom Krazit

 News.com

PCs Found Guilty of Too Much Trial Software

IF YOUR NEW PC is running slower than the old one it replaced, it might be weighed down with several applications destined to gather dust on the desktop.

New PCs increasingly come cluttered with pre-installed software—in some cases, the traditional trial offers for Internet service providers such as AOL and EarthLink, but also newer applications such as spyware-blocking tools, which, somewhat ironically, inundate users with pop-up windows advertising their services.

Of course, for years PC makers have been trying to get every extra dime they could by selling little pieces of the desktop not already controlled by Microsoft. But now the value of that real estate is soaring, as evi-

denced by the recent deal Google struck to install its software on new Dell PCs.


Almost all major con-



sumer Windows-PC makers, including Dell, Hewlett-Packard, and Gateway, give new PC users the opportunity to sign up for free limited-time access to

dial-up Internet services. Even if the full version of the program isn't installed, the trial versions can run in the background and tie up system resources that could be flowing to actively used applications.

Another source of frustration: the system-management consoles some vendors ship with their PCs. Many of these "system update" programs essentially duplicate Microsoft's Windows Update service, according to Jon Helin, director of technical services at PlumChoice Online PC Services. PlumChoice estimates that, of the complaints its technicians receive related to slow-running PCs, 90 percent can be fixed by deleting unneeded programs. —T.K.

 News.com

New Service Delivers Photo Prints Via E-Mail


If all you want to do is see pictures of the grandkids, a new startup thinks it has a service for you.

Launching this fall, Presto Services will provide Hewlett-Packard photo printers to its customers and hook them up to an online service managed by more-connected relatives looking to share photos, says Joe Beninato, founder and CEO of the new company.

Users connect the printer to a phone jack. The printer contains software that can access an online mailbox set up by a more tech-savvy relative or friend. New snapshots are e-mailed to the mailbox, and the service takes those photos and sends them to the printer every so often.

The printer owner doesn't need to have Internet service, and Beninato says that the device doesn't need any configuration. Pricing information has not been made available yet, but users will have to purchase the printer and pay a monthly or annual service fee.

The idea behind Presto comes from Beninato's attempts to set up his mother with a PC. "I bought her a PC with AOL, and she can't quite figure it out," he says. E-mail messages bearing family photos often got lost among spam and other messages. —T.K.

 CNET.com

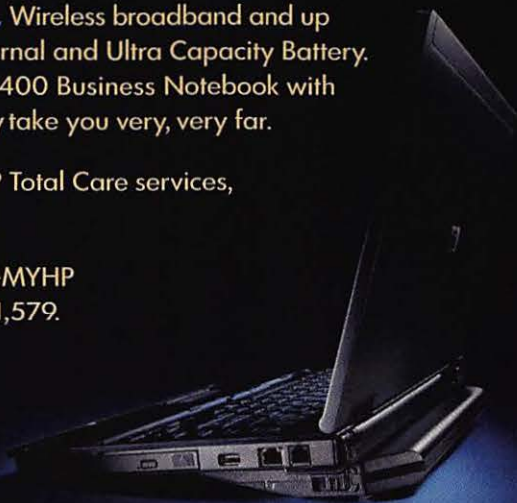
HP recommends Windows® XP Professional



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GEAR NEW PRODUCTS

BY ERIN KANDEL



Zoom ring

Better than your average camera phone, the **Nokia N93** has a built-in 3.2-megapixel shooter with features galore, including a Carl Zeiss 3x optical zoom lens and a swiveling 2.4-inch color display that acts as a viewfinder. The N93 also overachieves as a cell phone, with 50MB of internal memory, integrated 802.11b/g Wi-Fi connectivity, and support for 3G mobile networks. (Price and carrier information were not available at press time.) Nokia, www.nokia.com



Small drive, big storage

The highest-capacity external hard drive available, Seagate's \$559 **750GB Pushbutton Back-up Hard Drive** squeezes lots of storage into a tiny footprint. The sleekly designed unit offers 16MB of cache, along with USB 2.0 and FireWire 400 ports. It also comes loaded with backup software so you can save files with a touch of a button. Seagate Technology, www.seagate.com

Network noir

Based on the draft version of the forthcoming 802.11n wireless networking standard, Belkin's \$149.99 **N1 Wireless Router** uses multiple input, multiple output (MIMO) technology to send and receive data at speeds up to 300Mbps.

The glossy piano-black device also offers strong security features, including Wi-Fi Protected Access 2 (WPA 2) encryption and a built-in firewall. Plus, a unique LED panel shows the status of each major component in your wireless network. Belkin, www.belkin.com



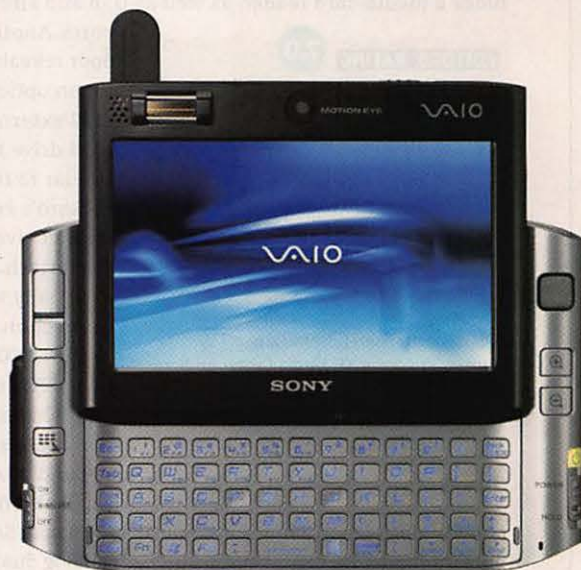
Metal mouse

The \$119 **Zspire Bluetooth Mouse** has a funky geometric shape sure to turn heads. Crafted from metal and metal alloys, its solid construction allows for increased precision and control. The wireless mouse works with any Bluetooth-enabled Mac or PC, and features a dedicated on/off switch to help you conserve battery life. Choose among four metallic colors. Zspire Technologies, www.zspire.com



Total control

Channel surfing just got more sophisticated with the \$299 **Thomson Acoustic Research Wi-Q Universal Remote Control**. The device uses built-in Wi-Fi to retrieve broadcast, cable, and satellite program guides from the Web, before displaying that information on its color LCD. It also has a ticker that scrolls news, sports, and weather updates. Plus, this overachieving clicker can control up to 24 components in your living room. Thomson, www.rca.com



XP in hand

Sony's \$1,799 **VAIO UX180P** is one highly portable PC. Weighing just 1.2 pounds, the powerful handheld computer, which runs Windows XP Professional, features a 1.2GHz processor, 512MB of RAM, and a 30GB hard drive. For data entry, the 4.5-inch touch-sensitive screen slides up to reveal a full-size QWERTY keyboard. Also onboard are two integrated cameras, 802.11a/b/g Wi-Fi connectivity, and a Memory Stick slot. Sony Electronics, www.sonymstyle.com

REVIEWS

THE LATEST HARDWARE AND SOFTWARE PRODUCTS

Shuttle XPC M2000

Hot-looking Viiv Media Center is ready for prime time

COMPARED WITH Shuttle's standard toaster-size PCs, the M2000, with its stereo-component design, begs for inclusion in home theaters. We expected more-powerful parts considering our test unit's \$2,199 price, but this well-designed Media Center PC is a true living-room model nonetheless.

The M2000 is virtually identical to last year's M1000, but this model bears Intel's Viiv sticker, which means it fulfills a list of basic specs for enjoying digital media. (See our Viiv PC roundup at www.computershopper.com/multimediamerger.) A large LED display dominates the front panel, and a small door hides a media-card reader, as well as USB and FireWire

ports. Another door reveals a slot for an optional \$132 external 80GB hard drive that's similar to Hewlett-Packard's Personal Media Drive. (You can also attach the drive externally via a USB connection.)

The M2000's selection of A/V connections shines. In addition to the standard DVI and VGA outputs, you'll also find com-

EDITORS' RATING 7.0
0 BETTER >> 10

PROS Sleek design; copious A/V connections; removable-hard-drive bay

CONS Paltry RAM; smallish hard drive; no expansion options

SPECS 2GHz Core Duo T2500; 512MB DDR; 250GB hard drive; double-layer DVD±RW; no monitor; nVidia GeForce 6600 LE graphics (256MB); two TV tuners; Windows XP Media Center Edition 2005

Shuttle Computer, 888-972-1818
sys.us.shuttle.com

Direct Price \$2,199

ponent-video jacks, along with optical and coaxial S/PDIF outputs for hard-core digital audio buffs. An analog dual-tuner TV card comes standard, but you can upgrade to a high-definition tuner for an extra \$69.

Accessing the interior is a hassle, although it's a moot point because you don't get any room for expansion—a potential problem considering the M2000's 512MB of RAM



The Shuttle XPC M2000 is ready to be the center of your digital media world with its strong line of I/O connections.



and relatively small 250GB hard drive. Also, the 256MB nVidia GeForce 6600 LE graph-

ics card is enough muscle for Media Center duties, though less so for the latest 3D games.

The unit's Core Duo CPU did well, hitting 224 on BAPCO SYSmark 2004. An extra 512MB of memory would improve performance, however. —Dan Ackerman

CNET.com

What's the Deal?

Shuttle flattens its typical cube design for a more A/V-rack-friendly PC. The M2000 is, without a doubt, one of the most attractive Media Center PCs we've seen.

What it's for: Managing all your digital media, playing CDs and DVDs, and watching and recording standard-definition television.

Who it's for: Those looking for a stylish PC to give them couch access to digital video, music, and photos, as well as the Internet. We don't recommend using it as your main PC or for playing the latest 3D games, however, and its expansion options are limited.

What's included: A one-year parts-and-labor warranty with toll-free support; a Media Center wireless trackball keyboard plus remote control; and a software bundle with CyberLink's PowerDVD, the Nero 6 disc-burning app, and a trial version of Trend Micro PC-cillin 2006.

Extra essentials: A monitor; 5.1-channel speakers; more RAM.

The bottom line: The Shuttle XPC M2000 is a great-looking living-room system that handles media tasks easily, but its stripped-down specs keep it from pulling double duty as your primary PC.

Canon PowerShot S3 IS

A well-designed megazoom camera for photo enthusiasts

A VERY well-executed megazoom camera, the \$499.99 Canon PowerShot S3 IS reminds you why DSLRs still have competition for photo enthusiasts' hearts.

Building on the success of its S2 IS predecessor, Canon bumps up the S3's resolution from 5 megapixels to 6 megapixel-



PROS Fast, responsive; LCD flips/twists; solid movie capture

CONS Small LCD; lacks RAW-file support; lame wide-screen capture mode

Canon U.S.A., 800-652-2666
usa.canon.com

Mfr. Est. Price \$499.99

els, increases the size of the flip-and-twist LCD to 2 inches from 1.8 inches (still on the small size, however), and tosses in a few new features. Otherwise, it's essentially the same camera—not a bad thing, since the S2 was a great one to begin with.

The company did add a ludicrous 16-to-9 aspect mode; not only does it simply crop and letterbox standard 4-to-3 images, but the LCD is too small for a functional

letterbox display. More useful is the new 320x240, 60-frame-per-second (fps) movie-capture mode, which produces slick little movies, as does the VGA-quality 30fps mode. One downer: The camera still lacks support for the RAW file format.

Despite the different sensors—or perhaps because both cameras use the same 36mm-to-432mm lens (with effective optical image stabilization) and DIGIC II imaging processor—the S3's photos look almost identical to the S2's. They display a broad tonal range, albeit with some clipping in highlights and shadows, as well as very good color accuracy and saturation, and acceptable edge-to-edge sharpness. Though the camera can now boost ISO sensitivity to as high as ISO 800, the noise at that setting is obtrusive. In general, the S3's photos are good but can't really shake the digital look, either onscreen or in print.

Performance, while not identical to the S2's, is either the equivalent or better. Going from startup to first shot takes only 1.5 seconds, which is quite zippy and especially impressive for a camera that has a long lens to extend. Shutter lag in bright light is about 0.4 second and doubles to 0.8 second when the lights get low. The S3 is also relatively responsive: 1.1 seconds, typically, from shot to shot, plus another second if the flash needs to recycle. Though the camera maxes out at 1.5fps in continuous-shooting mode, you can keep taking sequential shots at maximum resolution until the memory card fills up. —Lori Grunin

CNET.com

The PowerShot S3 IS features a 36mm-to-432mm lens with effective optical image stabilization.



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GoodSync 3.4
Mozy
WinZip 10.0 Pro
Babylon 6
OpenOffice.org 2
Propaganda 1.2.1



For details on how we test the hardware we review, visit computershopper.com/HowWeTest.

Cyberpower Gamer Ultra X1900 XT

CrossFire rig is a respectable SLI alternative

CYBERPOWER'S online configuration tool for the Gamer Ultra X1900 XT offers more options than almost any we've seen, with dozens of chassis and color choices.



PROS Impressive 3D performance on DirectX games; stylish, immaculately wired chassis; lots of customization options; reasonable price

CONS Less capable on OpenGL games; noisy operation; external CrossFire dongle

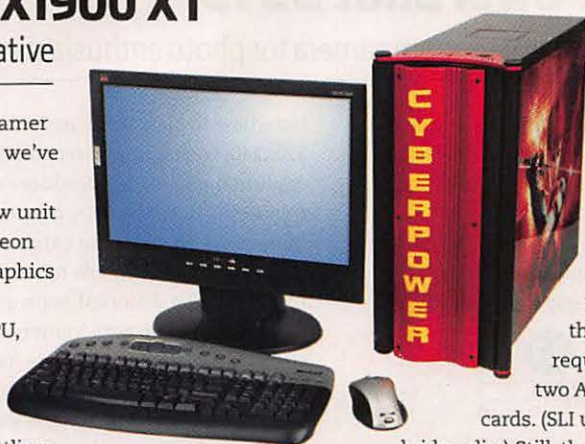
SPECS 2.6GHz Athlon 64 FX-60; 1GB DDR; two 74GB hard drives; 250GB hard drive; double-layer DVD±RW; DVD-ROM; 19-inch ViewSonic LCD; two ATI Radeon X1900 XTX graphics cards (512MB); Windows XP Professional

Cyberpower, 800-707-0393
www.cyberpowerpc.com

Direct Price \$3,499

Our \$3,499 review unit paired two ATI Radeon X1900 XT-series graphics cards with AMD's Athlon 64 FX-60 CPU, along with a sharp 19-inch ViewSonic wide-screen LCD and a bone-rattling eight-channel Creative speaker set. Our attractive, glossy red-and-black case was also airbrushed with an image of Ruby, ATI's heroine. Cyberpower did a fine job of routing and organizing the X1900 XT's interior. The unit's cooling fans created a noticeable din, however.

While ATI's CrossFire technology has advantages over



nVidia's competing Scalable Linked Interface (SLI) dual-graphics-card scheme, we're not fans of the external dongle required to connect two ATI CrossFire cards. (SLI uses an internal bridge clip.) Still, the X1900 XT didn't

exhibit any of the stability problems the first batch of SLI systems did, nor does it have their sky-high prices.

We couldn't deny the PC's impressive overall performance, either. In our 3D-gaming tests, performance results were predictably mixed. The X1900 XT blew away its SLI-based competition on our 1,600x1,200 DirectX Half-Life 2 tests, hitting 126.9 frames per second (fps). It fell behind on our 1,024x768 OpenGL Doom 3 tests, however, mustering a comparatively low score of 106.1fps—nearly 100fps slower than a similarly configured SLI-based PC. Office applications won't be a problem for this desktop, however, judging by its impressive BAPCo SYSmark 2004 score of 284. —John R. Delaney

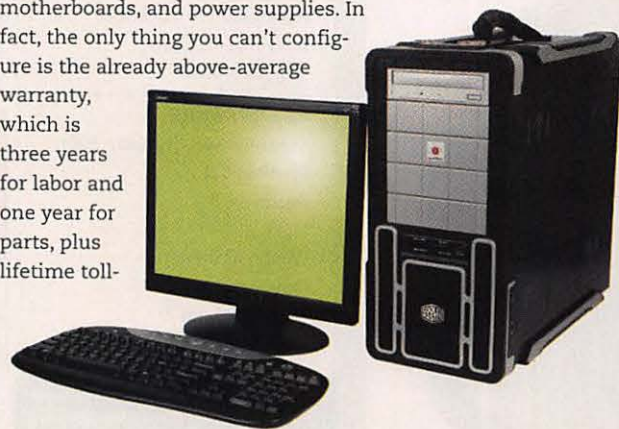
CNET CNET.com

iBuypower Value Ultra

Student-friendly PC lives up to its moniker

TRUE TO ITS NAME, the \$999 iBuypower Value Ultra delivers excellent value for your money, whether you need a computer for your college-bound teenager or a second PC to convert that now-vacant bedroom into a home office.

If customization isn't an issue, the eMachines T6532 (also reviewed in this section) is our top choice for a budget PC. If you want configuration alternatives, however, choose the Value Ultra. In addition to standard options, such as more memory or a larger hard drive, you can choose from a handful of cases, motherboards, and power supplies. In fact, the only thing you can't configure is the already above-average warranty, which is three years for labor and one year for parts, plus lifetime toll-



free tech support.

From an aesthetic standpoint, the Value Ultra's garish case will appeal more to gamers than casual users. Any interior tweaking may prove frustrating despite the ample expansion space, however, because the tangle of cables allows for little maneuverability.

Our \$999 test unit finished in a statistical dead heat with eMachines' T6532, scoring 181 on our BAPCo SYSmark 2004 benchmark test—not surprising, because the PCs are similar and use the same processor.

The Value Ultra truly flexes its muscle at 3D gaming, however, turning in a highly playable 60.9 frames per second in our 1,600x1,200 Half-Life 2 test.

Our unit also included Microsoft Works Suite 2006, a standard Internet keyboard, an optical mouse, a decent 17-inch ViewSonic LCD, and rather flimsy three-piece speakers. —J.R.D.



PROS Competitively priced; highly configurable; solid performance, 3D frame rates; good warranty

CONS Messy exterior, interior; no warranty extensions

SPECS 2.2GHz Athlon 64 3500+; 1GB DDR; 200GB hard drive; double-layer DVD±RW; 17-inch ViewSonic LCD; nVidia GeForce 7600 GT graphics (256MB); Windows XP Media Center Edition 2005

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Direct Price \$999

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REVIEWS DESKTOPS

eMachines T6532

Budget model gives you more than most

ALTHOUGH most competing budget PCs offer similar features, few companies give you more value for your money than eMachines.

EDITORS' RATING 7.6
0 BETTER >> 10

PROS Rock-bottom price; solid performance; available PCI Express x16 slot; big software bundle; inexpensive warranty upgrades

CONS Not configurable at time of purchase; no FireWire port; cheap input devices, speakers

SPECS 2.2GHz Athlon 64 3500+; 1GB DDR; 200GB hard drive; double-layer DVD±RW; 17-inch ViewSonic LCD; nVidia integrated graphics; Windows XP Media Center Edition 2005

eMachines, 408-273-0888
www.emachines.com

Direct Price \$579.99 (before a \$50 mail-in rebate)

Deal-seekers looking for a general-use PC will be pleased with the \$579.99 T6532, a non-configurable but competent entry-level PC.

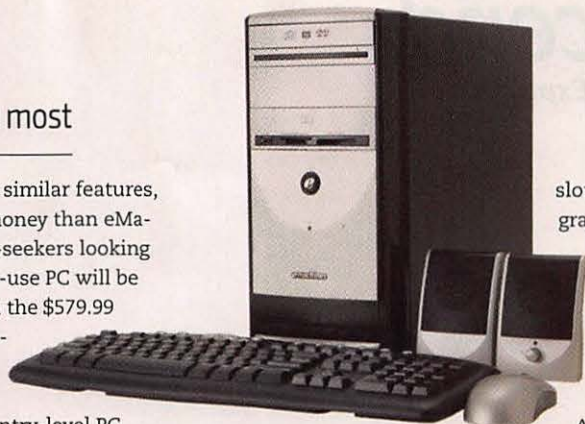
The black-and-gray T6532 has a clean aesthetic that blends into most environments. Its front panel has mic and headphone jacks, along with a USB 2.0 port and a media-card reader. Around back are four additional USB 2.0 ports, but no FireWire ports. Inside the easy-to-open case, you'll find a fairly orderly interior with room for future upgrades and add-ons, including a PCI Express (PCIe)

2.2GHz Athlon 64 3500+ processor, the T6532 performed well on our BAPCo SYSmark 2004 benchmark test, achieving an overall score of 179, commendable for a budget system. The integrated nVidia GeForce 6100 graphics could not complete our 3D-gaming tests, however.

The desktop runs on Windows XP Media Center Edition 2005 and comes with a generous package of bundled software, including CyberLink Power2Go, Microsoft Works 8.5, Money 2006, and a system-maintenance utility, BigFix. Documentation is sparse, but a detailed electronic user guide resides on the hard drive. And although the one-year standard warranty includes toll-call phone support, one- and two-year warranty extensions are affordable (\$99 and \$139, respectively). —Asa Somers and Matt Elliott

slot for adding a discrete graphics card. The included keyboard, ball mouse, and two-piece speaker set are cheaply made, however.

Built around AMD's mainstream



CNET.com

Gateway E-2600S SB

A business PC small in size, price



GATEWAY'S E-2600S SB offers platform-stability and management apps for small and medium-size businesses. Despite a base price of \$579, we weren't stuck with low-end components. Useful extras, such as an LCD and Microsoft Office 2003, however, raised our test unit's cost to \$1,313.

The "S" in its name indicates the small BTX chassis—a slim case that can stand upright or lay flat. Inside are two open half-height PCI Express slots (one x1, and

EDITORS' RATING 6.7
0 BETTER >> 10

PROS Slim BTX design; low price

CONS Half-height PCIe slots; add-ons can double the price

SPECS 3GHz Pentium 4 631; 1GB DDR2; 160GB hard drive; double-layer DVD±RW; 17-inch Gateway LCD; ATI integrated graphics; Windows XP Professional; Microsoft Office 2003

Gateway, 877-487-112
www.gateway.com

Direct Price \$1,313

one x16), but otherwise scant expansion room. Ports include six USB 2.0 jacks (two front, four rear) and legacy connections such as a VGA monitor port—but no DVI connector.

Our PC was robust enough for any office task, scoring a decent 167 on BAPCo SYSmark 2004. With only integrated graphics and no upgrade options, however, heavy 3D work is not advised. —Dan Ackerman

CNET.com

AOpen MiniPC Duo MP945-V

Tiny PC big on performance, little on extras

THE MAC MINI Core Duo has inspired a few copycat systems, such as the AOpen MiniPC Duo MP945-V. The two systems share almost identical specs, as well. AOpen's \$899 clone has double the RAM but costs about \$100 more than a similarly configured Mac Mini, and without all the great bundled software or a remote control. The MiniPC Duo did turn in slightly better test results, however, scoring an impressive 189 on BAPCo SYSmark 2004, versus the Mac Mini's 178.

Connections include a standard DVI port, along with a dongle for S-Video, composite-video, and component-video outputs. Three audio jacks provide standard options, with one doubling as an S/PDIF out. With only two USB 2.0 ports, however—and no PS/2 ports—you'll probably

EDITORS' RATING 7.0
0 BETTER >> 10

PROS Similar size to Mac Mini; speedy Core Duo CPU; multiple video-output options

CONS More expensive than Mac Mini; only two USB ports; no remote control; little bundled software

SPECS 1.67GHz Core Duo T2300; 1GB DDR2; 80GB hard drive; double-layer DVD±RW; no monitor; Intel integrated graphics; Windows XP Media Center Edition 2005

AOpen America, 408-232-1200
usa.aopen.com

Direct Price \$899

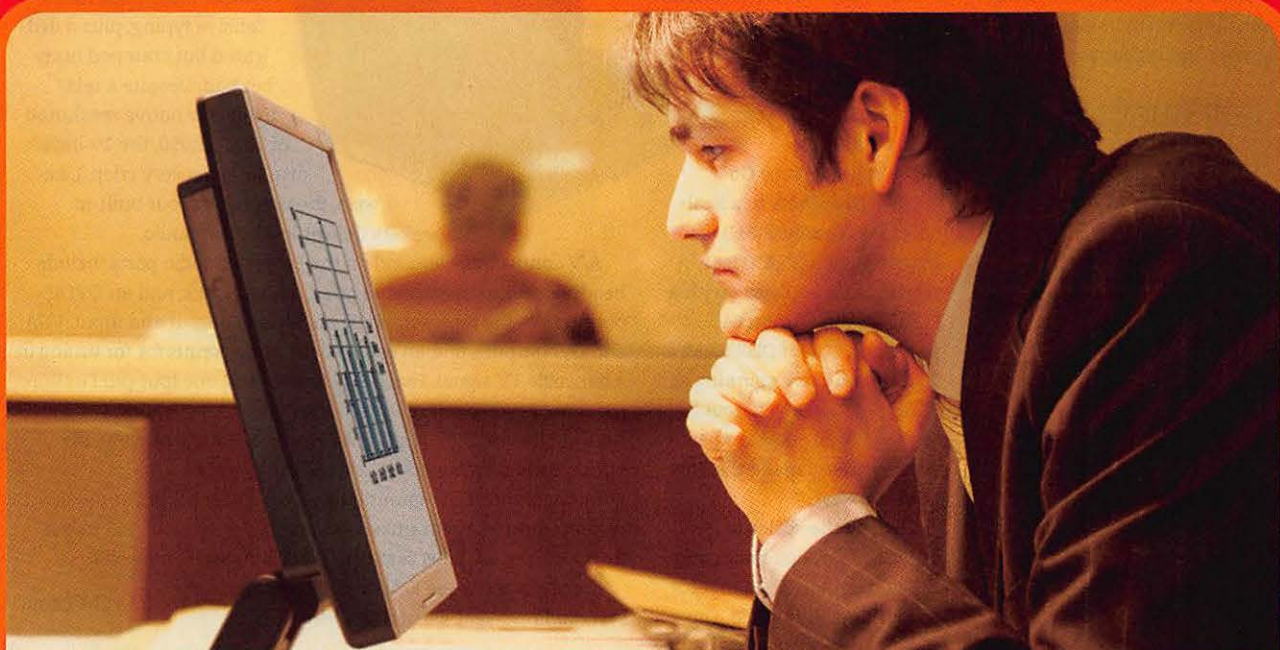
need to add a USB hub if you want to connect more than a keyboard and mouse. —D.A.



CNET.com

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Eurocom M590K Emperor

Hail to the first 19-inch-screen laptop with SLI

THE LAPTOP EQUIVALENT of a Cadillac Escalade, Eurocom's M590K Emperor is the first notebook we've laid hands on to pack both a 19-inch LCD and two graphics chips. But is this monstrous machine worth its titanic price? Unless you're a deep-pocketed gamer looking for a notebook with almost every possible mo-

mobile amenity, probably not.

In addition to two nVidia GeForce Go 7800 GTX chipsets in a Scalable Link Interface (SLI) configuration, our \$5,430 test model came equipped with a 2.21GHz AMD Turion 64 processor, 2GB of DDR RAM, a 100GB hard drive spinning at 7,200rpm, and an 8x double-layer DVD burner. As expected, this lineup made the Emperor run hot.

Tipping the scales at a hefty 17.7 pounds (including the AC adapter), the Emperor is anything but mobile. The



chassis features a full-size keyboard, which we found too mushy for extensive typing, plus a dedicated but cramped number pad. Despite a relatively low native resolution of 1,680x1,050, the 19-inch display looks very crisp. Likewise, the notebook's four built-in speakers deliver loud, clear audio.

A/V connections abound on the Emperor. Audio ports include headphone and microphone jacks, a line-in jack, and an S/PDIF output. Video is represented by an S-Video output and input, VGA and DVI outputs, and an external-antenna connector for tuning in a noncable TV signal. Five USB 2.0 ports and one four-pin FireWire port enable peripheral connections. Networking features include Gigabit Ethernet, 802.11a/b/g Wi-Fi, and a 56Kbps modem. An optional Bluetooth module adds \$71 to the price.

In our Doom 3 3D-gaming tests, the Emperor delivered an unprecedented 122 frames per second. Its score of 163 in our BAPCo SYSmark 2004 test was less impressive, however.

Eurocom backs the Emperor with an industry-standard one-year warranty. —Justin Jaffe

CNET.com

EDITORS' RATING 7.9

0 BETTER >> 10

PROS Excellent 19-inch display; best-in-class gaming performance; top-shelf SLI engine; solid assortment of A/V features, connections

CONS Extremely expensive; runs hot; no built-in Wi-Fi; mushy keyboard

SPECS 2.21GHz Turion 64; 2GB DDR; 100GB hard drive; double-layer DVD±RW; 19-inch TFT; Windows XP Professional

Eurocom, 877-387-6266
www.eurocom.com

Direct Price \$5,430

Dell Latitude D520

Moderately configured laptop is all business

IT WON'T WOW YOU with flashy features, but the Dell Latitude D520 has a satisfying combination of speed, battery life, and price that will keep business users with modest demands content.

Like the Latitude D620 (its thinner and lighter cousin), the D520-line laptops feature Intel Core Duo processors, which deliver faster mobile performance and better battery life than the Pentium M CPUs both notebook families used until recently. The D520, however, retains the 15-inch standard-aspect-ratio display of its predecessor, the D510. Standard-aspect screens like these are a dying breed among today's wide-screen laptops. The bright LCD has a 1,024x768 native resolution—too low to render graphics in fine detail, but just right for reading text.

Our \$1,482 test unit carried a 1.66GHz Core Duo T2300 processor, an integrated Intel 950 graphics engine with no upgrade option for discrete graphics (a disadvantage for anyone planning on running games or video-intensive apps), 512MB of RAM, and an anemic 40GB hard drive. Despite the inte-

grated graphics and slow hard drive, the D520 showed more than enough speed for a basic business system, achieving a 291 score on BAPCo MobileMark 2002. It also impressed us in our battery-drain tests, lasting 8 minutes shy of 5 hours.

The D520 offers a spacious, spill-resistant keyboard, as well as a big touch pad and mouse buttons, all of which are comfortable to use. The unit doesn't have an excess of ports and connections, but its offerings cover all the standards: four USB ports, a

FireWire port, an S-Video out, an ExpressCard slot, and built-in 802.11b/g wireless networking. Business travelers might bemoan the lack of wireless wide-area-network (WWAN) functionality and biometric security, however.

Dell includes a three-year warranty with onsite, next-business-day service and toll-free, 24/7 phone support. —Stephanie Bruzese

EDITORS' RATING 6.2

0 BETTER >> 10

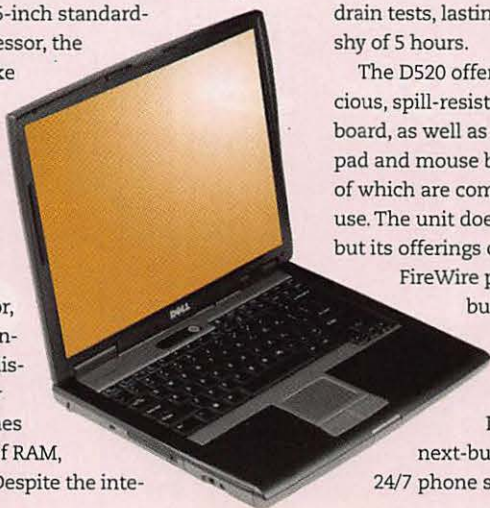
PROS Reasonable price; solid mobile performance, battery life; onsite service comes standard

CONS No option for discrete graphics; small hard drive; lacks fingerprint sensor, WWAN capability

SPECS 1.66GHz Core Duo T2300; 512MB DDR; 40GB hard drive; DVD±RW; 15-inch TFT; Windows XP Professional

Dell, 800-999-3355
www.dell.com

Direct Price \$1,482



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HP Compaq Presario V3000

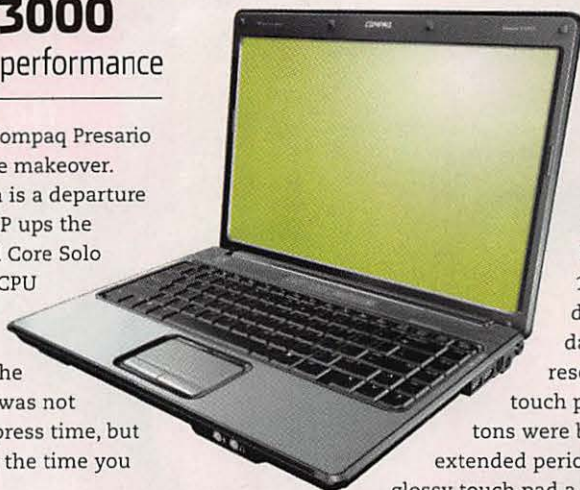
Budget notebook doesn't skimp on performance

HEWLETT-PACKARD'S competitively priced Compaq Presario V3000 looks ready to rock, thanks to a complete makeover.

The V3000's new high-gloss dark gray finish is a departure from its previous demure facade. Internally, HP ups the processor ante with a choice between an Intel Core Solo

or Core Duo CPU and an AMD dual-core processor. (The AMD option was not available at press time, but should be by the time you read this.)

Our \$1,163 test model included a 1.83GHz Intel Core Duo T2400 processor, 512MB of DDR2 SDRAM, integrated Intel graphics, and a 60GB hard drive. The laptop also has a DVD-ROM/CD-RW combo drive, which buzzed loudly whenever we touched the surface above it during use.



Weighing a manageable 6.3 pounds (with the AC adapter), the V3000 has an impressive 14.1-inch wide-screen display with a standard 1,280x800 native resolution. Its keyboard, touch pad, and mouse buttons were big enough to use for extended periods, but we found the glossy touch pad a tad too slippery.

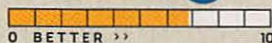
Connectivity includes three USB 2.0 ports, a four-pin FireWire port, an S-Video out, an ExpressCard slot, and a five-format memory-card reader. Networking connections include 802.11a/b/g, Gigabit Ethernet, and a 56Kbps modem.

The V3000 turned in top-notch performance in our benchmark tests, but we can't recommend it for serious gaming because it doesn't have a dedicated graphics chip. Its battery lasted just shy of 4.5 hours, decent for a laptop of this size and price.

HP provides a one-year warranty, including 24/7 toll-free tech support. —Justin Jaffe

CNET.com

EDITORS' RATING 6.9



PROS Strong specs for the price; solid performance, battery life; can be configured with AMD, Intel processors; bright 14.1-inch wide-screen LCD

CONS Integrated graphics; occasional optical-drive buzz

SPECS 1.83GHz Core Duo T2400; 512MB DDR2; 60GB hard drive; 14.1-inch TFT; DVD-ROM/CD-RW combo; Windows XP Professional

Hewlett-Packard, 888-999-4747
www.hp.com

Direct Price \$1,163

Apple MacBook

iBook replacement can hold its own against PC competition

WITH ITS NEW MacBook, Apple has replaced the iBook with a well-designed laptop that significantly narrows the value gap with the PC competition.

The MacBook line comprises three different models, all using Intel's Core Duo processors. A baseline model costs \$1,099, while the \$1,299 unit we tested offers a slight bump up in processor speed and replaces the DVD-ROM/CD-RW combo drive with a DVD burner. Those systems come in white; a third, black version with a slightly bigger hard drive costs \$1,499.

Our MacBook included a 2GHz Core Duo processor, 512MB of RAM, a 60GB hard drive, and integrated Intel graphics. Also onboard were Apple's iLife '06 suite and Front Row media software, along with a bundled remote. If you own a copy of Windows XP, you can run it on the MacBook via Apple's free Boot Camp utility.

At 5.1 pounds, the MacBook weighs more than the 12-inch PowerBook did, but it

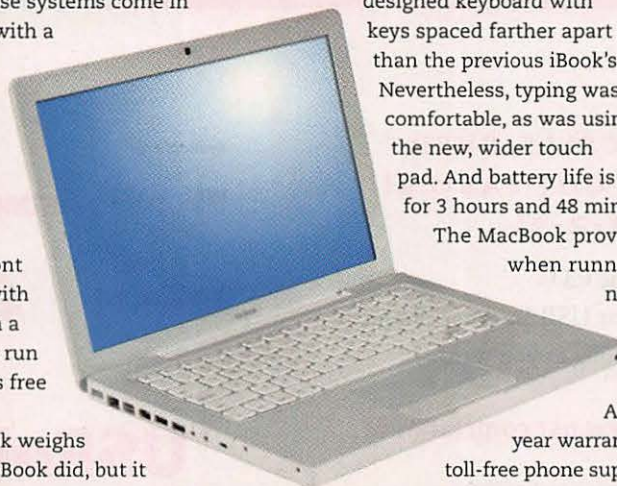
features a bigger, brighter 13.3-inch wide-screen display. The glossy screen offers starker contrast but is prone to glare in bright environments.

The MacBook has a redesigned keyboard with keys spaced farther apart than the previous iBook's. Nevertheless, typing was comfortable, as was using the new, wider touch

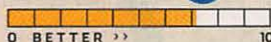
pad. And battery life is respectable—the notebook held out for 3 hours and 48 minutes in our drain test.

The MacBook provides more than enough muscle when running programs optimized for the new Intel CPU. Many older apps require Apple's Rosetta translation software, however, and as a result run slower.

Apple backs the MacBook with a one-year warranty but just 90 days of toll-free phone support. —J.J.



EDITORS' RATING 7.2



PROS Bright wide-screen display; comfortable keyboard, touch pad; can run Windows XP

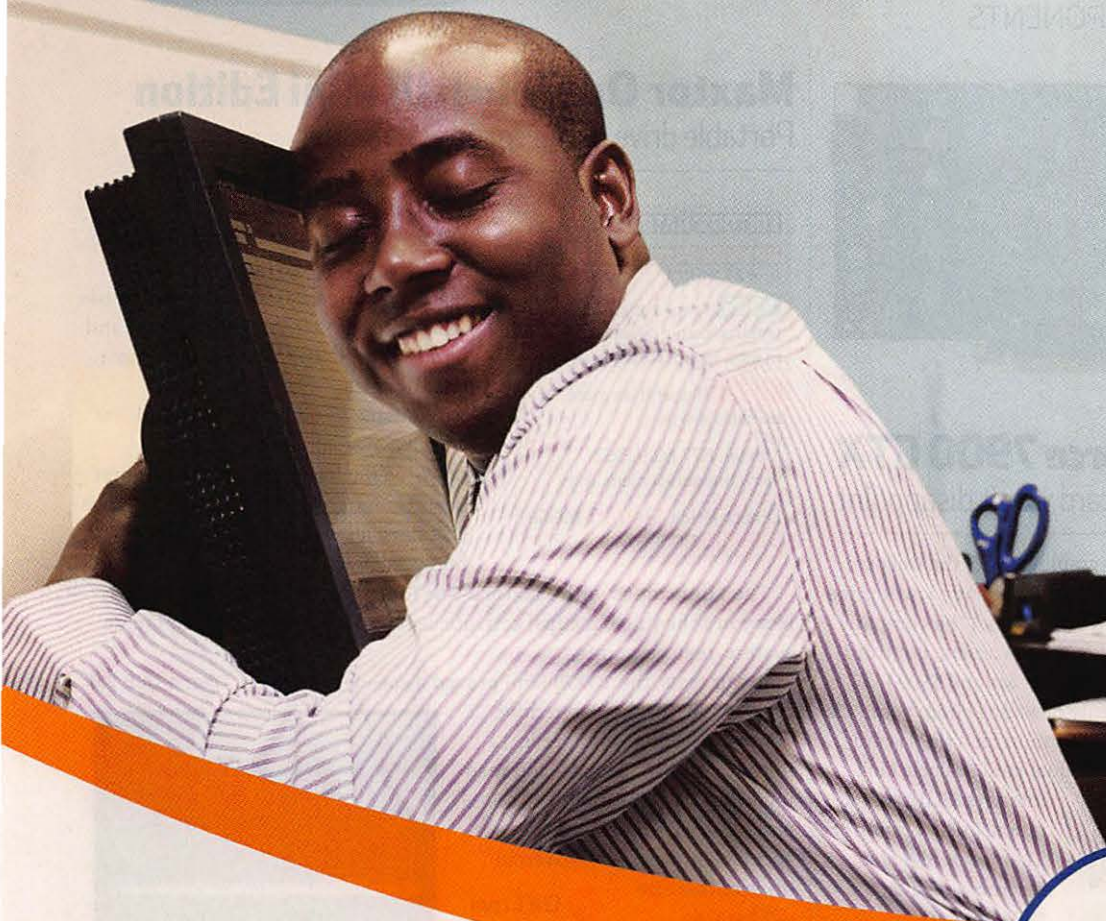
CONS Nonnative software runs slowly; short phone-support period; screen prone to glare

SPECS 2GHz Core Duo; 512MB DDR2; 60GB hard drive; double-layer DVD±RW; 13.3-inch TFT; Mac OS X

Apple Computer, 800-692-7753
www.apple.com

Direct Price \$1,299

CNET.com



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nVidia GeForce 7900 GTX

Speedy graphics card won't disappoint

NVIDIA'S new flagship graphics card, the GeForce 7900 GTX, offers better performance at a lower price than the 7800 GTX board it replaces. (The company doesn't sell graphics cards to consumers, but third-party boards using the GPU cost around \$500.)

The card demands plenty of wattage from your PC's power supply: 120 watts maximum for a single card, or 240 watts maximum in a dual-card Scalable Link

Interface (SLI) configuration. (Also, a rating of 22 amps or higher is recommended on the 12V channel.)

Due to its increased speed and 512MB of RAM, the 7900 GTX pulled in a scorching 113 frames per second (fps) in our Doom 3 tests at 1,280x1,024 resolution. It couldn't beat ATI's Radeon X1900 XTX on our F.E.A.R. test, but the

7900 GTX is still 40 percent faster than its predecessor.

When we paired two 7900 GTX cards in SLI mode, the results skyrocketed. Compared with two Radeon X1900 XTX cards in ATI's CrossFire mode, the two nVidia cards performed better on our Doom 3 and F.E.A.R. benchmark tests, even though they trailed slightly on two of our three Half-Life 2: Lost Coast tests.

The card features a pair of DVI outputs, plus a seven-pin connector that serves either as an S-Video port for connecting analog televisions or a port for an external component-output dongle for use with high-definition (HD) televisions. Both DVI connectors support dual-link DVI, allowing you to drive two large flat-panel monitors at resolutions up to 2,560x1,600. One downside: The card doesn't support High-Bandwidth Digital Content Protection (HDCP) digital rights management, which is required to play HD-DVD and Blu-ray movies at full resolution. —Denny Atkin

EDITORS' RATING 7.5

0 BETTER >> 10

PROS Scorching 3D performance in SLI mode; two dual-link DVI connectors; HDTV compatibility

CONS Pricey; ATI Radeon X1900 XTX is faster in some benchmarks; no HDCP support; power hog

nVidia, 408-486-2000
www.nvidia.com

Price \$500 (average price from third-party card makers)

Maxtor OneTouch III Mini Edition

Portable drive packs speed and utilities

EDITORS' RATING 7.8

0 BETTER >> 10

PROS Large capacity in a small package; speedy performance; useful software bundle

CONS Bigger than most portable drives

Maxtor, 877-692-3562
www.maxtorsolutions.com

Direct Price \$149.95 (60GB);
\$199.95 (100GB)

THOUGH SMALL, Maxtor's OneTouch III Mini Edition isn't light on features. The new 7.2-ounce member of the Maxtor family of external drives comes with helpful preinstalled software and enough storage space to satisfy most users' needs.

Available in 60GB (\$149.95) and 100GB (\$199.95) models, the USB-powered device is the company's first portable hard drive. Although the drive will fit in a purse, it's still slightly bulky to carry.

The Mini comes with Maxtor's OneTouch Manager interface, which lets you schedule backups, activate security features, and even create system-restore points.

In our tests, the 100GB Mini proved a speedy performer. Over a USB 2.0 connection, the 5,400rpm drive wrote our 10GB test folder in 12 minutes and 37 seconds, and read it back in 10 minutes and 18 seconds. Both are more-than-respectable times for an external drive of this size.

—Felisa Yang

CNET.com



Sony DVDirect VRD-MC1

FIRST TAKE Not only can Sony's latest external DVD burner connect directly to cameras and camcorders, but it'll even read memory cards. But at \$259.99, is this drive worth the price of admission?

Upside: The VRD-MC1 has two things you won't find on other external DVD burners: a built-in 2-inch LCD for previewing photos and videos, and the ability to burn images directly from five of the most common memory-card formats. Also, the drive has a FireWire port so you can transfer movies in real time from your camcorder straight to a DVD. (Other inputs include S-Video and composite video.)

If you prefer to do things the old-fashioned way, you can connect the VRD-MC1 to your PC via USB 2.0. The USB port also supports PictBridge, letting you connect a compliant printer to print directly from a disc. We particularly like that the drive supports 8x DVD+R and 4x DVD-R double-layer burning.

Downside: At the currently quoted price, the VRD-MC1 is more expensive than your average external DVD burner. And while we typically admire Sony's design, we can't help but compare this unit to an inverted, square Oreos.

Outlook: With its unique features, dual-layer support, and ease of use, the VRD-MC1 could be the ideal solution for hassle-free burning projects—despite the high price. —Louis Ramirez

■ Sony Electronics, 877-865-7669,
www.sonystyle.com

Direct Price \$259.99





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AMD

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Athlon™64 X2 4800+*
(Socket AM2)

- Part Number: 80728-9
- Code Name: Windsor
- Thermal Power: 65W
- L1 Cache: 128KB x 2
- L2 Cache: 1MB x 2



Athlon™64 X2 4600+*
(Socket AM2)

- Part Number: 80727-9
- Code Name: Windsor
- Thermal Power: 65W
- L1 Cache: 128KB x 2
- L2 Cache: 512KB x 2



Athlon™64 X2 4400+*
(Socket AM2)

- Part Number: 80726-9
- Code Name: Windsor
- Thermal Power: 65W
- L1 Cache: 128KB x 2
- L2 Cache: 1MB x 2



Athlon™64 X2 4200+*
(Socket AM2)

- Part Number: 80725-9
- Code Name: Windsor
- Thermal Power: 65W
- L1 Cache: 128KB x 2
- L2 Cache: 512KB x 2

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Athlon™64 X2 4000+*
(Socket AM2)

- Part Number: 80724-9
- Code Name: Windsor
- Thermal Power: 65W
- L1 Cache: 128KB x 2
- L2 Cache: 1MB x 2



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Samsung SyncMaster 204B

A business LCD suitable for the home

ALTHOUGH intended for business use, the Samsung SyncMaster 204B's impressive DVD performance and corporate-chic styling make it a viable option for the home, too.

