

Weigh all the options before you decide on a notebook

More than a dozen brands of notebooks or laptop computers are available in the market today. Before you choose one that is likely to be your travelling companion for years, give a serious thought to the features you require. For example, if you are a travelling CEO and frequently need to transfer files to the desktop PC, you will do well if you spend a few thousand more to buy a notebook that has a bigger screen and multiple drives.

Another important deciding factor is the weight of the notebook. Majority of the units available in the market fit the 5- to 8-pound category. Desktop replacements fall at the higher end of the scale, while mini-notebooks can be as light as 3 pounds. Remember to calculate the weight of the notebook both without and with the battery and accessories. If you need to take a CD-ROM drive with you on the road, add its weight into the total, as well as any extra batteries, AC adapters, external drives, and so on.

Other factors :

Screen size: Mainstream sizes include 12.1, 13.3, and 14.1 inch screens. Depending upon your budget, you can go in for 13.3 inch displays or the easy-on-the-eyes 14.1 inch screens.



Dushyant Shah
The Mediaman,
Mumbai

“Recent test results based on WinBench 99 show that upgrading a desktop PC to a 7200 rpm hard drive is a better bet than upgrading the processor.”



Jyotin Shah
J S Equipment,
Mumbai

“Gaming peripherals are no more a luxury, they are fast becoming a necessity.”

RAM: Stock up on RAM. Buy as much as you can afford. Too little memory can undermine a fast processor, forcing it to retrieve data from the much slower hard drive. 64 MB of RAM is recommended. You won't need more unless you plan to run Windows NT. Many vendors, in order to drop prices, offer 32 MB of RAM. You can get by with this, but it is worth the money to upgrade.

HDD: At least 4.3 or 6.4 GB. However, unlike hard disk drives for desktop computers, drives for notebooks are not interchangeable. It is safest to simply buy the upgrade from the notebook manufacturer.

Batteries: Lithium-ion (Li+) batteries have replaced nickel metal-hydride (NiMH) cells in all but the lowest-priced notebooks. You can evaluate battery life by comparing manufacturer-estimated runtimes, but remember that different usage patterns deliver different results.

Processor: Not less than 300 MHz.

Finally, look at the factors like the casing, the sturdiness of the notebook to judge the travel-friendliness of a notebook. Some companies also allow you to try out the product before you buy it. You might want to consider models with magnesium-alloy designs and shock-resistant hard drive mounts designed to safeguard against drops and knocks. Spill-resistant keyboards are also available with select models.



Graphics accelerator

Intel has already launched its 752 graphics accelerator in the US. The card will soon be released in India. Postpone your graphics card purchases till then.

Motherboards

If you are buying a new PC, make sure that the assembler does not give you a ZX motherboard. Insist on a BX motherboard. ZX is a scaled down version of BX and does not offer the same performance as BX boards.

PC Cabinets

In case you are getting a new PC assembled, buy a Tiger cabinet. These are spacious and neatly organized. The only drawback is that they are huge and thus occupy a lot of space.

Processors

It is rumored that Intel will be discontinuing the Pentium II series of processors. So expect the price of Pentium III to fall drastically.

Home Networks

Home networks are in nowadays and vendors are slashing hardware prices to target the SOHO market. A cheap deal is the D-Link 8-port with 2175 hubs.

Internet Service Providers

Mantra Online, the new ISP, has an innovative offer that allows users to pay for monthly usage of the Internet. This offer is perfect for those who need to be on the Net during specific months.

Hard Disk Drives