

Buying Computers and Phones

Mendlesham Computer Club

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Devices we will cover today

- Laptops
- Desktop PCs
- Tablets
- Phones

Is it worth getting new a PC?

- Current PC can't run Windows 11 - no more updates
- Current PC is slow
 - It takes a long time to boot
 - Doesn't have enough RAM for modern apps (< 8GB)
 - I'm running a lot more than before
 - Mechanical drive is slow or over 80% full
- Current device is more than 8 years old

Is it worth getting a new tablet or phone?

- Performance has slowed
 - Slower response times, apps take longer to open or crash, device struggles with newer software
- Poor Battery Life
 - The device no longer lasts a full day or requires frequent charging.
- End of Security and Software Support
 - No longer receives operating system or security updates, increasing cybersecurity risks.
- Hardware Wear or Damage
 - Cracked screens, failing buttons, damaged cameras, charging port issues, or intermittent connectivity.

Is it worth getting a new tablet or phone?

- Insufficient Storage
 - Limited capacity for apps, files, photos, and software updates or regularly run out of space.
- Compatibility Requirements
 - Can no longer run required apps or connect to newer peripherals and accessories. Older devices may not support new authentication methods.
- Improved Connectivity
 - Access to faster 5G, Wi-Fi, Wi-Fi calling, Bluetooth, and eSIM capabilities.
- Enhanced Features
 - Faster processors, better displays, improved cameras, AI features, collaboration tools

When is the best time to buy a device?

- Sales
 - Back-to-school
 - Amazon Prime days (July)
 - Black Friday (late November)
 - Boxing Day and January sales
- When new devices are announced prices on previous models drop
- Don't forget that last years model WAS the “bee's knees” then so refurbished machines are a very good idea

Where to buy

- On-line will give you the best deals but;
 - You cannot try before you buy
 - Returns may be difficult
 - Possibly poor support from non-reputable firms
- You may be able to look at an item in a shop, then buy on-line for less

Having decided to buy, what's next?

What do you need the device for?

Ask yourself what you want to do.

- Email and web browsing
- Video calls
- Online banking
- Photos and hobbies
- ...

Avoid paying for features you'll never use

Which device is best?

- Desktop PC – best for home and large screens.
- Laptop – ideal all-rounder.
- Tablet – simple and portable.
- Smartphone – always with you.

Windows or Mac

Windows

- Largest choice
- Clunky Software updates
- Cheaper
- Integration with Android phones improving
- Office Apps free for first year then £85/year

Apple Mac

- Simpler to use (but slightly different)
- Long support
- More expensive but beautifully designed
- Tight integration with Apple phones and tablets
- Office Apps free

Apple or Android

- iPhone/iPad
 - Simple to use
 - Consistent software/hardware quality
 - Style
 - Integration with Apple ecosystem
- Android
 - Cheaper
 - Large choice of devices

Key specifications for a PC or Laptop

- Random Access Memory - RAM - Short-term memory
 - minimum 16GB, avoid 8GB, more is better.
- Solid State Disk - SSD - Faster long term storage than mechanical disks
 - 256GB is a good minimum, 512GB is better.
 - Check against your current PC
- Processor - the engine of the computer
 - Very rarely a limitation for anything other than gaming or Video editing
- Screen size matters more than speed

Laptop buying guide

- Large, easy to read, bright screen (>14 inch)
- Tactile Keyboard
- Large trackpad
- Good battery life
- Easy to hold/use (not too heavy)
- Windows 11 or Mac
- Chromecast machines are low cost in comparison to other makes, but harder to maintain and have fewer apps
- Try before you buy

Tablet buying guide

- Large, easy to read, bright screen (10 inch)
- Does it have a detachable keyboard
- Good battery life
- Easy to hold/use (not too heavy)
- If Apple, check it is running iOS 15 or above (currently iOS 26)
- If Android, check it is running version 14 or above (currently 17)
- Try before you buy

Smartphone buying guide

- Large, easy to read, bright screen (>6 inch)
- Good battery life
- Easy to hold/use (not too heavy)
- If Apple, check it is running iOS 15 or above (currently iOS 26)
- If Android, check it is running version 14 or above (currently 17)
- Support for WiFi Calling
- Physical SIM or eSIM - multiple SIMS
- Try before you buy

Refurbished or new

- Refurbished devices offer excellent value, but do not buy very old devices as they will soon be out of support, stick to less than 4 years
- Buy from reputable firms
 - Armafone at Asda Ipswich
 - Penny Lane Computers Ipswich
 - Smart Cellular
 - Music Magpie
 - Back Market
 - Laptops Direct
 - Hoxton Macs

Will my new device be out of date soon?

- Heavy lifting apps are moving out of the PC/phone into the Cloud, so the need for powerful devices at home is diminishing
- Bad people are continuing to develop new hacks, this will lead to software updates and in some cases (e.g windows 10 to 11), hardware updates.