At \$349.99, the 204B has all the adjustability features you would want in a 20-inch LCD, including a built-in lazy Susan and the ability to pivot between portrait and landscape modes. You'll find basic digital and analog inputs, but little else, on the back of the monitor.

The 204B performed reasonably well in our DisplayMate-based tests. At its 1,600x1,200 native resolution, text was

dark and easily legible.

Also, despite some gray-scale inaccuracies, colors looked bright and vivid.

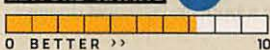
Screen uniformity, however, wasn't as impressive, and we noticed a dark patch along the top of the screen and a bright spot in the lower-left corner.

The panel's relatively fast 5-millisecond rated response time was evident

in its DVD-playback performance—we saw only a few skin-tone flaws and a nominal amount of ghosting. Gaming performance was near-perfect, with sharp images, vivid colors, and clean movement, even in fast-paced games.

The included CD comes with drivers and four software programs: MagicBright, MagicRotation, MagicTune, and Natural Color. The most-popular selection, MagicBright, offers six preset viewing modes: Game, Internet, Movie, Sport, Text, and Custom. You can switch among presets with the onscreen menu or via a dedicated button on the control panel. —Lara Luepke

EDITORS' RATING 7.3



PROS Ample adjustability; accessible image presets; impressive DVD, gaming performance

CONS Expensive; subpar screen uniformity

Samsung, 800-726-7864
www.samsung.com

List Price \$349.99

Philips Brilliance 230WP7

High-price big screen exhibits style, performance



IT COSTS MORE than the competition, but the Philips Brilliance 230WP7 delivers fine big-screen performance. Still, for \$999, we wish the 23-inch LCD included more features.

Tested at its native resolution of 1,920x1,200, the 230WP7 displayed clear text and vibrant colors. For a business monitor, gaming was also spot-on, showing detail in both bright and dark scenes, albeit with some streaking. DVD playback, however, looked unimpressive, despite the LCD's 12-millisecond response time.

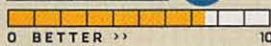
The 230WP7 is highly adjustable, although its two-pronged base feels unstable in pivot mode. Connectivity options include DVD-D, DVI-I, and VGA inputs, along with four USB ports. Video ports, however, are lacking.

One perk: Philips bundles SmartManage, a remote-asset-management tool for controlling fleets of Philips displays over a network.

—Jeffrey Fuchs

CNET.com

EDITORS' RATING 7.5



PROS Excellent image quality; highly adjustable; USB ports; software for network control

CONS Expensive; no video inputs; clunky pivoting action; disappointing DVD playback

Philips Electronics
877-835-1838
usa.philips.com

List Price \$999

LaCie 120

Costly 20-inch display is a great performer

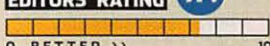
WELL-KNOWN for its high-end LCDs, LaCie now enters the mainstream market with the pricey 120. Though this \$719 monitor doesn't break any boundaries in design, it knocks out the competition with its excellent performance.

Tested at its native resolution of 1,600x1,200, the 20-inch monitor excelled in all of our DisplayMate-based tests. DVD playback was also impressive, but we noticed blurring in fast-moving games.

The 120 offers analog and digital interfaces (cables included), an easy-to-navigate onscreen menu, and a detachable screen, dubbed the LaFrame, that mounts behind the monitor to block out ambient light. The LaFrame hindered the 120's adjustability, however. The 120 also can't rotate from portrait to landscape mode, and it doesn't include a cable-management system. —L.L.



EDITORS' RATING 7.4



PROS Excellent image quality; analog, digital cables included; well-designed menu

CONS Expensive; LaFrame makes adjustments cumbersome; no portrait/landscape rotation; no cable management

LaCie, 503-844-4500
www.lacie.com

Direct Price \$719

CNET.com



Planon DocuPen RC800

Scanning on the go made easy



IF YOU NEED a compact mobile scanner, Planon's \$299.99 DocuPen RC800 should be at the top of your list. The company's previous model, the R700, was riddled with problems, but the RC800, though pricey, addresses every one of our prior complaints.

The oblong wand (it's available in several colors) measures 8.9x0.5 inches and weighs a scant 2 ounces. It can scan in either black-and-white or color (12-bit and 24-bit) and supports resolutions

from 100 to 400 dots per inch. You change settings via two buttons on top; one switches the resolution, the other runs through color modes. Lighted icons guide your selections.

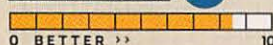
Unlike its predecessor, the RC800 doesn't require you to hold down a but-

ton while scanning, so running the scanner down a full page was fast and smooth. Planon also bumped up the storage capacity from 2MB to 8MB and added a MicroSD card slot. The latter inclusion is great news if you need room to store high-res color images.

What impressed us most, however, was the overall image quality. Both low- and high-resolution scans of black-and-white documents were legible down to 8-point text. Color scans were passable, but don't expect to make fine prints of photos.

You import images to your computer using Nuance Communications' included ScanSoft PaperPort 8.0 SE software. The optical-character-recognition function of this app worked poorly with the R700, but with the RC800 it performed much better, most likely due to the improved scan quality. —Joshua Goldman

EDITORS' RATING 8.5



PROS Compact; high-quality black-and-white scans; fast full-page scans; MicroSD card slot

CONS Pricey; average-quality color scanning

Planon System Solutions
888-507-3926
www.planon.com

Direct Price \$299.99

Epson Stylus CX4800

Budget MFP stalls on print speeds

EDITORS' RATING 6.1



PROS Crisp text printing; beginner-friendly photo-printing process; individual ink cartridges

CONS Very slow text print speeds; fair photo print quality; no LCD; won't scan without a PC

Epson America, 800-463-7766
www.epson.com

Direct Price \$129.99

EPSON'S \$129.99 Stylus CX4800 has more useful features than we're used to seeing in a budget multifunction printer—though text-printing speed isn't one of them.

Points in the CX4800's favor include separate ink cartridges for each color, a simplified photo-printing process that lets you select and print photos from an index sheet, and the ability to print directly from a media card or PictBridge-enabled camera. On the downside, the CX4800 lacks a built-in LCD and doesn't

allow for scanning without a PC.

Text on Epson's Bright White paper was dark and crisp. We noted a bigger problem, though, when outputting black text: The print speed clocked in at a shockingly slow 1.6 pages per minute (ppm). When we printed our test 8x10-inch photos, the CX4800 achieved a more respectable 1.9ppm.

Another caveat: In our color graphics and photo tests, we could see individual droplets of ink. And while the printer's maximum scan resolution is 1,200x2,400 dots per inch (dpi), our test scans at 150dpi revealed dark colors and a lack of focus. —Kristina Blachere



CNET CNET.com

HP LaserJet 1018



Thanks to an aggressive market, laser-printer prices have been in rapid decline. The latest salvo in the budget wars: HP's new monochrome printer, the \$129.99 LaserJet 1018.

Upside: There's no denying this pint-size printer's main attraction: It's HP's most affordable laser. Its toaster-size footprint is another plus, making the 1018 a perfect pick for tight work areas or college dorms.

Capable of speeds up to 12 pages per minute (ppm), this 600x600-dot-per-inch printer comes with a 150-sheet input tray and 2MB of memory. According to HP, its "instantly on" technology means the first page prints in less than 10 seconds. The company estimates the 1018's page duty cycle (that is, the recommended monthly print volume) at 3,000 pages.

Downside: Don't expect to use this printer at the office. With its minimal memory, the 1018 won't be able to handle demanding print tasks. Expansion is also limited, with no option for additional paper trays, networking, or a duplex.

Outlook: Despite its lack of upgradability, the 1018 appears to be the perfect match for budget-minded college students or home users looking to upgrade from their current inkjet. Check back for our hands-on review of this compact LaserJet. —Louis Ramirez

■ Hewlett-Packard, 888-999-4747,
www.hp.com

Direct Price \$129.99



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Draft Dodging

The first Draft N routers don't live up to the 802.11n hype

WE'VE WAITED a long time for 802.11n, the next-generation wireless networking standard, to be officially ratified. So long, in fact, that several networking companies are releasing products based on the Draft N version of the specification, which, as its name suggests, isn't the official standard. Still, companies claim that Draft N products should be firmware-upgradable to the final 802.11n spec when it's expected to be ratified in 2007.

Is it worth jumping the gun and buying a Draft N router for the promised benefits of the 802.11n spec, such as improved throughput at longer ranges, courtesy of multiple input, multiple output (MIMO) technology? We review the first two Draft N routers from Linksys and Netgear to find out if you're better off waiting till next year to buy a router based on the official 802.11n standard.

LINKSYS WRT300N WIRELESS-N BROADBAND ROUTER

Linksys claims its \$149.99 WRT300N router is capable of up to 12 times the speed and four times the range of older 802.11g routers. Those claims didn't materialize in testing, however: While the device managed decent maximum throughput and mixed-mode speed, it performed dismally in our 200-foot long-range test.



In particular, the Linksys wasn't able to beat Netgear's WPNT834 RangeMax 240, an 802.11g router using Airgo Networks' Gen 3 MIMO chip, in any of our tests, while trailing far behind the Belkin Pre-N router in our long-range test. It also fell behind Netgear's WNR834B RangeMax Draft N router (reviewed below) in our maximum-throughput and long-range tests.

While the WRT300N's design isn't as radical as the WNR834B's, it takes the idea of multiple antennae to a new level. In addition to its two standard, pen-shape antennae, the device has a unique third antenna shaped like a big paddle. All three antennae are located on the router's right edge, where they bend

and rotate in multiple directions, enabling you to adjust them to maximize your signal.

Linksys does a commendable job with the WRT300N's documentation and setup. An installation wizard guides you through connecting the device to your modem and PC, then with configuring settings via the Web-based configuration tool. The tool provides access to the WRT300N's thorough features list, which includes a four-port 10/100 Ethernet switch; a stateful packet inspection (SPI) firewall; a Dynamic Host Configuration Protocol (DHCP) server; demilitarized-zone (DMZ) and virtual-private-network (VPN) pass-throughs; and Wi-Fi Protected Access 2 (WPA2) security.

The WRT300N ships with a top-notch warranty for a wireless router: three years of free parts and labor, along with 24/7 toll-free tech support.

NETGEAR WNR834B RANGEMAX NEXT ROUTER

While it beat Linksys' WRT300N in two of our three networking benchmark tests, Netgear's \$149 WNR834B RangeMax Next Router still turned in an underwhelming performance that falls short of 802.11n's potential, especially with networks using legacy 802.11b/g products. In fact, the company's WPNT834 RangeMax 240 is a better bet if you need a fast, MIMO-based router now, and you're not worried about future upgradability to the 802.11n standard.

Although the WNR834B's performance is unremarkable, its appearance outshines its competition's. It hides all three of its antennae within its gray case, but the sleek design also means that you can't adjust the position of the antennae for better signal strength.

You can install the router using the intuitive setup wizard, which will be a boon for those new to networking, or by configuring it manually with the router's Web-based tool.

Once you're up and running, you may continue to use the Web tool to manipulate the router's state-of-the-art security settings, which include WPA2 encryption, a dual Network Address Translation (NAT) and SPI firewall, Media Access Control (MAC) address authentication, and a DMZ pass-through.

Like the WRT300N, Netgear's Draft N router trailed behind Belkin's Pre-N router, which uses an older MIMO chipset, in our long-range test (though by a much closer margin). Furthermore, the RangeMax 240 was over three times as fast as the WNR834B was in our mixed-mode test.

The WNR834B's warranty lasts for one year, two years shorter than Linksys' warranty. Netgear does include toll-free, 24/7 phone support with the device, however. —Stephanie Bruzzese



Product Summary

	Linksys WRT300N	Netgear WNR834B
EDITORS' RATING	6.7	6.3
PROS	Easy setup; solid security features; adjustable antennae	Slick design; tight security capabilities; painless install
CONS	Lackluster long-range performance	Subpar mixed-mode performance; can't adjust antennae
COMPANY	Cisco Systems 800-546-5797 www.linksys.com	Netgear 888-638-4327 www.netgear.com
MFR. EST. PRICE	\$149.99	\$149

Lenovo recommends Windows® XP Professional



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\$40 PN 73P2582

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Integrated Fingerprint Reader

system features
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Samsung SGH-P300

Credit-card-size phone is an able performer

THE \$499.99 SAMSUNG SGH-P300 may not be for everyone, but its powerful features, admirable performance, and credit-card-size form factor make it appealing. (No carriers sell the phone, but you can buy unlocked—non-carrier-specific—versions from several online retailers.)

At 3.4x2.1x0.4 inches and 2.8 ounces, the SGH-P300 is one of the smallest, thinnest phones we've seen. Despite its diminutive size, the GSM phone has a sharp 1.75-inch color display spanning

EDITORS' RATING 7.6

0 BETTER >> 10

PROS Compact, eye-catching design; solid performance; Bluetooth connectivity; built-in MP3 player, 1.3-megapixel camera; better-than-rated battery life

CONS Awkward controls; tinny music quality; unintuitive speakerphone access; patchy call quality with Bluetooth; no memory-card slot

Samsung, 800-726-7864
www.samsung.com

Mfr. Est. Price \$499.99

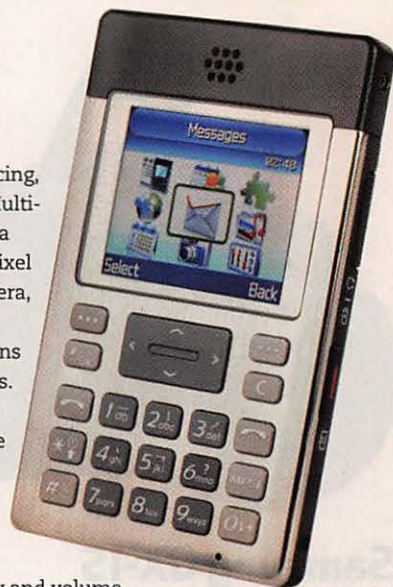
almost half its total area. Below the screen sits a four-way navigation toggle that can be awkward to manipulate. Another usability hurdle: The main keypad's layout takes some getting used to.

The SGH-P300 offers several business-oriented features, including Bluetooth connectivity, dial-up networking capability,

e-mail support, PC syncing, and a speakerphone. Multimedia options include a feature-rich 1.3-megapixel camera and video camera, plus a bare-bones MP3 player; dedicated buttons activate these functions.

The phone also has 80MB of user-accessible memory, though no memory-card slot.

In our tests, call quality was superior, with exceptional clarity and volume. (Audio didn't sound as sharp when we paired the SGH-P300 with a Bluetooth headset, however.) Speakerphone calls were problem-free, though the process of activating the speakerphone was clumsy. Tunes on the built-in MP3 player sounded tinny, and the volume, while fine for calls, couldn't be cranked up loud enough for music. The SGH-P300 has a rated talk time of 5.5 hours, but we managed to squeeze out an extra hour. The promised standby time is 8 days. —Kent German



CNET CNET.com

Jabra BT160

Bluetooth headset catches eye and ear

JABRA'S BT160 Bluetooth headset offers decent audio quality and a secure fit, and its eye-catching faceplates set it apart from competing models.

Weighing just 0.5 ounce, the \$59 BT160 has a slender oval design and a flexible ear loop that fits comfortably. (It takes a while to get the right fit, though.) Not only able to take and end calls, the headset also supports voice dialing and last-number redial.

The BT160 comes with 33 easy-to-use, replaceable covers that span a range of colors and patterns. You can also design your own on Jabra's Web site for a fee.



EDITORS' RATING 7.6

0 BETTER >> 10

PROS Flexible, comfortable ear hook; solid audio quality; variety of faceplates

CONS Takes fiddling to get good fit; lack of clarity in noisy environments

Jabra, 630-442-6900
www.jabra.com

Mfr. Est. Price \$59

We were able to pair the headset with our Bluetooth-enabled cell phones without a hitch. Sound quality was adequate, but we had some trouble with call clarity in noisier environments. As for battery life, the BT160 promises 8 hours of talk time and four days on standby. —Nicole Lee

CNET CNET.com

Palm Treo 700p

FIRST TAKE The Treo 700p is the latest smartphone based on the Palm OS platform. The list price is \$649.99, but it's available for less if bought with a service contract from Sprint or Verizon.

Upside: Designed much like its Windows OS-based cousin, the Treo 700w, the 700p offers Evolution Data Optimized (EV-DO) network support, 128MB of RAM, Bluetooth 1.2 connectivity, and a 1.3-megapixel camera. It also supports dial-up networking (DUN), which lets you use your smartphone as a wireless modem when it's connected to a PC via Bluetooth or USB. (The latter will also charge your device.) Other notable features include a sharp 320x320-pixel display and a built-in app for streaming media. Plus, a software suite lets you edit

Microsoft Word and Excel documents, as well as view PowerPoint presentations and PDFs.

Downside: Instead of running Palm OS 5.4.9, we had hoped this smartphone would showcase the yet-to-be-seen Palm OS 6. Integrated Wi-Fi would also have been nice.

Outlook: While the Treo 700p isn't groundbreaking, its EV-DO and DUN support may make it a worthy successor to the popular Palm OS-based Treo 650.

—Erin Kandel

■ Palm, 800-881-7256, www.palm.com

List Price \$649.99





Samsung GX-IS

Beginner-friendly dSLR is a photo copy

FOR ITS FIRST foray into the world of digital single-lens reflex (dSLR) cameras, Samsung has produced a virtual clone of the 6-megapixel Pentax *ist DS2. Though Samsung has changed an icon or two here and there, the \$799.99 GX-IS otherwise matches the Pentax model's features, performance, compact design, and even image quality.

That's mostly good news, because the *ist DS2 includes plenty of automatic features to ease

newcomers into the world of dSLRs and provides snappy performance that's similar to its dSLR competitors'. Another plus: The GX-IS accepts many of Pentax's legacy lenses. The camera also ships with a handy 18mm-to-55mm (35mm-equivalent) zoom lens that's only slightly hobbled by a

slow maximum aperture of f5.6 at the telephoto end of its range.

We were highly impressed with images from the GX-IS. Colors were well-saturated, though not overly so, and in-focus areas exhibited sharp edges. We noticed chromatic aberration (fringing around certain edges) only in some very high-contrast images.

The caveats? Advanced photographers may be put off by the number of controls tucked away in the camera's menu system. Also, while noise was minimal at ISO 200 and 400, it became noticeable at ISO 800, with colored specks invading shadows. At ISO 1600, noise was prominent, and at ISO 3200, it was rampant. —Philip Ryan

cnet CNET.com



PROS Impressive image quality; plenty of automatic features for beginners; compact for a dSLR; accepts Pentax legacy lenses

CONS Noisy high-ISO images; manual controls difficult to access quickly

Samsung Opto-Electronics
866-344-4629
www.samsungcamerausa.com

Mfr. Est. Price \$799.99

Fujifilm FinePix V10

Tiny shooter packs a big LCD



PROS Large 3-inch LCD; pocket-size; solid performance; takes usable high-ISO photos

CONS Average image quality; awkward control layout

Fuji Photo Film U.S.A.
800-800-3854
www.fujifilm.com

Mfr. Est. Price \$349

THE 5.1-MEGAPIXEL Fujifilm FinePix V10 separates itself from the pint-size pack with a 3-inch LCD, high-ISO photo quality, and a svelte design.

The \$349 V10 measures just 2.5x3.3x1 inches and weighs 6.1 ounces (including media and rechargeable battery). The camera is generally a sprightly performer, with the exception of continuous-shooting speed. It also captures monaural, 640x480 movie clips at 30 frames per second for as long as 15 minutes. And while the V10's feature set is

mostly humdrum, it does offer a fun Game mode, which includes four different games you can play when you're not snapping pictures.

Because of the big LCD, the camera's control layout is awkward, with frequently accessed buttons crammed along the bottom edge of the back panel. And image quality was only average, with good exposures offset by washed-out highlights. Still, the V10 handles high-ISO shooting better than many cameras. —David D. Busch

cnet CNET.com



Kodak EasyShare V610

Two lenses—plus Bluetooth—in a compact camera

WITH THE 6.1-megapixel EasyShare V610, Kodak delivers the power of 10x optical zoom in a compact package. How? The \$449.95 V610 offers two lenses that zoom internally: a 38mm-to-114mm and a second 130mm-to-380mm.

Geared for snapshooters, the camera leaves out most manual controls for a plethora of scene modes instead. The V610's other notable feature is its built-in Bluetooth support, which allows you to swap photos with similarly enabled devices, including cell phones and PCs. The camera doesn't ship with a dock, but it can wirelessly communicate with Kodak's \$179.99 EasyShare Printer Dock Plus Series 3.

Its snazzy design doesn't translate into excellent images, however. The lenses lack image stabilization, which would make that long zoom much more useful. And while colors are fully saturated, the camera tends to either overexpose highlights or underexpose shadows. Also, noise creeps in even at lower ISO settings. —P.R.



PROS Innovative dual-lens design; built-in Bluetooth; plenty of scene modes

CONS Mediocre photo quality; no image stabilization; few manual controls

Eastman Kodak, 800-235-6325
www.kodak.com

Direct Price \$449.95

cnet CNET.com

Back to School

Canon



PowerShot A530
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REVIEWS DIGITAL AUDIO

Iriver Clix

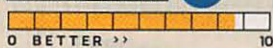
Unique, feature-filled flash player improves on predecessor



IRIVER'S \$199.99 Clix is a superbly designed flash-memory player that's competitively priced for its feature set. The 2GB device is essentially an improved version of its predecessor, the Iriver U10.

Measuring 2.7x1.8x0.6 inches and weighing 2.5 ounces, the Clix has the same miniature TV-like design and vibrant

EDITORS' RATING 8.7



PROS Unique design, interface; competitively priced; includes FM radio, voice recorder; offers photo/video viewing; supports WMA-based subscription content; album-art display

CONS Only available in 2GB capacity; fingerprint-prone screen; video-conversion software can't handle some file types

Iriver, 800-399-1799
www.iriveramerica.com

Direct Price \$199.99

2.2-inch display as the U10. You navigate its interface by pressing buttons alongside the display. Although this tactile control method is both intuitive and logical, it makes one-handed operation awkward. Plus, the player's screen attracts fingerprints easily.

Though some flash players offer more capacity, the Clix stands out because of its well-chosen extras, including an FM tuner, a voice recorder, a text viewer, and line-in recording via an

optional \$69.99 cradle. It can also display photos, slide shows, and album art while playing music. The player supports MPEG-4 video, but you need to convert files via Iriver's included software. (It had trouble converting a few file types in our tests.) Video playback looked sharp, if small, on the player's bright color screen.

As for audio, the Clix can play MP3, OGG, and WMA files, including tracks purchased from online stores or on-the-go subscription services. A beta version of Windows Media Player 11 comes bundled with the player.

Capable of pounding out plenty of decibels, the device sounded great in our tests. The U10 outperformed the Clix in battery life, however; the older player achieved an amazing 31.5 hours of music-only playback, but the Clix managed just 18.7 hours. —Jasmine France



CNET CNET.com

Samsung YP-U2

A tiny, budget-friendly flash device



THE BASIC Samsung YP-U2 has an ample selection of features for the price. The flash memory player is available in 512MB (\$69.99) and 1GB (\$109.99) capacities.

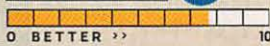
Measuring 3.4x1x0.5 inches and weighing just an ounce, the tiny YP-U2 features a convenient plug-in USB 2.0 design and a small but bright monochrome LCD. Navigating the player is a cinch because of its tactile center controller and icon-based menu. We had some minor design beefs, though: The player doesn't ship with a lanyard or an armband, and we didn't like the positioning of the headphone jack on the bottom of the player.

The YP-U2 plays MP3

and WMA files, including WMA DRM 10 tracks from online subscription services. It also features an extensive set of equalizer settings, along with an FM tuner and a low-quality voice recorder.

Audio quality was top-notch, apart from the clicks we heard when starting or stopping a song. One other downside: The battery life is rated at an unspectacular 15 hours. —James Kim

EDITORS' RATING 7.7



PROS Compact design; intuitive interface, controls; FM tuner, voice recorder; plays subscription content; good overall sound quality

CONS Ill-placed headphone jack; mediocre battery life; low-quality voice recording; no lanyard or armband included

Samsung, 800-726-7864
www.samsung.com

Mfr. Est. Price \$69.99 (512MB); \$109.99 (1GB)

CNET CNET.com

Creative Digital Wireless Headphones CB2530

Wireless headphones suffer from a tin ear

IF YOU'RE serious about music quality, Creative's \$149.99 Digital Wireless Headphones CB2530 aren't for you.

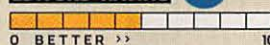
In our tests, the sound quality of this Bluetooth set was underwhelming. The headphones never got very loud, and the sound frequently dropped out. They do have a rugged design, however, along with soft vinyl ear cushions that almost entirely cover your ears. The right earcup houses a handy combination volume/mute control.

The CB2530 uses three AAA batteries: two in the left earcup, and one in the Bluetooth transmitter, which comes with a 7-inch cable that connects to your audio player.

(Using alkaline batteries, the CB2530 endured a mere 7 hours.) Creative estimates a 32-foot range for the Bluetooth signal, but our unit conked out at around 20 feet away. It also took us several tries before we could pair the transmitter with the headphones.

—Steve Guttenberg

EDITORS' RATING 5.0



PROS Rugged construction; conveniently located volume/mute controls

CONS Subpar sound quality; poor battery life; spotty Bluetooth performance

Creative Labs, 800-998-1000
www.creative.com

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Toshiba HD-A1

HD-DVD player comes with caveats

THE \$499.99 Toshiba HD-A1 is an affordable first-generation HD-DVD player that produces an impressive high-definition (HD) image. Only home theater enthusiasts are likely to be willing to swallow its long list of early-adopter caveats, however.

The native resolutions of standard DVDs max out at 720x480, but HD-DVD discs can store video

with native resolutions as high as 1,920x1,080—six times the detail potential of standard DVDs. Plus, HD-DVD discs can store new ultrahigh-resolution digital audio formats (Dolby True HD, Dolby Digital Plus, and DTS-HD) specifically designed to take advantage of the discs' extra capacity. As expected,

early HD-DVD titles performed better than standard DVDs on the HD-A1. Color saturation was the biggest improvement, due to HD video's more extensive color palette. The player can also play standard DVDs, but its image upconversion to 720p or 1080i HD is subpar.

Although the HD-DVD format supports resolutions of up to 1080p, the HD-A1 can output resolutions only as high as 1080i. Audio setup was also confusing, and picking up nuances in sound from the new high-resolution formats can be challenging.

If you have an HD television without a High-Definition Multimedia Interface (HDMI) port, you may experience lower-resolution video if a movie studio decides to copy-protect its discs to severely degrade a non-HDMI image. And if the other HD video technology, Blu-ray, emerges as the more popular standard, you'll be out of luck, because the HD-A1 cannot play Blu-ray discs. —John P. Falcone

CNET.com



PROS Plays HD-DVD discs in true HD; HD-DVD discs allow ultrahigh-resolution digital audio

CONS No 1080p video output; confusing audio setup; image from HD-DVDs can degrade in absence of HDMI; poor upconversion of standard DVDs

Toshiba America Consumer Products, 800-631-3811
www.tacp.toshiba.com

Mfr. Est. Price \$499.99

Panasonic TH-42PX60U

Plasma produces a pleasing picture



PROS Deep blacks; accurate color; good connectivity

CONS Black levels fluctuate; no picture-in-picture

Panasonic, 800-211-7262
www.panasonic.com

Direct Price \$2,499

PANASONIC'S TH-42PX60U produces images demonstrably superior to those of most 42-inch plasma high-definition televisions (HDTVs), and it does so at a relatively affordable \$2,499.

The panel's native resolution of 1,024x768 isn't high enough to display every pixel of HDTV sources, but then no plasma this size has been able to make that claim yet. Although you don't get picture-in-picture functionality, Panasonic

includes an ATSC tuner for over-the-air HDTV. Connectivity on this set is generous, given its price: two High-Definition Multimedia Interface (HDMI) ports, two component-video inputs, three S-Video connections, and an SD-card slot for displaying digital photos.

Overall color accuracy on this plasma was satisfactory, and color decoding was excellent. Dark colors were deep and rich, but blacks fluctuated slightly depending on the amount of bright content in a given scene. —Kevin Miller

CNET.com



Sony KDL-32S2000

An impressive LCD HDTV—but priced on the high side

THE SONY KDL-32S2000's impressive image quality and slick styling make it a viable high-definition television (HDTV) option, but lots of better values are available, considering the 32-inch LCD's \$1,699 price.

The set has a native resolution of 1,366x768, high enough to handle all 720p HD sources. An ATSC tuner lets you receive over-the-air HDTV broadcasts via an antenna. The KDL-32S2000 doesn't support picture-in-picture, however, and none of its three aspect-ratio modes works with HDTV sources.

The screen's average connectivity mix includes a single High-Definition Multimedia Interface (HDMI) port, two component-video inputs, and two S-Video connections. (Two HDMI inputs would have been preferable.) But it does feature more picture adjustments and options, including independent input memories, than do most LCDs.

The KDL-32S2000's proficiency with dark-looking material separates it from its cheaper LCD competitors. Its color decoding was able, and it provided solid detail reproduction from HD sources. Standard-definition video processing left something to be desired, however. —David Katzmaier



CNET.com



PROS Solid performance with darker material; sharp HD images; numerous picture adjustments

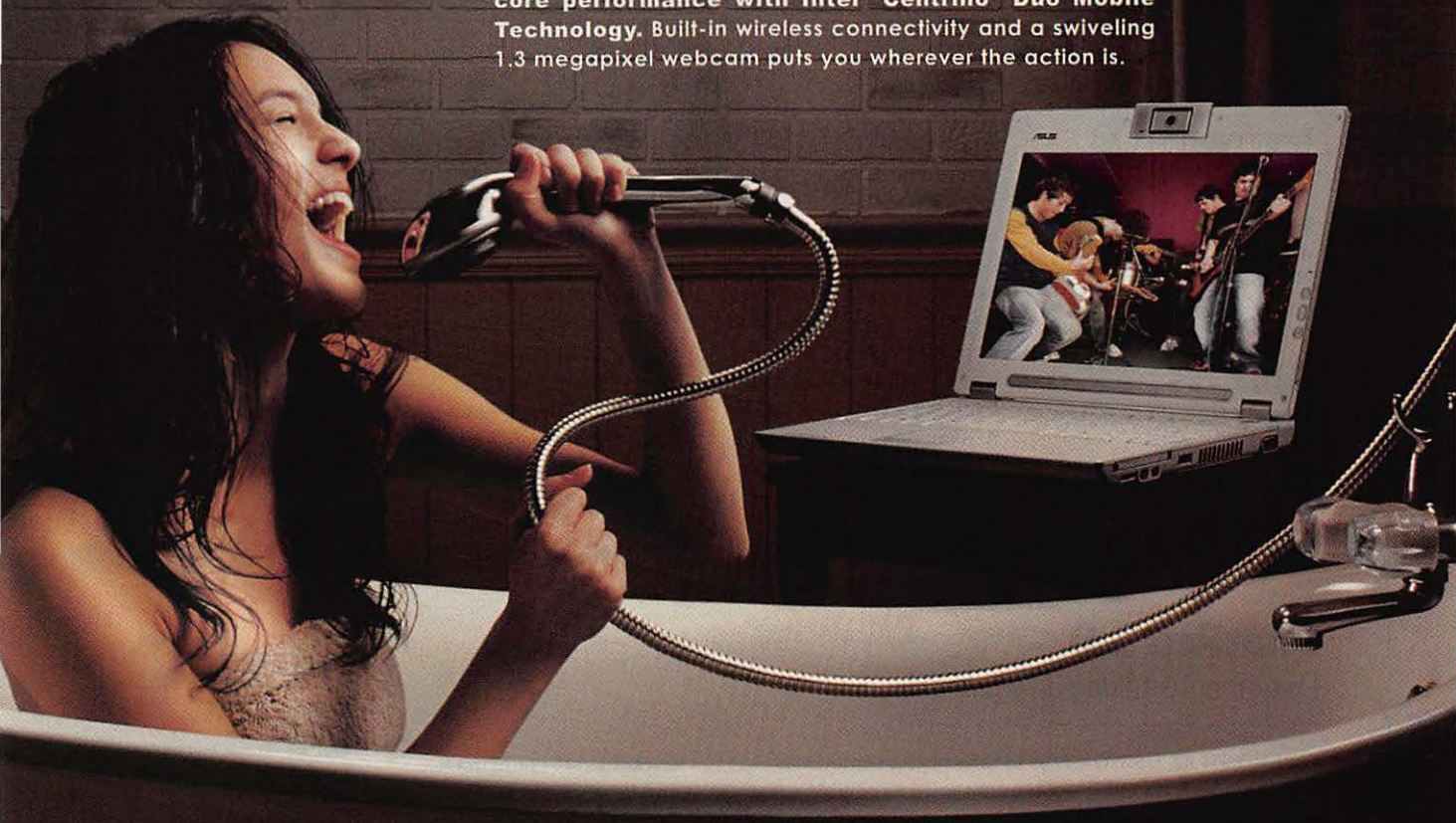
CONS Expensive; can't switch aspect-ratio modes with HD sources; no picture-in-picture; subpar video processing for standard-def sources

Sony Electronics, 877-865-7669
www.sonystyle.com

Direct Price \$1,699

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- Microsoft® Windows® Media Center 2005
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- 1024 MB DDR2
- 100 GB Hard Drive
- ATI MOBILITY™ RADEON™ X1600 256 MB
- 8x Dual Layer Slot-Loading DVD-RW



W3J - Performance in Style

- Intel® Centrino® Duo Mobile Technology
- Microsoft® Windows® XP Pro
- 14" Ultrabright Widescreen Display
- 1024 MB DDR2
- 100 GB Hard Drive
- ATI MOBILITY™ RADEON™ X1600 256 MB
- 8x Super Multi DVD-RW DL



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- 15.4" Ultrabright Display
- 1024 MB DDR2
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Steganos Security Suite 2006

Disk-encryption pack gets very beefed up



WITH ITS 2006 edition, Steganos Security Suite has taken a major leap forward. It no longer lags behind competition such as ZoneAlarm Internet Security Suite in providing cookie control or ad blocking, and features such as a password manager and an antispyware app significantly boost its value.

The \$69.95 suite installs easily, with only one minor irritation: You're not asked in advance before the package dumps icons onto your desktop, taskbar, and system tray. The first two can be removed, but the latter is permanent. That nuisance, however, is easily outweighed by across-the-board improvements in the software. For instance, the product has moved from 128-bit AES encryption to real-time 256-bit AES; the latter standard is extremely difficult to



crack. And you can now maintain an unlimited number of Safes (protected virtual hard drives), up from four. Safes can now be imported, as well, and portable Safes (those created on a CD, DVD, or external drive) are no longer read-only.

Another potentially valuable new feature is AntiTheft,

an IP-address-logging function that you set up online. If your computer is stolen and reconnected to the Web, AntiTheft's reports on the latest IP addresses the PC has used could help you locate the thief.

The antispyware app bundled with the suite not only scans for and removes spyware, but it also monitors potential adware incursions in real time. It's a separate install, however. —Barry Brenesal

EDITORS' RATING 8.0

0 BETTER >> 10

PROS Excellent encryption; many improvements; unlimited encryption for hard drives, removable-storage devices

CONS Installs icons without asking; antispyware app is a separate install

Steganos
www.steganos.com

Direct Price \$69.95

PhatPad 3.0

Instant note-taking on your PDA

WHEN YOU'RE USING a PDA to take notes, sometimes words alone don't cut it—you might need to combine text and drawings when illustrating a concept. PhatWare's PhatPad 3.0 comes to the rescue, letting you combine text and sketches, and include audio notes, as well. At \$29.95, PhatPad's expensive for what it does, but it's nonetheless the quintessential note-taking app for Windows PDAs.

Version 3.0 incorporates a number of new features: support for Windows Mobile 5, the ability to animate notes, a search module, and better integration with PhatWare's own handwriting-transcription app, Calligrapher. Plus, you can now preview files in File Manager before opening them, and rearrange document pages.

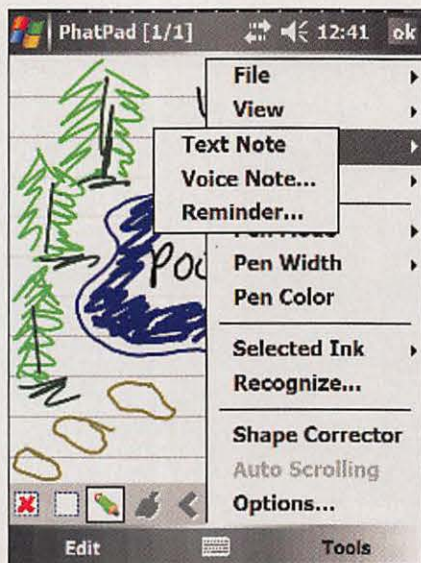
PhatPad is easy to learn—basically, you just load it and scribble away. Ink color and

thickness are configurable, and PhatPad can correct common geometric shapes, such as rectangles or crooked

lines, turning them into tidy outlines. You have a couple of options for turning your jottings into real text: Use Calligrapher and select the text, or insert a note into your document and use the built-in Transcriber.

PhatPad exports documents as images (BMP, JPG, or PNG), as well as to its own PMI and INK formats. It can't save or export text, however—you'll have to copy your text to the Clipboard and paste it into Word Mobile or another text-based app.

Moreover, although the program is fairly robust, we did experience some instability, especially when Calligrapher was installed on our Dell Axim X51v. Also, PhatPad would occasionally simply close out to the desktop, losing our document in the process. —Susan Glinert



EDITORS' RATING 7.0

0 BETTER >> 10

PROS Nimble editing features; customizable pens; supports voice notes

CONS Inability to save notes as text; mildly unstable

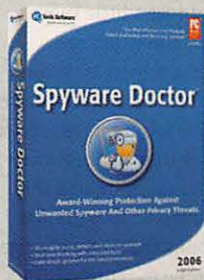
PhatWare, 650-559-5600
www.phatware.com

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REVIEWS SOFTWARE

GoodSync 3.4

Powerful sync utility has one frustrating flaw

IF YOU'RE TIRED of copying files between multiple computers and backup drives, you probably yearn for a utility that synchronizes folders for you automatically. GoodSync was designed for that very purpose—it works with removable devices, such as USB flash drives and CD-RW drives, as well as computers over a local network or the Internet.

Navigating the attractive interface is easy because it uses only a few basic commands.

EDITORS' RATING **7.5**
0 BETTER >> 10

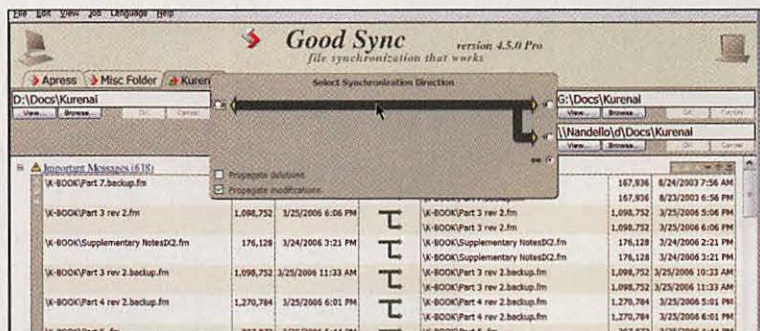
PROS Attractive, simple interface; easy synchronization between multiple drives; great automation features

CONS Clumsy file listing

Siber Systems, 877-762-6367
www.goodsync.com

Direct Price **Free** for moderate use; **\$19.95** for professional use

Also, all synchronization jobs are conveniently accessible via tabs above the folder listing. To set up a synchronization session, you simply specify the files or folders you wish to sync. You can sync the contents of one PC to multiple devices, such as a second PC, a USB key, and a backup drive, or run multiple sessions



simultaneously. You can also automate the entire process.

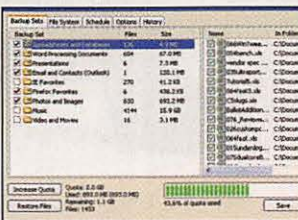
Although the app did an excellent job with most of the tasks we threw at it, viewing subfolders or numerous files in a single folder proved awkward—files and directories are set up so you can't scroll beyond the current page. Instead, you have to click a down-arrow button to see the next page of listings. This might not be so terrible if you could sort files by extension name or date, but you can't. Nor can you set parameters for multiple files at the same time. You can, however, filter files and folders for inclusion or exclusion during synchronization. —Susan Glinert

Mozy

No-fuss backup for essential files

MOST OF US don't back up our digital files, no matter how often we're reminded to. Mozy could change this by making the backup process less of a chore. While the free 2GB version won't save the contents of an entire PC, it's likely roomy enough for your critical documents.

Setting up Mozy is straightforward. Download the app, install it on your PC, then pick the files and folders you wish to back up. (A meter on Mozy's interface tracks how much storage capacity you have left.) The app slowly starts the backup while you're working on your PC, and it runs faster when the system is idle.



(Our initial 900MB save of 1,440 files took approximately 5 hours.) You can easily schedule backups, or have them automatically triggered according to different criteria.

Restoring your files is just as easy. Go to your account page and pick the files you want to restore, and Mozy creates a downloadable ZIP rescue file. —Joshua Goldman

EDITORS' RATING **7.8**
0 BETTER >> 10

PROS Simple to set up, use; free; painless restores

CONS Initial backup takes several hours; currently Windows-only

Berkeley Data Systems
www.mozy.com

Price **Free** (2GB); **\$19.95** per year (5GB); **\$29.95** per year (10GB); **\$39.95** per year (20GB)

WinZip 10.0 Pro

Capable, user-friendly file compression

VERSION 10.0 of WinZip's venerable file-compression app retains its predecessor's clean interface and industry-standard encryption capabilities, while adding extensive compression and automated-backup options. It also provides useful, if limited, CD- and DVD-burning features, going well beyond the native compression faculties of Windows XP. And while the

bonus-feature-packed WinZip 10.0 Pro may cost a little more than competing products, its abilities justify the expense.

Neophytes can use the WinZip wizard for a screen-by-screen walkthrough of common tasks. (More-advanced users can toggle to the WinZip Classic screen instead.) WinZip Job, another wizard, enables you to schedule daily, weekly, or monthly compressions of important files, then have the app automatically upload the

EDITORS' RATING **7.4**
0 BETTER >> 10

PROS Simple interface; useful wizards; automates compression functions; backup features

CONS Pricier than competition; limited disc-burning options

WinZip International
www.winzip.com

Direct Price **\$49.95** (full version); **\$24.95** (upgrade)

compressed files (or just the ones that have changed recently) to remote FTP sites as backup storage—very handy. —Laurie Bouck



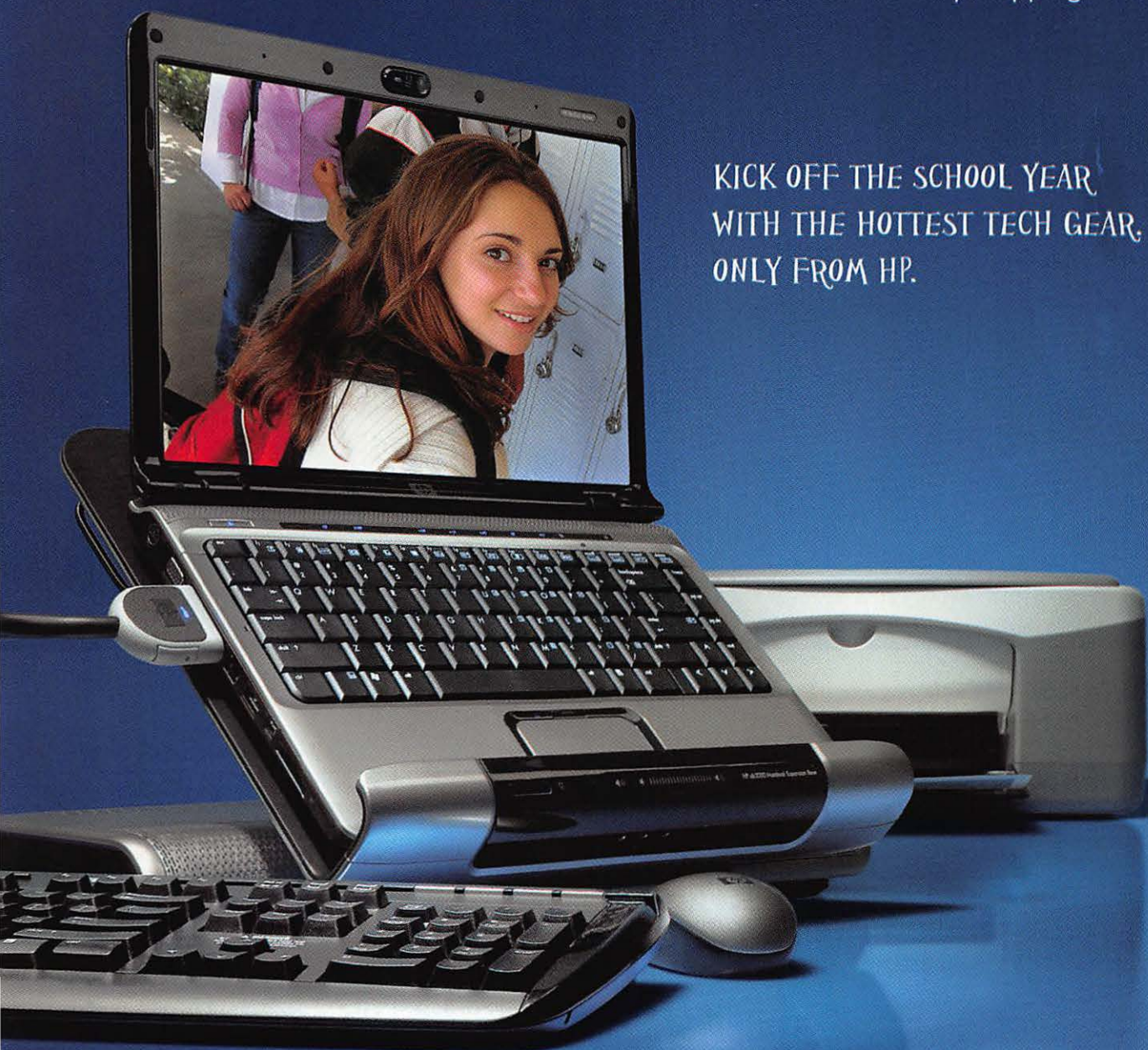
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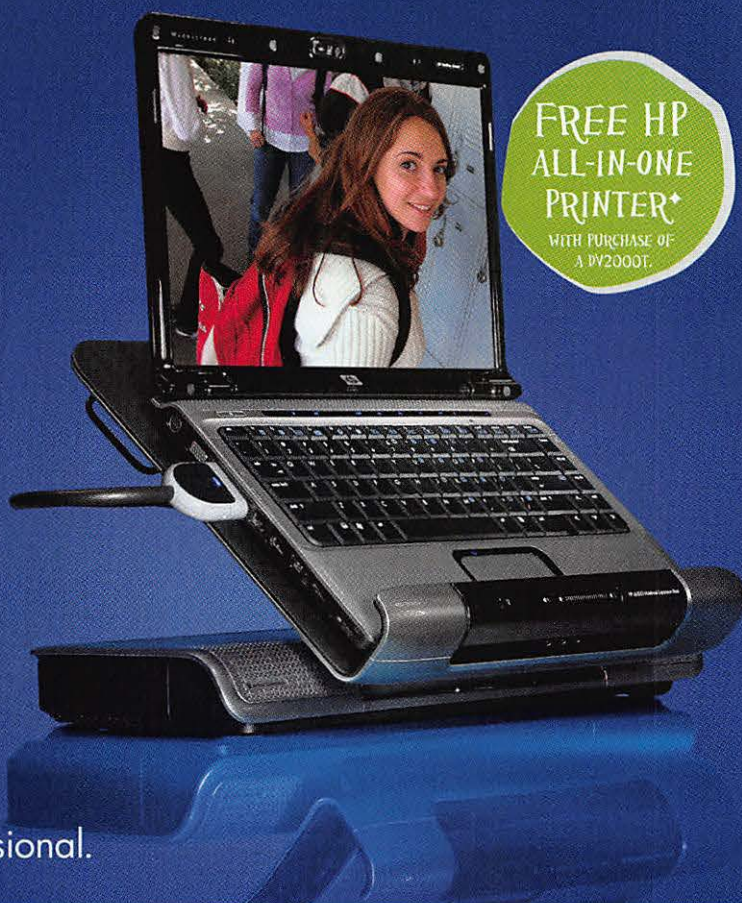
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¹Intel's numbering is not a measurement of higher performance.

