

Buying a Mac Computer

The universe of Mac computers comprises laptops (MacBook Air and Pro), desktops (Mac Mini and Studio), and all-in-ones (iMac). So, which one to buy?

Before we dive into the details, here's some basic information about Mac computers:

1. **Processors.** Two years ago, Apple changed from using Intel CPU chips to its own “silicon,” starting with the M1 chip. Based on Apple’s mobile devices, such as the iPhone and iPad, the M-series chips are ultra-fast, run cool, and use less battery power. Apple has regularly updated these CPU chips, denoted as M2, M3, etc., that are even faster.
2. **Retina displays.** MacBooks use Retina displays—you won’t see any pixels.
3. **Solid-state storage.** All Mac computers use solid-state primary storage instead of spinning disks, which means applications start quickly and files load very fast. Most Mac computers come with 256GB of primary storage, with options up to several terabytes at additional cost. Unfortunately, you can’t add storage, so you’ll need to decide how much primary storage you’ll need when you buy your computer. (We can help you decide.)
4. **Cost.** Mac computers start at \$1000 for the MacBook Air. The Mac Mini’s base price is \$600 (which is a lot of computer for the price, but you supply the monitor.)

Here’s a nifty table that lists the different Apple computers along with their specs and starting prices.

Mac Computer	Configuration	Processor	Starting Price	Notes
MacBook Air	13" Laptop	M1 or M2	\$1000	Fulfills most needs.
MacBook Pro	14" or 16" Laptop	M1	\$1300	Fast, with the power to edit photos and videos.
		M2 Pro, M2 Max	\$2000	
Mac Mini	Desktop (does not include a monitor)	M2 or M2 Pro	\$600	Excellent choice if you already have a monitor and don't want a laptop. Can be upgraded to be a very powerful processor.
Mac Studio		M1 Max or M1 Ultra	\$2000	Professional tasks, such as graphics and video production and editing
iMac	Desktop (all-in-one). 24" display	M1	\$1300	Like the MacBook Air, but with a large screen.

Adding a monitor to a laptop

You can connect a laptop to a desktop monitor for an expansive view. You can even use the laptop screen along with the monitor, allowing you to, say, view a webpage on one screen while you write a document on the other. Adding a wireless keyboard and mouse (or trackpad) gives you the best of both worlds: Portability and easy viewing.

Where to purchase an Apple computer

I prefer buying computers from a “bricks-and-mortar” store, like the Apple Store or BestBuy, where you can try the keyboards and check the screen resolution. It’s also easier to return a laptop to a local store if you have a problem. You’ll find discounts now and then (especially at BestBuy).

Setup

Mac computers come with the latest Mac operating system installed. The computer will walk you through the setup and help you establish an Apple account (if you don’t have one) or ask you to enter your ID and password if you do.

Once you set up your new Mac, you’ll copy your documents from your iCloud folders or Time Machine drive (including your software) or connect it directly to your old computer via the USB ports.

If you need help setting up your new computer, just fill out the help request at princetonsenior.wufoo.com/forms/technology-assistance-request, and we’ll be in touch!