

Do You Need a New Computer?

When does a computer become “obsolete?” Here are some things to consider.

Computers can last a long time. Folks bring us ten-year-old PCs and MacBooks that still perform basic tasks like web browsing, composing emails, and even word processing. So, when do you need to replace a computer that still works? Here are two considerations:

1. **The operating system is no longer supported.** Microsoft currently supports only Windows 10 and 11, and Apple supports MacOS Versions 11, 12, and 13. Computers more than roughly five years old may not be able to run these newer operating systems, and earlier versions (like Windows 7) are not updated with new features, bug fixes, or major security enhancements. Furthermore, some software won't work on older operating systems.
2. **Your computer is slow.** Your computer's central processor is running just as fast as it always did—but newer software is more demanding. Web pages include more graphics, newer software is more complex, and files are bigger. Older computers may not have the “horsepower” to keep up.



Steve is waiting patiently for Microsoft Word to load his memoirs.

So, you want a new computer? Sure! Here's what you can look forward to in today's laptop computers: ¹

1. **Latest operating system.** PC laptops come with Windows 11; MacBooks with MacOS 13 (Ventura). Both are excellent operating systems with enhanced security features and slick user interfaces (the menus, windows, and dialog boxes you see on the screen). Basic Windows and MacOS commands and desktop icons haven't changed much from earlier versions, and the learning curve isn't steep. (Besides, you can always ask us for help).
2. **Solid-state main memory.** Most computers now use solid-state main memory instead of spinning disks. This alone doubles the speed when starting a program, copying and transferring files, and even web browsing.
3. **Faster central processors.** Newer Intel and AMD processors on Windows laptop computers are much faster, and the latest MacBooks use Apple's new M1 and M2 processors that set the bar for both computing speed and battery life.
4. **Better screen resolution.** Most mid-priced Windows laptops use high-definition displays, with ultra-high-definition screens optional at extra cost. Apple MacBooks use Retina displays that render super-sharp text and graphics.

Consider tablet computers. Tablets are excellent for consuming (as in reading) information. Indeed, an iPad ² can either replace your aging computer or provide an alternative for surfing the web, writing emails, reading books (with the Kindle app), and so on.

Coming in April. Next month, I'll suggest what to look for in a Windows laptop or MacBook. So, don't touch that knob!

If you have questions about what computer to buy, just fill out the nifty help request at <https://princetonsenior.wufoo.com/forms/technology-assistance-request/>, and we'll be in touch!

¹ There's little reason to buy a “desktop” computer. Laptops are small and portable, and, with an external monitor, keyboard, and mouse, can double as a desktop computer.

² There are also Android tablets, but the iPad is stellar in every regard. They start at \$330.