²Wireless access point required and is not included. Wireless Internet use requires separately purchased Internet service contract. Availability of public wireless access points is limited. ³High definition content (e.g. WMV HD files) is required to view high-definition images. Most current DVDs do not provide high-definition images. ⁴Dual Core is a new technology designed to improve performance of certain software products. Check with software provider to determine suitability. Not all customers or software applications will necessarily benefit from use of this technology.

⁵Double layer is a new technology. Double layer media compatibility will widely vary with some home DVD players and DVD-ROM drives. ⁶LightScribe creates a grayscale image similar to a black-and-white photograph. LightScribe media required and sold separately. Does not permit copying of commercially available DVD movies or other copyright protected materials. Intended for your original content and other lawful uses. ⁷1 GB = 1 billion bytes; actual available capacity is less. Up to 8 GB (XP and XP Pro) is reserved for system recovery. ⁸Internet access required. Subscription required for live updates afterwards. ⁹Actual speed may vary. ¹⁰Does not permit copying of commercially available DVD movies or other copyright-protected materials. Intended only for creation and storage of original material and other lawful uses. ¹¹Repair within three days, not including transportation time, holidays or weekends. ¹²Instant savings and mail-in rebate valid 7/15/06 to 7/30/06. ¹³See legal for details. ¹⁴Free HP printer after \$80 mail-in rebate. Tax on pre-mail-in-rebate pricing. HP reserves the right to substitute printer model. Rebate not available in CT.

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QuickShop code: QS-252F



HP Express Repair

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(Does not include transit time. Other exclusions apply.)

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QuickShop code: QS-252I

Update your PC protection

Includes what you need for working at home or getting creative, with Norton Internet Security™ 2006⁸ (15-month subscription) and Sonic Backup MyPC.

\$118.00

HP recommends Windows® XP Professional.

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High performance. Low price.



Affordable performance

- Intel® Celeron® M Processor 410¹ (1.46 GHz)
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- 15.4" WXGA widescreen (1280x800) display
- Intel® Graphics Media Accelerator 950 graphics card
- 512 MB DDR2 SDRAM (2x256 MB)
- 40 GB³ hard drive (5400rpm)
- 8x max.² DVD drive
- Integrated 56K modem +10/100 Ethernet LAN
- 1-year limited warranty

\$699.99 before rebates

-\$150 instant savings*

-\$50 mail-in rebate* (rebate not available in CT)

\$499.99 as low as \$21/mo.¹
QuickShop code: QS-252B

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HP Silver Messenger Bag

The HP Silver Messenger Bag features a cool two-tone, black and gray design made of polyester rip-stop and nylon. This fashionable bag is loaded with compartments for all your stuff.

\$69.99 before rebate

-\$20 instant savings

\$49.99

(offer valid 7/15/06 to 7/22/06)

QuickShop code: QS-2527

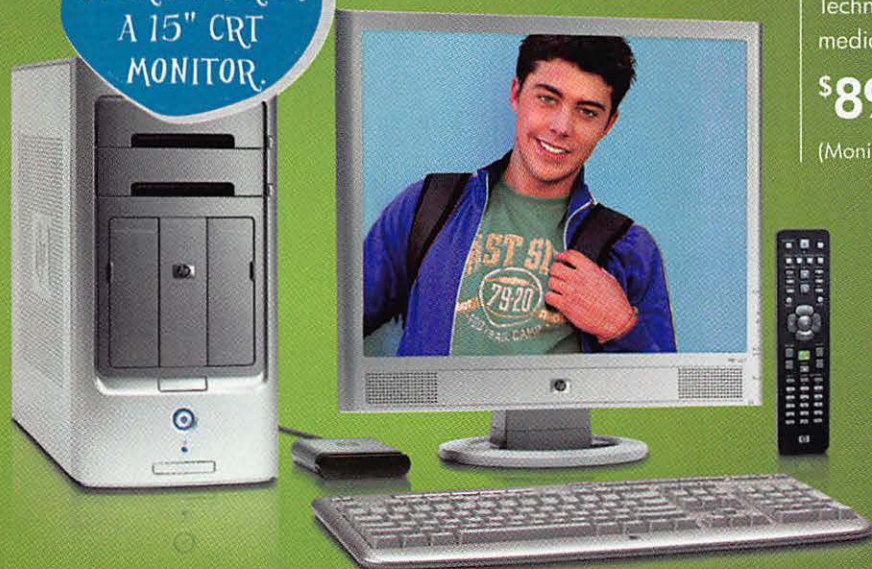


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m7560y Media Center PC

Be in control of your entertainment. Search, download and play movies and music — all at once thanks to the power of Intel® Viiv™ Technology. So, go ahead, enjoy your own media empire.

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(Monitor sold separately. Shown with 19" monitor.)



HP Personal Media Drive

Add this internal/external 300 GB drive and you can take your files anywhere. Connects via USB 2.0.

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- Intel® Pentium® D Processor 940¹ (3.20 GHz, 4 MB L2 cache, 800 MHz FSB)
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- Microsoft® Works 8.0/Money 2006/MSN® Encarta® Plus
- 2 GB DDR2-533 MHz dual channel SDRAM (4x512 MB)
- 250 GB⁴ 3-Gb/s and NCQ hard drive (7200rpm)
- SuperMulti DVD-burner with LightScribe² Technology
- Sound Blaster® Audigy™; 24-bit High-Definition Audio
- 256 MB NVIDIA® GeForce® 7500LE, TV-Out, DVI, VGA; Single NTSC TV Tuner with PVR and FM Tuner
- HP 19" flat-panel LCD monitor
- **FREE PRINTER** HP PSC 1410 All-in-One*
- 2-year HP Extended Service Plan

\$1949.99 before rebates
-\$250 instant savings*
-\$130 mail-in rebate* (rebate not available in CT)

\$1569⁹⁹ as low as \$59/mo.¹
QuickShop code: QS-2506

Design it for productivity

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- Genuine Microsoft® Windows® XP Media Center Edition
- Microsoft® Works 8.0/Money 2006/MSN® Encarta® Plus
- 1 GB DDR2-533 MHz dual channel SDRAM (2x512 MB)
- 160 GB⁴ 3-Gb/s and NCQ hard drive (7200rpm)
- Double Layer¹ 16x max.⁵ DVD+/-R/RW⁶ drive
- Integrated 7.1-capable Intel® High-Definition Audio
- NVIDIA® GeForce® graphics 7300LE with TurboCache; Single NTSC TV Tuner with PVR and FM Tuner
- HP 19" flat-panel LCD monitor
- **FREE PRINTER** PSC 1410 All-in-One*
- 1-year limited warranty

\$1329.99 before rebates
-\$250 instant savings*
-\$130 mail-in rebate* (rebate not available in CT)

\$949⁹⁹ as low as \$40/mo.¹
QuickShop code: QS-250E

¹Intel's numbering is not a measurement of higher performance.

²Double Layer is a new technology. Double layer media compatibility will widely vary with some home DVD players and DVD-ROM drives. ³LightScribe creates a grayscale image similar to a black-and-white photograph. LightScribe media required and sold separately. Does not permit copying of commercially available DVD movies or other copyright protected materials. Intended for your original content and other lawful uses. ⁴1 GB = 1 billion bytes; actual available capacity is less. Up to 8 GB (XP and XP Pro) and up to 12 GB (MCE) of memory is reserved for the system recovery software. ⁵Actual speeds may vary. ⁶Does not permit copying of commercially available DVD movies or other copyright-protected materials. Intended only for creation and storage of original materials and other lawful uses. ⁷Internet access required. Subscription required for live updates afterwards. ⁸Mail-in rebates and instant savings valid 7/15/06 to 7/30/06. ⁹See legal for details.

*Free HP printer after \$80 mail-in rebate. Tax on pre-mail-in rebate pricing. Rebate not available in CT. HP reserves the right to substitute printer model.

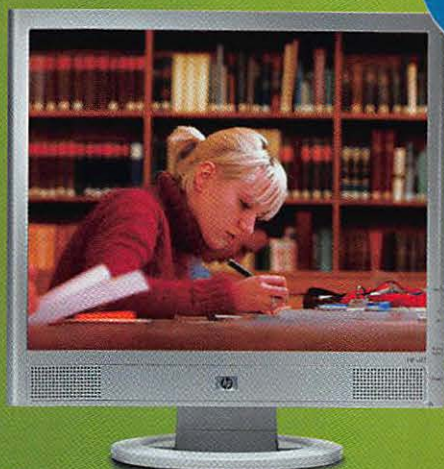
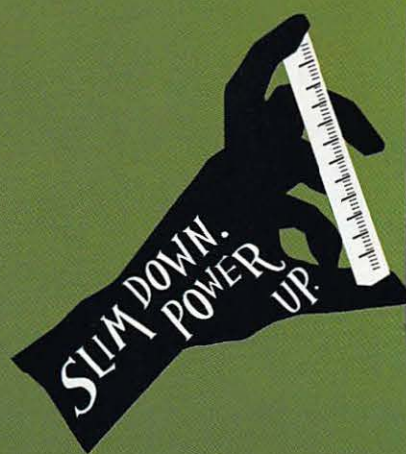
HP recommends Windows® XP Professional.

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Get full-on power and performance from a PC one-third the size of other desktops. Featuring Intel® Celeron® M Processor or Intel® Pentium® M Processor, this tiny PC lets you work and play in any space.

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(Monitor sold separately. Shown with 19" monitor.)

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- Microsoft® Works 8.0/Money 2006/MSN® Encarta® Plus
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- 160 GB⁴ hard drive (7200rpm)
- SuperMulti DVD-burner with LightScribe² Technology
- Integrated 7.1-capable Intel® High-Definition Audio
- Integrated Intel® Graphics Media Accelerator 900
- HP 17" flat-panel LCD monitor
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- 2-year HP Extended Service Plan

\$1384.99 before rebates

-\$220 instant savings*

-\$180 mail-in rebate* (rebate not available in CT)

\$984⁹⁹ as low as **\$42/mo.¹**
QuickShop code: QS-24F5

Design it for productivity

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- Genuine Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition
- Microsoft® Works 8.0/Money 2006/MSN® Encarta® Plus
- 512 MB DDR2-533 MHz dual channel SDRAM (2x256 MB)
- 80 GB⁴ hard drive (7200rpm)
- 16x max.² DVD-ROM
- Integrated 7.1-capable Intel® High-Definition Audio
- Integrated Intel® Graphics Media Accelerator 900
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- **FREE PRINTER** HP PSC 1410 All-in-One*
- 1-year limited warranty

\$909.99 before rebates

-\$230 instant savings*

-\$180 mail-in rebate* (rebate not available in CT)

\$499⁹⁹ as low as **\$28/mo.¹**
QuickShop code: QS-24EF

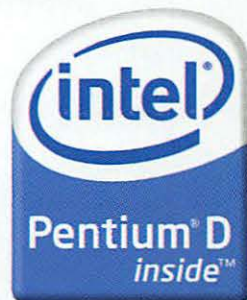


Upgrade your PC protection

Help protect your PC from security threats with Norton Internet Security™ 2006⁷ (15-month subscription) and Sonic Backup MyPC.

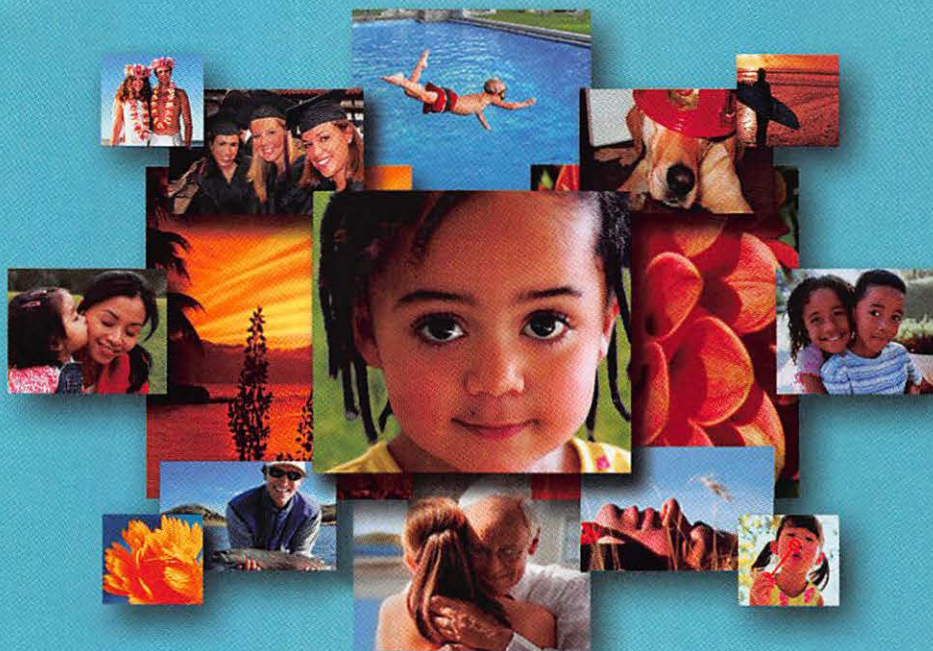
\$118⁰⁰

QuickShop code: QS-24E8



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GOOD

HP Photosmart 2575
All-in-One printer.
Prints up to 24 pages a minute.
More affordable than ever.

\$179.99 before rebate
-\$20.00 instant savings*

\$159.99 QuickShop code: QS-258E

BETTER

HP Photosmart 3210
All-in-One printer.
Prints up to 31 pages a minute.
Copies and scans in a snap.
Great for work and play.

\$279.99 before rebate
-\$56.00 instant savings*
\$223.99 as low as \$20/mo.*
QuickShop code: QS-257A

BEST

HP Photosmart 3310
All-in-One printer.
Print, copy and scan. Even fax.
Comes with wireless networking.
Perfect for powerful presentations.

\$429.99 as low as \$20/mo.*
QuickShop code: QS-2574

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HP Photosmart R927 Digital Camera

Incredible picture quality and features

- 8.2 MP, 3312x2496 pixels
- 24x total zoom (3x optical, 8x digital)
- 3.0" color image LCD display
- HP in-camera red-eye removal, HP Design Gallery, AE bracketing, HP Adaptive Demosaic, HP Adaptive Lighting, in-camera panorama preview and stitching, HP Image Advice, noise filter, HP Preferred Photo Reproduction

\$349.99 before rebate

-\$35.00 instant savings*

\$314.99 as low as \$20/mo.[†]
QuickShop code: QS-256E

NEW!



HP Photosmart R725 Digital Camera

Powerful photo style in a slim package

- 6.2 MP, 2864x2160 pixels
- 24x total zoom (3x optical, 8x digital)
- 2.0" color image LCD display
- HP in-camera red-eye removal, HP Design Gallery, AE bracketing, HP Adaptive Demosaic, HP Adaptive Lighting, in-camera panorama preview and stitching, HP Image Advice, noise filter, HP Preferred Photo Reproduction

\$229.99 before rebate

-\$23.00 instant savings*

\$206.99 as low as \$20/mo.[†]
QuickShop code: QS-256F

NEW!



HP Photosmart M527 Digital Camera

Big features, little price

- 6.0 MP, 2800x2128 pixels
- 21x total (3x optical, 7x digital)
- 2.0" color image LCD display
- HP in-camera red-eye removal, HP Design Gallery

\$199.99 before rebate

-\$20.00 instant savings*

\$179.99 as low as \$20/mo.[†]
QuickShop code: QS-255S



HP Color LaserJet 2600n Printer

Ideal for home or office

- Up to 8 ppm black, 8 ppm color
- Single-sheet priority feed slot and 250-sheet input tray
- Print up to 35,000 pages per month
- 1 USB, 1 Ethernet, networkable

\$399.99 before rebate

-\$40.00 instant savings*

\$359.99 as low as \$20/mo.[†]
QuickShop code: QS-2559

NEW!



HP Officejet 6310 All-in-One Printer

Print, scan, copy and fax for the home office

- Up to 30 ppm black, 24 ppm color
- 2400x4800 dpi optical resolution, 48-bit color
- 100-sheet input tray, 35-page auto document feeder
- 1 USB, 1 Ethernet, 1 PictBridge

\$279.99 before rebate

-\$28.00 instant savings*

\$251.99 as low as \$20/mo.[†]
QuickShop code: QS-2553

NEW!



HP Officejet 4315 All-in-One Printer

Ultra-compact and easy to use

- Up to 20 ppm black, 14 ppm color
- 1200x1200 dpi optical resolution, 48-bit color
- 100-sheet input tray, 20-page auto document feeder
- 1 USB

\$99.99 before rebate

-\$10.00 instant savings*

\$89.99 QuickShop code: QS-254A



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Only Original HP inks for your HP printer come in new cartridges with new print heads. That's why they're 35 times more reliable than bargain ink cartridges.[‡] So avoid clogs, streaks and smears. Print vibrant and precise, every time. Use only Original HP inks.



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[‡]Based on a 2005 Inkjet Cartridge Reliability Comparison Study by QualityLogic, Inc. and commissioned by HP. Testing performed on HP 45, HP 78, HP 56 and HP 57 Inkjet Print Cartridges compared to leading remanufacturer brands. Individual results may vary. ^{*}Instant savings valid 7/9/06 to 7/22/06. [§]See legal for details.



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Babylon 6

Look it up—in 17 languages

TIRED OF THE WEIRD, stilted results from online translation tools? Babylon 6 is an exceptional alternative. The program covers 17 languages and offers a huge number of add-ons—and using it is a snap. You can look up words or phrases from any Windows program by simply selecting the text and using a key shortcut or mouse click that is easily modified in the configuration options.

Babylon—which is free for a 30-day trial period—initially tries to add itself to your startup programs without asking, but it discreetly runs in the background once installed. Selecting single words or short phrases for definitions or translations works very well, but translating larger chunks of

text directly from a browser is less successful. Long passages translate better when pasted directly into Babylon, and translations tend to be more coherent than those from free online services.

The special features are impressive, including a computerized voice that pronounces words in English. (You'll need to add more engines to hear words in other languages.) Another helpful feature lets you quickly convert currencies, measurements, or time zones. But the real selling point is the vast number of dictionaries and glossaries, both free and for sale, available from the Babylon Web site. Adding them is simple and fast, and you can even build your own personalized glossaries with links and embedded images.

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handle tricky power-user tasks, such as setting up multipart documents with bibliographies, reference tables, and indexes. You can open and save



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Note: Because it's open source, OpenOffice relies entirely upon peer support, so you're out of luck if you need support personnel to walk you through a problem.

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CONS Lacks an e-mail client; tech support supplied by users

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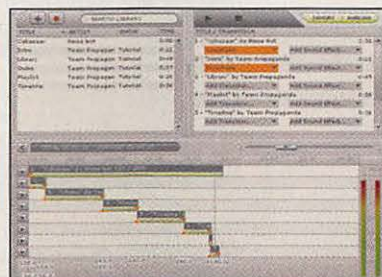
Podcast creation for newbies

A SIMPLE WAY to get your voice heard online, Propaganda offers easy-to-use start-to-finish production of podcasts.

The first thing you'll notice is the gorgeous iTunes-esque interface. The Propaganda screen is divided into three panes: one for your library of files, one that shows the current project files, and an intuitive multitrack Arrange window for drag-and-drop project assembly.

Recording audio is as simple as hitting the Record button and adjusting the input level. Once your project is assembled, the Publish feature creates the necessary XML, HTML, and MP3 files to get the podcast download-ready.

As ever, the program comes with some caveats. Even though Propaganda is geared toward first-timers, many basic controls—including those for



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PROS Gorgeous interface; one-click publishing

CONS Some basic controls are overly complicated; free version adds commercials

MixMeister Technology
www.mixmeister.com

Price **Free to try; \$49.95** (full version)

volume, EQ, and automatic rewinding—seem overly complicated. And note that the trial version inserts promo messages into your podcasts, so you'll need to pay the full \$49.95 to get your unfettered Internet radio career under way.

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\$ 1389



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\$ 1165



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- 512MB DDR-II PC4200 533 Memory
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- 6 Hours Battery Life; Free Carrying Case
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- 1 Year Limited Warranty
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GAMER XPLOER U3-3000

\$ 1229



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- 8X DVD+-RW Drive
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- 3-in-1 Built-in Media Reader
- 1 Firewire IEEE 1394 & 3 USB 2.0 Ports
- 4 Hours Battery Life; Free Carrying Case
- Super Light Weight only 3 Lbs
- 5 Custom Colors to Choose From
- 1 Year Limited Warranty
- Lifetime Toll Free 24/7 Techsupport

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GAMER XPLOER X5-6800

\$ 1255



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- Intel® Core™ Duo Processor
- Intel® PRO Wireless 3945A/B/G Networking
- Intel® 945GM Chipset
- GENUINE Windows® XP Media Center Edition 2005 with SP 2
- 1024MB DDR-II PC4200 533 Memory
- 80GB SATA150 Hard Drive
- Mobile ATI® X1600 256MB Video
- 15.4" WXGA TFT Display 1280X800 Pixels
- 8X DVD+-RW Drive

- 10/100/1000 Network Card & 56K V.92 Modem
- 3-in-1 Built-in Media Reader
- 1 PCMCIA Type II Slot
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- Weight only 6.39 Lbs
- 6 Custom Colors to Choose From
- 1 Year Limited Warranty
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- Intel® Core™ Duo Processor T2600 (2MB L2 Cache, 2.16Ghz, 677 Mhz FSB) \$ 1449
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- Intel® Pentium™ M Processor 760 (2MB L2 Cache, 2.0Ghz, 533 Mhz FSB) \$ 1599
- Intel® Pentium™ M Processor 750 (2MB L2 Cache, 1.86Ghz, 533 Mhz FSB) \$ 1545
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| Intel® Pentium® D Processor 950 (2MB Cache, 3.4Ghz, 800 Mhz FSB) | \$ 865 |
| Intel® Pentium® D Processor 940 (2MB Cache, 3.2Ghz, 800 Mhz FSB) | \$ 759 |
| Intel® Pentium® D Processor 930 (2MB Cache, 3.0Ghz, 800 Mhz FSB) | \$ 709 |
| Intel® Pentium® D Processor 805 (2MB Cache, 2.66Ghz, 800 Mhz FSB) | \$ 635 |
| Intel® Pentium® 4 660 Processor with HT Technology (2MB L2 Cache, 3.6 Ghz, 800 Mhz FSB) | \$ 945 |
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- LG 16X DVD+-RW Drive
- Intel® High Definition 7.1 Surround Sound
- 600 Watt Subwoofer Speaker System
- Logitech Deluxe 104 Keyboard
- Microsoft® USB Optical IntelliMouse
- Turbo X-Cruiser Case 420Watt with See Through Windows
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| Intel® Pentium® D Processor 950 (2MB Cache, 3.4Ghz, 800 Mhz FSB) | \$ 985 |
| Intel® Pentium® D Processor 940 (2MB Cache, 3.2Ghz, 800 Mhz FSB) | \$ 879 |
| Intel® Pentium® D Processor 930 (2MB Cache, 3.0Ghz, 800 Mhz FSB) | \$ 835 |
| Intel® Pentium® D Processor 805 (2MB Cache, 2.66Ghz, 800 Mhz FSB) | \$ 759 |
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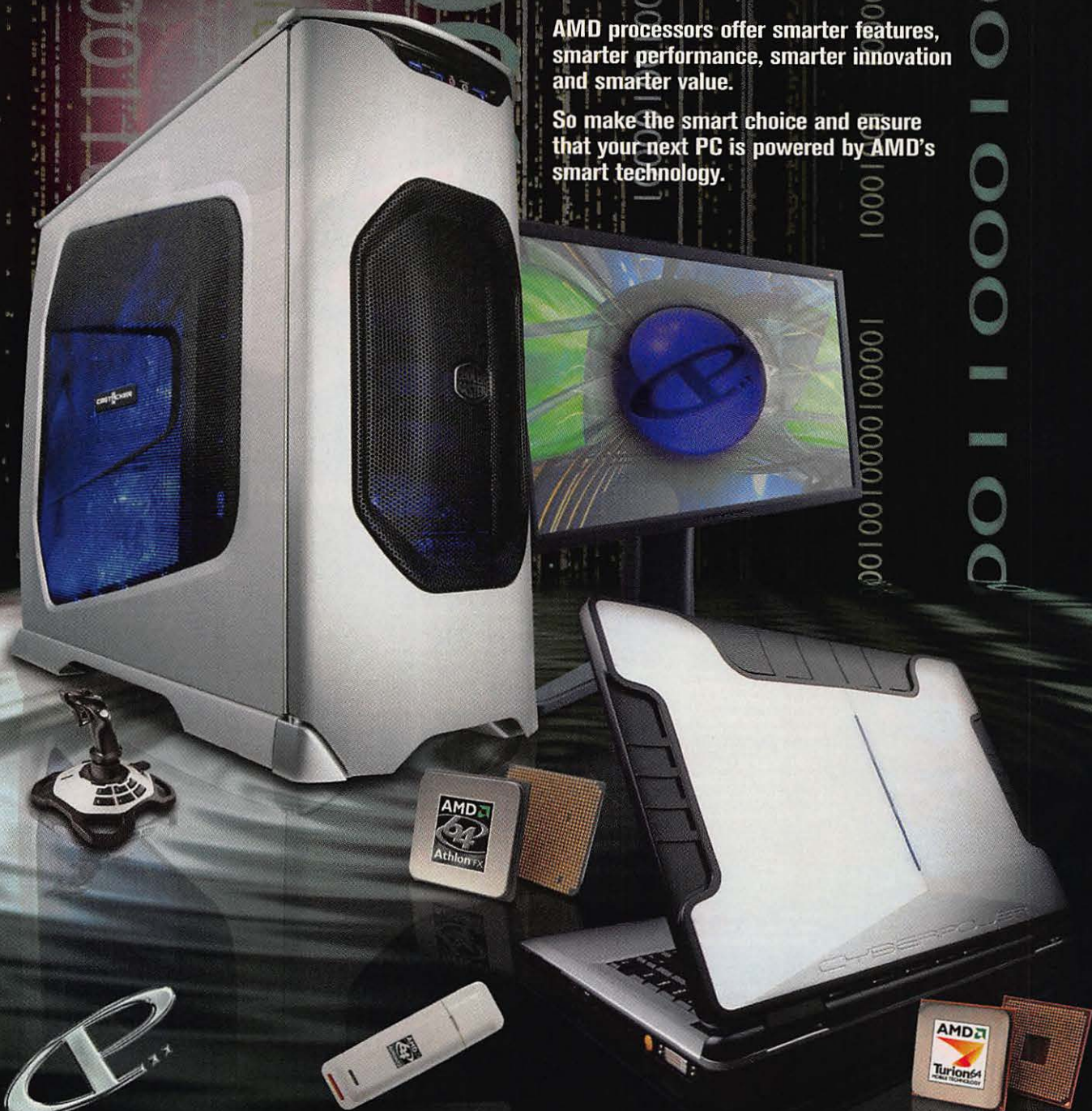
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AMD Athlon™ 64 X2 4600+ Processor	\$ 1155
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AMD Athlon™ 64 X2 4200+ Processor	\$ 955
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AMD Athlon™ 64 X2 4400+ Processor	\$ 1299
AMD Athlon™ 64 X2 4200+ Processor	\$ 1189
AMD Athlon™ 64 X2 4000+ Processor	\$ 1135
AMD Athlon™ 64 X2 3800+ Processor	\$ 1119
AMD Athlon™ 64 3500+ Processor	\$ 989
AMD Athlon™ 64 3200+ Processor	\$ 955

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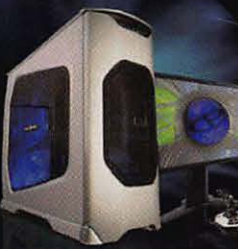


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- NVIDIA® nForce4 7.1 3-D Surround Sound
- Creative Cambridge Inspire P7800 7.1 Surround Sound System
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- Microsoft® Optical Intelli Explorer Mouse
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AMD Athlon™ 64 X2 5000+ Processor	\$ 3585
AMD Athlon™ 64 X2 4600+ Processor	\$ 3375
AMD Athlon™ 64 X2 4200+ Processor	\$ 3265
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- 1 Firewire IEEE 1394 & 4 USB 2.0 Ports
- 1 Year Limited Warranty
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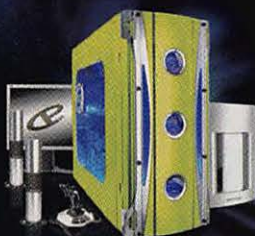
AMD Turion™ 64 Mobile Technology ML-44	\$ 3145
AMD Turion™ 64 Mobile Technology ML-42	\$ 3055
AMD Turion™ 64 Mobile Technology MT-40	\$ 2999
AMD Turion™ 64 Mobile Technology MT-37	\$ 2979
AMD Turion™ 64 Mobile Technology MT-34	\$ 2949
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| AMD Athlon™ 64 X2 4400+ Processor | \$ 985 |
| AMD Athlon™ 64 X2 4200+ Processor | \$ 875 |
| AMD Athlon™ 64 X2 3800+ Processor | \$ 799 |
| AMD Athlon™ 64 3500+ Processor | \$ 675 |
| AMD Athlon™ 64 3200+ Processor | \$ 645 |

GAMER ULTRA 8000 DREAM

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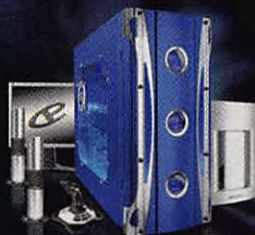
- NVIDIA® nForce™570 SLI Chipset MB with Dual 16X PCI Express
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| AMD Athlon™ 64 X2 5000+ Processor | \$ 1359 |
| AMD Athlon™ 64 X2 4600+ Processor | \$ 1255 |
| AMD Athlon™ 64 X2 4400+ Processor | \$ 1159 |
| AMD Athlon™ 64 X2 4200+ Processor | \$ 989 |
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| AMD Athlon™ 64 X2 3800+ Processor | \$ 1149 |
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| AMD Athlon™ 64 X2 4800+ Processor | \$ 1559 |
| AMD Athlon™ 64 X2 4400+ Processor | \$ 1369 |
| AMD Athlon™ 64 X2 4200+ Processor | \$ 1259 |
| AMD Athlon™ 64 X2 3800+ Processor | \$ 1189 |
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- 19" Viewsonic Q9B LCD Display
- LG 16X DVD+-RW Drive & 16X DVD-ROM
- NVIDIA® nForce4 7.1 3-D Surround Sound

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| AMD Athlon™ 64 FX-62 Processor | \$ 2159 |
| AMD Athlon™ 64 X2 5000+ Processor | \$ 1729 |
| AMD Athlon™ 64 X2 4400+ Processor | \$ 1529 |
| AMD Athlon™ 64 X2 4200+ Processor | \$ 1419 |
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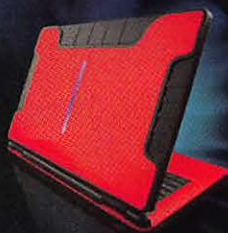


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- 3-in-1 Built-in Media Reader
- 1 Firewire IEEE 1394 & 4 USB 2.0 Ports
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- AMD Turion™ 64 Mobile Technology ML-42 \$ 1349
- AMD Turion™ 64 Mobile Technology MT-40 \$ 1299
- AMD Turion™ 64 Mobile Technology MT-37 \$ 1269
- AMD Turion™ 64 Mobile Technology MT-34 \$ 1239
- AMD Turion™ 64 Mobile Technology MT-32 \$ 1229

GAMER XPLOER-64 9500

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- AMD PowerNow! Technology
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- **GENUINE Windows® XP Media Center Edition 2005 with SP 2**
- 2048MB PC3200 DDR400 Memory
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- Mobile ATI™ X1600 256MB Video Card
- 15.4" WXGA Wide-Screen TFT Display 1280x800 Pixels
- 8X DVD+-RW Drive
- 10/100 Network Card & 56K V.92 Modem
- Wireless 802.11G 54Mbps Networking
- 3-in-1 Built-in Media Reader
- 1 PCMCIA Type II Slot
- 1 Firewire IEEE 1394 & 4 USB 2.0 Ports
- Weight only 6.39 Lbs
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- AMD Turion™ 64 Mobile Technology MT-37 \$ 1395
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PRODUCT	PRICE	SPECS/REQUIREMENTS	EDITOR'S TAKE	RATING
Overdrive Torque.SLI* www.overdrivepc.com	\$4,408	2.8GHz Athlon 64 FX-57; 1GB DDR; two 74GB, one 200GB HDDs; two GeForce 7900 GT	Other dual-graphics-card PCs have shown promise, but the Torque.SLI blows them all away with its incredibly fast 3D frame rates and amazing application performance.	8.4
Hypersonic Cyclone OCX LE* www.hypersonic-pc.com	\$4,534	2.8GHz Athlon 64 FX-57; 1GB DDR; two 74GB, one 300GB HDDs; two GeForce 7800 GTX	If you're among the lucky few who can afford a machine like the Cyclone OCX, you'll enjoy premium components, stellar performance, and serious bragging rights.	8.2
Shuttle XPC P 2600g* us.shuttle.com	\$3,192	2GHz Athlon 64 4000+; 2GB DDR; two 400GB HDDs; two GeForce 7800 GTX	A table-top, toaster-size PC packed with high-end gear, including a dual-core CPU and SLI graphics, it offers the same blazing speed you'll find in some big, beefy towers.	8.0
Velocity Gamer's Edge DualX* www.velocitymicro.com	\$3,235	2.8GHz Athlon 64 FX-57; 1GB DDR; 150GB, 250GB HDDs; two GeForce 7900 GT	By overclocking the latest AMD processor and nVidia graphics cards for enhanced performance, Velocity Micro has put together one of the fastest systems we've seen.	8.0
Velocity Raptor 64 DualX* www.velocitymicro.com	\$5,280	2.6GHz Athlon 64 FX-60; 2GB DDR; two 500GB HDDs; two GeForce 7900 GTX	Top-notch build quality and high-end parts are the hallmarks of this gamer. Power-draw issues require you to think carefully about your configuration and gaming demands.	7.6

DESKTOP-REPLACEMENT NOTEBOOKS >> Reclaim your desk space with these powerful portables.

Dell XPS M1710 www.dell.com	\$3,855	2GHz Core Duo T2500; 2GB DDR2; 100GB HDD; DVD±RW; 17-inch TFT	If you're a hard-core gamer looking to play the newest games at the highest settings, the XPS M1710 is the best laptop that (a lot of) money can buy.	8.2
Toshiba Satellite P105-S921 www.toshiba.com	\$1,999	1.83GHz Core Duo T2400; 1GB DDR; 160GB HDD; DVD±RW; 17-inch TFT	Also aimed at gamers, the Satellite P105 offers a thorough set of multimedia features and strong performance at a relatively affordable price.	8.2
Toshiba Qosmio G35-AV600 www.toshiba.com	\$2,399	1.83GHz Core Duo T2400; 1GB DDR2; two 80GB HDDs; DVD±RW; 17-inch TFT	With the Qosmio G35-AV600, Toshiba delivers a best-in-class multimedia experience. It's built on state-of-the-art components and includes plenty of high-end features.	8.1
Dell Inspiron E1705 www.dell.com	\$2,080	1.66GHz Core Duo T2300; 1GB DDR2; 80GB HDD; DVD±RW; 17-inch TFT	One of the first Core Duo laptops to hit the street, the E1705 has enough power to speed through virtually any task, from editing video to playing games.	7.8
HP Compaq NX9420* www.hp.com	\$1,749	1.83GHz Core Duo T2400; 1GB DDR; 100GB HDD; DVD±RW; 17-inch TFT	If you're looking for a 17-inch wide-screen laptop that offers corporate-caliber security, power, and battery life, the NX9420 is your top pick.	7.5

WI-FI ROUTERS >> Build a dependable wireless network around these advanced Wi-Fi devices.

Belkin Wireless Pre-N Router www.belkin.com	\$99.99	MIMO; 108Mbps maximum transfer rate; 802.11b/g; WEP, WPA security	For blanketing a large area with wireless coverage, this multiple input, multiple output (MIMO) router is a speedier alternative to a router/repeater combo.	8.4
Netgear RangeMax WPN824 www.netgear.com	\$109.99	MIMO; 108Mbps maximum transfer rate; 802.11b/g; WEP, WPA security	More compact than its MIMO counterparts, this router features seven internal antennae to help combat interference from cordless phones and nearby networks.	7.8
Netgear Double 108 Mbps WGU624 www.netgear.com	\$84.99	108Mbps maximum transfer rate; 802.11a/b/g; WEP, WPA security	This silver, angular device supports up to 50 virtual-private-network (VPN) tunnels, allowing as many employees secure access to the office LAN.	7.6
Belkin Wireless-G Travel Router www.belkin.com	\$69.99	54Mbps maximum transfer rate; 802.11b/g; WEP, WPA security	A top choice for business travelers who need Wi-Fi on the road, this portable router combines great design, a low price, decent performance, and helpful support.	7.1
Linksys Wireless-N WRT300N www.linksys.com	\$149.99	MIMO; 300Mbps maximum transfer rate; 802.11n/b/g; WPA security	Though it offers good maximum throughput, the WRT300N ultimately fails to do the new Draft N wireless standard proud in either mixed-mode or long-range tests.	6.7

HEADPHONES >> Digital audio sounds sweet with these top-notch 'phones.

Shure E4g www.shure.com	\$319	Wired earbuds; 56-inch cord; in-line volume control	Like Shure's predecessor 'phones, the E4c, the E4g are among the best in-ear buds we've heard. Fitted to your ear canal, they deliver superb sound and block outside noise.	8.5
Ten NavPlay Bluetooth Headset tenttechnology.com	\$200	Wireless over-ear headphones; integrated volume control	The best option for iPod users who want to enjoy wireless listening. Kit includes noise-canceling headphones you can pair with your player or a Bluetooth-enabled phone.	8.3
Ultrasone iCans www.ultrasone.com	\$129.99	Wired over-ear headphones; 45-inch cord; no in-line volume control	High style meets high performance in the iPod-inspired Ultrasone iCans. These portable headphones are lightweight and fold for compact storage in their included travel case.	8.0
Ultimate Ears Super.fi 3 www.ultimateears.com	\$99.99	Wired earbuds; 46-inch cord; no in-line volume control	Ultimate Ears' no-frills Super.fi 3 Studio in-ear headphones deliver a clear, balanced audio response for a budget price. Tall users may find the cable too short, though.	7.7
Westone UM1 Single Earphones www.westone.com	\$109	Wired earbuds; 48-inch cord; no in-line volume control	Like the Super.fi 3 from Ultimate Ears, Westone's nicely priced in-ear headphones are for budget-conscious audiophiles who value balanced audio over brain-numbing bass.	7.7

HOME PC SOFTWARE >> Essential apps to optimize your computing experience.

Adobe Photoshop Elements 4.0 www.adobe.com	\$90	800MHz CPU; 256MB RAM; 900MB hard drive space; Windows XP	Equipped with an excellent interface and a fantastic toolbox, Elements is the best choice for digital photographers who want to organize and share their photo collections.	8.1
Nero 7 Ultra Edition www.nero.com	\$79.99	800MHz CPU; 128MB RAM; 600MB hard drive space; Windows 98, 2000, Me, or XP	Still an excellent value, version 7 of this versatile, comprehensive DVD- and CD-burning suite has a new media-browsing interface that offers remote control from the couch.	8.0
Quicken Premier 2006 www.quicken.com	\$69.99	300MHz CPU; 128MB RAM; 100MB hard drive space; Windows 98, Me, 2000, or XP	Not a big step up from the 2005 edition, but we like the latest Quicken's tweaks, including its new mini-reports feature and the ability to attach images to records.	8.0
iLife '06 www.apple.com	\$79	PowerPC G4/G5, or Core Duo CPU; 256MB RAM; 10GB hard drive space; OS X 10.3.9	With iLife '06, Mac users get a host of digital media applications, including a photo organizer, a podcast-creation tool, and DVD-burning software, all for a bargain price.	7.3
Microsoft Works Suite 2006 www.microsoft.com	\$99.95	700MHz CPU; 256MB RAM; 1.5GB hard drive space; Windows 98, Me, 2000, or XP	Microsoft Works Suite 2006 is a time-saver for basic home-computing tasks such as organizing photos, budgeting, finding travel directions, and word processing.	7.0

✓ = Editors' Choice * = Configuration changed from original review.

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Internet access and usage charges imposed by your online service will apply.

2. Prize is \$1,000 Gift Check. Winner will be selected in a random drawing from among all eligible ballots/entries received. Odds of winning are dependent on the number of entries received. The prize will be awarded, and the winner will be notified by mail, e-mail, or phone. Only one prize per individual or household. The prize is nontransferable, and no substitutions are allowed, except by the sponsor, which reserves the right to award a prize of equal or greater value if advertised prize is unavailable. Sponsor and its agencies assume no responsibility or liability for damages, losses, or injury resulting from acceptance or use of any prize. SX2 Media Labs, its agencies, and its employees are not responsible or liable for any guarantee or warranty either expressed or implied on any prize awarded. Taxes, if any, related to the prize are the responsibility of the

individual winners. 1099 tax statements will be filed with the IRS for major prize winners. The winner will be required to verify their address, and execute and return an affidavit of eligibility and liability/publicity release within 14 days of notification attempt, or the prize may be forfeited and an alternate winner selected. No responsibility is assumed for lost, misdirected, or late entries. Acceptance of prize constitutes permission to use the winner's name and likeness for publicity purposes without further compensation, except where prohibited by law. Sponsor and its agencies are not responsible for technical, hardware, or software malfunctions; lost or unavailable network connections; or failed, incorrect, inaccurate, incomplete, garbled, or delayed electronic communications, whether caused by the sender or by any of the equipment or programming associated with or used in this sweepstakes or by any human error that may occur in the processing of the entries in

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NP 5950V

FEATURES

- nVIDIA® SLI™ GPUs deliver heart-pounding graphics performance and mind-blowing gaming experiences. Combining two nVIDIA® GeForce™ Go 7900 GTX graphics modules in a single notebook allows you to essentially double your graphics performance.
- AMD Turion™ 64 Mobile Technology is made for mobility. Bring digital media to life whether you're editing photos, downloading video or playing games. Stay connected wherever you go with longer battery life.
- The 19" widescreen display redefines the visual experience of mobile computing, maximizing the viewing range for the highest visual satisfaction.

OPTIONS

- Bluetooth Module
- TV Tuner Module with Remote

SPECIFICATIONS

- 19.0" Wide Viewing Angles WSXGA+ Active Matrix Display with Super Clear Glare Type Screen
- AMD Turion™ 64 Mobile Technology ML-44
- Dual 512MB DDR3 NVIDIA® GeForce™ Go 7900 GTX PCI-Express™ Graphics with SLI™ Technology enabled
- 1GB DDR SDRAM at 400MHz
- 80.0GB 5400RPM Serial ATA 150 Hard Drive
- 8X DVD±R/RW/4X +DL Multi Drive
- Full Sized Keyboard with Numeric Keypad
- Integrated Super Wireless LAN 802.11 a/b/g
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FEATURES

- Empowerment! The AMD Athlon™ 64 X2 Dual-Core Processor enables you to do more in less time by delivering exceptional multi-tasking capabilities and increased performance on digital media.
- nVIDIA® GeForce™ Go 7900 GTX PCI-Express™ Graphics Module with 512MB DDR3 Memory delivering the power and technology you need to tear through the hottest games.
- Dual Optical Device bays and Dual Hard Disk Capability allow this system to be customized with 2 CD-ROM devices and 2 Hard Drives coexisting for maximum storage capacity.

OPTIONS

- 802.11g and Bluetooth Combo Module
- TV Tuner Module with Remote

SPECIFICATIONS

- 17.0" Wide Viewing Angles WUXGA Active Matrix Display with Super Clear Glare Type Screen
- AMD Athlon™ 64 X2 Dual-Core Processor 4200+
- 512MB DDR3 NVIDIA® GeForce™ Go 7900 GTX PCI-Express™ Graphics
- 1GB DDR SDRAM at 400MHz
- 80.0GB 5400RPM Serial ATA 150 Hard Drive
- 8X DVD±R/RW/4X +DL Multi Drive
- Full Size Keyboard with Numeric Keypad
- Hardware Raid 0,1 Function
- Dual Optical Device bays and Dual Hard Disk capability allow this system to be customized with 2 CD-ROM devices and 2 Hard Drives coexisting
- Integrated Wireless LAN 802.11 b/g
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- Built-In 7-in-1 Card Reader
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loudspeaker. Made for iPod.

iHome



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Radio Play music from your iPod
iPod's battery charges while docked

LINKSYS



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D-Link



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THRIFTY TECH FOR STUDENTS

NOTEBOOKS

Go to the head of the class with these affordable essentials for students and deal hunters alike.

