

## Laptop Purchase Considerations from EWU IT

Before purchasing a computer, parents and students might consider waiting a few quarters to see if the technology services provided at Eastern are adequate. And the rule with technology, as you probably know, is you'll always get more machine for your money the longer you wait. To see what the \$35 Technology Fee provides, go to <http://itech.ewu.edu>. (Briefly, it covers computer labs with tons of software and up-to-date hardware, \$9.00 print credit for b/w and color laser/photo printing, equipment checkout services at the Library including 200 laptops, D-SLR cameras, Go-Pro's, projectors, video cameras, etc, 10Gb online storage space, email, web space, and more).

### **Below are some things to consider if you are thinking about buying a laptop.**

- (1) Cost. Sales people will normally suggest higher end systems to make a better sale. Therefore, set your budget first and go from there.
- (2) Windows vs. Mac: Either is a good choice! :) But for specific programs such as Engineering the Windows OS is preferred for best compatibility with a number of Windows-only software applications. Contact your specific program to probe for more information.
- (3) Weight. When toting around a laptop, you'll be surprised how heavy it feels after a few hours.
- (4) Screen size. Usually breaks down into 3 categories: 11"-13" super portable, 14"-15" medium size, and 17" bigger and heavier.
- (5) Speed. The more the better. Again, base it on your budget. Same goes for RAM / memory, hard drive size and speed, and graphics card. An SSD flash-based hard drive is highly recommended for best performance, better battery life, and less heat.
- (6) Programs. Trend Internet Security and Microsoft Office 365 are free for currently enrolled students. Adobe provides discounts for Creative Cloud Apps (Photoshop, InDesign, Illustrator, Premiere, etc) for students directly at their site. Refer to <http://itech.ewu.edu> for a link and more details.
- (7) A number of other things:
  - a. Standard case vs. backpack case
  - b. Keyboard touch and feel
  - c. Battery life (get the longest life battery option possible if you are on the go a lot)
  - d. External wired or wireless mouse vs. using just the onboard track pad/mouse for navigating.
  - e. Built-in Bluetooth which is pretty-much standard, for use with Bluetooth headphones and other BT devices. BT USB adapter can be added on after-the-fact as well.

### **Additional details to consider (some are a repeat):**

- Unless you really know computer hardware and want to build your own, stick with name-brand such as DELL, HP, Toshiba, Apple and other larger companies. Look on their web sites to get weights, sizes, promo pricing, etc.
- 4Gb of RAM at the very minimum. 8Gb+ is recommended.
- SSD flash-based hard drive for best performance. Hybrid 7,200 RPM drives is a good option as well.
- Biggest battery possible if on the go a lot and not around power, like watching movies on a long bus ride or plane trip. Down side: Adds more weight.
- Warranty depends on your comfort level with risk. Normally people go with a standard 1-year but some companies are cutting down to 90-day as standard and making you pay extra for 1 year. 4+ year warranty with ADP (Accidental Damage Protection = covers everything no matter what happens) is ideal.
- And the biggest suggestion of all: Protect it well. There are locks from companies like Kensington to secure it in a home or residence hall room. You may want to check into how much it would cost to insure. A product like LoJack / Computrace (tracks computer location) may be a good idea as well.