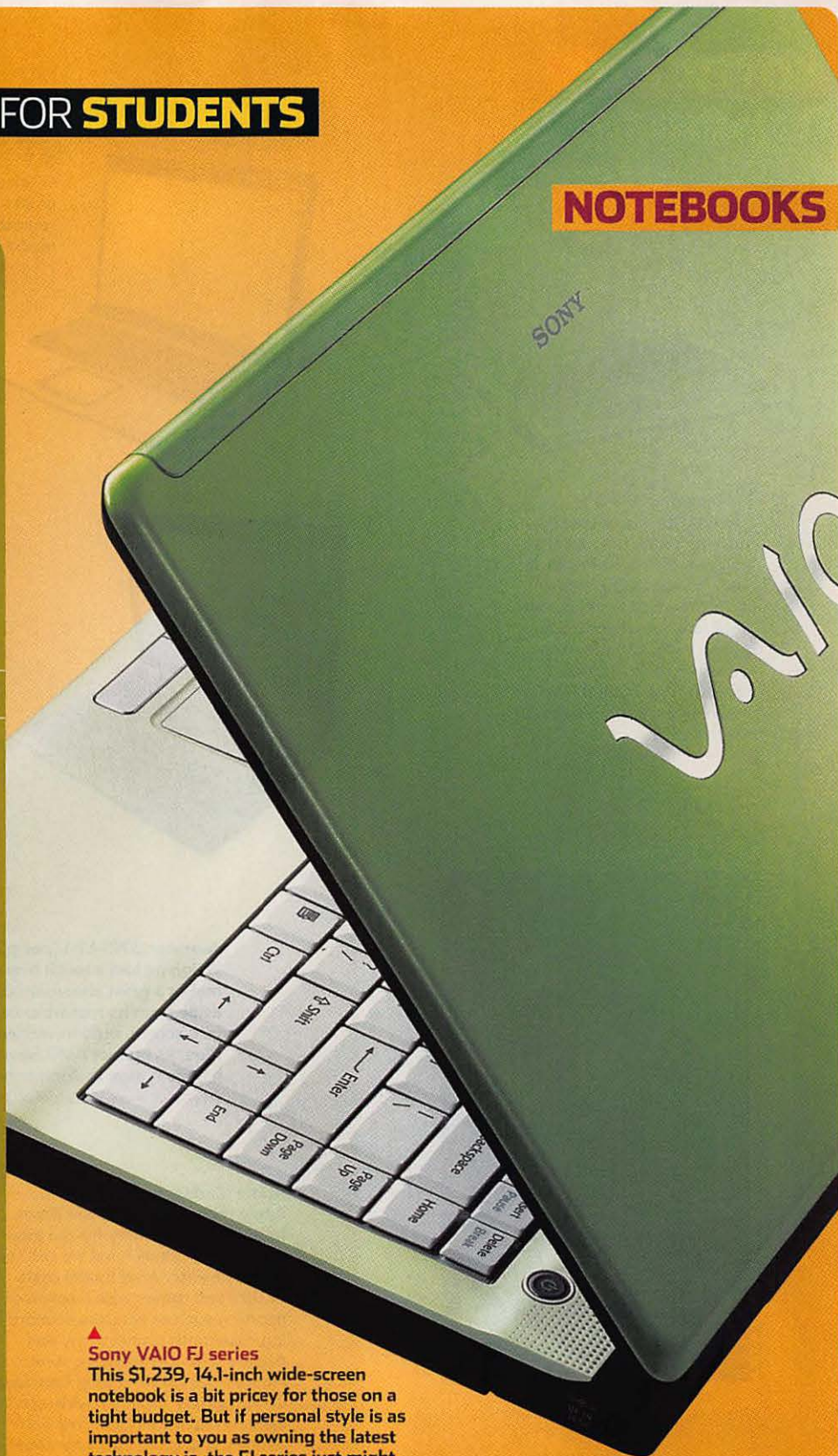
BY JOSHUA GOLDMAN

The price of college tuition might be skyrocketing, but the cost of technology is a little more down to earth—if you know where to look and what to buy, that is.

That's where we come in. We've identified five types of products that college students (and their parents) are likely to need: desktops, notebooks, peripherals, software, and PC accessories. With our eyes on your wallet, we shopped these categories to find tech that balances performance with affordability.

There's something for everyone here, whether you're heading off for your freshman year, shopping for a first-year student, or simply looking for an excuse to upgrade your own equipment. These fresh tech picks are capable yet temptingly affordable.

▲ **Sony VAIO FJ series**
This \$1,239, 14.1-inch wide-screen notebook is a bit pricey for those on a tight budget. But if personal style is as important to you as owning the latest technology is, the FJ series just might be worth the money. Available in five different colors in a slim, 5.3-pound package, this notebook is guaranteed to stand out on campus.
Sony Electronics • www.sonymstyle.com

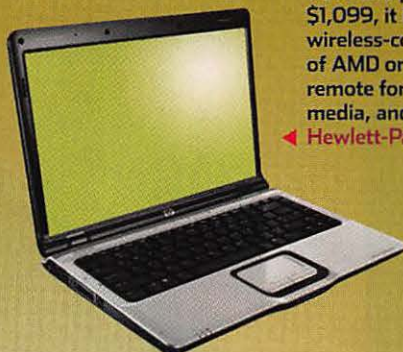


NOTEBOOKS



▲ **Dell Inspiron E1405**
The E1405, with a starting price of \$849, is a powerful bargain. Its bright 14.1-inch wide-screen LCD provides ample room to work, but the notebook maintains a 5.5-pound weight that makes it easy to carry around campus. Plus, Dell throws in some nice media features for downtime.

Dell • www.dell.com



HP Pavilion DV2000

This slick-looking notebook, like the Dell Inspiron E1405, is solid for both work and play. With an entry price of \$1,099, it includes all the latest wireless-connectivity options, a choice of AMD or Intel mobile processors, a remote for couch-side control of your media, and an integrated Webcam.

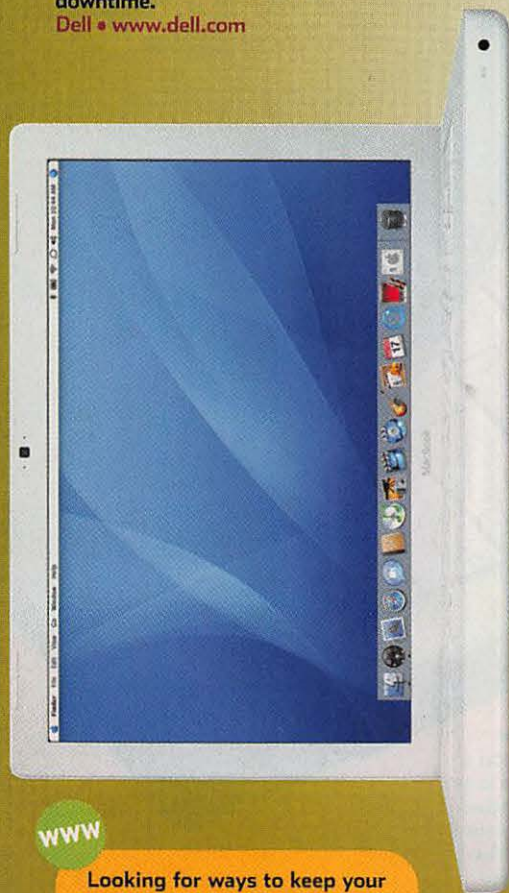
◀ Hewlett-Packard • www.hp.com



Lenovo 3000 N100

The 3000 N100 comes in 12 different configurations, with prices starting as low as \$699. Its design is a bit sober, but this laptop includes a DVD drive and a wide-screen 14.1-inch LCD for after-hours fun. And while the spacious, responsive keyboard and added security features are great, the Lenovo Care service-and-support package secured our love for this portable.

Lenovo • www.lenovo.com



Averatec 3715-EH1 (not pictured)

Weighing just a touch over 4 pounds, Averatec's 3715-EH1 makes a great classroom companion. The \$849.99 laptop, aside from its resemblance to Apple's iBook, features a 12.1-inch screen, built-in wireless networking, and a DVD burner. Plus, its budget AMD Sempron 3000+ processor can ably handle typical assignments.

Averatec • www.averatec.com

Apple MacBook

Apple dropped the popular iBook from its lineup in May for the Intel-powered MacBook—and we can see why. The entry-level model costs \$1,099 and comes with a bunch of goodies, such as wireless networking, Bluetooth connectivity, and Apple's iLife '06 software suite. Figure in its 1.83GHz Intel Core Duo CPU, a glossy 13.3-inch wide-screen display, and a weight of just 5.2 pounds, and you've got one sweet study buddy.

Apple Computer • www.apple.com

WWW

Looking for ways to keep your notebook secure? Check out our feature "Laptop Lockdown."
computershopper.com/lockdown



Take advantage of school credentials. Most major vendors, such as Dell and Apple, offer special student pricing on hardware and software. Also, manufacturers frequently sell refurbished tech at great discounts, with their usual warranty options.

DESKTOPS

Dell Dimension E310

Starting at only \$499, Dell's entry-level desktop has a lot to offer the diligent student. A commendable balance of price and performance, the E310 can be set up with Dell's DataSafe technology to safely and automatically back up files. Plus, the manufacturer's prices frequently include peripherals such as LCD monitors.

Dell • www.dell.com

**eMachines T6528 (not pictured)**

We're consistently impressed with eMachines' offerings. (Check out our full review of its T6532 in the Desktop Reviews section.) The T6528, which rings up at \$549.99 before a \$50 mail-in rebate, has excellent specs, including a 2.2GHz AMD Athlon 64 3500+ CPU, 512MB of memory, and a 160GB hard drive. The configuration is fixed, but when it's this good a value, we don't mind.

eMachines • www.emachines.com

**Apple Mac Mini Core Duo**

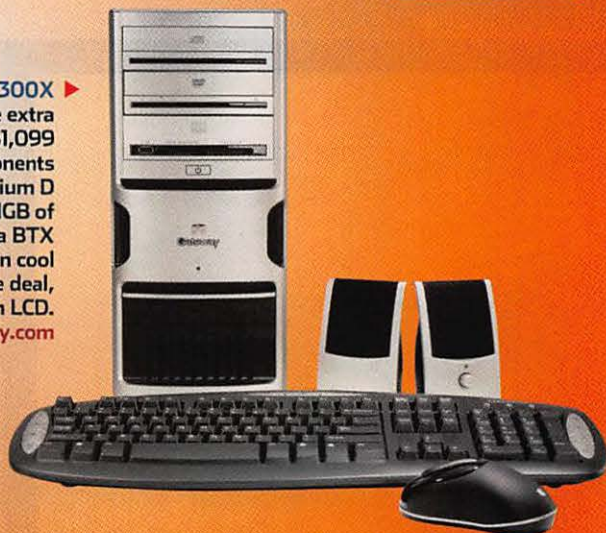
Though tiny, this little guy packs a wallop. The \$799 Mini Core Duo comes loaded with a ton of software, so it's primed to perform as soon as you unpack it. The Mini's speedy 1.66GHz Intel dual-core mobile processor can capably run multiple applications without choking, and its double-layer DVD burner enables you to easily back up huge batches of important files.

Apple Computer • www.apple.com

Gateway DX300X

If you can afford some extra desktop power, the \$1,099 DX300X has tasty components that include an Intel Pentium D 920 dual-core CPU and 1GB of RAM. The system employs a BTX design, which allows it to run cool and quiet. To sweeten the deal, Gateway throws in a 19-inch LCD.

Gateway • www.gateway.com

**HP Pavilion s7400n Series Slimline**

Whether it's a dorm room, bedroom, or studio apartment, a student's space is often small. That's why we like Hewlett-Packard's \$679.99 Slimline: It jams a lot of PC into a tiny package. Its 1.7GHz Intel Celeron M 390 processor isn't the fastest, but all the surrounding components are top-notch.

Hewlett-Packard • www.hp.com



i To efficiently accomplish typical school tasks, look for a desktop with these minimum specs. For the CPU, insist on an Intel mobile-specific chip (such as the Core Solo or Core Duo), a 5xx- or 6xx-series Intel Pentium, or an AMD Athlon 64 3x00+-series chip. Also look for 512MB of RAM, a 7,200rpm 60GB hard drive, and a DVD±RW optical drive.

PERIPHERALS

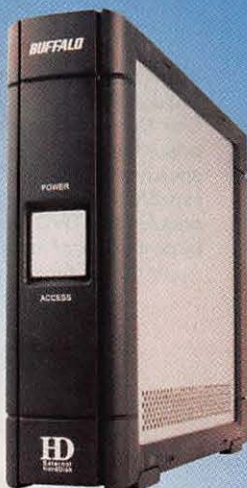


▲ Canon Pixma iP4200

Inexpensive color inkjet printers are plentiful, but only a handful are actually worth buying. The \$99.99 Canon Pixma iP4200 is one of them. Although a little sluggish performance-wise, this inkjet delivers solid print quality for both text and photos. We also like the printer's ease of operation and its tree-saving autoduplexing feature for two-sided printouts. Canon U.S.A. • usa.canon.com

Buffalo DriveStation HD-HC160U2 160GB Hard Drive

Few things precipitate that sinking feeling faster than a computer crash does. The \$169 HD-HC160U2 provides abundant storage space, connects instantly via USB 2.0 to a Mac or PC, and includes the excellent Memeo backup software. Add to that the included security software and a slot that accepts a locking device, and you can rest easy knowing that your data's safe. Buffalo Technology www.buffalotech.com



i When pricing printers, consider consumables such as ink and toner cartridges. That bargain printer might save you some money up front, but you may end up paying more over time if it's not ink-efficient. Carrot Ink's online store (www.carrotink.com) is our pick for inexpensive cartridges.

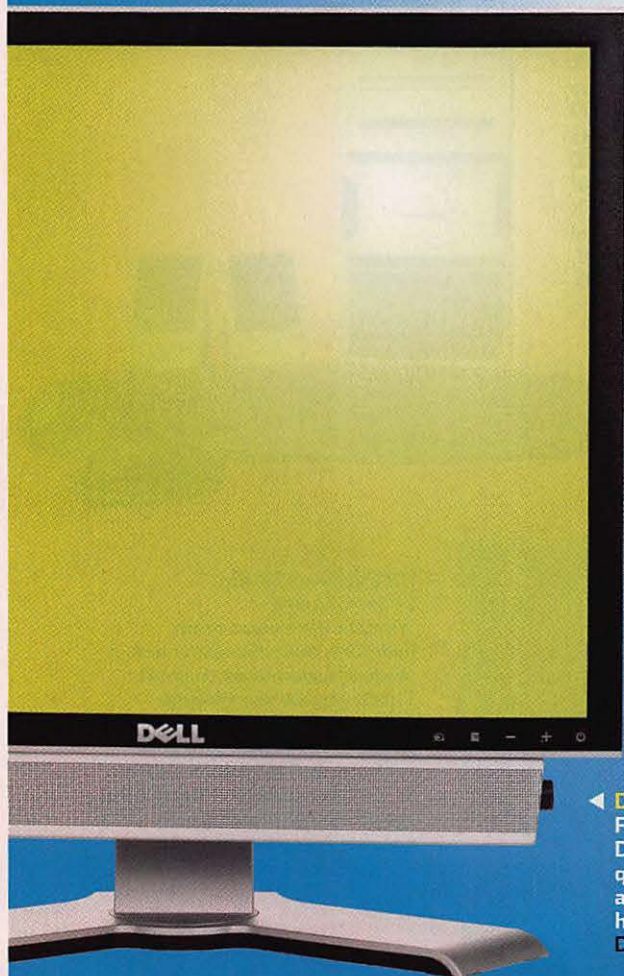
Brother HL-2040

Having to make a late-night run to a computer lab or print shop is inconvenient, so if you do a lot of black-and-white printing, we wholeheartedly recommend the HL-2040 personal laser printer. Not only is it inexpensive (we found it as low as \$85.99 after a rebate at Newegg.com), but it also prints fast and has a small footprint. Brother Industries www.brother.com



◀ Dell UltraSharp 1907FP

Flat-panel displays keep getting cheaper—and better. Upping the ante is Dell's \$309 UltraSharp 1907FP, a 19-inch LCD with very respectable image quality and lots of connectivity options, including DVI-D. Plus, it's highly adjustable, supporting portrait/landscape rotation, and allows ergonomic height modifications. Dell • www.dell.com



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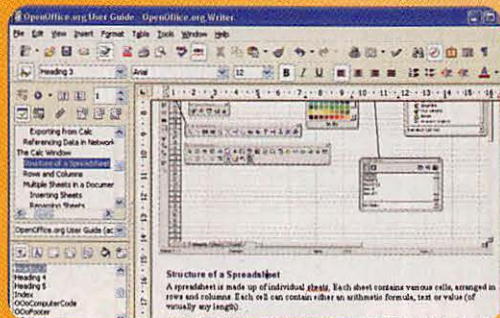
AVG Anti-Virus Free Edition

Most schools require their students to run antivirus software on their computers before gaining access to the campus network. Grisoft's AVG Anti-Virus Free Edition will not only get you the hookup, it'll also keep your computer clean of viruses without slowing down performance. Bonus: It's free. Grisoft • www.grisoft.com



EverNote 1.1

Going to school means a never-ending stream of note-taking. EverNote, a free download, helps you make sense out of every note you take, whether it's an assignment, a Web-page excerpt, an e-mail, an address, or the results of a brainstorming session. The software facilitates organization by letting you drag and drop notes into multiple categories you create. EverNote • www.evernote.com



Ad-Aware SE Personal Edition

Spyware and adware are quickly becoming as threatening as—and more numerous than—viruses are. Thankfully, free software such as Lavasoft's Ad-Aware combats unwanted data-mining, advertising, and tracking nasties. All it takes is a simple system scan to see if you've picked up any nosy hitchhikers. Lavasoft • www.lavasoft.com



Hunting for freeware and shareware applications on the Web can be tricky. Head to sites like Version Tracker (www.versiontracker.com) and CNET's Download.com (www.download.com) to find what you need. Scan the user reviews, too, to avoid any duds.

OpenOffice.org 2

If you just can't afford Microsoft Office 2003 Student and Teacher Edition (\$129.99), here's a great solution that's absolutely free: OpenOffice.org 2. The 91MB download has parallel components for everything you'd find in Microsoft Office. The multiplatform and multilingual office suite is compatible with all other major productivity suites, too. (See our full review in the Software Reviews Section.) Sun Microsystems www.openoffice.org

Microsoft Student 2007 (not pictured)

The 2006 version of Student targeted middle- and high-school students. The new \$69.99 version adds some features for the college set, including a ton of math-related tools and step-by-step solutions to equations. New templates help students create a variety of items for all stages of academic life: book reports, college applications, résumés, even job-search letters. Microsoft www.microsoft.com

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AMD Athlon™ 64 FX-62 (Socket AM2)	\$2469

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AMD Athlon™ 64 FX-62 (Socket AM2)	\$1989

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ACCESSORIES



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Kensington Twin MicroSaver Notebook Security Cable (not pictured)

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Power Parts

Rejuvenate your PC—or build one from scratch—with our all-inclusive guide to choosing upgrade components.

BY DENNY ATKIN

YOU HEAR IT ALL THE TIME: Today's budget PCs are fast enough for most daily computing tasks. Still, it's hard to resist the allure of a faster, more powerful computer. The prospect of speeding up your PC makes it easy to justify paying for the occasional upgrade—or even splurging a bit to build a fleetier PC from scratch. But deciding which components deliver the best balance of performance and value isn't quite as simple.

That's where we can help. Whether you're looking to build a whisper-quiet media-centric PC or hoping to give your current home-office workhorse a performance jolt, our advice will steer you to the best add-ons your money can buy. Armed with our knowledge (and your Phillips screwdriver),

you can turn your PC into the dream machine you've always craved.

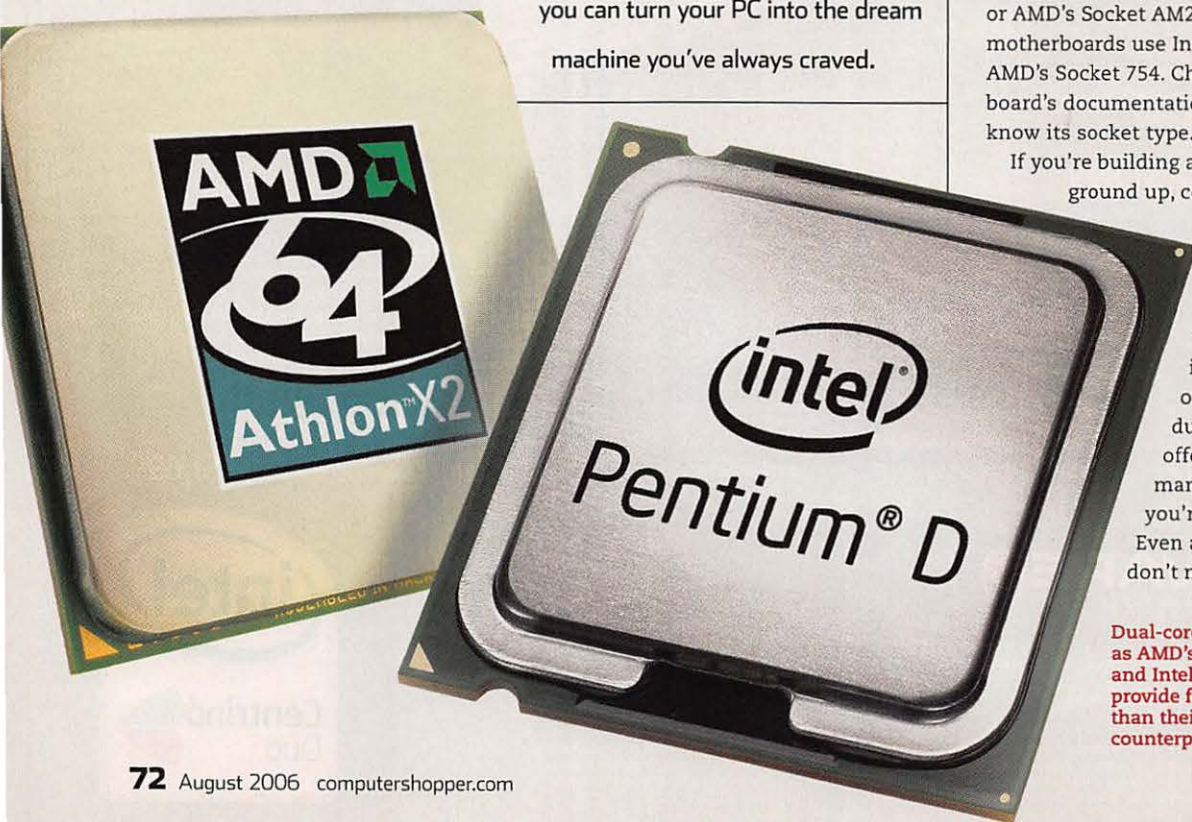
PICKING A PROCESSOR

Not so long ago, buying the processor with the fastest clock speed available meant you had the best CPU you could get. Today's processors are designed differently, however, and clock-speed ratings are no longer quite as relevant. Rather than basing your CPU purchase solely on clock speed, you need to carefully consider a number of features. (See the sidebar, "Processor Picks," for an at-a-glance look at current power CPUs.)

For starters, the processor you select must be compatible with your motherboard's socket type, whether you're using your old board or a new one. Many new boards support Intel's Socket 775 or AMD's Socket AM2, while older motherboards use Intel's Socket 478 or AMD's Socket 754. Check your motherboard's documentation if you don't know its socket type.

If you're building a system from the ground up, consider buying a dual-core CPU such as Intel's Pentium D or AMD's Athlon 64 X2. By incorporating two processors onto a single chip, dual-core CPUs can offer a huge performance boost when you're multitasking. Even applications that don't natively support

Dual-core processors, such as AMD's Athlon 64 X2 and Intel's Pentium D, provide faster performance than their single-core counterparts do.



dual-core processors can take advantage of these processors, since one core can run video while the other handles background chores.

Also, both AMD and Intel offer CPUs that support 64-bit technology. Unlike 32-bit processors, which can address only up to 4GB of memory under Windows, 64-bit chips can address more, and also offer a speed boost when used with 64-bit-optimized programs. Most current processors have built-in 64-bit support, but AMD's Sempron line and Intel's Core Solo and Core Duo chips don't. Note that you need Windows XP Professional x64 Edition to take advantage of a 64-bit chip's features.

If you're trying to build a noise-free PC, such as a media PC for your living room, consider purchasing a mobile-class CPU rather than a desktop processor. CPUs such as Intel's Core Duo and AMD's Turion 64 can use quieter, low-speed cooling fans. Just make sure the motherboard you have or choose supports these processors. Intel's Core Duo, for instance, runs on

might need to upgrade your motherboard before installing one, because their power and chipset demands differ from the Pentium 4's.

A MATTER OF MOTHERBOARDS

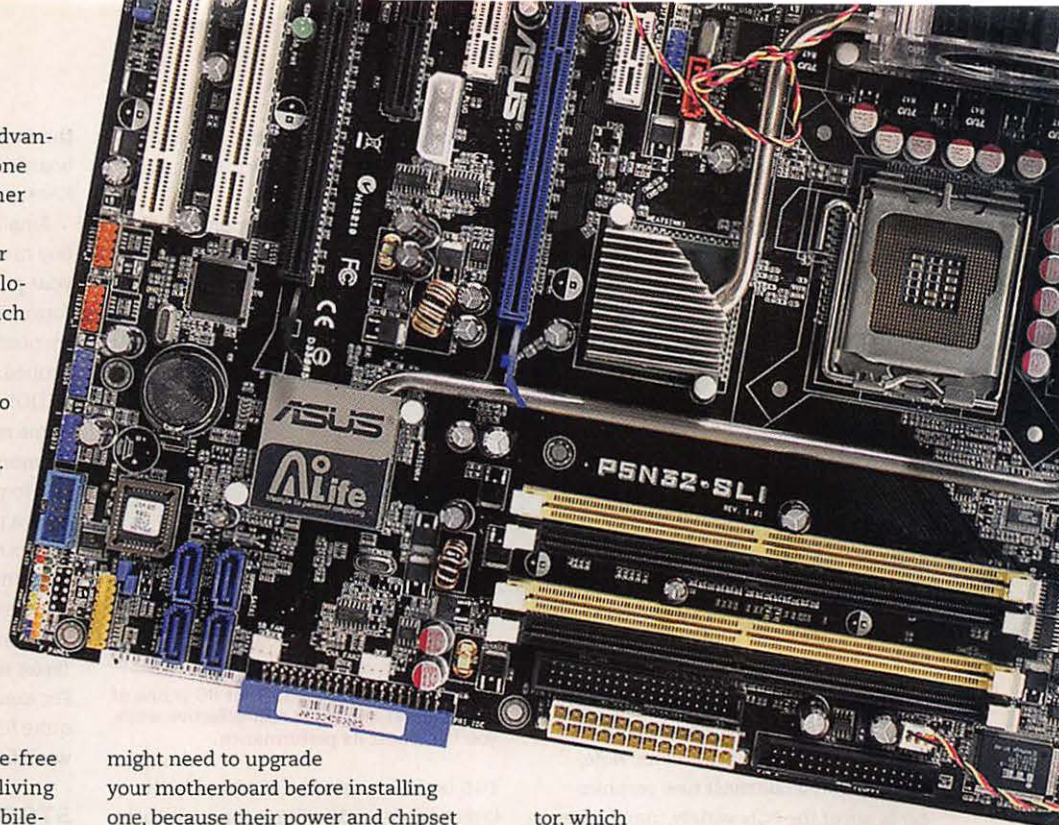
The motherboard is the glue that holds your computer together—it dictates the components you can use, including which processors are compatible. For instance, to use the newest Athlon 64 and Athlon 64 X2 CPUs, you'll need a motherboard equipped with Socket

tor, which dictates the placement of its mounting holes and ports, and determines

whether it will fit in a given case. Most full-size desktop cases accept ATX motherboards. If you're building a compact computer, however, look for a MicroATX board and case. MicroATX uses the general ATX design but includes fewer expansion slots, allowing for a shorter board that can fit in a smaller case. Another option is BTX, used by a few Intel boards, which moves components around and drops the power supply to the bottom of the case to streamline interior cooling. One caveat: Relatively few case and power-supply manufacturers support BTX at the moment.

When shopping for a motherboard, be sure the model you pick includes all the ports you require. Network adapters, FireWire ports, and USB 2.0 ports come standard on most boards, and some boards even include built-in graphics chipsets, eliminating the need for a dedicated graphics card. Most new motherboards also feature Serial ATA (SATA) interfaces, the connectors of choice for the latest hard drives. If you

The Asus P5N32-SLI Deluxe motherboard uses heat pipes, rather than fans or heat sinks, to dissipate heat.



PROCESSOR PICKS

A quick guide to today's most popular processors from AMD and Intel.

Processor	Socket Type	Available Clock Speeds	Dual-Core Support	64-Bit Support	Front-Side Bus*
AMD Athlon 64 X2	Socket 939 or AM2	2GHz to 2.6GHz	Yes	Yes	2,000MHz
AMD Athlon 64 FX-60, FX-62	Socket 939 or AM2	2.6GHz, 2.8GHz	Yes	Yes	2,000MHz
Intel Pentium Extreme Edition	Socket 775	3.2GHz to 3.73GHz	Yes	Yes	800MHz or 1,066MHz
Intel Pentium D	Socket 775	2.66GHz to 3.6GHz	Yes	Yes	533MHz or 800MHz
Intel Core Duo	Socket 479	1.66GHz to 2.16GHz	Yes	No	667MHz

* = Although AMD's Hyper Transport interconnect is considered a front-side bus, its architecture differs from that of Intel's front-side bus, and the two are not directly comparable.

Socket 479. You should also consider AMD's new line of Energy Efficient processors. Expected this summer, this new line of CPUs will cost a bit more but should reduce power consumption and heat. These processors will run on the new Socket AM2, so you'll need to pair these with a new motherboard.

Likewise, Intel is on the verge of releasing its next-generation processors, the Core2 Duo. These chips promise faster performance with less heat and power consumption than previous-generation Pentium 4 processors. Although these chips will support Socket 775, you still

AM2, whereas you'll need a Socket 479 motherboard for Intel's Core Solo and Core Duo chips.

Equally important is your motherboard's chipset. Newer processors require newer chipsets to function correctly. For example, though motherboards based on the Intel 915G chipset use Socket 775, they don't support the latest Intel Pentium D Socket 775 processors.

Another key motherboard spec is its form fac-

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Need a step-by-step primer on building your own PC? Check out "Build a Bargain." computershopper.com/buildabargain

need to connect IDE hard drives or optical drives you already own, make sure your board has at least one IDE port. (Each

IDE port supports two IDE drives, chained off a single IDE cable.) Likewise, if you need serial and parallel connectors, make sure your board has them.

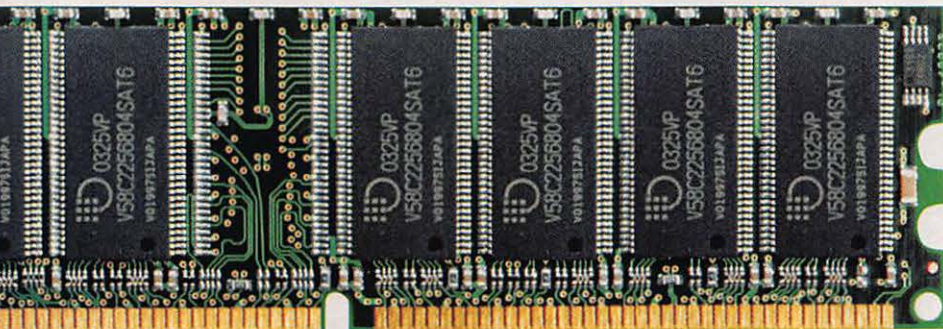
For expandability, PCI Express (PCIe) has all but replaced AGP on new boards as the

through tasks and one that fritters away time swapping information to and from your hard drive.

How much you need depends on how you use your computer. For today's typical productivity and Internet tasks,

the newest AMD chips and motherboards have migrated to DDR2 SDRAM. Recent Intel systems use DDR2 as well.

Finally, make sure that the memory you buy matches the memory-bus speed of your processor. The best source for this information is your motherboard's documentation. Memory speed is typically described by the type and bus speed (such as DDR400) or transfer rate (PC3200). Some motherboards support using slower memory with newer processors, allowing you to pair DDR266 or DDR333 memory with a processor rated for DDR400 RAM, for example. (You'll lose significant performance if you go this route, however.) Alternately, if you plan to upgrade your system in the future, you can buy faster memory than it currently requires. For example, a Pentium D CPU may require 533MHz DDR memory, but it will work fine with 667MHz RAM.



performance-graphics interface of choice, and PCIe technology is even looking to supplant conventional PCI slots. Note, though, that while most new graphics cards are of the PCIe variety, many other cards—such as your sound card—are only available in old-style PCI models. Make sure your motherboard has the right mix of slots to accommodate both.

Gamers looking to build the ultimate gaming rig should look for a board that supports dual graphics cards via two PCIe x16 slots. You'll need to decide up front, however, which dual-card technology you plan to use: ATI's CrossFire or nVidia's Scalable Link Interface (SLI). The two aren't compatible.

Finally, if you seek quiet cooling on your board, instead of a cacophony of roaring fans, look for a motherboard that uses passive, fanless cooling for its onboard chipsets. (The CPU proper will require a fan and heat sink, however, unless you install a water-cooling system.) For instance, the \$196 P5N32-SLI Deluxe and \$199 A8N32-SLI Deluxe from Asus (www.asus.com) use heat pipes to cool their chipsets, allowing for silent operation. Just expect to pay more for this design.

MEMORY MUSINGS

Processors get all the glory when it comes to computer speed, but RAM is the true unsung hero of PC performance. Having enough RAM makes the difference between a PC that speeds

Adding more memory to your PC is one of the quickest and most cost-effective ways you can boost its performance.

1GB is the sweet spot. If you play the latest games, edit videos, or multitask extensively, consider 2GB of memory.

Before installing your memory modules, check to see if your motherboard supports dual-channel memory. By installing a pair of matched memory modules (for example, two 512MB modules versus a single 1GB one), you can squeeze better performance from your system. Conversely, the memory speed of many boards slows down when you occupy all of

the board's memory-module slots, so buying RAM to take best advantage of your slots requires some strategy.

To avoid system-stability problems, consider replacing all existing memory, rather than installing new memory modules next to existing ones. If you must add memory, though, match the specifications of the new and old memory as closely as possible to aid stability. Also, make sure you buy the right type of RAM. Most AMD systems, for instance, use double-data-rate (DDR) SDRAM, but

STORAGE CONCERNS

A new hard drive can accommodate your growing collection of digital media, while simultaneously giving your PC a performance boost. Internal hard drives offer the best performance, but consider an external drive if you don't want to open up your PC or if it doesn't have available drive bays or internal drive connectors. External drives are available in USB 2.0, FireWire, and SATA varieties; the latter requires a SATA controller card, or a



The latest SATA hard drives provide faster maximum transfer rates than their IDE predecessors.

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For everything you need to know about choosing a motherboard, check out our buying guide, "Board Review." computershopper.com/boardreview



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bracket that converts an internal SATA connector to an external port.

As a rule of thumb, the faster a hard drive spins, the faster it can access your data. An inexpensive 5,400rpm drive is fine as secondary storage for music files or other data, but a 7,200rpm drive will give you better performance. A faster drive can also speed up disk-intensive applications such as video editing. Top-end 10,000rpm drives offer the best performance, but they're generally available only in smaller capacities and are the costliest drives on a gigabytes-per-dollar basis. Another drive-speed factor is how much cache memory a drive supports. Typical drives have 2MB of cache memory, but higher-performance models feature 8MB or 16MB.

Average users can get by with a 120GB to 200GB drive, but gamers and serious photographers should consider stepping up to a drive in the 250GB or 300GB range, and video editors will want a 400GB or larger model. Keep in mind, however, that the largest-capacity drives come at a significant cost-per-gigabyte premium. Adding a pair of 250GB drives, for example, is a lot cheaper than buying a single 500GB drive.

If possible, choose SATA drives over IDE models. SATA drives are faster, and they're quickly replacing their IDE counterparts. They come in two speeds: SATA/150 and SATA/300, with 150MB- and 300MB-per-second maximum transfer rates, respectively. You'll need a compatible controller on your motherboard to take full advantage of a SATA/300 drive.

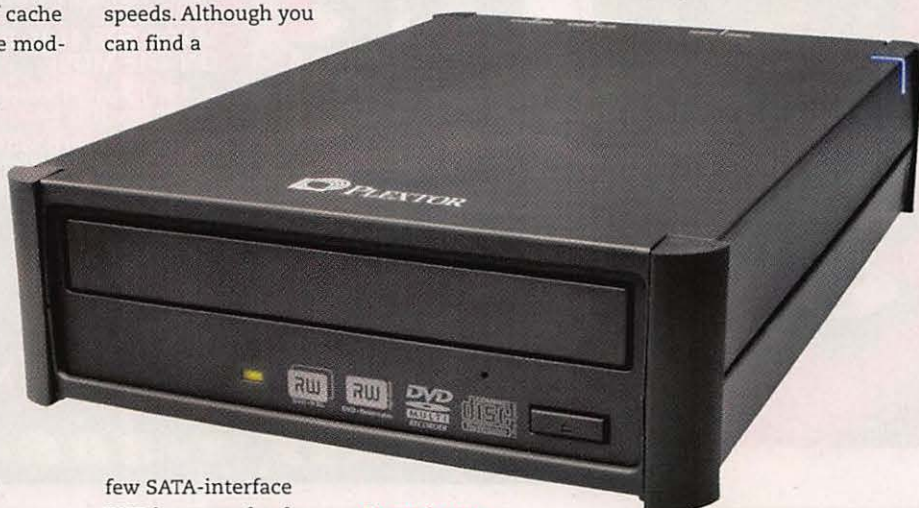
If your motherboard includes a Redundant Array of Independent Disks (RAID) controller, you can pair identical drives to gain a small speed increase (by spreading your data across the drives for faster file access) or to protect your data against drive failure (by duplicating it on two or more drives).

Spinning at thousands of revolutions per minute, hard drives are among the most likely components in your PC to fail, so be sure the warranty on any drive you buy is at least a year—preferably longer.

OPTICAL-DRIVE CHOICES

With DVD burners available at rock-bottom prices, you have little reason to consider a CD-only drive at this point. Look for drives compatible with both the "plus" and "minus" varieties of recordable and rewritable DVD discs; this support is often denoted as "DVD±RW." (Support for the DVD-RAM format is only important if you already own a library of DVD-RAM discs.) You'll also want to make sure your drive supports double-layer discs, which can store 8.5GB instead of the 4.7GB of standard discs.

Internal drives are your best bet, because they provide the fastest speeds. Although you can find a



few SATA-interface DVD burners, the demand for these drives has been small; you'll find a much larger selection of IDE models. External DVD writers are available with USB 2.0 or FireWire interfaces (or sometimes both). Most drives top out at 16x for burning write-once DVDs, but we're now starting to see 18x DVD+R drives. Also, look for 8MB of on-drive cache memory.

Next-generation, high-capacity HD-DVD and Blu-ray drives will start hitting store shelves soon, but at the moment they're expensive, with prices hovering around \$1,000. With the standards war for next-generation DVD just beginning, these first-generation drives are only worth the investment if you're truly serious about high-definition video.

GETTING YOUR GRAPHICS

A cutting-edge graphics card can make the difference between 3D games that run smoothly and 3D games that run

like a slide show. But graphics-card upgrades aren't just about gaming anymore—you might want a card that lets you add a second monitor in a dual-display configuration, or that supports high-definition content.

If you intend to buy the current highest-performance card, or you want to run two cards side-by-side for enhanced performance, you'll need a motherboard with PCIe x16 graphics slots; to run two cards, the board needs two of these slots. (The other varieties of PCIe slot—x1 and x4—accommodate cards that demand less throughput, such as drive or network controllers.) If your PC doesn't have

For optimum compatibility, make sure your DVD burner supports both DVD+R and DVD-R double-layer media.

PCIe slots, but has an old-school AGP slot instead, don't fret: You can still find AGP cards, though performance likely will be less impressive.

Extra on-card memory will boost graphics performance in demanding games. 256MB is plenty for now, but a 512MB card, like ATI's Radeon X1900 XTX, will prepare you better for 2007's games. If you don't play games, having the extra video memory can still boost performance if you are powering several monitors.

If you plan on upgrading to Windows Vista, a fast graphics card with plenty of dedicated memory will help you get the best performance from the new OS. Casual gamers, however, should consider a card with a midrange graphics processor, such as nVidia's GeForce 7600 GT or ATI's Radeon X1600.

Most new cards support simultaneous display to two monitors, but some include a VGA port and a DVI port, while others have two DVI ports (often called DVI-I). A card with two DVI ports



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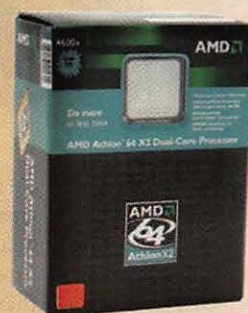
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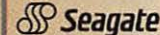
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will give you the most flexibility, because those cards usually include DVI-to-VGA adapters. What you're trying to avoid is using a VGA port to connect an LCD monitor that only uses DVI—image quality will deteriorate.

If you want to watch television on your computer, you can purchase a graphics card with a built-in TV tuner, such as one of ATI's All-In-Wonder models. Buying a separate PCI tuner card will give you more upgrade flexibility, however, because you can later replace the tuner and graphics card individually.

If you're building a Media Center PC and want to keep ambient noise to a minimum, consider a passively cooled graphics card that uses a large heat sink instead of a noisy fan, such as one based on nVidia's GeForce 7600 GS graphics processor. An alternative: You can get a stock card and attach an aftermarket "quiet-rated" fan/heat-sink combo, such as Arctic Cooling's \$33 Accelero X2 (www.arctic-cooling.com).

SOUND (CARD) DECISIONS

Most current motherboards come with built-in sound. Integrated sound, however, is often rudimentary and prone to interference from other motherboard components. If you care about PC audio, you'll want something better. Current add-on sound cards require a PCI slot; no PCIe sound cards are available yet.

Before choosing a card, consider which inputs and outputs you need. If you plan on connecting a microphone, a 7.1-channel surround-sound system, and a host of other devices, for example, consider Creative's Sound Blaster

ATI's Radeon X1900 XTX is one of the fastest video cards on the market.

X-Fi Elite Pro (www.creative.com), a \$399.99 deluxe model with an external breakout box that saves you from reaching behind your computer every time you want to connect

something. If you want to connect to a stereo using a digital output, make sure your card has a digital S/PDIF connector. Note that most sound cards pass only stereo, not multichannel, sound through digital outputs when playing games; the \$79 Turtle Beach Montego (www.turtlebeach.com) is a rare exception that offers full digital 7.1 gaming support. Gamers will also want to make sure their card supports any 3D-sound standards, such as EAX or Direct-Sound3D, used by their favorite games.

For playing back CDs and commer-

cial digital music, a basic card that supports a 16-bit/48KHz sampling rate will perform fine. (Watch the signal-to-noise ratio, though—you want 90dB or higher.) If you watch lots of DVDs on your PC, look for a card that supports a 24-bit/96KHz rate. Audiophiles and digital musicians should demand 24-bit/192KHz.

If you want to connect a keyboard or drum machine to your PC, make sure your card includes a MIDI adapter—the once-popular MIDI ports are no longer standard on every sound card. Specialized cards that include multiple MIDI inputs and outputs are available, though.

POWER PLAY

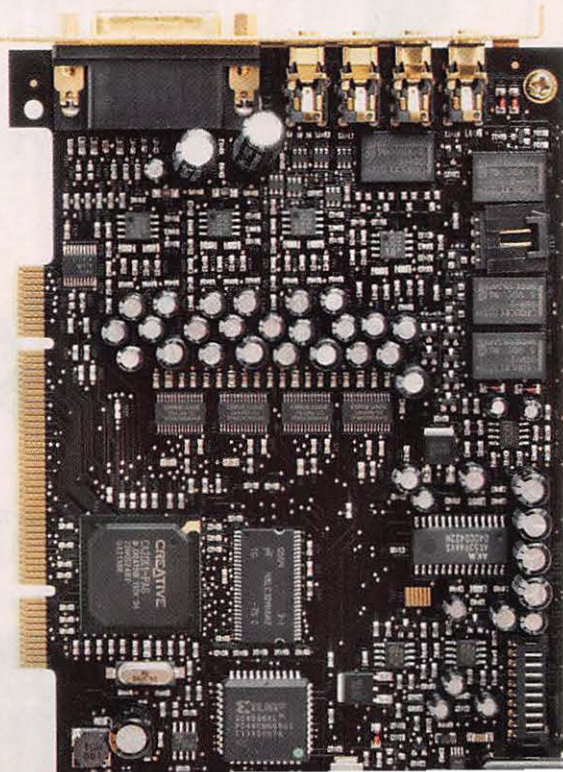
Your power-supply unit (PSU) is a key component in keeping your PC stable. The inexpensive PSUs bundled with budget cases might suffice for a basic configuration, but they often cause mysterious crashes or shutdowns when burdened with a dual-core processor and a high-end graphics card.

Newer motherboards have replaced the main 20-pin ATX 1.3 power feed that runs from the PSU to the motherboard with a new 24-pin ATX 2.0 design. Whichever variety of power connector your motherboard has, buy an ATX 2.0-compatible PSU, since the new 24-pin connectors let you split off the additional four pins for

the connector to work with older motherboards. Also, make sure the PSU has enough power leads to accommodate the IDE and SATA drives you plan to use. (Many new PSUs have SATA-specific drive connectors.) If you're installing two video cards in an SLI or CrossFire scheme, look for a PSU that includes two dedicated PCIe graphics-card power leads.

Check the manufac-

Few sound cards offer the number of inputs and outputs found on the Creative Sound Blaster X-Fi Elite Pro.



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XG's Magnum 500 is a fanless power supply to complement your living-room PC.

turer's recommendations on your most demanding components—typically the processor and graphics card or cards—to see what their power requirements are. Don't just look at the PSU's total wattage; also consider the power available on the 12-volt line. Some PSUs with impressive wattage numbers don't provide enough 12-volt power for the latest video cards.

Finally, remember that the fan or fans built into a PSU can make an otherwise quiet system noisy. If that's a concern, look for a PSU with quieter 120mm fans, such as Enermax's Liberty models (www.enermax.com) or a fanless PSU like XG's Magnum 500 (www.xgbox.com).

ON THE CASE

Now that you have all your components, you need the right case to store them in. Cases come in the same form factors that motherboards do. In addition to models supporting the ATX, BTX, and MicroATX standards, you'll also find some specialized small-form-factor (SFF) cases designed for home theater and portable use. When buying a case that comes with a PSU installed, make sure the PSU is robust enough to power your most demanding components, as outlined earlier—or be prepared to replace it.

If you want to keep noise to a minimum, look for a larger case. Larger cases allow for better airflow, which in turn lets you install fans that run slower and quieter. Specialty quiet cases such as the \$99 Antec Sonata II (www.antec.com) have additional silencing features, such as drive-vibration absorbers

for even quieter performance.

Finally, if you plan on connecting various peripherals to your PC, such as MP3 players and digital camcorders, a case with front-mounted ports makes plugging them in much more convenient. Be sure, however, that your motherboard has the necessary pin connectors (or "headers") to hook them up.

Antec's Sonata II case is built for quiet computing.



WRAPPING UP THE CHECKLIST

As you're assembling or upgrading your system, keep a couple of other thoughts in mind. If you're on a budget, consider buying components one or two steps down from the highest-end units. The second-fastest graphics cards and processors often perform within a few percentage points of the top-of-the-line models, yet cost dramatically less. Similarly, the second-largest hard drive generally costs much less per gigabyte than the largest one does.

If you don't need the software bundled with the hard drive or sound card you're buying, consider buying an OEM or "white box" version of it, packaged for system builders, rather than one in full retail packaging. The actual hardware is typically identical, but leaving out some of the accoutrements that come in retail packaging keeps costs down. Check the warranty first, though, as some manufacturers offer significantly better warranties on their retail units. The same is true of processors—retail-boxed CPUs typically offer three-year warranties, whereas OEM processors often are covered for just 30 days.



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Madshrimps.com

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Tweaktown.com

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iProductivity

The iPod can **do a lot more** than play music and video. These apps will make you "think different" about your favorite player.

BY SEAN PORTNOY
AND WENDY SHEEHAN

APPLE'S INCREDIBLY POPULAR IPOD

has long been known for its multimedia talents—first music, then photos, and now video. Less well-known, however, is the legion of ingenious third-party programmers who design apps to extend the iPod's functionality. They've uncovered ways for you to do everything on the slick little player, from displaying PowerPoint presentations to playing vintage arcade games.

Here are some of their best efforts. Read on, and find out how to get a lot more than just a case of hearing loss out of your iPod.

STAY-IN-TOUCH TOOL

Unless you own an iPod Shuffle, the software on your iPod already lets you sync calendar and contact info between your player and your desktop computer. These apps are more robust, however—ideal for those who crave connectedness.

e2Sync

Your iPod can automatically sync with Microsoft Outlook, but not with Microsoft's Mac equivalent, Entourage. Apps such as the \$39 e2Sync function as intermediaries, converting Entourage info into iSync-friendly data. e2Sync automatically takes Entourage contacts and inserts them into the OS X Address Book, and places Entourage

events into iCal, letting you access this info from your iPod when you sync with your Mac. Plus, the company offers free lifetime updates to the program.

e2Sync • www.e2sync.com

GetCals 0.2, GetFolks 0.11

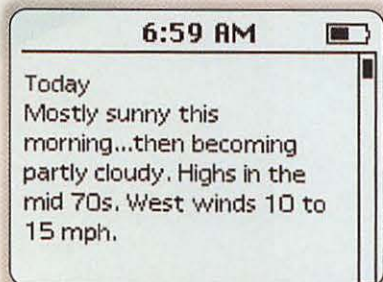
Google has enhanced Gmail with Google Calendar, and developer Johnny Matthews has taken it a step further by creating two free utilities that can convert data from these programs into iPod-compatible iCal data. Likewise, GetFolks 0.11 converts exported Gmail contacts into vCard format and copies them to your iPod.

Johnny Matthews • johnny.matthews.googlepages.com/getcals

Pod2Go

If you want even more nonmusic matter on your iPod than iSync delivers, take a look at Kainjow's \$15 Pod2Go. This info suite can put news headlines,

stock information, movie showtimes, directions, gas prices, and weather forecasts on your player. It will also let you read text documents in various formats. (You'll need Mac OS X 10.3 or later for porting Word documents, and OS X 10.4 or later to transfer viewable PDF files.) The program even comes with a utility to transfer your player's music collection



Pod2Go

back onto your Mac, something iTunes won't do. (At press time, Kainjow had just launched a beta version of Pod2Go for Windows.)

Kainjow • www.pod2go.com

OUT-OF-THE-OFFICE MATE

We're not about to suggest that your iPod is a viable alternative to a PDA when you're on the road, but it can be handy for corporate tasks in a pinch. Let these programs put your iPod to work.

MagneticTime

If you find scrolling through e-mail or Word documents on your smartphone to be a frustrating, thumb-tiring process, make use of your iPod and headphones instead. This \$39.99 program converts Outlook mail and Word documents into audio files read by a computerized voice. Don't fret—digital voice quality has come a long way, so your spoken text will sound more like a real person than a primitive robot. Currently, MagneticTime is available only for Windows PCs, though the company is working on a Mac version. In the meantime, if you need a similar but Mac-compatible program, try ZappTek's \$14.95 iSpeak It (www.zapptek.com/ispeak-it).

MagneticTime
www.magnetictime.com

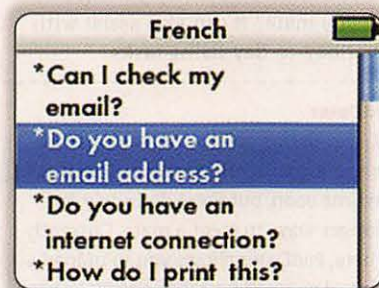
Merriam-Webster Pocket Dictionary

No need to schlep around a heavy tome—never be at a loss for words again with this \$9.95 miniature version of the venerable Merriam-Webster dictionary. The Pocket Dictionary works with any third-generation or newer iPod, including the Nano and the Mini. Finding one of the dictionary's 40,000 words might seem like a chore on the iPod's tiny screen, but the Click Wheel should help you locate the definition you seek with little more effort than thumbing through a printed volume.

iPREPress
www.iprepress.com

Rambler

When traveling in another country, pulling out a little phrase book and mangling a foreign greeting isn't exactly suave. Lighten your luggage and improve international relations with Rambler, a series of language guides for your iPod. You'll hear the correct pronunciation of hundreds of phrases in French, German, Italian, or Spanish.



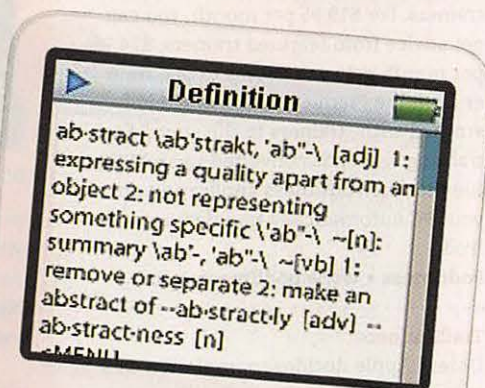
Rambler

Phrases are sorted by category, so you're only a few clicks away from what you want to say. Each guide is available for \$19.95, or you can pick up all four for \$49.95. Rambler is only available for third-generation or newer iPods.

CyraKnow • www.cyraknow.com

ThinkFree Office 3 Show, iPod Edition

The name may be a mouthful, but this program's purpose is easily understood: displaying slide-show-style presentations from iPods equipped with color screens. The \$29.95 Show lets you create and edit PowerPoint files on a Mac or PC, then export them to your iPod as JPEG images that can be viewed as a slide



show. You can then connect your device to an external monitor or projector to share your presentation. It's a handy alternative to lugging a laptop if you only need to deliver a single presentation. (Note that the iPod Nano doesn't provide a connection to an external video output, but you can still show the presentation on its screen, although its tiny size will limit its usefulness.)

ThinkFree • product.thinkfree.com

TRUSTY TRAVEL COMPANION

The iPod makes it easy to locate the song or video file you seek, but it can also help you find your way around a foreign city, locate a Wi-Fi hotspot around the corner, or zero in on a great restaurant. These apps give your favorite player new direction.

iPod Directions

Internet mapping services are a godsend if you're trekking into uncharted territory: Enter your starting address and destination, print your results, and hit the road. But you can save some trees and lose the printout with iPod Directions. This free service turns your Yahoo Maps driving directions into a set of image files you can download and access on your iPod.

iPod Directions
www.ipod-directions.com

iSubwayMaps

Nothing screams "tourist!" more than unfolding a huge, unwieldy map on the subway. iSubwayMaps offers free downloadable transit maps for 23 U.S. and international cities for viewing on your photo-enabled iPod. In most cases, maps are chopped into smaller portions as separate image files, so you'll need to switch among images to view the entire transit system. But it's a sweet solution if you're in a pinch—and don't want to look like a clueless out-of-towner.

iSubwayMaps
www.ipodsubwaymaps.com

Pod CityGuides

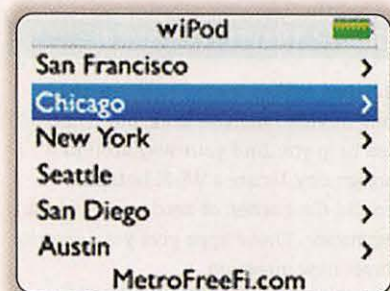
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you seek free Wi-Fi at. WiPod will e-mail the information to you as a ZIP file. Follow the instructions for importing the data into your iPod's notes folder, and you'll never be at a loss for free wireless access on the road. You can change your cities at any time (Anchor-Free updates the WiPod listings once a month), and the service is free.

AnchorFree

www.anchorfree.com/wipod

Zagat's Top 100 Hotel Restaurants

iPod-toting business travelers never have to settle for subpar room-service grub again. The famed Zagat Survey has compiled a downloadable list of the best hotel restaurants in the United

States. For each of the top 100 eateries, peruse pricing info, customer-review excerpts, and food, décor, and service ratings.

Zagat Survey

www.zagat.com/promo.aspx?PN=22

POCKET PERSONAL ASSISTANT

You probably already think of your iPod as the perfect little companion—but did you know it can help you find a real-life mate? It can also assist with other day-to-day-living tasks.

PodDater

OK, this dating service isn't going to be competing with eHarmony or Match.com anytime soon, but there definitely are stranger ways to meet a mate. Currently in beta, PodDater allows you to upload a video of yourself for other singles to scope out on their iPods, and you can download clips of potential partners to view on your own player. You can tag your profile with your interests and search for like-minded dates by their tags. Best of all, it's free, so no date, no foul.

PodDater • www.poddater.com

Podfitness

Many iPods lead a double life as a workout buddy, but Podfitness offers a service that can pump up your exercise routine even further. The company mixes music you select from your iTunes library with training instructions from fitness experts to provide a personalized workout "tape." You can choose among various exercise types (yoga, cycling, treadmill) and goals (weight loss, strength training), as well as two tiers of trainers. For \$19.95 per month, you can get advice from featured trainers; \$24.95 per month gets you access to one trainer from the Premier roster, which is stocked with "trainers to the stars." Each training session is converted to an MP3 file that the Podfitness application on your PC automatically transfers to your iPod.

Podfitness • www.podfitness.com

TrailRunner

Unless Apple decides to implant a GPS system into future iPods, TrailRunner's Mac-based program for creating iPod-friendly maps for your run, hike, or bike ride may be your best choice for fitness-related navigation. You'll need

'Pod Plus

These nifty hardware add-ons can transform your iPod into something more.



Apple iPod Radio Remote

Apple iPod Radio Remote

Tired of the songs on your iPod, or need a quick fix of NPR programming? Turn your player into an FM radio and get an influx of new audio whenever you want with Apple's \$49 Radio Remote. The cabled Radio Remote plugs into the dock connector and works with the iPod's Click Wheel to let you tune in and bookmark your favorite stations. It works with the fifth-generation iPod and the Nano.

Apple Computer • store.apple.com

DLO HomeDock Deluxe

Put your iPod at the hub of your home entertainment center with DLO's \$149.99 HomeDock Deluxe. This truly luxe dock connects to your television



DLO HomeDock Deluxe

and lets you navigate, select, and play your iPod's image, audio, and video files from your TV screen with the included 18-button remote. It works with third-generation and newer iPods, as well as the Mini and Nano.

**Digital Lifestyle Outfitters
www.dlo.com**

Griffin iBeams

If you've ever used your iPod's back-light to find your way in a dark place, Griffin Technology has an interesting

alternative. iBeams (\$19.99) are small modules that plug into your iPod's headphone jack—one is a flashlight, the other is a laser pointer for presentations. They're compatible with the third- and fourth-generation iPods, as well as the Mini.

Griffin Technology
www.griffintechology.com

JBL On Time

Can your iPod serve a more productive function other than getting you out of bed in the morning? JBL's \$249.95 On Time speaker system includes alarm-clock functionality that lets you wake up to any



song on your player. Better still, it features an AM/FM radio, and a sleekly designed arch-shape speaker to fill your room with rich sound. The system comes in white or black and works with any dockable iPod. **Harman Multimedia • www.jbl.com**

XtremeMac MicroMemo

Use your iPod to record lectures, meetings, or anything else worth hearing again with XtremeMac's \$79.95 MicroMemo. You can capture 16-bit, CD-quality sound with the included flexible microphone, or connect any other 3.5mm-plug mic. A built-in

speaker delivers instant playback so you can listen without headphones. It works only with the latest (fifth-generation) iPod, however.

XtremeMac • www.xtrememac.com

(For pointers to the best places to buy iPod accessories online, check out the Web Buyer section on p. 139.)

to do some virtual legwork to begin: import a map into the TrailRunner app, plot different routes in the mapped areas, and figure out distances based on GPS coordinates. You can then export route info to your iPod—older models can store

the information in the Notes section, while photo-capable iPods can export NanoMaps to show map images for each part of the trail. TrailRunner is "prerelease" software that will need to be periodically updated, but it's a free download.

TrailRunner
www.trailrunnerx.com/english.html

FUN-AND-GAME MACHINE

You can't be really productive unless you goof off a little, right? While your iPod's music, videos, and photos are great time-wasters by themselves, hard-core hackers have figured out even more ways for you to while away the hours with your favorite media player.

Anapod Explorer

iPodders who want to turn all the info from their iPod's tracks into an SQL database or access their iPod from a Web browser will love the Anapod Explorer suite of utilities. Like iTunes on steroids, this app lets you adjust bit rates automatically during file transfers and download files from your iPod across a network. The software's one failing: no Mac version. Anapod Explorer costs \$20 for the iPod Shuffle edition, \$25 for the iPod, iPod Mini, or iPod Nano editions, and \$30 for a "universal" edition.

Red Chair Software
www.anapod.com

iPodLinux

If a device has a chip inside, someone will figure out a way to get Linux onto it—and the iPod is no exception. While it may seem like overkill to port a whole computer OS for a mere MP3 player, iPodLinux is the key to turning your iPod into a handheld gaming sys-



iPodLinux

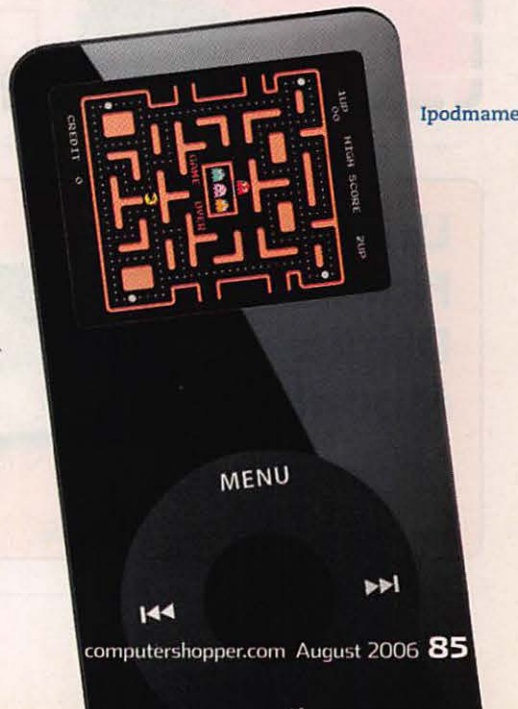
Invaders and Tetris. And because it's an open-source operating system, iPodLinux is free to download. Note that older-generation iPods tend to be better supported by the iPodLinux Project than the newer ones are.

iPodLinux Project • www.ipodlinux.org

Ipodmame

Multiple Arcade Machine Emulator (MAME), which recreates classic video games based on their original ROM images, has enjoyed great underground popularity on the PC for years. Now, Ipodmame gives you the ability to play Pac-Man, Ms. Pac-Man, Centipede, Zaxxon, and more—in all their retro glory—on your iPod. You'll need to be pretty tech-adept to set up Ipodmame, and, technically, using ROM images from games you don't own isn't legal, but if you ever need a Pac-Man fix, it's good to know that your iPod can supply it. (Ipodmame works only with fifth-generation iPods and the iPod Nano.)

Ipodmame
www.ipodlinux.org/ipodmame





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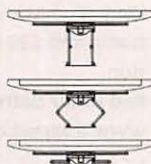


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COMPUTER CURES ALFRED POOR

DESPERATELY SEEKING DOUBLE-LAYER

Is double-layer 8.5GB rewritable DVD media available yet, or is it only write-once media that comes in double-layer format?
ERICK WU

Only write-once double-layer media is available at this point, though it is available in both DVD+R and DVD-R versions. The DVD+RW Alliance announced that double-layer DVD+RW was supposed to debut last year, but it has yet to arrive. My sources indicate that the erasable versions should be shipping this fall.

DRIVE DIVERSIFICATION

What's the best way to move the My Documents folder to a different partition or drive? I'm using Windows XP and would prefer to keep my C: drive for the operating system, and store all my documents and temporary files on a different drive.
PEDRO LARANJEIRA

It's a good idea to keep your data on a drive separate from your OS and programs. This makes it easier to back up, and it may improve performance, as well.

First, right-click on My Documents in Windows Explorer (or on the desktop), and choose Properties. Then click the Move button. You can then specify a different folder to use for My Documents, which can be a folder on a different drive, if you prefer.

To change the location of your temporary folders, choose Start, then right-click on My Computer, and select Properties > Advanced > Environment Variables. Select the TEMP line in the User Variables section, and select Edit. Edit the Variable Value to show the new folder location, and press OK. Repeat for the TMP variable, and Windows will use the specified folders for temporary files.

POSSIBLE PRINT FREEZE

My mother has a summer home that isn't winterized. She wants to keep a printer there to use with her laptop, but she doesn't want to have to drag the printer back and forth each year. I don't think an inkjet printer is a good idea, since it will be sitting idle in a house whose temperature will be below freezing at times. Would a laser printer be a better option?

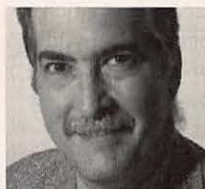
NATHANIEL POOR

I gather your question stems from concern over the temperature of the inkjet cartridges. Have no fear—while the operating range of a typical inkjet cartridge is between 50° and 95° F, the storage range is -40° to 140° F. So unless your mother's summer home is in the Yukon or the

It's a good idea to keep your data on a drive separate from your OS and programs. This makes it easier to back up, and it may improve performance, as well.

Sonoran Desert, stored cartridges should be just fine. (A few types of cartridge should not be stored below freezing, however, so you should check the manufacturer's specifications first.)

The bigger problem is not using the printer for nine months at a stretch. Many inkjets develop clogged nozzles over an extended period of nonuse, and these clogs can be difficult to clear. Your best bet if you go with an inkjet: Buy a model that includes the printhead in the cartridge. Then at the end of the season, throw away the current



cartridges, and start with a fresh set the next summer.

A laser printer is a good alternative, since the long idle periods are not likely to cause any problems for the print mechanism. The specifications for some models allow for storage temperatures ranging from below 0° to 95° F, but other models call for a minimum of 32° F. This might be a problem, depending on how cold the house gets in winter, but I suspect most laser printers will survive colder conditions.

COMPUTER IDENTITY CRISIS

I have a PC running Windows XP Home Edition that I want to give to my son. He wants to be named as the registered owner. How do I change the original owner's name?

ALBIN S. WILSON

This information is stored in the Windows Registry, and Windows' Registry Editor is the utility that lets you change Registry information. The problem with this program is that it lacks an undo command, so if you change or delete something in error, you have no simple way to correct your mistake. Commercial and shareware Registry editors are safer to use, but if you're careful and take your time, the Windows utility can do the job just fine.

Choose Start > Run, then type **REGEDIT** and click OK. Select Edit > Find, then type **RegisteredOwner** and click Find Next. The search can take several minutes if your computer's Registry is large, so be patient. It

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HELP & HOW-TO COMPUTER CURES

should find the key HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\SOFTWARE\Microsoft\WindowsNT\CurrentVersion. Simply double-click on the RegisteredOwner item, and a window should open in which you can change the name. You can edit the RegisteredOrganization in the same way. Do not change anything else. Once you're done, close the Registry Editor. After you reboot, the new name should appear.

HELP, CRAZY CURSORS!

My wife and I have older systems running Windows XP Professional, and both machines have the same problem. The cursor just starts jumping all over the place, all on its own. I try to point it at something, and suddenly it shows up somewhere else. There's no particular pattern, and it doesn't happen all the time, but it's becoming more frequent with time.

LARRY JEAN

Try this first. Choose Start > Control Panel. If you're using the default Category View, choose Printers and Other Hardware > Mouse; if you're using Classic View, choose the Mouse applet directly. Then click the Pointer Options tab. The next-to-last option in this window is "Hide pointer while typing." If the box is checked, clear it; if the box is cleared, check it. Then choose OK. This change may stop the erratic mouse-pointer behavior. (I don't know why this works; it seems to reset something within the Windows configuration. It's the software equivalent of banging on the side of the TV set.)

If this doesn't work, check next for mouse problems. Make sure the ball and rollers are clean if it's a mechanical mouse, and that the sensor windows are clear if it's an optical one. Also, download the latest mouse driver from the manufacturer. If necessary, switch in a different mouse; if the problem then goes away, you know your old rodent was at fault. If not, I suspect a problem with your connection port—or some program conflict—is causing the erratic mouse behavior.

DIG DEEP FOR MY DOCUMENTS

In the April 2006 edition of "Computer Cures" (p. 92), you discussed printing a directory listing using the Command Prompt in Windows. I tried those instructions but ran into a problem when I tried to print the contents of the My Documents folder. When I entered `cd \My Documents`, I got an error message stating: "System could not find the path specified." I was successful, however, in changing to the Windows folder. Is this because DOS is only able to recognize filenames with up to eight characters? If so, why did it work on your system?

FRED OTTO

The problem is not in how you typed the folder name; it's in the folder name itself. The My Documents folder doesn't reside in the root directory of the C: drive. When you typed `cd \My Documents`, that instructed the operating system to look in the root directory of the current drive. The My Documents folder is actually buried deeper in the

drive's file structure. It appears on the Windows desktop through a shortcut.

An easy way to find the folder from the Command Prompt is to use an environmental variable named USERPROFILE. You can use it in a command line; just put % before and after it. This variable points to the folder where data is stored for the user who is currently logged in, including the My Documents folder. So simply type `cd %userprofile%\My Documents` at the command prompt and then press Enter, and you will change to the My Documents folder.

DOUBLE FEATURE

What do I need to project a movie from one DVD player onto two projectors that will display on two separate screens.

JON-PAUL MAURIN

You need a video splitter, which takes the signal from the single source—the DVD player, in this case—and divides it so that it can be sent to two or more displays.

The first step is to determine the connection types your DVD player supports. Composite video is the simplest to use, but it won't give you the image quality you'll get from an S-Video connection, or a digital one such as DVI. Next, you need to get a splitter designed for that type of signal. Prices vary wildly, but expect a composite-video splitter to cost much less than an S-Video or DVI one. KVM Switches Online (www.kvm-switches-online.com) and KVMs.com (www.kvms.com) both offer a wide selection.

TIP OF THE MONTH: FLASH TO THE RESCUE

You probably have at least one retired laptop or desktop lying around somewhere. It doesn't have the horsepower to run the latest applications, but it can still handle simple word processing or e-mail. This month's tipster has a simple way to get better performance from an older system.

I use an old notebook for reading e-mail. The hard drive seemed to rattle around for several minutes, and applications took a long time to load. I got tired of waiting around, so I put a 2GB CompactFlash card on a PC Card adapter and stuck it in my open PC slot. Then I moved the TEMP direc-

tory, the browser cache, and the most-used programs to that "drive." My browser now starts with almost no hard drive activity, boot time is reduced, and the laptop is much more responsive now that there's almost no drive delay.

CRAIG CHAMBERS



This is a great tip. A flash drive is likely to be faster than the hard drive in your

system, so you'll get faster reads and writes. This means that programs stored on the drive will load faster, and when data is being cached, you should see a big boost in speed. You could get a similar effect using a USB flash-memory drive, though the USB connection will be a bit slower, especially if it's not USB 2.0.

Keep in mind, however, that flash memory isn't foolproof and can fail without warning. As a result, make sure you have a backup image of everything except the temporary data.

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Install a speedy new DVD burner in five easy steps.

Optical Addition

BY BRIAN T. HOROWITZ



EVERY MODERN PC should have a DVD burner. Just a few years ago, DVD writers were premium peripherals, but their prices have gone the way of all things tech—that is, way down. Now, for \$100 or less, an internal burner can give your computer the ability to make and play movie discs—not to mention back up your data. Plus, you can install the drive yourself, even if you've never lifted the hood on your PC.

Here, we outline how to mount a DVD burner in your computer as a second internal optical drive. For our project, we installed Plextor's \$119 PX-760A DVD±RW inside our Polywell Poly MicroATX PC.

1 Open your case and examine connections

Power down your PC, unplug all cables, and open the case. Remember to ground yourself before handling anything inside by touching your PC's chassis or using an antistatic wrist strap.

First, a primer on drive connections. Most modern optical drives (and many hard drives) use the IDE interface, connecting to your motherboard via IDE ribbon cables. Barring a few recent Serial ATA boards, most motherboards have two IDE ports; each port supports up to two IDE drives, letting you install a maximum of four.

The IDE cable or cables inside your PC are distinguished by their flat, wide appearance and have either two or three connectors. A cable with a third, middle connector can host two drives. With two drives on one cable, the drive at the end of the cable is designated, via pin settings on the back of the drive, the "master" drive, and the middle drive the "slave." Alternately, both drives can be set for "cable select." (More on these settings in Step 2.)

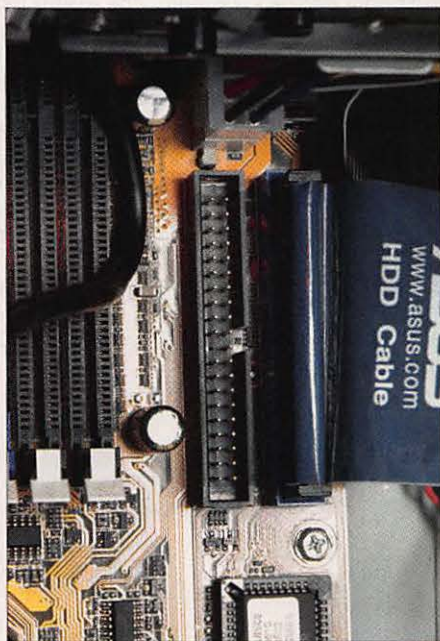
Look at your current optical drive and hard drive to see how they're installed. (We're assuming you have one of each.) Most likely, you'll see a separate IDE cable attached to each drive, each leading to one IDE port on the motherboard, with an unused connector in the middle of each cable. That free connector is where your new DVD burner will attach—preferably, sharing the cable used by your existing optical drive. (If the IDE cable you want to use has no third, middle connector, you can swap in the one boxed with your new burner.)

The other possibility: Your hard drive and optical drive are

chained off one IDE cable. If so, you'll connect your DVD burner to the secondary IDE interface on your motherboard.

To do this, you'll designate your new drive "master," and plug one end of the supplied IDE cable to the burner, and the other to the IDE port. (If that's the arrangement you have, skip ahead to Step 2.)

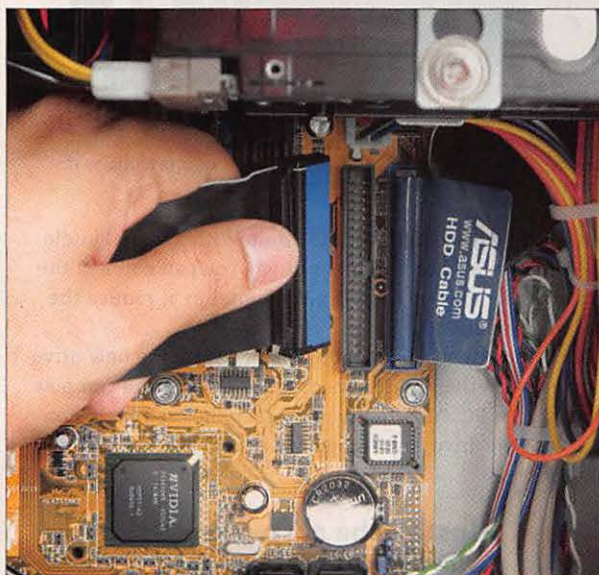
If you plan to chain your



It's possible to install two IDE drives on the same channel, as long as one drive is designated "master" and the other "slave."

burner off one of the currently installed cables, however, you'll need to check that the cable is the correct type. Most new IDE drives—DVD burners included—require an 80-conductor ribbon cable; one should be bundled with your drive. Compare the kit cable to the one in your PC—an 80-conductor cable has thinner wires than a 40-conductor cable, found in some older PCs, does. If your PC is using a 40-conductor cable, you'll need to swap it out.

In our PC, the existing optical drive was connected to the motherboard's primary IDE port, and our hard drive was plugged into the neighboring one, with each drive on its own IDE cable.



If you're installing your new DVD burner on a new IDE cable, connect one end to your motherboard's IDE connector.

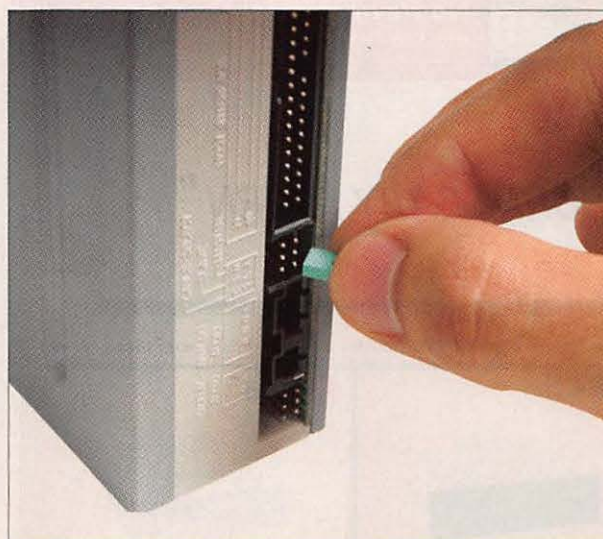
2 Adjust jumper settings

In a chained-drive arrangement, the black end of your 80-conductor IDE cable attaches to your primary ("master") drive, the middle connector attaches to the secondary ("slave") drive, and the blue end connects to your motherboard.

If you plan to chain your burner on an already installed cable, look at the rear panel of the optical drive or hard drive that's currently installed on that cable. You'll see a row of pins, with a little piece of plastic likely covering two of them. The position of the plastic—called the jumper block—determines the drive's master, slave, or cable select setting. The correct block positioning for the different jumper settings may be etched into the back edge of the drive above the pins, or illustrated in a graphic on the drive's top label. If they're not there, check the manual that came with your PC or drive. If the jumper is set to master, leave it alone. If it's set to cable select, switch it to master.

Checking and changing the setting on your new burner isn't hard. Find the appropriate setting on the drive itself or in the manual. You'll want to use master if the drive will be the only drive on the cable; if it's being chained on a middle connector, use slave, since the other drive will be set to master.

Our Plector drive came set for master mode. Our PC's ex-



To set your drive to slave mode, simply remove the jumper block and slide it onto the appropriate pins.

isting optical drive was already set to master, however, so we changed the Plector drive to slave. To do so, we pulled out the jumper block and replaced it so that it bridged the correct pins.

3 Insert the drive

Now that your new drive is properly configured, it's time to place it. On the front of your PC's case, remove the plastic panel over the empty drive bay you'll be using. (Unfasten the cover from the inside; you may need to remove the case's front face to do so.) Remove any metal punchout that may be blocking the drive bay. Then slide in the new drive. In most new PCs, the drive should slide straight into the track, but with some cases you may have to screw guide rails onto the sides of your drive first. Either way, don't push the drive all the way in just yet; you'll probably find it easier to connect the drive's cables with the drive halfway inserted.

4 Attach the drive's cables

As mentioned earlier, we determined to install our new drive using the gray middle connector on the existing optical drive's IDE cable. Now, attach the IDE cable to the back of the drive. The cable is keyed so you can't install it upside-down, but use even pressure on the connector—the interface pins are delicate.

Next, locate a free four-pin power plug running from the PC's power supply. That goes into the corresponding DC-input jack on the optical drive. It's also keyed, and it may require some force to seat it.

The only other connection left to consider is audio. Optical drives have jacks for analog and digital audio output. The analog jack is rarely, if ever, used these days, since the motherboard's sound chip or your sound card will decode any audio streams coming from the drive over the IDE interface. But the digital jack can come in handy if you have a stand-alone



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SAMSUNG



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You may want to leave your case open during your initial bootup. That way, you can easily adjust any connections if your PC doesn't recognize the drive.

sound card with a digital audio input. With a digital audio cable (likely bundled with your drive), you can connect the drive directly to your sound card's digital in to reduce the burden on your CPU.

Once all your cables are connected, secure the new drive in its bay, whether via screws or other means. You can now boot up your PC. (You may want to keep the case open, however, in case the drive isn't recognized and you need to adjust connections.)

5 Install the software

When you start your computer, Windows should recognize the new drive and install drivers for it. If it's not recognized, double-check the jumper settings on both your existing drive and your new DVD burner, and make sure that all cable connections are firm.

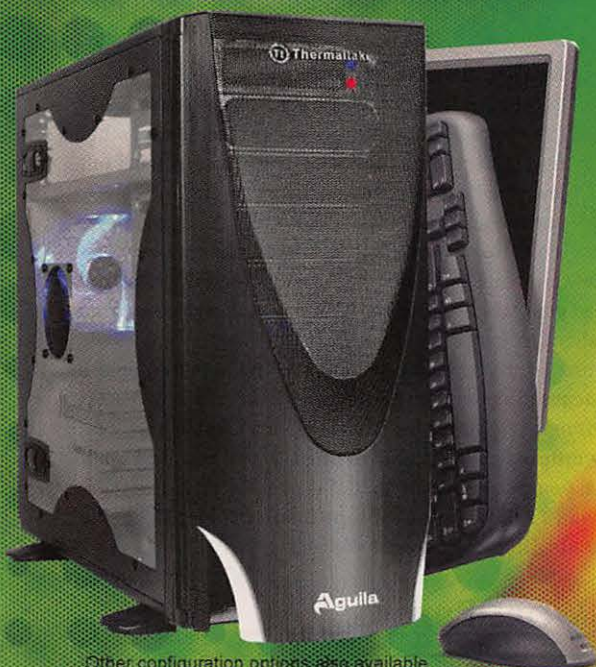
You can then install the software bundled with the drive. Our Plextor drive came with Roxio Easy Media Creator 7 DVD Basic Edition for creating discs, Sonic CinePlayer for watching DVDs, and a Plextor tool suite. Using the suite that came with your drive, you should now be ready to use your burner for backups.



Using your new drive's included software, you can back up items from your hard drive to DVD.



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- AMD Athlon™ 64 processor 3800+*
(2.4GHz, 512KB Cache, socket AM2)
- 2GB DDR2-675 PC2-5400 HyperX Performance Memory (2 x 1GB)
- PhysX P1 Gaming Accelerator
- (2x) 250GB SATA 3.0Gb/s 7200RPM 8MB Hard Drive -
RAID 0 for Improved Performance
- 16X DVD-ROM and Dual Layer DVD±RW
- (2x) NVIDIA GeForce 7900GT 256MB DDR PCIe x16 w/ TV-Out & DVI-I
- 11-in-1 Card Reader/Writer
- MS Windows XP Pro w/ SP2
- Thermaltake Agulla Case w/ 600W PS & Clear Side Panel
- 1-Year Parts and Labor Warranty w/ Lifetime Technical Support

Other configuration options also available

- Cool'n'Quiet Technology
- Enhanced Virus Protection1
- ISO 9001 Certified Facility
- AMD64 Technology
- HyperTransport™ Technology
- 5-Stage Quality Testing



Matrix 2000 AM2

- NVIDIA GeForce 6150 Chipset MB
- AMD Athlon™ 64 processor 3200+*
(2.0GHz, 512KB Cache, socket AM2)
- 1GB DDR2-667 PC2-5300 Memory
- Optional PhysX P1 Gaming Accelerator Card Available
- 160GB SATA 3.0Gb/s 7200RPM 8MB Cache Hard Drive
- 16X DVD-ROM & Dual Layer DVD±RW
- NVIDIA GeForce 7600GS 256MB DDR PCIe x16 w/ TV-Out & DVI-I
- MS Windows XP Home w/ SP2
- Thermaltake Swing Case w/ 550W PS
- 1-Year Parts and Labor Warranty w/ Lifetime Technical Support

\$859.00

Other configuration options also available



Matrix 6000 AM2

- NVIDIA nForce 570 SLI MCP Chipset MB
- AMD Athlon™ 64 processor 3200+*
(2.0GHz, 512KB Cache, socket AM2)
- 1GB DDR2-675 PC2-5400 HyperX Performance Memory (2 x 512MB)
- PhysX P1 Gaming Accelerator
- 250GB SATA 3.0Gb/s 7200RPM 8MB Cache Hard Drive
- 16X DVD-ROM & Dual Layer DVD±RW
- (2x) NVIDIA GeForce 7600GS 256MB DDR PCIe x16 w/ TV-Out & DVI-I
- MS Windows XP Home w/ SP2
- Thermaltake Armor Case w/ 550W PS & Clear Side Panel
- 1-Year Parts and Labor Warranty w/ Lifetime Technical Support

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*This model number indicates relative software performance among this AMD processor family. 1 Enhanced Virus Protection (EVP) is only enabled by certain operating systems including the current versions of Microsoft® Windows®, Linux®, Solaris and BSD Unix. After properly installing the appropriate operating system release, users must enable the protection of their applications and associated files from buffer overrun attacks. Consult your OS documentation for information on enabling EVP. Contact your application software vendor for information regarding use of the application in conjunction with EVP. AMD strongly recommend that users continue to use third party anti-virus software as part of their security strategy. AMD®, the AMD® arrow logo, AMD® Athlon™, and the combinations thereof are trademarks of Advanced Micro Devices, Inc. ©2006 Ajump.com Inc. All rights reserved.

WEEKEND PROJECT

Improve your blog's look
and increase your traffic.

Optimize Your Blog

BY KEVIN SAVETZ



THE WEB IS ALREADY HOME to more than 100 million blogs—and, according to the Pew Internet & American Life Project, a new one is created every 5.8 seconds. Clearly, the hard part isn't creating the blog itself. That's easy enough with a service such as Blogger (www.blogger.com) or software such as WordPress (www.wordpress.org). The challenge is attracting readers to your blog.

With a few tweaks and the help of several services (some of them free), getting your blog noticed is a real possibility—assuming you've got plenty of interesting things to say, too. These tips should help you boost your traffic and keep your readers coming back for more.

Illustration by David Flaherty

1 Make it look good

Because most users rely on their blog software's default settings, most blogs look the same. Frequent blog readers recognize the cookie-cutter look of a default layout, which tells readers the owner doesn't care enough about the blog to customize it. Changing the look involves installing (or sometimes simply choosing) a new template. You won't have to alter anything else or re-upload your articles—the new template will give your blog a personalized look.

The procedure for finding and installing a new template varies depending on your platform. An enormous directory of WordPress templates (or "themes") is available at www.wordpress.org/extend/themes. When you find one you like, you can generally install it by uploading the theme folder via FTP to your **wp-content/themes** folder in your Documents directory on your Web server.



With services like WordPress, spicing up your blog's appearance can be as easy as downloading a new template.

If you're using Blogger, from your Blogger account, click the Template tab, then click Pick New to find a new look. After you've selected one, use the "Republish entire blog" command to rebuild the look of the site. For other platforms, go to your help system to learn how to install a new theme.

2 Write good—um, well

A blog lives or dies by the quality of the writing. That doesn't mean the stuff you write has to be grammatically perfect—it means the content needs to be interesting. It doesn't matter how nice your blog looks if what you say isn't engaging. An interesting story, a funny or poignant entry—these are the things that will make others link to you and bring readers back.

Some light reading can be your key to better writing. Pick up a copy of *On Writing Well*, by William Zinsser, an excellent tome that explains how to improve your writing even if you already know when to use "which" and when to use "that." If your grammar needs some work, read *Grammatically Correct: The Writer's Essential Guide to Punctuation, Spelling, Style, Usage, and Grammar* by Anne Stilman.

Tip: Paying attention to what you like about other blogs can suggest ways to make your own more interesting.

3 Attract more traffic

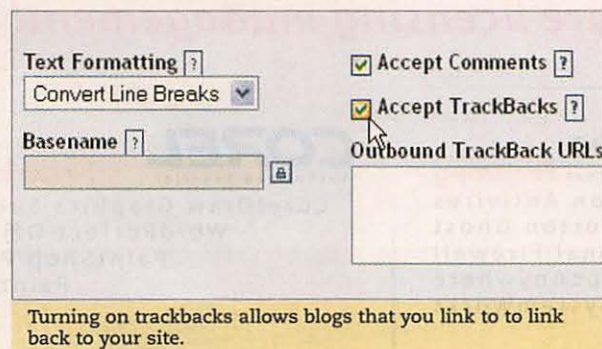
Once your blog has a distinctive look and great content, you're ready to build your readership. You can't count on people just stumbling upon your blog, however—you need to work to build traffic.

A simple way to do this is to post relevant comments on other blogs. By participating in conversations on other sites—especially in blogs that might have a similar demographic to yours—other readers might find your comments interesting and follow your links back to your site.

Use the "trackback" feature of your blogging software to link to related posts on other blogs. With trackbacks enabled, the blogs you link to in your entries will be notified of the link, and many will automatically include a link back to your site. Be sure that your posts are relevant to the pages you link to—otherwise, it's an abuse of the trackback system.

Wise use of keywords can improve the traffic you get from search engines. The titles of your blog articles are particularly important, so use words in your titles that search-engine users are likely to hunt for. For example, instead of "Mmmm, I Love Cookies," use the title "Great Chocolate Chip Cookie Recipe," a more likely search phrase.

One important corollary to building reader traffic: Readers won't keep coming back if there's nothing new to read. Post new articles regularly. If your blog has just one new post a month, that indicates you don't find the blog compelling. Neither will readers.



4 Use syndication to your advantage

Frequent readers of blogs use software to check up on the latest posts at their favorite sites. To let them monitor yours, too, you need to offer a Really Simple Syndication (RSS) or Atom feed. All blogging platforms worth their salt include this feature, so you simply need to make sure that RSS or Atom feeds (or both) are enabled on your site. The benefit of syndication is that once you've acquired a reader, it's very easy for that person to know to come back when you post new material.

Blog directories, such as Blogwise (www.blogwise.com) and Bitacle (www.bitacle.org), help readers discover interesting blogs. By making sure your blog is listed in such directories, you boost the chances that new readers will find you. Feedshot (www.feedshot.com) is a fast way to add your blog

to a variety of directories; the service will submit your blog to 19 directories for \$1.99 or nine directories for free. You need to do this only once.

After you post a new article, you can boost traffic by telling the major blog directories about it. Those sites will, in turn, let their users know about your latest entry. Ping-O-Matic (www.pingomatic.com) is an easy way to alert all of the major sites about each new entry. The simple interface lets you alert more than 20 blog search engines that your site has been updated.

Tip: Some blogging software, including WordPress, can notify Ping-O-Matic automatically when you post. Enabling this option can save you the extra effort after you write each message.

5 Measure your traffic

It can be difficult to tell how many readers your blog actually has. The number of comments that readers leave on your blog is one gauge, but if you like hard numbers, you'll need to do more. Site Meter (www.sitemeter.com) adds a free basic hit counter to any site, easily tracking the number of page views your blog receives. Upgrade to Site Meter's Plus plan (which starts at \$6.95 per month or \$59 per year, increasing depending on your site's traffic) for significantly improved statistics, including charts showing the number of visits over time.

Google Analytics (www.google.com/analytics) is a more powerful tool for measuring site traffic. More complicated than Site Meter, it isn't as easy to install on your blog, and the statistics it generates are more detailed. If you're willing to

commit some time to understanding its interface, however, you can glean a ton of information about your blog's traffic. Google Analytics is free, but it's offered by invitation only, which you'll need to request.

Report: Referring Search Engines Ranked by Visits

Visits	Search Engines	Share
2,984	Not referred from a search engine	74.9%
372	google.com	9.3%
77	google.co.uk	1.9%
73	images.google.com	1.8%
43	search.yahoo.com	1.1%
40	images.google.co.uk	1.0%
20	google.ca	0.5%
19	images.google.de	0.5%
17	search.msn.com	0.4%
15	images.google.it	0.4%
15	images.google.fr	0.4%
15	google.fr	0.4%
15	google.es	0.4%
13	google.com.au	0.3%
12	images.google.es	0.3%
12	google.fr	0.3%
10	google.de	0.3%
9	images.google.nl	0.2%
9	google.nl	0.2%
8	images.google.com.au	0.2%
7	google.pt	0.2%
7	google.bg	0.2%
7	google.be	0.2%

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Upgrading to Site Meter's Plus plan provides plenty of statistics, such as which search engines are referring the most visitors.

6 Go forth and blog

A blog can serve many purposes: a personal online diary, a travelogue, an open letter to friends and family, an extension of your hobbies, or a business in itself. But while setting one up might be effortless, maintaining one isn't. A good blog—one that people will want to keep coming back to—requires constant feeding and care. Make the effort, and your prose should reach a wider audience than ever.



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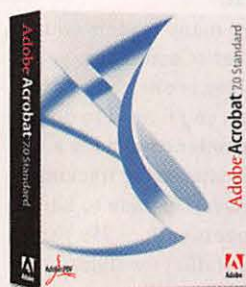
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BUDGET DESKTOPS (\$749 AND LESS)

NEED TO KNOW

PROCESSOR You'll pay a premium for the fastest processor, so go with a CPU several cycles behind the top clock speed. It will save you money, yet still yield a PC plenty fast for everyday tasks. **Upgrade:** Expect to spend \$50 for every 200MHz-increment upgrade of Intel processors.

GRAPHICS As a rule, budget PCs use integrated graphics that share system memory and can't handle complex games and graphics. Look for a desktop with an AGP or x16 PCI Express (PCIe) slot, which lets you add a dedicated card later. **Upgrade:** A basic graphics card costs about \$60 more than integrated graphics.

MEMORY Get at least 512MB of RAM, especially if you multitask. You can get by with 256MB, but it may slow you down, especially if the PC employs integrated graphics. **Upgrade:** Each additional 256MB of DDR memory will cost roughly \$30.

HARD DRIVE Go for at least an 80GB drive, although more is better. Faster is also better—look for a spin rate of 7,200rpm. **Upgrade:** Each additional 40GB of storage will cost about \$20.




OPTICAL DRIVES Two optical drives (CD-RW, DVD-ROM, or recordable-DVD) are better than one. If you can afford only one drive, make it a DVD±RW. **Upgrade:** A DVD±RW drive costs about \$30 more than a CD-RW drive.

CASE Most budget PCs use minitower or midtower cases. If you think you'll want to upgrade or add components later, make sure the case has room for expansion.

SOUND AND SPEAKERS You'll be hard-pressed to find anything but motherboard-integrated sound. This is fine for general use but underpowered for listening at loud levels, and it may not support surround sound. Don't expect quality speakers, either. A three-piece system (two satellites and a subwoofer) is possible, but a two-piece set is the norm. **Upgrade:** A quality sound card will cost about \$50 more than onboard audio.

MONITOR With flat-panel prices falling, adding a 15-inch LCD won't cost you a mint. If you want more screen real estate, you'll either have to kick in more cash or forgo the flat panel and choose a CRT. —Joshua Goldman, Desktop Editor

Next month:
Midrange Desktops

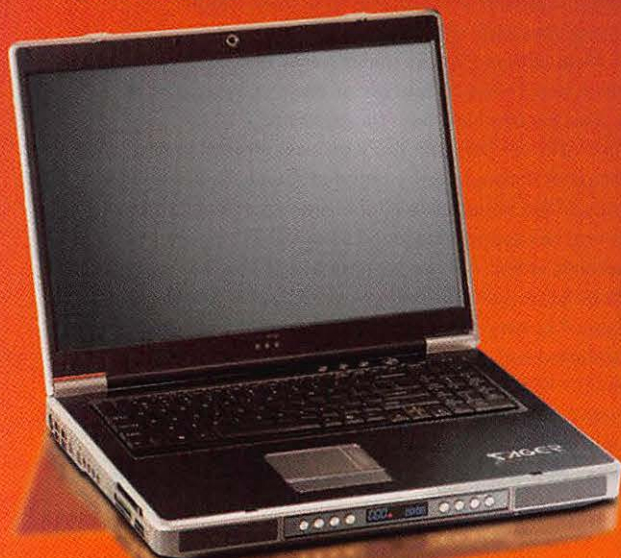
Model	Base Price*	Processor	RAM	Graphics	Hard Drive	Optical Drive(s)	Monitor	Editor's Take	Find Out More
ABS COMPUTER TECHNOLOGIES									
Explorer Workstation 1200	\$589	2.4GHz Celeron D 320	256MB	Integrated	40GB	DVD-ROM	None	Strictly a business PC—don't expect to do much more than Web surfing, e-mail, and simple office tasks.	www.abspc.com 800-876-8088
Explorer Workstation 1100	\$639	1.6GHz Sempron 2400+	256MB	nVidia GeForce MX 440	80GB	DVD-ROM	None	A good choice for small-office or home users. The dedicated graphics card with TV-out is a nice bonus.	
APPLE COMPUTER									
Mac Mini	\$599	1.5GHz Core Solo	512MB	Integrated	60GB	DVD/CD-RW combo	None	A tiny Mac that takes up minimal desk space, and a silent runner with decent power for the basics.	www.apple.com 800-692-7753
CYBERPOWER									
Mega Special II	\$475	2GHz Athlon 64 3200+	512MB	nVidia GeForce 6200	160GB	DVD/CD-RW combo	None	Add about \$200 for a 17-inch LCD and swap the peculiar case; otherwise, we like this capable, well-priced PC.	www.cyberpowerpc.com 800-707-0393
Mega Special III	\$585	3GHz Pentium D 930	512MB	nVidia GeForce 6200	160GB	DVD±RW (double layer)	None	Extra processing power makes this budget box worth considering, but the Mega Special II is a better bargain.	
Gamer Ultra 7000 Elite	\$629	2GHz Athlon 64 3200+	512MB	nVidia GeForce 6200	250GB	DVD±RW (double layer)	None	This model might qualify as "Elite" with some heavy-duty upgrades. As it stands, won't suffice for serious gaming.	
LAN Party Special	\$689	2GHz Athlon 64 3200+	1GB	nVidia GeForce 6600	250GB	DVD±RW (double layer)	None	Smallish cube case with a carry handle—but show up at a serious LAN party with this GPU, and you're likely to be ridiculed.	
DELL									
Dimension B110	\$379	2.53GHz Celeron D 325	512MB	Integrated	160GB	DVD±RW (double layer)	17-inch CRT	The "B" is for "basic"—indeed, basics are all you'll be able to do with this config. Plus, Dell offers few upgrades for this model.	www.dell.com 800-999-3355
Dimension E310	\$599	2.8GHz Pentium 4 521	512MB	Integrated	80GB	DVD/CD-RW combo	17-inch CRT	An entertainment PC that doesn't have the parts to be all that much fun; fairly disappointing as an entry-level PC.	
Dimension S150	\$649	2.8GHz Pentium D 820	512MB	Integrated	80GB	DVD-ROM	None	If you can afford \$70 to double the storage and upgrade the optical drive, you can make this an attractive config.	
EMACHINES									
T3120	\$399.99	1.8GHz Sempron 3100+	512MB	nVidia GeForce 6100	100GB	DVD/CD-RW combo	None	eMachines tends to bog down its PCs with trial software, which means a cluttered desktop out of the box.	www.emachines.com 408-273-0888

* = Base price reflects vendor's default configuration. Most models are configurable. Prices are subject to change.

See computershopper.com for full reviews of products in boldface.

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- Dual Optical Device bays and Dual Hard Disk Capability allow this system to be customized with 2 CD-ROM devices and 2 Hard Drives coexisting for maximum storage capacity.
- Hardware RAID boosts HDD Speed with RAID 0 or mirror backup your data with RAID 1 Fault-Tolerance.

OPTIONS

- 802.11g and Bluetooth Combo Module
- TV Tuner Module with Remote

SPECIFICATIONS

- 17.0" Wide Viewing Angles WUXGA Active Matrix Display with Super Clear Glare Type Screen
- Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor 630 with HT Technology (2MB L2 cache, 3.0GHz, 800MHz FSB)
- 512MB DDR3 NVIDIA® GeForce™ Go 7900 GTX PCI-Express™ Graphics
- 1GB Dual Channel DDR2 SDRAM at 533MHz
- 80.0GB 5400RPM Serial ATA 150 Hard Drive
- 8X DVD±R/RW/4X +DL Multi Drive
- Full Size Keyboard with Numeric Keypad
- Hardware Raid 0,1 Function
- Dual Optical Device Bays and Dual Hard Disk capability allow this system to be customized with 2 CD-ROM devices and 2 Hard Drives coexisting
- Integrated Wireless LAN 802.11 b/g
- Built-In 1.3M High-Resolution Video Camera
- Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition

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NP 5760V

FEATURES

- nVIDIA® GeForce™ Go 7900 GTX PCI-Express™ Graphics Module with 512MB DDR3 Memory delivers best-in-class performance and high-definition video for gaming and multimedia applications.
- The front panel Audio DJ CD player control with separate power switch lets you play your favorite music CD or MP3 while on the go.
- Modular Bay design maximizes customization capability allowing the CD-ROM device to be interchange with 2nd Hard Disk Drive.

OPTIONS

- Bluetooth Module
- TV Tuner Module with Remote
- Second Hard Drive Module

SPECIFICATIONS

- 17.0" Wide Viewing Angles WUXGA Active Matrix Display with Super Clear Glare Type Screen
- Intel® Centrino® Duo Mobile Technology
 - Intel® Core™ Duo Processor T2300E (2MB L2 Cache, 1.66GHz, 667MHz FSB)
 - Intel® PRO/Wireless 3945ABG LAN 802.11a/b/g
- 512MB DDR3 NVIDIA® GeForce™ Go 7900 GTX PCI-Express™ Graphics
- 1GB Dual Channel DDR2 SDRAM at 667MHz
- 80.0GB 5400RPM Serial ATA 150 Hard Drive
- 8X DVD±R/RW/4X +DL Multi Drive
- Modular Optical Device Bay design allows CD-ROM Device to be exchanged with optional 2nd Hard Drive
- Front Panel Audio DJ with Separate Power Switch
- Built-In 1.3M High-Resolution Video Camera
- Built-In 4-in-1 Card Reader (MS/MS Pro/SD/MMC)
- Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition

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FEATURES

- NVIDIA® GeForce™ Go 7800 GTX PCI-Express™ Graphics Module with 256MB DDR3 Memory delivering the power and technology you need to tear through the hottest games.
- Dual Optical Device Bays and Dual Hard Disk Capability allow this system to be customized with 2 CD-ROM devices and 2 Hard Drives coexisting for maximum storage capacity.
- Hardware RAID boosts HDD Speed with RAID 0 or mirror backup your data with RAID 1 Fault-Tolerance.

OPTIONS

- 802.11g and Bluetooth Combo Module
- TV Tuner Module with Remote

SPECIFICATIONS

- 17.0" Wide Viewing Angles WXGA+ Active Matrix Display with Super Clear Glare Type Screen
- Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor 630 with HT Technology (2MB L2 Cache, 3.0GHz, 800MHz FSB)
- 256MB DDR3 NVIDIA® GeForce™ Go 7800 GTX PCI-Express™ Graphics
- 512MB DDR2 SDRAM at 533MHz
- 40.0GB 5400RPM Serial ATA 150 Hard Drive
- 8X DVD±R / 24x10x24 CD-RW Combo Drive
- Full sized Keyboard with Numeric Keypad
- Hardware RAID 0,1 Function
- Dual Optical Device bays and Dual Hard Disk capability allow this system to be customized with 2 CD-ROM devices and 2 Hard Drives coexisting
- Integrated Wireless LAN 802.11 b/g
- Built-in 1.3M High-Resolution Video Camera
- Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition

NP 5750V

FEATURES

- ATI MOBILITY™ RADEON® X1600 PCI-Express™ Graphics with up to 512MB HyperMemory™ brings your 3D gaming and multimedia applications to new levels of realism.
- The front panel Audio DJ CD player control with separate power switch lets you play your favorite music CD or MP3 while on the go.
- Modular Bay design maximizes customization capability allowing the CD-ROM device to be interchange with 2nd Hard Disk Drive.

OPTIONS

- Bluetooth Module
- TV Tuner Module with Remote
- Second Hard Drive Module

SPECIFICATIONS

- 17.0" WXGA Active Matrix Display
- Intel® Centrino® Duo Mobile Technology
 - Intel® Core™ Duo Processor T2300E (2MB L2 Cache, 1.66GHz, 667MHz FSB)
 - Intel® PRO/Wireless 3945ABG LAN 802.11a/b/g
- 128MB DDR ATI MOBILITY™ RADEON® X1600 PCI-Express™ Graphics (Up to 512MB HyperMemory™)
- 1GB Dual Channel DDR2 SDRAM at 667MHz
- 80.0GB 5400RPM Serial ATA 150 Hard Drive
- 8X DVD±R/RW/4X+DL Multi Drive
- Modular Optical Device Bay design allows CD-ROM Device to be exchanged with optional 2nd Hard Drive
- Front Panel Audio DJ with Separate Power Switch
- Built-in 1.3M High-Resolution Video Camera
- Built-In 4-in-1 Card Reader (MS/MS Pro/SD/MMC)
- Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition

NP 6630C

FEATURES

- Premium technology is yours with the new Intel® Centrino® Duo Mobile Technology. Have breakthrough performance to run more demanding applications simultaneously.
- Dual Channel DDR2 System Memory capable, providing the best match for new Intel® Core™ Duo Processor.
- New Express Card 34/54 Slot providing next generation functionality and connectivity.

OPTIONS

- Bluetooth Module
- Port Replicator

SPECIFICATIONS

- 15.4" WXGA Active Matrix Display with Super Clear Glare type Screen
- Intel® Centrino® Duo Mobile Technology
 - Intel® Core™ Duo Processor T2300E (2MB L2 Cache, 1.66GHz, 667MHz FSB)
 - Intel® PRO/Wireless 3945ABG LAN 802.11a/b/g
- Share Memory Architecture up to 128MB
- Integrated Intel® Graphics Media Accelerator 950
- 512MB DDR2 SDRAM at 667MHz
- 40.0GB 5400RPM Serial ATA 150 Hard Drive
- 8X DVD±R / 24x10x24 CD-RW Combo Drive
- Built-In 1.3M High-Resolution Video Camera
- Built-In 4-in-1 Card Reader (MS/MS Pro/SD/MMC)
- 3 USB 2.0 Ports
- Virtual 8 Channel External Speaker Output
- 3D Surround Sound (S/PDIF output for DVD)
- Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition

NP 5460C

FEATURES

- Premium technology is yours with the new Intel® Centrino® Duo Mobile Technology. Have breakthrough performance to run more demanding applications simultaneously.
- Dual Channel DDR2 System Memory capable, providing the best match for new Intel® Core™ Duo Processor.
- New Express Card 34/54 Slot providing next generation functionality and connectivity.

OPTIONS

- Port Replicator
- Charger Box

SPECIFICATIONS

- 14.0" WXGA Active Matrix Display with Super Clear Glare Type Screen
- Intel® Centrino® Duo Mobile Technology
 - Intel® Core™ Duo Processor T2300E (2MB L2 Cache, 1.66GHz, 667MHz FSB)
 - Intel® PRO/Wireless 3945ABG LAN 802.11a/b/g
- Share Memory Architecture up to 128MB
- Integrated Intel® Graphics Media Accelerator 950
- 512MB DDR2 SDRAM at 533MHz
- 40.0GB 5400RPM Serial ATA 150 Hard Drive
- 8X DVD±R / 24x10x24 CD-RW Combo Drive
- Built-In Digital Video Camera
- Built-In 4-in-1 Card Reader (MS/MS Pro/SD/MMC)
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TECHMARKET BUDGET DESKTOPS (\$749 AND LESS)

Model	Base Price*	Processor	RAM	Graphics	Hard Drive	Optical Drive(s)	Monitor	Editor's Take	Find Out More
EMACHINES									
T6528	\$499.99	2.2GHz Athlon 64 3500+	512MB	nVidia GeForce 6100	160GB	DVD±RW (double layer)	None	Probably the best \$500 PC around. All you need to handle typical tasks, plus room to add or upgrade parts.	www.emachines.com 408-273-0888
T6532	\$579.99	2.2GHz Athlon 64 3500+	1GB	nVidia GeForce 6100	200GB	DVD±RW (double layer)	None	An extraordinary build for the money. You can't configure anything before you buy, but there's little else you'll likely need.	
GATEWAY									
E-1500D S8	\$644.99	2.8GHz Celeron D 336	512MB	Integrated	80GB	CD-ROM	None	A basic business PC with a midtower case and a weak starting config; you'll find much better deals in this category.	www.gateway.com 800-369-1409
DX310S	\$699.99	3GHz Pentium D 930	512MB	Integrated	160GB	DVD/CD-RW combo	None	Not a bad setup for the money, and you can upgrade to a discrete graphics card for as little as \$59. Runs Windows Media Center.	
HEWLETT-PACKARD									
Pavilion a1400e	\$399.99	1.8GHz Sempron 3200+	256MB	Integrated	80GB	CD-RW	None	A fairly anemic setup as-is; we suggest spending the rebates HP frequently offers for more RAM and a faster processor.	www.hp.com 888-999-4747
Pavilion s7420n Slimline Desktop	\$729.99	1.7GHz Pentium M 735A	1GB	Integrated	250GB	DVD±RW (double layer)	None	We love this little box—a solid design with good components and quiet operation. No internal expansion, however.	
IBUYPOWER									
Bargain 64	\$529	2GHz Athlon 64 3200+	512MB	nVidia GeForce 6200	160GB	DVD/CD-RW combo	None	A bargain considering what's inside, but the price doesn't include an operating system—XP Home Edition costs \$89 more.	www.ibuypower.com 888-462-3899
Special B	\$582	2GHz Athlon 64 3200+	512MB	nVidia GeForce 7300 LE	80GB	DVD±RW (double layer)	None	We'd opt for a tamer case for an office setting, but the components make for a decent budget box.	
Back to School	\$599	3GHz Pentium 4 630	512MB	ATI Radeon X300SE	80GB	DVD/CD-RW combo	None	The company offers 10 case designs for this PC, in a variety of colors. Config is a smart choice for work tasks.	
Special C	\$619	2.2GHz Athlon 64 3500+	1GB	nVidia GeForce 6200	80GB	DVD/CD-RW combo	None	64-bit processing for under \$650. Boost the power supply if you plan on much future expansion.	
Special A	\$649	3GHz Pentium 4 630	512MB	nVidia GeForce 7300 LE	80GB	DVD/CD-RW combo	None	A good rig with just enough pop to handle some 3D gaming. We'd spend \$31 extra to upgrade to a Pentium D chip.	
LENOVO									
ThinkCentre E50	\$379	2.66GHz Celeron D 331	256MB	Integrated	40GB	CD-ROM	None	Base hardware config is bleak, though an excellent software package comes bundled with all ThinkCentres.	www.lenovo.com 866-458-4465
ThinkCentre A52	\$649	2.8GHz Pentium 4 521	512MB	Integrated	80GB	DVD/CD-RW combo	None	Solid quality at a low price. Better deals can be had, but the IBM legacy is worth the extra cash.	
SYSTEMAX									
Venture B517	\$499.99	2.93GHz Pentium 4 516	256MB	Integrated	80GB	CD-ROM	None	Disappointing specs for a \$500 PC. A few simple tweaks online can improve this setup for just a little more money.	www.systemaxpc.com 888-845-6225
Venture HU DH630I	\$709.99	2.8GHz Pentium 4 521	512MB	Integrated	250GB	DVD±RW (double layer)	None	Included Tech-in-a-Box software helps you fix PC problems or perform a complete factory software recovery.	
VELOCITY MICRO									
Vector Pro Intel	\$650	2.53GHz Celeron D 325J	512MB	Integrated	120GB	DVD-ROM	None	CPU has an extra security feature to improve network safety by preventing buffer-overflow attacks.	www.velocitymicro.com 800-303-7866
Vision Pro	\$695	2.4GHz Athlon 64 3700+	512MB	Integrated	120GB	DVD-ROM	None	A tidy, compact business PC built with the same attention to detail Velocity puts into its \$5,000 gaming systems.	
WINBOOK COMPUTER									
PowerSpec 6342	\$399.99	3.06GHz Celeron D 346	512MB	Integrated	160GB	DVD±RW (double layer)	None	The best \$400 desktop here. If you're not concerned with future upgrade options or running Vista, it's a great choice.	www.winbook.com 800-254-7806
PowerSpec 7111	\$649.99	3.06GHz Pentium 4 524	512MB	Integrated	250GB	DVD±RW (double layer)	None	Looks okay on the surface, but dig deeper, and you'll find the chipset supports old technologies such as DDR and AGP.	
ZT GROUP									
Performance X3121	\$393.10	2.53GHz Celeron D 325J	256MB	Integrated	40GB	CD-ROM	None	Suffices for very basic tasks such as checking e-mail, or as a point-of-sale PC. Will likely be frustratingly slow.	www.ztgroup.com 866-984-7687
Home PC A4026	\$449	1.8GHz Sempron 3100+	256MB	Integrated	80GB	DVD/CD-RW combo	None	Like the X3121 above, not enough power for demanding users. We strongly urge adding another 256MB of RAM (\$24).	
Media Center PC A7059	\$639	2GHz Athlon 64 3000+	512MB	ATI Radeon 9250	160GB	DVD/CD-RW combo	None	A good starter PC for media playback or general use; includes a decent TV tuner and remote control.	
Superbuy PV X6009	\$699	3GHz Pentium D 930	512MB	Integrated	250GB	DVD±RW (double layer)	None	Lives up to its name. The respectable dual-core CPU is good for multitaskers, and the PCIe slot lets you upgrade the graphics.	

* = Base price reflects vendor's default configuration. Most models are configurable. Prices are subject to change.

See computershopper.com for full reviews of products in boldface.

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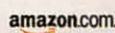
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* This model number indicates relative software performance among this processor family.

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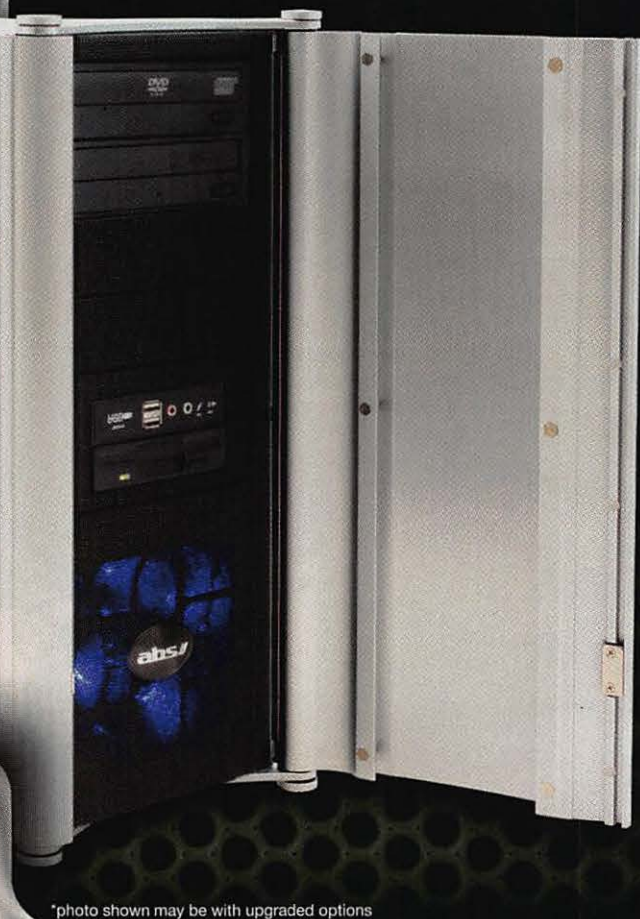
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BUDGET NOTEBOOKS (LESS THAN \$1,000)

NEED TO KNOW

PROCESSOR Most budget notebooks ship with a low-powered Intel Celeron or AMD Sempron processor. If you're lucky, you'll find a notebook running a robust Intel Pentium M, Core Solo, or Core Duo. These mobile chips have a full 2MB of cache and advanced power-management features. **Upgrade:** Expect to pay roughly \$100 for every 100MHz-increment upgrade for Pentium M processors.

MEMORY Inadequate memory can drastically reduce overall performance, so don't be frugal. Shoot for 512MB if you can. **Upgrade:** Each additional 256MB of DDR SDRAM will cost roughly \$50.

GRAPHICS Low-cost laptops will disappoint gamers, because most lack discrete 3D chips. A few manufacturers may offer notebooks with aging dedicated chips from ATI or nVidia, however, and this may be enough to handle older game titles.

HARD DRIVE A 40GB or 60GB drive may be plenty of space for casual users, but if you have a large digital music collection, play lots of advanced games, or edit digital video, opt

for 80GB or more. **Upgrade:** Each additional 20GB of storage should cost about \$30.





OPTICAL DRIVES Strive for a multiformat (DVD±RW) DVD burner, which writes to both plus- and minus-format DVD media. If you have no need or desire to burn DVDs, a DVD-ROM/CD-RW combo drive, which burns only CDs, will suffice. **Upgrade:** Expect to pay about \$75 to upgrade to a DVD±RW from a combo drive.

WIRELESS CONNECTIVITY Integrated 802.11 wireless networking (Wi-Fi) is an essential feature. Many budget notebooks ship with 802.11b/g internal Wi-Fi radios. With rated data throughput of 54Mbps, 802.11g technology is all you need for ordinary use.

MONITOR Unless you're on a tight budget or looking for optimum portability, search for a wide-screen 15-inch-or-larger TFT. Whether you'll be watching DVDs or merely viewing multiple documents at once, more screen space is always better.

—Louis Ramirez, Staff Editor






Next month:
Thin-and-Light
Notebooks

Model	Base Price*	Processor	RAM	Graphics	Hard Drive	Optical Drive	Display	Wireless	Weight	Editor's Take	Find Out More
ACER AMERICA											
TravelMate TM4011WLCI	\$679.99	1.6GHz Pentium M 725	512MB	Integrated	60GB	DVD/CD-RW combo	15.4 inches	802.11b/g	6.2 lbs.	Entry-level specs and lack of a DVD burner limit this system's appeal; fortunately, it's easy on the eyes.	us.acer.com 800-571-2237
Aspire AS5003WLMi	\$899.99	1.8GHz Turion 64 ML-32	1GB	Integrated	100GB	DVD±RW (double layer)	15.4 inches	802.11b/g	6.2 lbs.	AMD-based unit will meet most budget shoppers' needs. The full gigabyte of RAM and big hard drive are positives.	
TravelMate TM4062WLMi	\$999.99	1.73GHz Pentium M 740	512MB	Integrated	100GB	DVD±RW (double layer)	15.4 inches	802.11b/g	6.4 lbs.	Of the three Acer models here, the only one using faster DDR2 RAM. Not a bad deal.	
AVERATEC											
1000 Series	\$849.99	1GHz Celeron M ULV 373	512MB	Integrated	60GB	DVD/CD-RW combo	10.6 inches	802.11b/g	3.6 lbs.	One of the least-expensive ultralights we've seen—and it delivers on features. Just don't expect a blazing CPU.	www.averatec.com 877-462-3462
4200 Series	\$929.99	1.73GHz Pentium M 740	512MB	Integrated	80GB	DVD±RW (double layer)	13.3 inches	802.11b/g	4.7 lbs.	Like the 1000 series, the 4200 is highly portable, and it trades the DVD combo drive for a double-layer DVD burner.	
7100 Series	\$999.99	1.6GHz Turion 64 MT-30	512MB	Integrated	80GB	DVD±RW (double layer)	17 inches	802.11b/g	7.2 lbs.	Highly affordable for a 17-inch laptop; doesn't skimp too much on its offerings, and comes with a media-card reader.	
CYBERPOWER											
Xplorer U3-1000	\$949	1.73GHz Pentium M 740	256MB	Integrated	40GB	DVD/CD-RW combo	12.1 inches	None	4.1 lbs.	A ho-hum configuration, though powered by a quick Pentium M CPU. One of the most portable models here.	www.cyberpowerpc.com 800-707-0393
DELL											
Inspiron B120	\$649	1.4GHz Celeron M 360	512MB	Integrated	40GB	DVD/CD-RW combo	14.1 inches	802.11b/g	6.4 lbs.	The "B" in B120 stands for "basic," which accurately describes the level of computing this inexpensive model delivers.	www.dell.com 800-999-3355
Inspiron B130	\$749	1.4GHz Celeron M 360	512MB	Integrated	40GB	DVD/CD-RW combo	15.4 inches	802.11b/g	6.7 lbs.	Same basic configuration as the B120. The larger 15.4-inch LCD is what fetches the additional \$100.	
Latitude D510	\$769	1.4GHz Celeron M 360	256MB	Integrated	40GB	CD-ROM	14.1 inches	802.11b/g	5.2 lbs.	Backed by a generous three-year warranty; solidly built and suitable for modest business tasks.	
Inspiron E1405	\$849	1.66GHz Core Solo T1300	512MB	Integrated	60GB	DVD/CD-RW combo	14.1 inches	802.11b/g	5.3 lbs.	Capable notebook should satisfy most, but the similar E1505, with its bigger screen, is a better bargain.	
Inspiron E1505	\$899	1.66GHz Core Solo T1300	512MB	Integrated	60GB	DVD/CD-RW combo	15.4 inches	802.11b/g	5.3 lbs.	Same specs as the E1405, but with a 15.4-inch screen for just \$50 more.	
Latitude D520	\$909	1.66GHz Core Duo T2300	512MB	Integrated	40GB	CD-ROM	14.1 inches	802.11b/g	5.2 lbs.	A Core Duo-based unit for under a grand is sweet—but you'll probably want to upgrade the hard drive and optical drive.	

* = Base price reflects vendor's default configuration. Most models are configurable. Prices are subject to change.

See computershopper.com for full reviews of products in boldface.

TECHMARKET BUDGET NOTEBOOKS (LESS THAN \$1,000)

Model	Base Price*	Processor	RAM	Graphics	Hard Drive	Optical Drive	Display	Wireless	Weight	Editor's Take	Find Out More
GATEWAY											
NX500S	\$749.99	1.6GHz Celeron M 380	512MB	Integrated	40GB	DVD/CD-RW combo	15.4 inches	802.11b/g	6 lbs.	Midsized model's weak parts are offset by sturdy construction and an attractive wide-screen display.	www.gateway.com 800-369-1409
NX510S	\$849.99	1.6GHz Celeron M 420	512MB	Integrated	80GB	DVD±RW (double layer)	15.4 inches	802.11a/b/g	6 lbs.	An included dual-layer DVD burner makes this laptop worth a look; also configurable with a Core Duo CPU.	
NX260X	\$999.99	1.66GHz Core Duo T2300	512MB	Integrated	80GB	DVD/CD-RW combo	14.1 inches	802.11b/g	5.5 lbs.	An even better deal than Dell's Core Duo system, given its larger hard drive and DVD combo drive.	
HEWLETT-PACKARD											
Pavilion DV5000z	\$679.99	1.8GHz Sempron 3100+	256MB	Integrated	40GB	DVD/CD-RW combo	15.4 inches	None	6.6 lbs.	Small hard drive and lack of Wi-Fi at this price make this model one to pass on; Gateway's NX500S has more to offer.	www.hp.com 888-999-4747
Pavilion DV1000t	\$719.99	1.46GHz Celeron M 410	256MB	Integrated	40GB	DVD/CD-RW combo	14 inches	None	5.3 lbs.	Not much state-of-the-art tech in this starting config, though HP QuickPlay lets you play CDs/DVDs without booting up.	 
Compaq Presario V5000t	\$749.99	1.46GHz Celeron M 410	256MB	Integrated	40GB	DVD-ROM	15.4 inches	None	6.6 lbs.	Also configurable with an AMD CPU, but, either way, should have at least a DVD/CD-RW combo drive at this starting price.	
Pavilion DV2000z	\$979.99	1.6GHz Sempron 3200+	512MB	nVidia GeForce Go 6150	40GB	DVD/CD-RW combo	14.1 inches	802.11b/g	5.3 lbs.	Featuring built-in Wi-Fi, this good-looking, glossy machine is Vista-ready and has dedicated GeForce graphics.	
Compaq Presario V3000T	\$999.99	1.66GHz Core Duo T2300E	512MB	Integrated	40GB	DVD/CD-RW combo	14.1 inches	802.11a/b/g	5.3 lbs.	Unlike the DV2000z, the V3000T lacks discrete graphics, but you do get a faster dual-core CPU for just \$20 more.	
IBUYPOWER											
Battalion 101 S550-Turbo	\$989	1.8GHz Athlon 64 3000+	512MB	ATI Mobility Radeon X700	40GB	DVD±RW (double layer)	15.4 inches	None	6.4 lbs.	Its aggressively designed blue (or red) exterior gives it a radical look; will fit in better on campus than at the office.	www.ibuypower.com 888-462-3899
LENOVO											
ThinkPad R52	\$999	1.73GHz Pentium M 740	512MB	Integrated	40GB	DVD/CD-RW combo	14.1 inches	802.11b/g	5.6 lbs.	Has all the makings of a capable business laptop, and a nice price to boot. Also comes in a 15-inch model.	www.lenovo.com 866-458-4465
TOSHIBA AMERICA											
Satellite A100-S2311TD	\$699.99	1.7GHz Celeron M 390	256MB	Integrated	40GB	DVD/CD-RW combo	15.4 inches	802.11b/g	6 lbs.	You'll need at least 512MB RAM, but otherwise a reasonably powerful entry-level model.	www.toshiba.com 800-316-0920
Tecra A6-S513	\$849	1.66GHz Core Solo T1300	512MB	Integrated	60GB	DVD/CD-RW combo	14.1 inches	802.11a/b/g	5.5 lbs.	Great extras like a spill-resistant keyboard and biometric security. Hard drive locks up for protection when it senses a fall.	
Satellite M105-S3001	\$999.99	1.66GHz Core Solo T1300	512MB	Integrated	80GB	DVD±RW (double layer)	14.1 inches	802.11a/b/g	5.4 lbs.	One of the few base configs here that features a double-layer DVD burner; this drive also supports DVD-RAM discs.	
WINBOOK COMPUTER											
V410	\$599.99	1.5GHz Celeron M 370	256MB	Integrated	40GB	DVD/CD-RW combo	15.1 inches	None	6.2 lbs.	The most affordable laptop of the lot, but don't expect it to handle much more than basic productivity tasks.	www.winbook.com 800-254-7806
V412	\$699.99	1.5GHz Celeron M 370	512MB	Integrated	40GB	DVD/CD-RW combo	15.4 inches	802.11b/g	6.4 lbs.	A step up from entry-level, but we'd go with Toshiba's Satellite A100, which packs a better CPU for the price.	
W235	\$899.99	1.6GHz Pentium M 725	512MB	Integrated	80GB	DVD±RW (double layer)	14 inches	802.11b/g	5.3 lbs.	\$100 less than its higher-end cousin, the W245, but you'll get 20GB less storage space and half the memory.	
W245	\$999.99	1.6GHz Pentium M 725	1GB	Integrated	100GB	DVD±RW (double layer)	14 inches	802.11a/b/g	5.3 lbs.	At the top of WinBook's budget line is the W245, with a full gig of RAM and a 100GB hard drive.	

THE BEST RECENTLY REVIEWED BUDGET NOTEBOOKS

HP Pavilion DV5000z • \$1,283 (as tested) • Editors' Rating: 7.6

With the Pavilion DV5000z series, HP delivers a well-designed, versatile multimedia laptop that starts at a highly affordable price point.

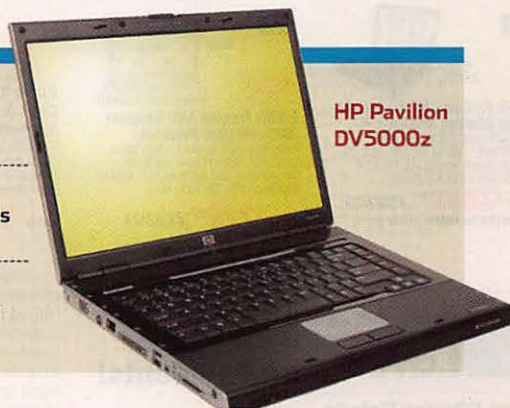
Dell Inspiron E1505 • \$2,300 (as tested) • Editors' Rating: 7.0

The Inspiron E1505 makes a fine home or small-business laptop, thanks to its solid multimedia capabilities.

Averatec 1000 Series • \$1,071 (as tested) • Editors' Rating: 6.2

It's one of the least-expensive ultraportables we've seen, yet its performance almost matches that of much costlier models.

HP Pavilion DV5000z



Desktops & Notebooks



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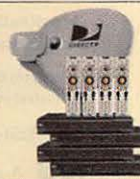
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INKJET PRINTERS

NEED TO KNOW






RESOLUTION Resolution figures refer to the maximum number of horizontal and vertical dots a printer can lay down within a 1-inch-square space. In theory, a higher-resolution printer can produce more-detailed text and images, but manufacturers inflate these numbers for marketing purposes, meaning these specs often have little or no bearing on real-world performance. If possible, view actual output from a printer before you decide.

PRINT SPEED This spec measures how many pages or photos per minute (ppm) a printer spits out. To come up with the fastest-possible speeds, some manufacturers use basic text documents at the lowest quality settings (draft mode) on plain paper. In our tests, using a printer's automatic mode for text and its photographic-paper setting for photos, we typically achieve about half the speed the manufacturer promises.

CONNECTIVITY Most printers connect to your PC via USB 2.0, but you'll have to buy the cable separately. For PC-free printing, look for memory-card slots, as well as ports that allow for direct printing from supported cameras or external storage devices. Many models also support wireless printing over infrared or Bluetooth, or via Wi-Fi access points with built-in print servers.

CONSUMABLES Before you buy, consider the cost of items such as ink and paper. Replacement ink can quickly exceed a printer's price, running anywhere from \$12 to as high as \$60 per cartridge. More-expensive printers may actually be more economical in the long run because they often have higher-capacity ink tanks and separate tanks for each color. As for paper, use what the manufacturer recommends for the best results. These papers can cost anywhere from 10 cents to \$2 per letter-size sheet.

—Louis Ramirez, Staff Editor

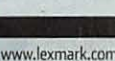
Model	Price	Maximum Resolution (Color)	Maximum Resolution (Monochrome)	Number of Cartridges*	Number of Ink Colors	Max. Print Speed**	Editor's Take	Find Out More
CANON U.S.A.								
Pixma iP1600 Photo Printer	\$49.99	4,800x1,200dpi	600x600dpi	Two	Four	19ppm	Entry-level price, but offers a respectable print speed that should benefit most home users.	usa.canon.com 800-652-2666
Pixma iP4200 Photo Printer	\$99.99	9,600x2,400dpi	600x600dpi	Five	Five	29ppm	Features autoduplexing and two paper input trays; though fast for its class, slower than other Pixmas.	
Pixma MP130 Photo All-in-One	\$99.99	4,800x1,200dpi	600x600dpi	Two	Four	18ppm	Not ideal for offices because of its small ink tanks, but produces good-looking text and photos.	
Pixma iP5000 Photo Printer	\$199.99	9,600x2,400dpi	600x600dpi	Five	Five	25ppm	A relatively fast, versatile printer that provides autoduplexing and excellent text and graphics.	
Pixma iP6600D Photo Printer	\$199.99	9,600x2,400dpi	9,600x2,400dpi	Six	Six	18ppm	Media-card slots and a generous 3.5-inch LCD are just some of this printer's highlights.	
Pixma i80 Color BubbleJet	\$249.99	4,800x1,200dpi	600x600dpi	Two	Four	14ppm	Highly portable; optional car charger and Bluetooth support will benefit those who print on the go.	
Pixma iP90	\$249.99	4,800x1,200dpi	600x600dpi	Two	Four	16ppm	An update to the popular i80, but for true mobile printing, you'll need to spring for the \$100 battery.	
Pixma MP760 Photo All-in-One	\$249.99	4,800x1,200dpi	600x600dpi	Five	Five	25ppm	Digital-photo-friendly MFP also scans film negatives and slides. No fax or auto document feeder, though.	
Pixma MP950 Photo All-in-One	\$399.99	9,600x2,400dpi	600x600dpi	Six	Six	29ppm	Sprawling 3.6-inch LCD justifies this tank-size MFP's high price.	
i9900 Photo Printer	\$499.99	4,800x2,400dpi	4,800x2,400dpi	Eight	Eight	16ppm	Limited paper-type options, but prints up to 13x19. High-quality, fast color and black-and-white prints.	
DELL								
All-in-One Printer B10	\$69	4,800x1,200dpi	4,800x1,200dpi	One	Four	12ppm	Features Dell's Ink Management System, which alerts you when you're low on ink and lets you purchase refills online.	www.dell.com 800-999-3355
Photo All-in-One Printer 924	\$89	4,800x1,200dpi	4,800x1,200dpi	Two	Four	20ppm	Great for tight budgets; all-in-one convenience should satisfy students and households alike.	
Photo All-in-One Printer 944	\$129	4,800x1,200dpi	4,800x1,200dpi	Two	Six	21ppm	Optional photo cartridge boosts the number of ink colors to six and provides better photo printing.	
Photo All-in-One Printer 964	\$179	4,800x1,200dpi	4,800x1,200dpi	Two	Six	26ppm	Comes with a plethora of features, including PictBridge compatibility and a 50-page auto document feeder.	
EPSON AMERICA								
Stylus C88	\$79.99	5,760x1,440dpi	5,760x1,440dpi	Four	Four	22ppm	Your average budget printer, the C88 won't thrill but should provide serviceable performance.	www.epson.com 800-463-7766
Stylus Photo R220	\$99.99	5,760x1,440dpi	5,760x1,440dpi	Six	Six	15ppm	In addition to making 4x6- and 5x7-inch prints, can print directly onto DVDs and CDs.	
Stylus CX4800	\$129.99	5,760x1,440dpi	5,760x1,440dpi	Four	Four	20ppm	Hold out for this model's faster, color-LCD-equipped sibling, the CX7800.	
Stylus CX7800	\$179.99	5,760x1,440dpi	5,760x1,440dpi	Four	Four	20ppm	In addition to a built-in LCD and an array of memory-card slots, offers slide and negative scanning.	
Stylus Photo R340	\$179.99	5,760x1,440dpi	5,760x1,440dpi	Six	Six	15ppm	Lets you edit photos from your camera and send them to a USB drive or CD burner, without a PC.	
PictureMate Deluxe Viewer Edition	\$199.99	5,760x1,440dpi	5,760x1,440dpi	One	Six	Not rated	A color LCD and an optional battery pack make it a formidable portable photo lab.	

* = Indicates the number of ink cartridges the printer simultaneously hosts

** = Fastest manufacturer-rated monochrome print speed

✓ = Editors' Choice | See computershopper.com for full reviews of products in boldface.

TECHMARKET INKJET PRINTERS

Model	Price	Maximum Resolution (Color)	Maximum Resolution (Monochrome)	Number of Cartridges*	Number of Ink Colors	Max. Print Speed**	Editor's Take	Find Out More
EPSON AMERICA								
Stylus Photo RX620	\$299.99	5,760x1,440dpi	5,760x1,440dpi	Six	Six	17ppm	Stocky design; features a rated 39-second 4x6-inch print speed.	 www.epson.com 800-463-7766
Stylus Photo R800	\$399	5,760x1,440dpi	5,760x1,440dpi	Eight	Eight	17ppm	Despite the nozzle problems Epsoms are prone to, print quality is excellent, and photos print relatively quickly.	
Stylus Photo R1800	\$549	5,760x1,440dpi	5,760x1,440dpi	Eight	Eight	Not rated	Its print nozzles are high-maintenance, but this solid medium-format printer produces quality color photos.	
Stylus Photo R2400	\$849.99	5,760x1,440dpi	5,760x1,440dpi	Eight	Eight	Not rated	Expensive, but worth it for photo enthusiasts, thanks to advanced black-and-white print modes.	
HEWLETT-PACKARD								
Deskjet 3930	\$29.99	4,800x1,200dpi	1,200x1,200dpi	Two	Four	11ppm	Prints 8.5x11-inch bordered photos and borderless 4x6s at a price that's hard to beat.	 www.hp.com 888-999-4747
Deskjet 5940	\$89.99	4,800x1,200dpi	1,200x1,200dpi	Two	Four	30ppm	Streamlined design gives this inkjet a scanner-like look. Can print directly from PictBridge-compliant cameras.	
Deskjet 6540	\$129.99	4,800x1,200dpi	1,200x1,200dpi	Two	Four	30ppm	One of HP's fastest inkjets. Nice specs and features for its affordable price.	
Photosmart 8050	\$129.99	4,800x1,200dpi	1,200x1,200dpi	Two	Four	30ppm	A true PC-independent printer, but we wish its 1.8-inch LCD was slightly bigger.	
Photosmart 8250	\$149.99	4,800x1,200dpi	1,200x1,200dpi	Six	Six	32ppm	Despite some grainy output, a fast, able stand-alone printer with a sharp 2.5-inch LCD.	   
Deskjet 6840	\$179.99	4,800x1,200dpi	1,200x1,200dpi	Two	Four	30ppm	Compatible with 802.11b/g networks; offers lightning-fast print speeds and good output.	
Officejet Pro K550	\$199.99	4,800x1,200dpi	1,200x1,200dpi	Four	Four	37ppm	With a rated print speed of 37ppm (black draft mode), this is one fast inkjet for a relatively low price.	
Business Inkjet 1200dn	\$249.99	4,800x1,200dpi	1,200x600dpi	Four	Four	28ppm	Solid, low-cost option for small offices and workgroups that need budget color printing.	
Deskjet 9800	\$299.99	4,800x1,200dpi	1,200x1,200dpi	Two	Four	30ppm	An attractively styled medium-format model capable of prints as large as 13x19 inches.	
Deskjet 450wbt Wireless	\$349.99	4,800x1,200dpi	1,200x1,200dpi	Two	Four	9ppm	On-the-road printer delivers great portability, excellent photo quality, and both infrared and Bluetooth printing.	 
Officejet Pro K850dn	\$499.99	4,800x1,200dpi	1,200x1,200dpi	Four	Four	24ppm	Built-in networking gives this unit an edge, whether you're using it at home or in the office.	
Photosmart 8750 Professional	\$499.99	4,800x1,200dpi	1,200x1,200dpi	Two	Up to nine	19ppm	Designed for pros and serious amateurs, a nine-ink photo printer that produces pics as big as 13x19 inches.	
LEXMARK INTERNATIONAL								
X1270	\$49.99	4,800x1,200dpi	2,400x1,200dpi	Two	Four	17ppm	Bare-bones MFP lets you print, scan, and copy for under \$50.	 www.lexmark.com 800-539-6275
P915	\$59.99	4,800x1,200dpi	2,400x1,200dpi	Two	Six	22ppm	PictBridge compatibility and a 2.5-inch LCD make this model a solid choice for easy photo prints sans PC.	
X2470	\$59.99	4,800x1,200dpi	2,400x1,200dpi	Two	Three	17ppm	Three-color MFP is rated to print 1,000 pages per month and is also PictBridge-compliant.	
X2350	\$69.99	4,800x1,200dpi	1,200x1,200dpi	Two	Three	15ppm	Has limited features—and only three colors—so print photos sparingly. Better bargains abound.	
P4350	\$129.99	4,800x1,200dpi	2,400x1,200dpi	Two	Six	22ppm	A midrange multifunction model with a 1.7-inch screen and PictBridge compatibility.	 
P6250	\$149.99	4,800x1,200dpi	2,400x1,200dpi	Two	Six	22ppm	An easy-to-use and beginner-friendly MFP; prints are decent quality but take long, and scans are mediocre.	
X7170	\$149.99	4,800x1,200dpi	2,400x1,200dpi	Two	Four or six	22ppm	Prints great color photos, but poor text and scan quality mar this well-designed, easy-to-use all-in-one unit.	

THE BEST RECENTLY REVIEWED INKJET PRINTERS

Epson Stylus Photo R800 • \$399 • Editors' Rating: 8.0
 If you can afford its high price, the Stylus Photo R800 delivers excellent print quality and fast print speeds.

HP Photosmart 8250 • \$149.99 • Editors' Rating: 7.5
 Speed and economy make the Photosmart 8250 a reasonable choice for family photo printing on a budget.

Canon Pixma iP6600D • \$199.99 • Editors' Rating: 7.0
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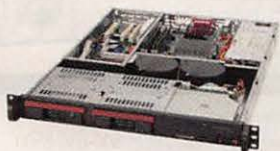
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ULTRACOMPACT DIGITAL CAMERAS (UNDER 5 OUNCES)

NEED TO KNOW

RESOLUTION The quality of digital photos is measured primarily by the number of pixels a camera's image sensor can capture. A 5-megapixel camera, therefore, should capture more image detail than a 4-megapixel model. Still, whether you choose a 4- or a 5-megapixel camera, you should be able to print good-quality images up to 11x17 inches. Higher resolution models allow you to blow up an image and crop details without losing sharpness.

LENS The ability of a digital camera's lens to magnify far-away action (that is, its optical zoom) is measured in x. Look for a model with at least a 3x optical zoom, or more if you often need to catch distant action. Pay no attention to digital-zoom specs. A glass lens is preferable to a plastic one, though vendors often don't specify which you get.





STORAGE MEDIUM Most digicams use wafer-thin flash-memory cards like CompactFlash, SD/MultiMediaCard, Olympus' xD-Picture Card, or Sony's Memory Stick. Cameras

usually come with a small-capacity card, so you'll want to invest in an additional, roomier card with at least 128MB or 256MB to store more photos. If you already have a PDA or a flash-based MP3 player, consider cameras that use the same storage format so you can share cards between devices.

BATTERY Some cameras offer only a proprietary rechargeable battery, usually either lithium-ion or nickel-metal-hydride, that can't be swapped out if it runs out of power while you're shooting. Better are models that can also handle disposable lithium or alkaline batteries you can carry with you to use in a pinch.






VIDEO RECORDING Most digicams can record short video clips with sound. Some models limit recording to 30 seconds or less, while others will record as long as your storage will allow. A number of cameras can record up to 30 frames per second and/or at VGA quality (640x480 pixels).

—Sean Portnoy, Senior Editor

Model	Price	Resolution (Megapixels)	Optical Zoom	Included Memory	Storage Type	Battery Type	Weight	Editor's Take	Find Out More
CANON U.S.A.									
PowerShot SD30	\$299.99	5	2.4x	16MB	SD/MMC	Proprietary	3.7 oz.	Canon finally gives fashion-conscious shooters a zoom lens—if only 2.4x. Cam comes in a choice of four colors.	usa.canon.com 800-652-2666
PowerShot SD600	\$349.99	6	3x	16MB	SD/MMC	Proprietary	4.9 oz.	Not many extra features, but quick performance and excellent images make this model a great choice.	
PowerShot SD430	\$499.99	5	3x	16MB	SD/MMC	Proprietary	4.6 oz.	Adds Wi-Fi to the otherwise-average SD400, so you can transfer/print images and control camera wirelessly.	
CASIO									
Exilim Zoom EX-Z60	\$249.99	6	3x	8.3MB (internal)	SD/MMC	Proprietary	4.2 oz.	Impressive style, performance, and features aren't enough to make up for its soft, noisy, overprocessed photos.	www.casio.com 800-836-8580
Exilim Zoom EX-Z600	\$299.99	6	3x	8.3MB (internal)	SD/MMC	Proprietary	4 oz.	Features an eBay Best Shot mode for people taking pics of items to sell at auction—it's one of 33 scene modes.	
Exilim Card EX-S600	\$349.99	6	3x	8.3MB (internal)	SD/MMC	Proprietary	4.1 oz.	Loads of scene modes, antishake technology, and stellar movie capturing are offset by mediocre image quality.	
Exilim Zoom EX-Z850	\$399.99	8.1	3x	8.3MB (internal)	SD/MMC	Proprietary	4.6 oz.	Squeezes lots of features into a pocket-size form. Only drawback: a zoom lens that adds artifacts to images.	
Exilim Zoom EX-Z1000	\$399.99	10.1	3x	8.3MB (internal)	SD/MMC	Proprietary	4.9 oz.	Highest resolution of any ultracompact; also features a 2.8-inch LCD and image-stabilization technology.	
EASTMAN KODAK									
EasyShare V570	\$399.95	5	5x	32MB (internal)	SD/MMC	Proprietary	4.5 oz.	Couples a 23mm wide-angle lens with a 3x zoom lens for shooting flexibility, but image quality is only average.	www.kodak.com 800-235-6325
FUJIFILM U.S.A.									
FinePix A500	\$179	5.1	3x	12MB (internal)	xD-Picture Card	AA	4.4 oz.	Design—and feature list—are lean; offers just four scene modes, a small 1.8-inch LCD, and no manual controls.	www.fujifilm.com 800-659-3854
FinePix F470	\$279	6	3x	16MB (internal)	xD-Picture Card	Proprietary	4.3 oz.	An average shooter in every sense; nothing sets it apart from the other cameras in this class.	
FinePix Z3	\$279.95	5.1	3x	10MB (internal)	xD-Picture Card	Proprietary	4.6 oz.	A stylish cam with antishake technology; also, Dual Mode feature takes same shot with and without flash.	
HEWLETT-PACKARD									
Photosmart E327	\$119.99	5	None	16MB (internal)	SD/MMC	AA	3.2 oz.	A budget camera crippled by its small (1.8-inch) LCD, limited video-capture features, and lack of optical zoom.	www.hp.com 800-282-6672
Photosmart M425	\$149.99	5	3x	16MB (internal)	SD/MMC	AA	4.8 oz.	At 1.7 inches, its LCD is even smaller than E327's, but the cam does have optical zoom and red-eye reduction.	
Photosmart M527	\$199.99	6	3x	16MB (internal)	SD/MMC	Proprietary	4.8 oz.	Boosts the LCD size to 2 inches, and adds a megapixel of resolution, but video maxes out at 320x240 and 20fps.	
Photosmart R727	\$299.99	6.2	3x	32MB (internal)	SD/MMC	Proprietary	4.8 oz.	Stylish addition to Photosmart line has a 2.5-inch LCD, a panorama mode, and VGA-resolution video capture.	

See computershopper.com for full reviews of products in boldface.

TECHMARKET ULTRACOMPACT DIGITAL CAMERAS (UNDER 5 OUNCES)

Model	Price	Resolution (Megapixels)	Optical Zoom	Included Memory	Storage Type	Battery Type	Weight	Editor's Take	Find Out More
NIKON									
Coolpix L4	\$149.95	4	3x	16MB (internal)	SD/MMC	AA	4.1 oz.	Resolution is a bit low, but it's all most beginners will need; offers an optical zoom for just under \$150.	 www.nikonusa.com 800-645-6687
Coolpix L2	\$249.95	6	3x	32MB (internal)	SD/MMC	AA	4.2 oz.	Extremely bare-bones and a sluggish performer, but delivers excellent photos with minimal effort.	
Coolpix S5	\$349.95	6	3x	21MB (internal)	SD/MMC	Proprietary	4.8 oz.	Well-designed, including a click-wheel interface, but few manual controls. Images show only minor flaws.	
Coolpix S3	\$379.95	6	3x	12MB (internal)	SD/MMC	Proprietary	4.2 oz.	Cool matte-black metal body with a choice of two user-interface styles; also features built-in red-eye reduction.	
Coolpix S6	\$399.95	6	3x	20MB (internal)	SD/MMC	Proprietary	4.9 oz.	Same feature set as the S5, but adds highly limited Wi-Fi capabilities that aren't worth the extra \$50.	
OLYMPUS AMERICA									
FE-115	\$149.99	5	2.8x	28MB (internal)	xD-Picture Card	AA	4.9 oz.	A complete lack of image settings, coupled with sluggish performance, make this a cam to avoid.	 www.olympusamerica.com 888-553-4448
FE-140	\$199.99	6	3x	22MB (internal)	xD-Picture Card	AA	4.6 oz.	Suitable for beginners—includes a Guide mode to help newbies—but images and video captures look mediocre.	
Stylus 710	\$299.99	7.1	3x	19MB (internal)	xD-Picture Card	Proprietary	3.6 oz.	Features a water- and scratch-resistant metal body and a swift burst mode. Image quality is disappointing, however.	
PANASONIC									
Lumix DMC-FX01	\$349.95	6	3.6x	16MB	SD/MMC	Proprietary	4.6 oz.	Optical image stabilization—and a zoom lens that begins at a wide-angle 28mm—set this model apart.	www.panasonic.com 800-405-0652
PENTAX IMAGING									
Optio E10	\$199.95	6	3x	10MB (internal)	SD/MMC	AA	4.6 oz.	Internal memory is lacking, and video-clip capture isn't the best, maxing out at 20fps.	 www.pentaximaging.com 800-877-0155
Optio S6	\$249.95	6	3x	23MB (internal)	SD/MMC	Proprietary	3.5 oz.	Will please casual shooters with its ease of use and build quality, though it suffers in image quality and performance.	
Optio W10	\$299.95	6	3x	10.5MB (internal)	SD/MMC	Proprietary	4.9 oz.	Like the Olympus Stylus 710, offers a waterproof body for extreme shooting and delivers mediocre photos.	
Optio A10	\$349.95	8	3x	24MB (internal)	SD/MMC	Proprietary	4.4 oz.	A roster of fun features and an excellent macro mode are marred by LCD limitations and noisy images.	
Optio T10	\$349.95	6	3x	12MB (internal)	SD/MMC	Proprietary	4.8 oz.	Has a touch-screen interface (and a stylus) for the roomy 3-inch LCD. You can draw stamps and frames on images.	
SAMSUNG ELECTRONICS									
Digimax A503	\$129.99	5	None	24MB (internal)	SD/MMC	AA, CR-V3	3.5 oz.	Available in silver, black, or red—but color choices don't make up for the lack of an optical zoom lens.	 www.samsung.com 866-344-4629
Digimax L60	\$229	6	3x	23MB (internal)	SD/MMC	Proprietary	4.6 oz.	Offers video-capture features such as a movie stabilizer, in-camera editing of clips, and the ability to merge clips.	
Digimax i6	\$299	5	3x	24MB (internal)	SD/MMC	AA, CR-V3	3.4 oz.	Features sleek wave design, built-in red-eye removal, anti-shake function, and ability to play MP3/video downloads.	
SONY ELECTRONICS									
Cyber-shot DSC-W30	\$229.95	6	3x	32MB (internal)	Memory Stick Duo, Pro Duo	Proprietary	4.5 oz.	Provides impressive photos and fast, easy operation in a simple package, though it lacks manual controls.	 www.sonystyle.com 800-222-7669
Cyber-shot DSC-W70	\$299.95	7.2	3x	58MB (internal)	Memory Stick Duo, Pro Duo	Proprietary	4.7 oz.	Bumps up the resolution, LCD size, and internal memory from the DSC-W30.	
Cyber-shot DSC-T9	\$399.95	6	3x	58MB (internal)	Memory Stick Duo, Pro Duo	Proprietary	4 oz.	A beautiful, pocket-friendly camera that's fast and easy to use. High-quality images, save for excessive red-eye.	
Cyber-shot DSC-T30	\$499.95	7.2	3x	58MB (internal)	Memory Stick Duo, Pro Duo	Proprietary	4.7 oz.	Adds more megapixels to the DSC-T9's winning formula, along with a bigger LCD and a version clad in all black.	

THE BEST RECENTLY REVIEWED ULTRACOMPACT DIGITAL CAMERAS (UNDER 5 OUNCES)

Canon PowerShot SD600 • \$349.99 • Editors' Rating: **7.8**

Despite its no-frills features, the Canon PowerShot SD600 delivers quality photos and strong performance in a small, sturdy package.

Casio Exilim Zoom EX-Z850 • \$399.99 • Editors' Rating: **7.6**

The versatile Casio Exilim EX-Z850 is well-suited for snapshooters and photo enthusiasts looking for an ultracompact camera.

Sony Cyber-shot DSC-T30 • \$499.95 • Editors' Rating: **7.6**

Pocket-friendly and stylish, the Sony Cyber-shot DSC-T30 continues the T-series tradition of ease of use and image quality.



Canon PowerShot SD600

SMARTPHONES

NEED TO KNOW

SIZE AND CAPABILITY Smartphones come in a wide range of shapes and sizes but can be divided into three major styles based on primary function. Large, PDA-like handsets tend to be powerful organizers first and cell phones second. Sleeker models are meant to be used as mobile phones above all else, but they also offer advanced connectivity features. Finally, e-mail- and text-messaging-centric devices can double as voice communicators.



INPUT METHOD If you plan to chat via IM or send e-mails often, a keyboard is a plus. A QWERTY keyboard usually adds to a handset's size, however. Phones that rely on a touch-screen keypad and stylus are not ideal for manually entering data but are generally more portable. Flip- and candy-bar-style handsets are the smallest of all and use standard numerical keypads, which are awkward for data entry.

SCREEN Though most smartphones will have a color screen, TFT resolution is another matter. Look for the highest pixel count in the smallest screen size you can live with.

CONNECTIVITY Most smartphones connect to a cellular network via GSM or CDMA technology. A few GSM-based devices even qualify as world phones, meaning they can roam on the GSM networks commonly found in Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. Some smartphones also support Bluetooth and/or 802.11b Wi-Fi wireless networking.

CAMERA Most models have rudimentary cameras able to capture low-resolution VGA (640x480-pixel) pictures. Many of these phones can even record brief video clips. That said, unless you have a burning desire to capture basic images on the road, this feature shouldn't factor much into your decision.

—Erin Kandel, Assistant Editor

Model	Price*	Carrier	Wireless Standard	Operating System	RAM	Input	Built-In Camera	Weight	Editor's Take	Find Out More
CINGULAR WIRELESS										
2125	\$299.99	Cingular	GSM	Windows Mobile 5.0	64MB	Keypad	Yes	3.7 oz.	Lacks Wi-Fi and has only average call quality, but redeemed by its powerful parts and compact frame.	www.cingular.com 888-333-6651
8125	\$349.99	Cingular	GSM	Windows Mobile 5.0	128MB	Keyboard	Yes	5.3 oz.	Clunky, heavy world phone has long battery life and a slide-out keyboard. Call quality is subpar.	
HEWLETT-PACKARD										
iPaq HW6515 Pocket PC	\$599.99	Cingular	GSM	Windows Mobile 2003 SE Phone Ed.	64MB	Keyboard, stylus	Yes	6.2 oz.	A bit pricey, but packs features galore, including Wi-Fi, Bluetooth, and EDGE capability.	www.hp.com 888-999-4747
IMATE										
SP5	\$539.99	Cingular, T-Mobile	GSM	Windows Mobile 5.0	64MB	Keypad	Yes	3.7 oz.	Candy-bar-style phone is feature-loaded but won't weigh you down. Bluetooth and Wi-Fi are onboard.	www.imate.com
Jamin	\$749.99	Cingular, T-Mobile	GSM	Windows Mobile 5.0	64MB	Stylus	Yes	5.3 oz.	Pricey successor to the i-mate Jam adds Wi-Fi, a bigger touch screen, and a 2-megapixel camera.	
MOTOROLA										
NEW Moto Q	\$299.99	Verizon	CDMA	Windows Mobile 5.0	64MB	Keyboard	Yes	4 oz.	Long-awaited Q packs a full keyboard and lots of features into its razor-thin frame.	www.motorola.com 866-289-6686
NOKIA										
9300	\$399.99	Cingular	GSM	Symbian OS 7.0	80MB	Keypad, keyboard	No	5.9 oz.	Bluetooth-enabled, Symbian-based cell splits open to reveal a wide keyboard and big color screen.	www.nokiausa.com 888-256-2098
PALM										
Treo 650	\$599	Cingular, Sprint, Verizon	GSM, CDMA	Palm OS 5.4	32MB	Keyboard, stylus	Yes	6.3 oz.	Former smartphone leader is still a top choice, with a bright screen, full keyboard, and fast processor, but its feature set falls behind Palm's latest offerings.	www.palm.com 800-881-7256
Palm 700p	\$619	Sprint, Verizon	CDMA	Palm OS 5.4.9	128MB	Keyboard, stylus	Yes	6.4 oz.	Treo 650 successor is built on the same robust hardware as the 700w, but runs the latest Palm OS.	
Palm 700w	\$619	Verizon	CDMA	Windows Mobile 5.0	128MB	Keyboard, stylus	Yes	6.4 oz.	Palm's first phone based on the Windows Mobile platform; feature-rich, but screen is low-res.	
RESEARCH IN MOTION										
BlackBerry 7100i	\$349.99	Nextel	Nextel	Proprietary	64MB	Keypad	No	4.3 oz.	First BlackBerry on the Nextel network features a slim body and walkie-talkie functionality, but no keyboard.	www.rim.com 519-888-7465
BlackBerry 7130e	\$449.99	Verizon	CDMA	Proprietary	64MB	Keypad	No	4.7 oz.	An attractive phone with solid call quality, EV-DO support, and a sharp display. No keyboard, though.	
BlackBerry 8700g	\$549.99	T-Mobile	GSM	Proprietary	64MB	Keyboard	No	4.7 oz.	Robust but user-friendly; offers easy e-mail setup and supports popular instant-messaging clients.	
SAMSUNG										
SPH-i700	\$349.99	Verizon	CDMA	Windows Mobile 2003 for Pocket PC	64MB	Stylus	Yes	6.9 oz.	Large, but lacks a keyboard for fast, on-the-go text entry. An otherwise-capable choice for the price.	www.samsung.com 800-726-7864
SCH-i730	\$699.99	Verizon	CDMA	Windows Mobile 2003 for Pocket PC	64MB	Keyboard	No	6.4 oz.	A nice blend of phone and Windows PDA, with Wi-Fi, Bluetooth, and EV-DO broadband.	
T-MOBILE U.S.A.										
SDA	\$299.99	T-Mobile	GSM	Windows Mobile 5.0	64MB	Keypad	Yes	3.7 oz.	Keypad is cramped, but productivity tools, multimedia features, and performance are top-notch.	www.t-mobile.com 800-866-2453
Sidekick II	\$349.99	T-Mobile	GSM	Danger OS	32MB	Keyboard	Yes	7 oz.	A mobile messenger's dream, featuring a hidden, swiveling keyboard. Great for sidewalk surfing.	
MDA	\$399.99	T-Mobile	GSM	Windows Mobile 5.0	64MB	Keyboard	Yes	5.6 oz.	A capable phone marred by a poorly designed keyboard and sluggish performance.	
UTSTARCOM										
XV6700	\$499.99	Verizon	CDMA	Windows Mobile 5.0	64MB	Keyboard, stylus	Yes	6.6 oz.	Powerful Windows Mobile smartphone is tripped up by wireless restrictions and mediocre performance.	www.utstar.com 800-229-1235
PPC6700SP	\$599.99	Sprint	CDMA	Windows Mobile 5.0	64MB	Keyboard, stylus	Yes	6.1 oz.	Large, but supports three flavors of wireless data networking: Wi-Fi, Bluetooth, and EV-DO.	

See computershopper.com for full reviews of products in boldface. * = List price. Actual cost may vary by carrier.

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*Enhanced Virus Protection is only enabled by certain operating systems including Windows and Linux. The model number indicates relative software performance among this AMD processor family.

USB FLASH DRIVES








NEED TO KNOW

STORAGE While they can't hold as much data as most portable hard drives, smaller, pocket-friendly USB flash drives are ideal for shuttling files back and forth between PCs. Storage capacities typically range from 128MB to 4GB.

FEATURES To protect your sensitive data, several drives come with preloaded software that will password-protect and encrypt files. A few models even incorporate fingerprint scanners for extra security. Others include tools for desktop replication and file synchronization. And some even throw in flash-capable versions of popular apps such as Firefox, Skype, and Winamp.

ACCESSORIES Tiny, thumb-size flash drives are easy to misplace. Look for a model that comes with an attachable accessory such as a lanyard or key ring to keep your drive close at hand.

COMPATIBILITY Most flash drives are plug-and-play-compatible, meaning they work automatically when connected to a computer's USB port. If you're still running Windows 98 (or, for Mac users, anything older than OS 9), you'll need to install a driver first. While many flash drives will work with both PCs and Macs, the software that comes preinstalled is often for Windows PCs only. —Erin Kandel, Assistant Editor

Model	Price	Capacity	Size (HWD, Inches)	Construction	Accessories	Compatibility	Editor's Take	Find Out More
CRUCIAL TECHNOLOGY								
Gizmo	\$18.99/\$28.99	256MB/512MB	3.2x1x0.4	Plastic	Lanyard	PC, Mac, Linux	Sleek silver drive offers an attractive look and an excellent price per megabyte.	www.crucial.com 800-336-8896 
Gizmo Overdrive	\$35.99/\$47.99	512MB/1GB	3.2x1x0.4	Plastic	Lanyard	PC, Mac, Linux	Swaps silver body for white, and moves data more quickly than the original Gizmo, but at a cost.	
Gizmo Overdrive With Security Software	\$39.99/\$52.99/\$95.99	512MB/1GB/2GB	3.2x1x0.4	Plastic	Lanyard	PC, Mac, Linux	Comes with preinstalled software that encrypts your data for password-protected access.	
IOMEGA								
Mini USB Drive	\$39.95	256MB	3.4x1x0.4	Plastic	None	PC, Mac, Linux	Pricey, but supports Iomega's Active Disk technology, which lets you use certain apps on any computer.	www.iomega.com 888-516-8467 
Micro Mini USB Drive	\$49.95/\$99.95	512MB/1GB	1.5x.6x0.4	Plastic	Key clip, neck chain, three colored caps	PC, Mac, Linux	Tiny drive is about half the size of your thumb. Also has Active Disk—and a high price.	
KANGURU SOLUTIONS								
KanguruMini Drive	\$14.95/\$19.95/\$49.95/\$69.95/\$119.95	128MB/256MB/512MB/1GB/2GB	2.8x1x0.5	Aluminum	Neck strap, USB extension cable	PC, Mac, Linux	A little heavier than the competition, and lacks security options. Still, a good pick considering its swift transfer speeds and moderate price.	www.kanguru.com 888-526-4878 
Bio Drive	\$99.95/\$129.95/\$199.95/\$279.95	256MB/512MB/1GB/2GB	3x1x0.6	Plastic	USB extension cable	PC	Has a built-in fingerprint scanner for ultimate security. Works only with Windows PCs.	
Flash Drive Max	\$799.95/\$1,499/\$2,799	16GB/32GB/64GB	3.7x1x0.6	Aluminum	Neck strap, USB extension cable	PC, Mac, Linux	Largest-capacity flash thumb drive available, but overkill for most, costing more than many PCs. Includes security software and a two-year warranty.	
KINGSTON TECHNOLOGY								
DataTraveler II	\$20/\$29/\$45/\$99	256MB/512MB/1GB/2GB	2.7x0.8x0.4	Plastic	Lanyard	PC, Mac, Linux	Comes with a user-friendly encryption app that lets you password-protect up to 90 percent of the drive.	www.kingston.com 800-835-6575 
DataTraveler II Plus Migo Edition	\$24/\$34/\$58/\$88/\$144	256MB/512MB/1GB/2GB/4GB	2.7x0.8x0.4	Plastic	Lanyard	PC	Migo software stores your desktop settings and automatically syncs them with other PCs.	
U3 Data Traveler	\$37/\$55	1GB/2GB	2.7x0.8x0.4	Plastic	Lanyard	PC	Similar to Migo Edition, its U3 software saves your personal preferences, profiles, and data.	
LEXAR MEDIA								
JumpDrive Sport	\$24.99/\$29.99/\$44.99/\$79.99	128MB/256MB/512MB/1GB	3.2x0.8x0.3	Plastic, rubber	None	PC, Mac	No-frills drive has a sturdy design and a rugged rubber strap to protect it from bumps on the road.	www.lexar.com 800-789-9418 
JumpDrive Secure II	\$29.99/\$44.99/\$79.99/\$119.99	256MB/512MB/1GB/2GB	2.6x0.9x0.2	Plastic	None	PC, Mac	File Shredder feature allows you to securely delete data so it can never be reaccessed or recovered.	
JumpDrive Expression	\$29.99/\$49.99/\$89.99	256MB/512MB/1GB	3.3x0.7x0.5	Plastic, rubber	Two colored bands with attached caps	PC, Mac	Colored rubber band wraps around this drive to form a protective cover and a cap for the USB connector.	
JumpDrive Lightning	\$59.99/\$99.99/\$159.99	512MB/1GB/2GB	3.1x0.9x0.4	Stainless steel	Polishing cloth	PC	Fast transfer speeds, strong security features, and a solid software bundle in one shiny little drive.	
JumpDrive Touchguard	\$69.99	256MB	3.4x0.9x0.5	Plastic, rubber	USB extension cable	PC	Built-in fingerprint scanner offers primo security, but Mac and non-Internet Explorer users are out of luck.	
MEMOREX PRODUCTS								
Mini TravelDrive U3	\$34.99/\$54.99/\$99.99/\$179.99	256MB/512MB/1GB/2GB	2.25x0.9x0.3	Plastic	Lanyard	PC, Mac, Linux	Expensive drive is loaded with U3 apps for e-mail, security, file synchronization, and virus detection.	www.memorex.com 562-653-2800 
M-Flyer USB 2.0 TravelDrive	\$69.99/\$119.99/\$219.99	512MB/1GB/2GB	3.2x0.8x0.5	Aluminum	Carrying case, lanyard	PC, Mac	Aluminum body dents easily, but retractable plug, security features, and travel case sweeten the deal.	
TravelDrive I.D.	\$79.99/\$119.99	512MB/1GB	3.3x1.1x0.3	Plastic	Lanyard	PC, Mac	Equipped with a customizable LCD that shows you the drive's available space.	
SANDISK								
Cruzer Mini USB Flash Drive	\$24.99/\$39.99/\$59.99/\$99.99/\$199.99	256MB/512MB/1GB/2GB/4GB	2.8x0.8x0.3	Plastic	Lanyard, two colored caps	PC, Mac	Not many fancy features—just a simple flash drive at a nice price. Comes with an app to sync your PC's files and Outlook data.	www.sandisk.com 408-542-0500 
Cruzer Micro USB Flash Drive	\$39.99/\$59.99/\$99.99/\$199.99	512MB/1GB/2GB/4GB	2.2x0.8x0.3	Plastic	Lanyard, Skype voucher card	PC	U3-enabled drive has a retractable USB plug and comes preloaded with Skype VoIP software.	
Cruzer Titanium USB Flash Drive	\$49.99/\$74.99/\$119.99	512MB/1GB/2GB	3x0.8x0.3	Titanium-coated metal	Key ring, lanyard	PC, Mac	Delivers useful utilities and superior durability at a competitive price per megabyte.	
Cruzer Profile USB Flash Drive	\$69.99/\$79.99	512MB/1GB	2.5x1.1x0.6	Plastic	Lanyard	PC	Fingerprint scanner works well, but the clumsy split design blocks access to adjacent USB ports.	

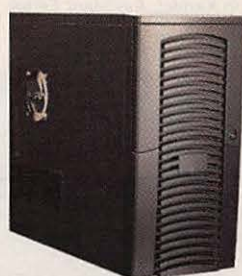
✓ = Editors' Choice | See computershopper.com for full reviews of products in boldface.

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WARRANTIES AND SERVICE PLANS FOR DESKTOPS AND NOTEBOOKS

NEED TO KNOW

TERM Major vendors such as Lenovo and Gateway are trying to set the benchmark for support at 90 days, but no PC owner should settle for a warranty that short. If you're looking at a term shorter than one year, consider an extended service plan. **Fine Print:** Most extended plans require you to purchase them before the standard warranty has expired.

PARTS COVERAGE As a rule, standard warranties cover your computer's main hardware components (CPU, hard drive, RAM). Software and peripherals, such as monitors and keyboards, are usually covered by their manufacturers' warranties or an optional service plan. Keep in mind that extended service plans for PCs still won't cover these extras—they only lengthen the coverage period of the standard warranty.

DAMAGE PROTECTION Under a standard warranty, vendors will repair computers damaged during shipping or with defective parts. Notebook owners and the accident-prone should invest in an accidental damage protection (ADP) plan to insure their PCs against falls,

spills, and regular wear and tear. **Fine Print:** ADP plans aren't available in all states.

REPAIRS Many vendors offer depot service, which requires a customer to return a PC to an authorized factory or service center for major repairs and parts replacement. If you get a service plan that includes onsite repair, a computer technician will fix your PC at your home, usually by the next business day. **Fine Print:** A host of eligibility restrictions usually apply to getting onsite service. Examine the service contract before buying.

TECHNICAL SUPPORT Phone and online chat are generally the most effective forms of tech support, but an easily navigable online knowledge base can help you solve simple computer problems at home, without waiting on hold.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS While the warranty and support information below applies to most of each vendor's offerings, terms and conditions can vary by system or system line. Always review the terms for your particular PC carefully before buying. —Erin Kandel, Assistant Editor

Plan	Price	Term	Accidental-Damage Protection (ADP)	Onsite Repair/Return-to-Depot Service	Free Online Knowledge Base	Toll-Free Phone Support Hours	E-Mail Support/Live Chat	Editor's Take
ABS COMPUTER TECHNOLOGIES www.abspc.com • 800-876-8088								
Standard Warranty	Free	One year	No	No/yes	Yes	Weekdays, 11:30 a.m. to 10:30 p.m.; Saturday, 11:30 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. (ET)	Yes/no	Online forum and knowledge base remain, but ABS has eliminated its live-chat option. Limited phone hours have been expanded to include Saturdays.
APPLE COMPUTER www.apple.com • 800-692-7753								
Limited Warranty	Free	One year	No	No/yes	Yes	24 hours daily (90 days)	Yes/yes (90 days)	Apple's massive online knowledge base is one of the best in the biz, but its skimpy 90-day support is a real downer.
AppleCare Protection Plan	\$149 to \$349	Three years	No	Yes (desktops)/yes	Yes	24 hours daily	Yes/yes	A necessity for all but the bravest, to bolster the anemic 90 days of included support. Covers hardware and software.
CYBERPOWER www.cyberpower.com • 800-707-0393								
Limited Warranty	Free	One year (notebooks); three years (desktops)	No	Yes (desktops)/yes	No	24 hours daily (one year)	Yes/no	Lackluster notebook coverage, but desktops get a solid three years, plus one year of onsite service. Desktop owners can add an extra year of onsite and 24/7 phone support for \$40 in the second year of warranty, or for \$80 in the third year.
DELL www.dell.com • 800-999-3355								
Limited Warranty	Free	One year	No	Yes/yes	Yes	24 hours daily (one year)	Yes/yes	Dell recently upped its measly 90-day service term. All desktops and notebooks now come with a full year of support.
Extended Services Plan	\$19 and up	One to four years	No	Yes/yes	Yes	24 hours daily	Yes/yes	Three- and four-year plans include global support for laptops and extended hours for onsite repairs.
CompleteCare Agreement	\$59 and up (desktops); \$79 to \$199 (notebooks)	One to four years	Yes	Yes/yes	Yes	24 hours daily	Yes/yes	Well-priced plan has some caveats: It doesn't cover all components, and notebooks require at least a three-year contract.
FUJITSU COMPUTER SYSTEMS www.fujitsupc.com • 800-385-4878								
International Limited Warranty	Free	One year	No	No/yes	Yes	24 hours daily	Yes/yes	Solid, no-frills coverage provides peace of mind for one year but doesn't include shipping costs for depot repairs.
Extended Warranty	\$99.95 (one year); \$179.95 (two years)	One or two years	No	No/yes	Yes	24 hours daily	Yes/yes	Note: This warranty extension must be activated within 30 days of the date of the notebook purchase.
Executive Mobile Service	\$49.95 (one year); \$149.95 (three years)	One or three years	No	Yes/no	Yes	24 hours daily	Yes/yes	Adds onsite repair but no damage protection; must buy two-year extended warranty with the three-year contract.
GATEWAY www.gateway.com • 800-369-1409								
Value Plan	Free	90 days	No	No/yes	Yes	No	Yes/yes	Basic 90-day warranty falls short, and phone support is not toll-free. For increased coverage, the Value Plus Plan is the best value.
Value Plus Plan	\$39.99 to \$119.99 (desktops); \$99.99 to \$319.99 (notebooks)	One to four years	No	Yes/yes	Yes	No	Yes/yes	Gateway recently lowered the cost of this extended-warranty upgrade. Includes onsite repair and advanced live chat, but still no toll-free phone support.
Total Protection Plan	\$149.99 to \$259.99 (desktops); \$169.99 to \$419.99 (notebooks)	One or three years	Yes (notebooks only)	Yes/yes	Yes	24 hours daily	Yes/yes	The only Gateway plan with toll-free phone support. Next-day onsite repair is a standout, but at this price, notebook-only damage protection limits the appeal for desktop users.

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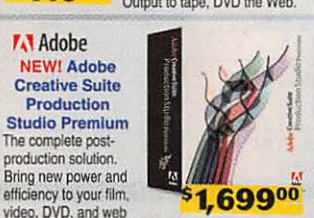
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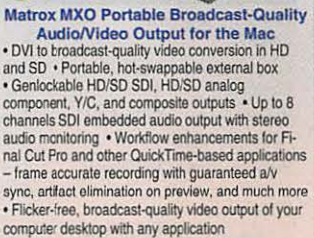
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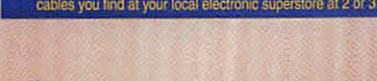
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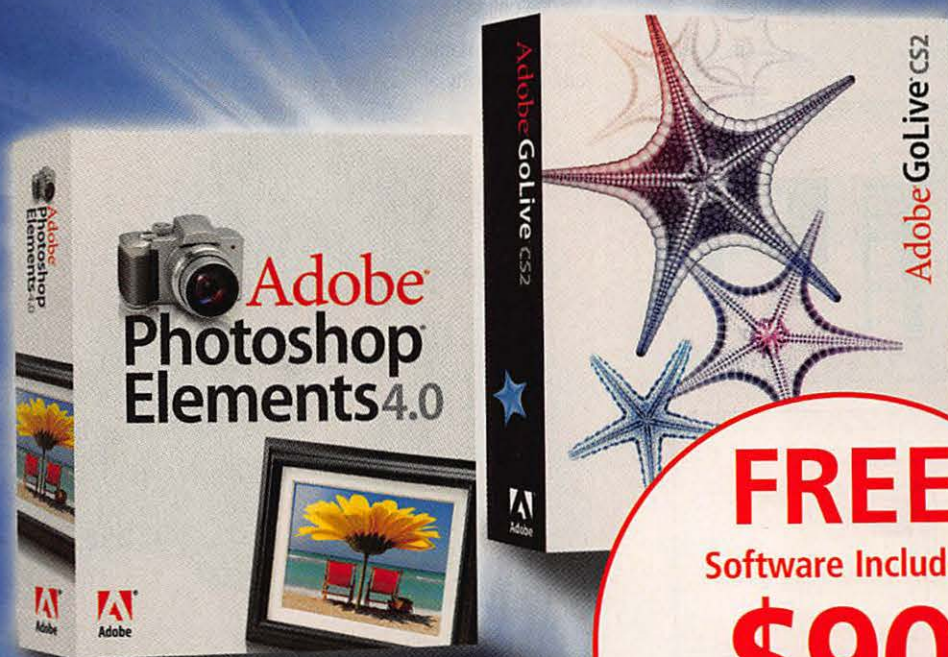


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Plan	Price	Term	Accidental-Damage Protection (ADP)	Onsite Repair/Return-to-Depot Service	Free Online Knowledge Base	Toll-Free Phone Support Hours	E-Mail Support/Live Chat	Editor's Take
HEWLETT-PACKARD www.hp.com • 888-999-4747								
Basic Warranty	Free	One year	No	No/yes	Yes	24 hours daily	Yes/yes	Generous standard warranty covers both hardware and software. Knowledge base and online chat are also pluses.
Extended Service Plan	\$99.99 to \$199.99 (desktops); \$99.99 to \$179.99 (notebooks)	Two or three years	No	No/yes	Yes	24 hours daily	Yes/yes	Covers displays purchased on same invoice as PC, and notebooks get express three-day repair, but we'd also like either damage protection or onsite service at this price.
HP House Call for Desktops	\$129.99 to \$199.99	Two or three years	No	Yes/yes	Yes	24 hours daily	Yes/yes	Plan applies only to eligible desktops and Media Center PCs; includes live chat.
Accidental Damage Protection Extended Service Plan	\$149.99 to \$199.99 (desktops); \$99.99 to \$349.99 (notebooks)	One to three years	Yes	No/yes	Yes	24 hours daily	Yes/yes	Adds damage protection to Extended Service Plan package; covers accidental damage as well as user wear-and-tear.
IBUYPOWER www.ibuypower.com • 888-462-3899								
Limited Warranty for Desktops	Free	One year (parts); three years (labor)	No	No/yes	No	Weekdays, noon to 8 p.m. (ET)	Yes/yes	Plan covers free depot repairs for three years, but parts replacement for only one year. Phone support hours are only on weekdays, so take advantage of iBuypower's e-mail and live-chat support options.
Limited Warranty (Notebooks)	Free	One year	No	No/yes	No	Weekdays, noon to 8 p.m. (ET)	Yes/yes	Average notebook coverage is weakened by limited phone support hours. No online knowledge base, either.
Depot Service Warranty (Notebooks)	\$29	One year	No	No/yes	No	24 hours daily	Yes/yes	To cover shipping costs for repairs, notebook buyers should shell out the \$29 for this plan.
Extended Warranty (Desktops)	\$49 (two years); \$79 (three years)	Two or three years	No	Yes/yes	No	24 hours daily	Yes/yes	Great price, but use onsite support carefully—there's a \$165 service charge for software problems.
LENOVO www.lenovo.com • 866-968-4465								
Limited Warranty (Desktops)	Free	90 days to four years	No	Yes/yes	Yes	24 hours daily	Yes/no	Terms vary greatly from model to model; some plans offer mail-in instead of onsite service. Steer clear of 90-day terms.
Limited Warranty (Notebooks)	Free	90 days to four years	No	Yes/yes	Yes	24 hours daily	Yes/no	Aside from a few models with 90-day terms, notebooks get better-than-average coverage here.
Warranty Service Upgrade (Desktops)	\$29 to \$293	One to four years	No	Yes/yes	Yes	24 hours daily	Yes/no	The most-expensive upgrades provide long coverage plus 24/7, same-day onsite service.
Warranty Service Upgrade (Notebooks)	\$49 to \$549	One to five years	No	Yes/yes	Yes	24 hours daily	Yes/no	Lenovo's willingness to cover notebooks for five years is reassuring, but look to the ADP plan for damage protection.
Accidental Damage Protection (Notebooks)	\$109 to \$469	One to four years	Yes	No/yes	Yes	24 hours daily	Yes/no	Plan offers full damage protection for up to four years, but, considering the cost, we wish it included onsite service.
POLYWELL COMPUTERS www.polywell.com • 800-900-5836								
Basic Warranty	Free	Varies by model	No	No/yes	Yes	24 hours daily (one year)	Yes/no	Parts coverage is based on individual manufacturers' warranties; five years of labor coverage for PCs priced at \$1,000 and up.
Enhanced Basic Warranty	3 percent of price (one year); 8 percent of price (three years)	One or three years	No	Yes/yes	Yes	24 hours daily	Yes/no	Depending on the price of your PC, this plan option can cost a bundle—plus, it requires the purchase of an onsite-service contract. No knowledge base.
SONY ELECTRONICS www.sonystyle.com • 877-512-7669								
Limited Warranty	Free	One year	No	No/yes	Yes	24 hours daily	Yes/yes	A solid limited warranty, enhanced by a superior knowledge base and live-chat support.
Express Ship (Notebooks)	\$124.99 to \$429.99	One to four years	No	No/yes	Yes	24 hours daily	Yes/yes	Sony's most basic warranty extension for notebooks, this plan shoulders express-shipping costs for depot repairs.
Onsite Service (Desktops)	\$149.99 to \$379.99	Two to five years	No	Yes/yes	Yes	24 hours daily	Yes/yes	Covers lightning damage if your surge protector fails, but no complete damage-protection plan is offered for desktops.
Onsite Service With ADP (Notebooks)	\$199.99 to \$439.99	Two to four years	Yes	Yes/yes	Yes	24 hours daily	Yes/yes	Pricy but well-rounded package covers all the bases for long-term laptop protection.
TOSHIBA AMERICA www.toshibadirect.com • 800-316-0920								
Limited Warranty	Free	90 days to three years	No	Yes (Qosmio models)/yes	Yes	24 hours daily	No/no	Best to upgrade if you're stuck with a skimpy 90-day term. No live-chat or e-mail support, but Qosmios get onsite service.
Extended Warranty	\$71.10 to \$206.10	One to three years	No	No/yes	Yes	24 hours daily	No/no	Most expensive for Qosmio laptops; for extra protection, consider adding the accidental-damage-protection plan.
Onsite Repair	\$71.10 to \$314.10	One, three, or four years	No	Yes/yes	Yes	24 hours daily	No/no	Same coverage as limited warranty, but with onsite support for all notebook models; a better deal when purchased with an extension.
SystemGuard Accidental Damage Coverage	\$134.10 to \$314.10	One to three years	Yes	No/yes	Yes	24 hours daily	No/no	Well-priced damage-protection plan is offered in more term lengths when bundled with a warranty extension or at-home repair.
VELOCITY MICRO www.velocitymicro.com • 800-303-7866								
Limited Warranty	Free	One to three years	No	Yes/yes	Yes	Weekdays, 7 a.m. to 11 p.m.; Saturday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. (ET)	Yes/yes	Phone-support hours are limited, but the user-friendly live chat and up to three years of free onsite service can't be beat.
VelocityCare	Free; \$49 to \$79 (varies by model)	One to three years	No	Yes/yes	Yes	24 hours daily	Yes/yes	This plan rounds out limited warranty features with 24/7 phone hours; comes free with most models.

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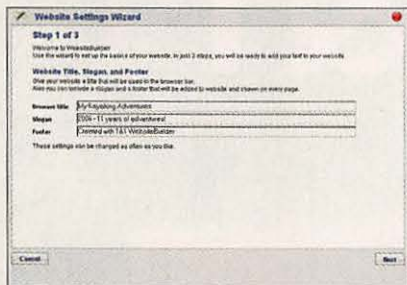
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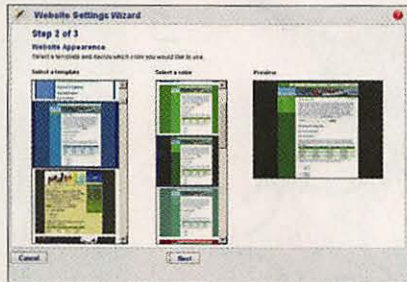


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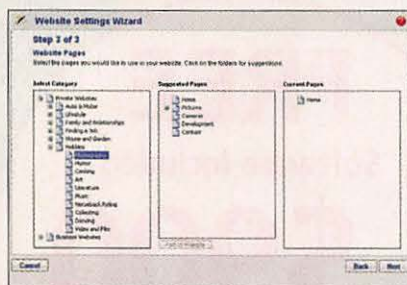
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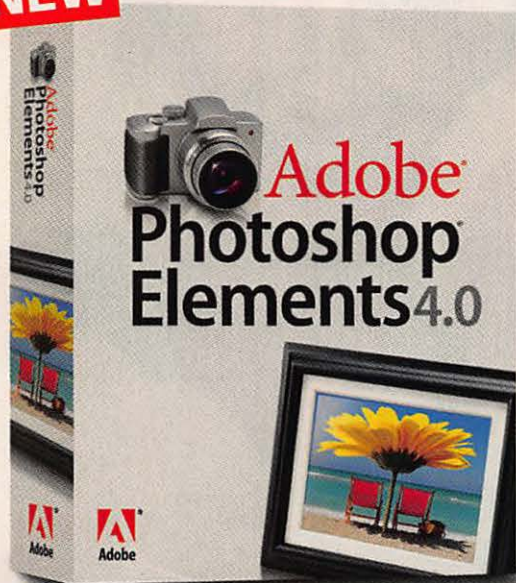
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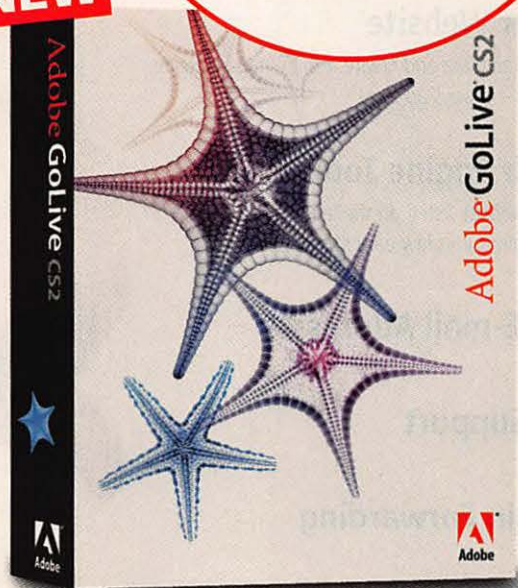
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Our Premium Software Suite also includes the new GIF Animator 5, Ranking Toolbox 4.0, Hello Engines 4.1 Professional and WISE FTP 3.0. Now combined with the design power of Adobe, this suite, valued at over \$900, offers everything you need to create, publish and promote your website.

*If you choose to receive the Premium Software Suite, you must commit to a one-year contract for the package you choose. \$6.99 shipping & processing fee applies

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Protect your contact information from spammers! Your privacy is important. That's why, unlike other registrars, we offer this important feature free of charge.

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Choose a template and create a three page website in minutes – always ad free!

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Get your website listed on the leading search engines in a few easy steps.

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DNS Management



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We include up to
5 FREE DOMAINS
 with all
 Shared Hosting Packages!

1&1 beats the competition with more included features and the lowest prices in the industry. Why pay more?

Compare for yourself!

	1&1	Go Daddy	YAHOO!
.com .net .org	\$5.99	From \$7.95	From \$9.95
Private Domain Registration (Optional)	Included	\$1.95	\$9.00
ICANN Fee	Included	\$0.25	Included
E-mail Account	FREE 1,000 MB Mailbox Size	FREE 25 MB Mailbox Size	NO Mailbox Included
Total Annual Cost	\$5⁹⁹	From \$10¹⁵	From \$18⁹⁵

VALUE 1&1 delivers the best value for your money!

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The 1&1 Beginner Package is our most affordable shared hosting solution and provides the quickest and easiest way to establish your first web presence.

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FREE Private Domain Registration!

The 1&1 Beginner Package includes a free domain name. Register the .com, .net, .org or .info domain of your choice and 1&1 will pay for your domain for as long as you keep your shared hosting package with us!

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Share your ideas with the world...

Start your own blog today. This personal publishing medium is included free with all Linux shared hosting packages and is a great way to share your thoughts, activities, developments or interests on a regular basis. An out-of-the-box solution, your weblog can be installed in two minutes and with no programming skills.



Not familiar with what a weblog can do for you?
Check out our sample blogs:

www.newsthewayiseeit.info

www.thecasualfarmer.info

www.thewidestweb.info

www.europacker.info

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features and the lowest prices in the industry.
Why pay more?

Compare for yourself!

	1&1	Go Daddy
	BEGINNER	ECONOMY
	\$2⁹⁹	\$3⁹⁹
Price Per Month		
Included Domains	1	\$1.99/year with purchase
Web Space	5 GB	5 GB
Monthly Transfer Volume	250 GB	250 GB
E-mail Accounts	500 IMAP or POP3	500 POP3
Mailbox Size	2 GB	10 MB
RSS Feed Creator	✓	—
Blog	✓	\$2.99/mo. for ad-free blogs
Search Engine Submission	✓	\$29.99/year for submission & optimization
Search Engine Optimization	90-Day Trial	Freeware
Website Builder	8 Pages	✓
Photo Gallery	✓	✓
Database	10 MySQL	10 MySQL
PHP Support	✓	✓
90-Day Money Back Guarantee	✓	—
Support	24/7 Toll-free Phone, E-mail	24/7 Phone, E-mail

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Add an online photo album to your website, quickly and easily. Choose from several eye-catching styles, select your favorite color scheme and layout, then import and organize your photos. Create slideshows with fade-in/fade-out transitions, background music and other professional effects. Now with more layouts, more sounds, more colors and adjustable sizes.



*If you choose to receive the Starter Software Suite, you must commit to a one-year contract for the package you choose. \$6.99 shipping & processing fee applies.



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	1&1	YAHOO!	Go Daddy
	HOME	STARTER	DELUXE
	\$4⁹⁹	\$11⁹⁵	\$6⁹⁹
Price Per Month			
Included Domains	2	1	<u>\$1.99/year with purchase</u>
Web Space	50 GB	5 GB	50 GB
Monthly Transfer Volume	500 GB	200 GB	500 GB
E-mail Accounts	1,000 IMAP or POP3	200 POP3	1,000 POP3
Mailbox Size	2 GB	2 GB	10 MB
RSS Feed Creator	✓	—	—
Blog	✓	✓	<u>\$2.99/mo. for ad-free blogs</u>
Search Engine Submission	✓	✓	\$29.99/year for submission & optimization
Search Engine Optimization	90-Day Trial	90-Day Trial	—
Geographic Map	✓	✓	—
Website Builder	12 Pages	✓	Freeware
Flash Site Builder	12 Pages	—	—
Photo Gallery	✓	✓	✓
Dynamic Web Content	✓	✓	—
Web Statistics	✓	✓	✓
Chat Channels	✓	—	✓
Database	25 MySQL	MySQL Support	25 MySQL
PHP Support	✓	✓	✓
Perl Support	✓	✓	✓
Starter Software Suite	✓	—	—
90-Day Money Back Guarantee	✓	—	—
Support	24/7 Toll-free Phone, E-mail	24/7 Toll-free Phone, E-mail	24/7 Phone, E-mail

VALUE

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1&1 Newsletter Tool

Maintain relationships with your customers!

Build and maintain a relationship with your visitors via e-mail newsletters and our Newsletter Tool, now updated with 10 new templates. Create and send professional-looking e-mails – easily and with no programming hassles! Build your own mailing lists, manage recipients' addresses, track results and more.

1&1 Dynamic Content Catalog

Add real-time web content!

Enrich your site with real-time news and fresh web content from a wide range of topics such as news headlines, business reports, sports highlights, travel destinations, online games, weather forecasts and more. Integration is easy, no HTML knowledge is required, and thanks to automatic updates, your content is always current and completely maintenance-free!

SimpleSEO

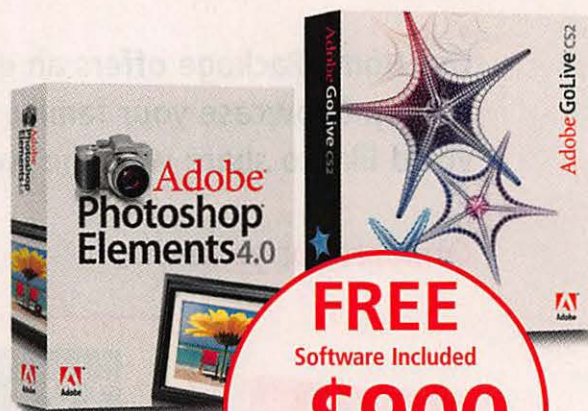
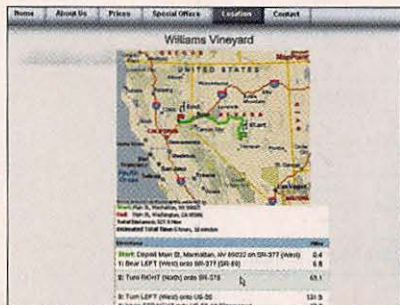
Maximize your website visibility!

With thousands of new websites appearing on the internet each day, search engine optimization (SEO) has never been more important. Search engines are most people's first point of attack when researching new products, services and information. Maximize your organic search engine ranking with this unique and user-friendly SEO tool.

1&1 Geographic Map & Driving Directions

Offer convenient directions for your customers!

Make sure your audience knows how to find you. With this handy tool, you'll provide your customers with accurate driving directions and detailed geographic maps. Easily integrated into any website, you can add this important resource in a few simple steps.



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Software Included
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If you run a small to medium-sized business and are looking to easily build a professional, interactive website, the 1&1 Business Package is your solution.

Compare for yourself!

	1&1	YAHOO!	Go Daddy
	BUSINESS	STANDARD	PREMIUM
	\$9⁹⁹	\$19⁹⁵	\$14⁹⁹
Price Per Month			
Included Domains	3	1	<u>\$1.99/year with purchase</u>
Web Space	100 GB	10 GB	100 GB
Monthly Transfer Volume	1,000 GB	400 GB	1,000 GB
E-mail Accounts	2,000 IMAP or POP3	500 POP3	2,000 POP3
Mailbox Size	2 GB	2 GB	10 MB
RSS Feed Creator	✓	—	—
Blog	✓	✓	<u>\$2.99/mo. for ad-free blogs</u>
Search Engine Submission	✓	✓	\$29.99/year for submission & optimization
Search Engine Optimization	90-Day Trial	90-Day Trial	
Geographic Map	✓	✓	—
Driving Directions	✓	✓	—
Website Builder	18 Pages	✓	Freeware
Flash Site Builder	18 Pages	—	—
Photo Gallery	✓	✓	✓
Dynamic Web Content	✓	✓	—
Web Statistics	✓	✓	✓
E-mail Newsletter Tool	✓	<u>\$10/month</u>	<u>\$9.99/year</u>
In2site Live Dialogue	✓	—	—
Chat Channels	✓	—	✓
Form Builder	✓	✓	—
Database	50 MySQL	MySQL Support	50 MySQL
PHP Support	✓	✓	✓
Perl Support	✓	✓	✓
Premium Software Suite	✓	—	—
90-Day Money Back Guarantee	✓	—	—
Support	24/7 Toll-free Phone, E-mail	24/7 Toll-free Phone, E-mail	24/7 Phone, E-mail

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NEW
NEW
NEW
NEW**

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Secure your website!

This first line of defense against online intruders ensures a safe exchange of information over the Internet. The lock icon shows your site visitors that their personal data is secure. One certificate is included with all 1&1 Developer Packages.

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Create feedback forms – easily!

Generate leads and gain valuable feedback with template-driven contact forms, online polls, event registrations and more. Adapt the templates to fit your site or easily build your own forms. The information entered is saved in its own database so you can view the results at any time.

EasyRSS

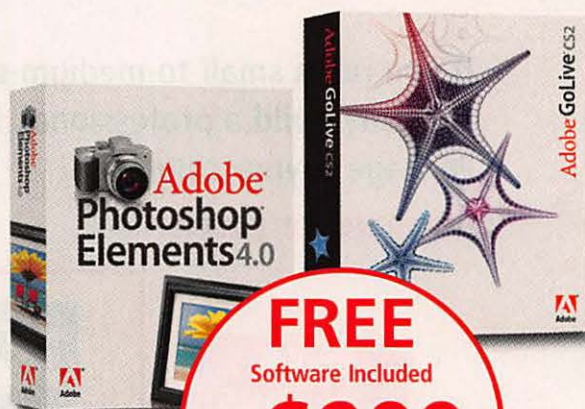
Communication made easy!

Without any programming skills or technical knowledge, our EasyRSS enables you to share your message with the world. Send your photos, news stories and podcasts quickly and easily. Our feed creator wizard guides you through each step. To update your feed, simply log into your Control Panel and add or delete a post.

In2site Live Dialogue

Make your site truly interactive!

Chat with your visitors while they use your website – live and in real time! This innovative type of quick and easy communication makes In2site Live Dialogue an ideal tool for sales, support and consulting professionals.



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Software Included
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the Industry!

With maximum web space, bandwidth and advanced developer capabilities, the 1&1 Developer Package was built for those who demand powerful Internet technologies.

Compare for yourself!

	1&1	YAHOO!
	DEVELOPER	PROFESSIONAL
	\$19⁹⁹	\$39⁹⁵
Price Per Month		
Included Domains	5	1
Web Space	150 GB	20 GB
Monthly Transfer Volume	1,500 GB	500 GB
E-mail Accounts	3,000 IMAP or POP3	1,000 POP3
Mailbox Size	2 GB	2 GB
RSS Feed Creator	✓	—
Blog	✓	✓
Search Engine Submission	✓	✓
Search Engine Optimization	90-Day Trial	90-Day Trial
Geographic Map	✓	✓
Driving Directions	✓	✓
Website Builder	25 Pages	✓
Flash Site Builder	25 Pages	—
Photo Gallery	✓	✓
Dynamic Web Content	✓	✓
Web Statistics	✓	✓
E-mail Newsletter Tool	✓	\$10/month
In2site Live Dialogue	✓	—
Chat Channels	✓	—
Form Builder	✓	✓
Database	100 MySQL	MySQL Support
PHP Support	✓	✓
Perl Support	✓	✓
Dedicated SSL Certificate	✓	—
Premium Software Suite	✓	—
90-Day Money Back Guarantee	✓	—
Support	24/7 Toll-free Phone, E-mail	24/7 Toll-free Phone, E-mail

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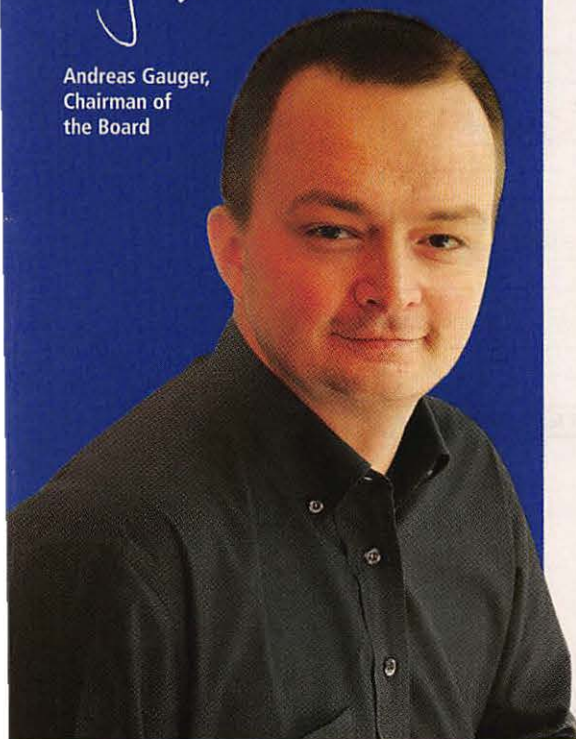
"You'll get more for your money with 1&1."

1&1 is the only name you need to know in affordable web hosting. Our 5 million customers world-wide can tell you what makes us the world's #1 web host: VALUE.

1&1 offers all-inclusive hosting plans for every budget and every need, with no hidden fees and no gimmicks. The bottom line? Look to 1&1 for powerful, reliable web products at consistently low prices.



Andreas Gauger,
Chairman of
the Board



Not many Internet companies can say they've been in business for nearly 15 years.

Thanks to solid products, reliable services and a commitment to providing the most feature-rich web hosting packages at some of the most competitive prices available, 1&1 Internet has steadily developed into the world's biggest and best web host.

1&1 began offering its accessible and affordable hosting packages to a small – but loyal – European customer base nearly 10 years ago. The company's reputation for reliability, integrity and value allowed it to quickly expand throughout Europe, the U.K. and the U.S. Today some 5 million people around the world rely on 1&1 for web hosting, domain registration and various other services.

In fact, you can even find 1&1 on the high seas as the main sponsor of United Internet Team Germany, a contender for the coveted America's Cup yachting trophy. Thanks to its size, strength and long-standing reputation for quality and dependability, 1&1 is more focused than ever on

offering the absolute best value for your money.

While the company has evolved into a major player in the global web hosting market, it remains even more committed to the basic principles that have contributed so much to its success: great products at low prices, with none of the too-good-to-be-true pricing gimmicks or small print "catches" you'll find elsewhere.

As we move forward, we believe this ongoing commitment to helping customers succeed

will bring us further growth and, subsequently, the ability to provide customers with a whole new dimension of online possibilities.



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OST



Award-Winning Web Hosting

When you're the best at what you do, people notice. That's why 1&1 was named Best Web Hosting Company of 2005 by Hostreview.com, a leading independent web hosting research firm. And it's not just the industry experts who are sold on 1&1. With 5 million customers and counting, many of our best recommendations still come by word-of-mouth.

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With 2.9 million active sites worldwide, 1&1 is a global leader in volume and web hosting power.



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High-tech Data Center with more than 28,000 servers



99.9% Server Uptime



90-Day Money Back Guarantee



Leader in Microsoft Technologies

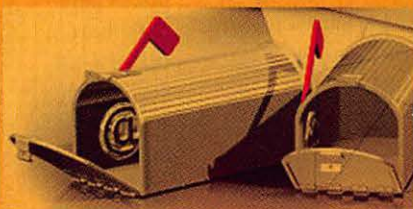
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In addition to shared hosting, we offer some of the most affordable and feature-rich e-mail solutions, e-commerce hosting and dedicated servers.

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- ✓ Virus & Spam protection
- ✓ Powerful online communications

1&1 INSTANT MAIL

\$0⁹⁹

No setup fee PER MONTH

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\$6⁹⁹

No setup fee PER MONTH

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1&1 eShops are as powerful as any major online retailer, but with no software or hardware to install and no programming skills needed. Let the online wizard help you get started! Choose your design template then add your personal touches to achieve the exact look you want.

- ✓ More than 30 design templates
- ✓ Webpace, bandwidth and e-mail included
- ✓ Powerful marketing tools included

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No setup fee PER MONTH

1&1 DEDICATED SERVERS



POWERFUL SOLUTIONS FOR MAXIMUM PERFORMANCE

Take your web presence to the next level! 1&1 Root Servers and 1&1 Windows Server 2003 put you in the driver's seat with total control. Or sign up for a 1&1 Managed Server and let 1&1 handle all the server maintenance and administration.

- ✓ Includes one GeoTrust Dedicated SSL Certificate
- ✓ Advanced security for your data
- ✓ 24/7 hardware monitoring

FROM

\$99

PER MONTH

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138 iPod Accessories
139 Direct PC Vendors
139 Software
140 Printer Ink

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amazon.com

Amazon.com is an unparalleled superstore with a massive inventory equaled only by its special features, such as personalized product recommendations and mobile access. The Early Adopter Products pages show what's fresh in electronics, video games, and DVDs.

askergoworks.com

Ergo Works wants to turn your desk into a healthier workspace. Its selection of keyboard trays, monitor risers, and ergonomic seating can make computing more comfortable. Check out the kid-friendly chairs, keyboards, and mice.

www.batterybarn.com

You'll get a charge from the selection at **Battery Barn**, which includes batteries for cordless phones, digital cameras, camcorders, and other power-hungry portable gadgets. The site also stocks hard-to-find batteries for tools and electric razors. Orders of more than \$25 ship free.

bestbuy.com

Our readers voted **Best Buy** their favorite place to buy consumer electronics. The selection in each department is comprehensive and impressive. The best part? You can have your gadget delivered, or readied for pickup at a nearby store.

bits.com

Take a byte of **Bits.com**, which has low prices on a modest selection of computer peripherals, MP3 players, and software. The company offers a 30-day return policy and \$5 flat-rate shipping.

blackbox.com

Get connected! Specializing in network products, **Black Box** can get you wired with its extensive catalog of storage, cabling, and surge-protection products, plus many other connectivity accessories.

buy.com

Buy.com's vast million-product inventory includes computer hardware, software, electronics, video games, books, music, and DVDs. Sister site **BuyMusic.com** delivers music downloads starting at 79 cents a song.

buydig.com

At **BuyDig.com**, you'll find a multitude of tech toys, such as MP3 players, digital cameras, scanners, PDAs, DVD players, and video-capture devices. Accessory orders of more than \$50 ship free.

cablestogo.com

The mammoth selection at **Cables To Go** includes esoteric system-specific cables, as well as PDA, cell-phone, and audio/video connectors. Check out the rounded cables for improved internal PC cooling.

caplinktech.com

Stocked with hard drives, motherboards, and CPUs, **Caplink Technology** is a system builder's dream come true. The site also offers an enticing mix of digital music players, GPS receivers, and other gadgetry, with free shipping on most items.

ccrane.com

In business for nearly 30 years, the **C. Crane Company** specializes in radios, light, and scientific gadgets. The catalog includes shortwave and scan-

ning radios, home weather stations, and a variety of LED flashlights—educational, techie fun.

cdw.com

In addition to a wide selection of hardware and peripherals, **CDW** offers an Outlet section where you'll find deals on clearance merchandise and customer returns. Click the Mac Warehouse tab to reveal a medley of Apple hardware and peripherals.

circuitcity.com

Plug in to **Circuit City**, where you can choose from a quarter-million movies, video games, and CDs. The inventory also includes digital cameras, televisions, and PDAs. Have your products delivered, or pick them up in a Circuit City store.

compusa.com

The well-organized **CompUSA** rounds out the usual selection of PC hardware, peripherals, and accessories with areas devoted to home electronics and wireless gadgets. Set your own price on PCs at CompUSA's auction site.



Canon Pixma MP500
Photo All-in-One
from CompUSA

computers.ebay.com

eBay is an unparalleled auction site and a unique shopping experience. Shoppers can set their own prices on components, including new and used PCs, software, tech books, and vintage computers.

computers4sure.com

Computers4Sure comprises 21 departments well-stocked with a broad spectrum of products, including networking gear, LCD monitors, and storage. Free ground shipping is available for many products.

c-source.com

The catalog at 15-year-old **CompSource** is chock-a-block with PC products—more than 200,000 in all. Check out the Best Sellers list to find customers' favorite products in 17 categories, including desktops, notebooks, and other peripherals.

dalco.com

Dalco Electronics stocks everything from motherboards to monitors. Bargain hunters will want to start with the specials found on the home page, which change regularly—but watch out for the 20 percent restocking fee.

dbuys.com

Dbuys.com shoppers get to choose from a first-rate selection of home theater products, including DVD players/recorders and all-in-one surround-sound systems. Shipping is free on many items, such as big-screen televisions.

REFURBISHED HARDWARE



discountpc.net

Discount PC International sells refurbished desktops, notebooks, monitors, and accessories. Each product is graded by condition—"Grade B" products, with minor cosmetic blemishes, can get you the best deals.

electrified.com

Electrified Discounters will shock you with deals on discontinued, refurbished, and no-longer-state-of-the-art PC components and consumer electronics. You'll find printers, plasma televisions, and projectors—most with a 30-day money-back guarantee.

refurbished4less.com

The selection at **Refurbished 4 Less** includes digital camcorders, home theater components, and car-audio equipment. We found more than 20 digital cameras to choose from, including inexpensive models from Olympus, Panasonic, and Sony.

retrobox.com

For a cheap pre-owned computer, think **retro**. **RetroBox.com** resells PCs, peripherals, and networking equipment that once toiled away in the offices of Fortune 500 companies. We found functional laptops for as little as \$50.

sunrem.com

Budget Macs abound at **Sun Remarketing**. You'll find not-so-old systems such as G4 desktops and G3 PowerBooks, along with not-so-new Apple IIs, and even the original 128K Mac. The site also sells older or overstocked Mac-friendly peripherals and parts.

techforless.com

What happens to PCs and peripherals that customers return to the store? Some of them end up at **Tech For Less**, which tests and resells them to budget-minded shoppers like you. The company provides a 30-day return policy on everything, but you may not get a warranty beyond that.

usanotebook.com

USANotebook.com specializes in refurbished laptops. Shop for your favorite brand, or hunt for models in the price range you can afford—some laptops here start at under \$300. Most models come with a six-month warranty.

dealsonic.com

Does picking through scores of under-\$20 PC parts sound like a blast? Then **DealSonic.com** is the place to go. The store's Top Sellers and Clearance areas have plenty of cheap components and accessories for system builders.

IPOD ACCESSORIES



apple.com/ipodstore

It makes sense that the company that brought us the iPod would sell some of the player's most stylish accessories. The **Apple Store** sells the iPod Hi-Fi sound system, sleek leather cases for iPods of all sizes, car-audio accessories, cables, docks, and other extras from third-party manufacturers.

belkin.com

Belkin manufactures and sells a panoply of accessories to protect and coddle your beloved music machine, including cases, power adapters, transmitters, and docking stations. The unique leather "kickstand" cases prop your iPod upright on a desk.

griffintech.com/store

Griffin Technology manufactures all the iPod accessories it sells. The broad selection includes a lapel mic, a remote control, an FM transmitter, silicone skins, and other add-ons that make a good thing even better.

ipodaccessories.com

The aptly named **iPodAccessories.com** specializes in add-ons for your favorite music player. You'll find iPod remote controls, colorful earphone pads, watertight cases, and even a laser-pointer add-on.

podspplus.com

PodsPlus features aluminum cases, silicone skins, FM transmitters, and other add-ons for iPods, smartphones, and PDAs. Orders of more than \$25 qualify for free shipping.

thinkdifferentstore.com

The **Think Different Store** by GadgetLocker.com stocks hundreds of iPod accessories, including all kinds of cases and sleeves, a dozen speaker systems, cables, and more. It also offers a scratch-removing formula that will help rejuvenate your older, scuffed player.

xtrememac.com

Xtreme Mac sells extremely cool iPod gear, including chargers, earphones, and cables, along with cases emblazoned with your favorite team's logo. The site makes it easy to tell which accessories are compatible with your particular iPod model. Plus, shipping is free.

digitalfotoclub.com

Digital Foto Discount Club has a vast selection of digital cameras, camcorders, PDAs, and digital audio gadgetry, and is well-rated by its customers at sites such as PriceGrabber.com. Check out the Top 10 Best-Sellers in the various product categories.

ebags.com

Ease your aching back with a new, rolling laptop bag. **eBags** sells a diverse assortment of computer bags and cases for your portable digital gadgets. Every purchase is backed by a 60-day return policy.

ecost.com

Look to **eCost.com** for deals on PC components, software, electronics, and DVDs. You'll be enticed by short-lived but sweet deals in the Bargain Countdown area.

www.flash-memory-store.com

FlashMemoryStore.com specializes in removable media. The company sells CompactFlash and SmartMedia cards, Memory Sticks, card-reader accessories, and external hard drives. All products come with a 30-day satisfaction guarantee and a lifetime warranty.

geeks.com

With no doubts about the tech-savvy of its customers, **Geeks.com** is a fun-to-browse tech site that's perfect for people piecing together a PC or looking for a geeky project. Check out the new and refurbished computer gear, such as cheap optical drives, and gadgets like a wearable TV watch.

geekstuff4u.com

Looking for something different? **GeekStuff4U.com** specializes in high-tech gadgets from Japan. The selection includes hard-to-find and downright weird products like an iPod movie recorder and sushi-shaped USB memory keys.

insight.com

Insight delivers IT products for businesses, including networking hardware, projectors, and servers. The stellar Narrow Your Results feature and comparison tools will help you find the best product.

kvm-switches-online.com

Let your monitor, keyboard, and mouse share more than one PC. **KVM Switches Online** is dedicated to keyboard/video/mouse switches for every type of hardware. You'll also find video splitters and rack-mountable LCDs.

laptoptravel.com

If you tote a computer wherever you go, take a trip to **Laptop Travel**, a site that specializes in portable-computing and international-travel gear. The site stocks cases, electrical adapters, modem converters, mobile desks, and security accessories.

memorysuppliers.com

MemorySuppliers.com's customer-friendly policies include \$4.95 flat-rate shipping, a 30-day money-back guarantee with free return shipping, and lifetime warranties on memory and hard drives. The Upgrade Guides explain how to install RAM and troubleshoot common memory problems.

mostlyprinters.com

You'll find new and refurbished printers from Brother, Canon, Lexmark, Samsung, and other manufacturers at **MostlyPrinters.com**. Plus, the site offers a price-matching policy and free shipping on every order.

mydigitaldiscount.com

If you use a digital camera, PDA, or MP3 player, visit **MyDigitalDiscount.com** for memory cards, card readers, and other accessories. You'll also find a generous selection of USB drives, optical media, and portable storage hardware.

neutronexpress.com

You may get a charge from the dense nucleus of PC peripherals and networking hardware at **NeutronExpress.com**. Visit the Specialty sections for PC components, low-profile peripherals, and PC security products.

newegg.com

Newegg.com is a nest of good stuff for do-it-yourself PC upgraders. The selection focuses on hard drives, motherboards, CPUs, optical-storage add-ons, and consumer electronics.

outpost.com

Shoppers at **Fry's Outpost.com** enjoy an ample catalog of hardware, software, cameras, and video games. Notable features include the Power Search function, special deals, and a 30-day money-back guarantee on most products.

overstock.com

Try not to be overwhelmed by the selection at **Overstock.com**. This discount shopping site sells practically anything you can think of, including new and reconditioned computers, peripherals, cameras, audio devices, and video gear. Plus, you'll find software, DVDs, and video games in the Media department.

pcconnection.com

PC Connection can connect you to a world of PCs, peripherals, and software. Use the Rebate Center to find products with cash-back deals, or visit sister site MacConnection (**www.macconnection.com**) for Mac OS wares.

pcmall.com

Catering to businesses of all sizes, as well as consumers, **PC Mall's** catalog includes more than 100,000 products, with hot deals on notebooks, LCD monitors, and digital media. Sister site MacMall (**www.macmall.com**) is devoted to Apple hardware and software.



Samsung SyncMaster 204T from PC Mall

styluscentral.com

Use your mobile device in style. **Stylus Central** has a large selection of PDA styli, cases, and chargers, plus a complete line of iPod accessories. Have your initials engraved on many items for free.

techonweb.com

TechOnWeb.com's low prices and fast shipping on a wide array of tech products keep the site in the good graces of its customers. The unusual "quote desk" lets you ask for a better deal when purchasing three or more of the same item.

the3dshop.com

The **3-D Shop** sells graphics cards for home, professional, and high-end-workstation users, including dozens of choices from 3DLabs, ATI, Leadtek, Matrox, and PNY Technologies.

thegpsstore.com

You may not know where you're going, but you'll know where you are right now with the help of a global positioning system (GPS) receiver. The **GPS**

Store sells GPS units for the car, hiking excursions, and aviation, plus accessories and software.

tigerdirect.com

For deals and discounts, visit **TigerDirect**. This sizable catalog includes low-cost PC components, PDAs, and office equipment. Geeks on a budget can find desktop PCs for as little as \$250 and laptops for under \$500.

unityelectronics.com

Check out **Unity Electronics'** impressive selection of PC peripherals, including hard drives, optical drives, and networking products. The site is also well-stocked with cables and batteries, as well as parts for handhelds.

usedlaptops.com

UsedLaptops.com, in the business for 10 years, sells name-brand portable PCs for as little as \$220. Browse among its inventory of more than 1,100 notebooks by price, manufacturer, or features—a perfect way to weed out machines that don't meet your specifications.

yesmicro.com

Emphasizing customer service and low prices, **YesMicro.com** sells 60,000 hardware, peripheral, and PC-accessory products. The site's Top Hard Drives and Top Monitors lists are right on the home page, making locating the most-popular peripherals a snap.

zones.com

There's a zone for whatever you need at **Zones**: the home page for hardware and software, the Mac Zone for Apple stuff, the Creative Pro page for graphics pros, and the Zones Clearance section for special buys.

zunafish.com

Zunafish facilitates trades of used video games, DVDs, CDs, and books. Post your used items, then propose and execute one-for-one trades with others, all for \$1 per trade. Use the My Zunafish page to monitor your trade offers.

>> DIRECT PC VENDORS

abspc.com

Expect gaming, multimedia, and business PCs aplenty at **ABS Computer Technologies**. The company offers a choice of Intel or AMD processors, a three-year parts and lifetime labor warranty, and toll-free technical support. Visit the Outlet Store for short-lived specials.

alienware.com

Alienware can custom-build your dream game machine—desktop or laptop. Each is available with out-of-this-world cases in a rainbow of colors. Buyers get a personalized owner's manual and toll-free technical support any time of the day or night.

buympc.com

MPC Computers sells desktops, notebooks, and servers. You can custom-configure a high-performance TransPort notebook, tuned to your specifications, for business, multimedia, or gaming.

cyberpowersystem.com

Power up with a customized Intel or AMD system from **Cyberpower**. The selection includes 64-bit machines, gamers' dream systems, Media Centers, and budget PCs for everyday use.

dell.com

Dell's electronic storefront has always led the way in ease of use. The site is jam-packed with detailed information that makes it a snap to match a machine to your needs. Each system is configurable to the nth degree, and you can get quick access to online support customized for your PC.

falcon-nw.com

Once you get your talons on a **Falcon Northwest** PC, you won't want to let go. The heavyweight desktops and totable FragBox computers include the hardware you want, the way-cool look you crave, and the personalized system-rescue discs you may need one day.

gateway.com

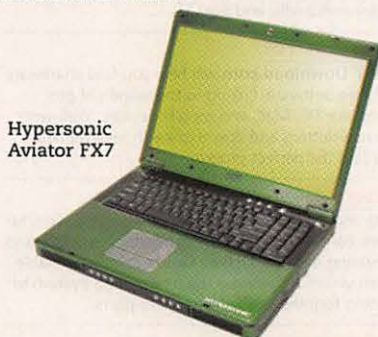
One of the biggest players in online computer sales, **Gateway** has an enormous and informative site that sells custom-built desktops and notebooks.

hpshopping.com

At this site, choose among **Hewlett-Packard** and Compaq desktop and notebook computers, plus networking accessories, printers, handhelds, and digital cameras.

hypersonic-pc.com

Need computing power that's faster than fast? Go hypersonic. Visit **Hypersonic PC** for gaming systems, workstations, and laptops outfitted with the latest high-performance peripherals. Enthusiast options include 3D-graphics optimization and case customization.



Hypersonic Aviator FX7

ibuypower.com

iBuypower can power up your workspace with a 64-bit PC for less than \$500. Even the company's least-expensive PCs include large hard drives, dedicated graphics cards, desktop speakers, and other essentials. All products are backed by a 30-day money-back guarantee.

idotpc.com

Find a customized desktop, an economical bare-bones PC, or a personalized laptop at **iDotpc.com**. Menus allow you to create the PC that's right for you, letting you specify the processor, memory, optical drive, and other necessities.

lenovo.com

Lenovo sells IBM's former lines of ThinkCentre desktops, ThinkPad laptops, and ThinkVision monitors. Configure built-to-order PCs, and choose among accessories such as memory and printers.

maingear.com

MainGear specializes in premium PCs with advanced specs for gamers and other power users. The selection includes sleek-looking and colorful desktops, space-saving X-Cube machines, and powerful laptops.

monarchcomputer.com

Monarch Computer Systems creates built-to-order desktops, workstations, and servers. Configure the computer you want, then lock in the price for up to a week. If you're building a PC, check out the PC Parts section for components and peripherals.

overdrivepc.com

Sleek, overclocked PCs for gamers and professionals highlight **Overdrive PC's** offerings. Each

computer includes a quiet cooling system, free antivirus software, and no-cost shipping.

sagernotebook.com

Specializing in notebook computers, **Sager** offers a variety of options, from budget machines to speedy multimedia units. Service includes a 72-hour repair-turnaround guarantee and free lifetime tech support.

shopprostar.com

Each computer in **ProStar Computer's** line of notebook PCs is backed by a 30-day money-back guarantee, a speedy-repair promise, and free tech support.

sonystyle.com/vaio

Sony Style is a sleek-looking site selling Sony's line of VAIO desktops and notebooks, plus digital cameras, displays, and storage devices.

store.apple.com

The **Apple Store's** well-designed site lets you custom-configure any Macintosh and offers a wide array of Mac-compatible software and accessories. For frequent (or compulsive) customers, the one-click-ordering feature makes purchases extra-simple.

toshibadirect.com

The custom-configured notebooks and Tablet PCs at **Toshiba Direct** range from budget models to the unique Qosmio laptops, which combine PC, TV, DVD, and audio features.

us.fujitsu.com/shop

Fujitsu's site focuses on portable computing, including notebook PCs and pen-based tablet computers. Each computer has several warranty options.

velocitymicro.com

Looking for a 64-bit processor to push your games to the limit? They're in **Velocity Micro's** Gamer's Edge and Raptor models. The custom-configuration menus offer a mind-boggling array of component choices.

viciouspc.com

Creating "hardware for the hard-core," **Vicious PC** sells desktops with clear cases, high-output ventilation, easy-access sliding rails, and front-accessible USB ports. Washable air filters mean your computer's innards will remain dust-free.

woodoopc.com

Nobody else can do the voodoo that they do so well. **VoodooPC** specializes in high-end PCs for gamers, with a choice of Intel or 64-bit AMD processors. Take your pick among tower systems, laptops, and portables—all thoroughly customizable, of course.

winbook.com

WinBook Computer sells laptops and desktops with a 30-day money-back guarantee, a one-year warranty, and free tech support. Ironically, some of the best deals, "Web specials," can only be ordered by phone.

www.ztgroup.com

ZT Group builds and sells desktop and notebook computers for every type of user. The selection includes PCs for gaming, media, home offices, and businesses, with your choice of AMD or Intel processors.

>> SOFTWARE

atomicpark.com

Free shipping is available for **AtomicPark.com's** entire selection of business and productivity apps. Plus, you'll never pay a restocking fee. The New Direct Downloads section lets you use new software in minutes, not days.

bigclearance.com

Offering current-version software at clearance prices, the big selection at **BigClearance.com** includes wares from Microsoft, Macromedia, Corel, and others.

PRINTER INK



bulkinkjetcarts.com

With a \$6 flat-rate shipping fee and a satisfaction guarantee, **BulkInkJetCarts.com** will keep your Brother, Canon, Epson, HP, Lexmark, or Xerox printer humming. The site also sells a variety of high-quality photo paper.

carrotink.com

You don't have to root around all day for printer ink. The well-regarded **Carrot Ink** store sells new inkjet cartridges and laser toner for printers from a dozen manufacturers. Shipping is inexpensive, and satisfaction is guaranteed.

dealnews.com/printer-ink

Deal yourself a cheaper printout at **DealInk**, a price-comparison search engine dedicated to printer ink. Although it's limited to Apple, Canon, Epson, HP, and Lexmark cartridges, you can still search for generic, remanufactured, and name-brand ink.

4inkjets.com

4Inkjets.com sells OEM and plain-wrap ink cartridges for more than 20 makes of printer. For prolific printers willing to get their hands dirty, the site sells money-saving inkjet-refill kits. You also get free shipping on orders over \$50.

inkgrabber.com

InkGrabber.com sells inkjet cartridges, plus laser, copier, and fax toner, with a 90-day return policy. Sign up for the site's newsletter, and the company will e-mail you a coupon you can use right away.

inksite.com

Is your off-brand printer thirsty for ink? **InkSite** probably has it. The company offers cartridges from more than 30 brands—not just the big names. Paper, copier supplies, and printer-cleaning kits round out the selection.

misterinkjet.com

Mr. Ink Jet specializes in inkjet refill kits to replenish your black or color inkjet cartridges. Specialty printing materials include "temporary tattoo" inkjet paper, blacklight film, and media with a canvas-like texture.

buycheapsoftware.com

The name says it all. **Buycheapsoftware.com's** selection consists primarily of business and utility apps. The company offers flat-rate \$5 shipping on small orders and free shipping on orders over \$200.

buypcsoft.com

Buypcsoft.com sells Windows and Mac software in categories from business management to virus prevention. It's an efficient site with a good selection of big-name applications.

directory.fsf.org

The Free Software Foundation's **Free Software Directory** catalogs no-cost, useful apps that run with Linux and other free operating systems. Browse by category, or check out the newest additions to the directory, which are listed front and center.

distrowatch.com

Keep up-to-date with the latest Linux and FreeBSD distributions with **DistroWatch**. You'll find news about free operating systems and links to the most popular distros in categories including multimedia, beginner-friendly, and live CDs.

download.com

CNET Download.com will help you find shareware and free software, linking to thousands of programs for PC, Mac, and mobile devices. Well-written newsletters and down-to-earth reviews help you find the perfect program.

driverguide.com

With more than 100,000 downloadable drivers for every conceivable piece of computer hardware and operating system, **Driver Guide** is indispensable when you're repairing a malfunctioning system or piecing together a PC from spare parts.

filebot.org

Buy software, download it, and use it right away with **FileBot**. The site sells a wide variety of audio software, system utilities, business apps, and games. Free trial versions are available for many titles.

freewarefiles.com

FreewareFiles.com is an index to free downloadable software for Windows. Articles and tutorials deliver advice on free software and computer maintenance.

freewarepro.com

Freeware Pro finds free software and organizes it into categories such as home office, Web authoring, and games. Begin with the Recommended Downloads list to load up your PC with the best no-cost wares.

jumbo.com

Jumbo is a fitting name for this monstrous file archive, featuring shareware, freeware, and commercial-software demos for PC, Mac, and Linux.

9software.com

#9 Software is stocked with applications in nine categories, ranging from games to business applications. The company provides free shipping on orders of more than \$99.

nonags.com

Nonags offers software that's useful, tested, and (as the name suggests) won't nag you to pay. Basic access to the site is free, but a subscription to the Plus version adds MP3 downloads and "best of" software links.

nothingbutsoftware.com

You'll make much ado about **Nothing But Software**. This collection of apps includes games, educational titles, graphics programs,

utilities, and more—all with flat-rate shipping. Try the programs in the Specials section for as little as \$7.

oldversion.com

Sometimes the latest version of software isn't the greatest version—bloat and feature creep can ruin a great program. **OldVersion.com** is a nifty archive of previous versions of applications, including Internet clients, utilities, and media players.

palmgear.com

Palm OS users will appreciate the large selection of free and commercial programs downloadable from **PalmGear.com**. Check out the list of "essential" apps, then sign up to get software news and tips.

retrossoftware.com

Retro Software specializes in software from major publishers, including Adobe and Corel, but with a twist. If you don't need the latest version of an application, you can purchase a generation-old version at a significant discount—or, buy really old versions for really low prices.

serverfiles.com

ServerFiles.com is a directory of software for network administrators and IT professionals. The selection includes network-security, collaboration, and server applications.

simtel.net

For shareware and freeware downloads for Windows, look to **Simtel.net**. The home page lets you jump right in with its lists of the newest and most-popular software releases.

snappfiles.com

Download shareware and freeware in a snap with **SnapFiles**. This site will point you to the latest software releases and Weekly Top 20 titles. Users' ratings and reviews show which software is worth checking out.

software-blowouts.com

Software Blowouts is home to oodles of inexpensive Windows and Mac OS software, with flat-rate shipping. Peruse the Blowouts page for education, entertainment, and utility titles, many for just \$9.95.

softwareoutlet.com

Plug in to **SoftwareOutlet.com**, a veritable virtual bargain bin. You'll find dirt-cheap applications and hardware accessories. Browse older software from defunct companies, plus modern titles.

store.purplus.net

Purplus Software is a well-regarded seller of software for business, graphics, and music. The site offers free shipping on orders of \$45 or more.

tronixweb.com

When it's playtime, head to **Tronix**, a site specializing in software, hardware, and accessories for PlayStation Portable (PSP), PlayStation 2, Xbox 360, and other console video-game platforms. Scope out and preorder upcoming games in the Coming Soon section.

tucows.com

Tucows is an incredible library of freeware and shareware for Windows, Mac, and Linux. This recently redesigned site makes it easy to find the newest, most-popular, or top-rated software.

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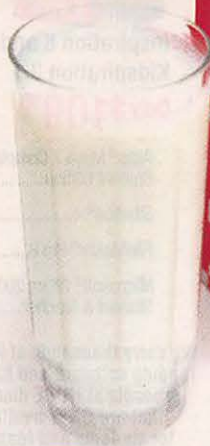
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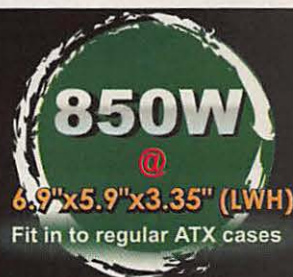
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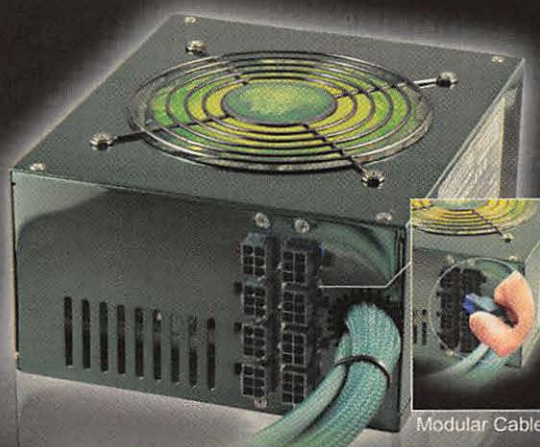
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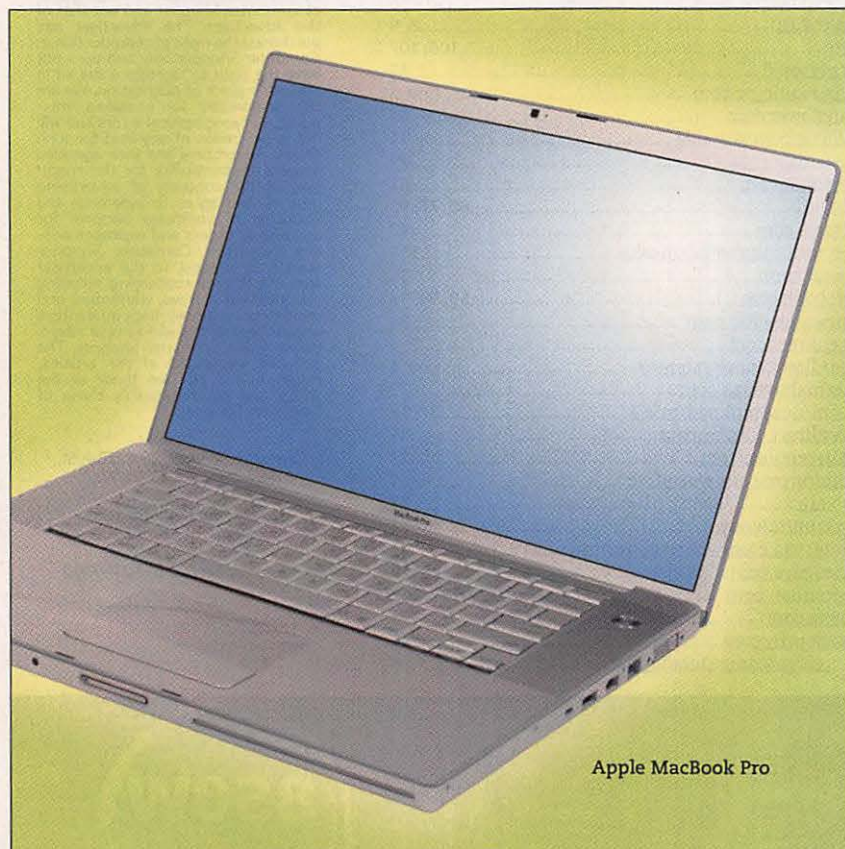
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The Right Thin-and-Light Notebook

BY ERIN KANDEL



Apple MacBook Pro

If you're looking for a laptop that strikes a balance between a feature-rich (but heavy) desktop-replacement notebook and a less-than-loaded (but totable) ultraportable, a thin-and-light notebook should be a perfect fit. Here's what you need to know to choose the right model.

3 GREAT BUYS

GOOD

HP Pavilion DV1000t
(www.hp.com, starting at \$949.99)
Just under \$1,000, the starting model of this 5.4-pound Centrino-based laptop features a Core Solo processor and a 14.1-inch LCD. Among the bevy of multimedia controls are buttons for launching HP's QuickPlay media applications, which can play CDs/DVDs and access photos without booting Windows.

BETTER

Lenovo ThinkPad T60
(www.lenovo.com, starting at \$1,349)
Despite weighing only 4.6 pounds, the ThinkPad T60 packs a quick Core Duo CPU, strong security features, and a full range of networking connections into its sturdy, well-designed case. Add long battery life and the ThinkPad reputation to the mix, and you have a mean mobile machine for business users.

BEST

Apple MacBook Pro
(www.apple.com, starting at \$1,999)
Apple's notebook debut after switching to Intel processors, the 5.5-pound MacBook Pro features a fast Centrino Core Duo processor, a 15.4-inch wide-screen display, a solid software package, and Apple's characteristically stylish design. Bonus: It can run Windows XP using Boot Camp software.

SHOPPING SPECS

SIZE

Laptops fall into three general size categories. Desktop replacements tip the scales at 6 pounds and over, while ultraportables weigh in at 4 pounds or less. That leaves the 4-to-6-pound range for thin-and-light notebooks.

PROCESSOR

For the best combination of performance and battery life, look for a laptop built around Intel's Centrino technology. Centrino-based notebooks include support for integrated 802.11b/g wireless networking, and are often configured with swift Pentium M processors. Many newer Centrino laptops, however, are powered by Intel's next-generation Core Solo and Core Duo processors; the latter promise increased multitasking prowess.

DISPLAY

LCD screens on thin-and-lights vary in size. The larger the screen, the larger—and heavier—the laptop likely will be. If you plan to watch DVDs on the go, look for a wide-screen display, which can present movies in their native 16-to-9 aspect ratio.

OPTICAL DRIVE

The least you should settle for in your thin-and-light is a combo DVD-ROM/CD-RW drive for burning CDs and watching DVDs. If you need to record DVDs, plan on investing more in a notebook that offers a DVD burner.

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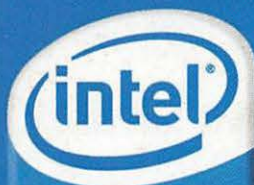
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