

## AnswersThatWork's Laptop Minimum Specs

Hardware	Minimum Spec
CPU	<input type="checkbox"/> Intel 1.7GHz (1.5GHz acceptable) <input type="checkbox"/> AMD Turion 1.8HGz (1.5GHz acceptable) <input type="checkbox"/> AMD Sempron 3GHz <input type="checkbox"/> AMD or Intel <u>Dual-Core</u> processor (go for <u>dual-core</u> over any other processor, such as the ones itemized above – dual-core effectively means your laptop has two processors and, consequently the speed of your laptop is double the rated speed of the processor. For example, a 1.66GHz Dual-Core Intel laptop, or a 1.66GHz X2 in AMD notation, is effectively a 3.3GHz laptop which will actually work faster than a 3.3GHz single-core laptop).
RAM	<input type="checkbox"/> 1Gb (2Gb preferable for Vista)
Hard Drive	<input type="checkbox"/> 80Gb minimum
DVD-Writer	<input type="checkbox"/> <u>Integrated Dual Layer DVD-Writer</u>
Screen Size	<input type="checkbox"/> 14.1" <u>for standard displays</u> (15" is much better) <input type="checkbox"/> 15.4" <u>for widescreen displays</u>
Graphics (VGA)	<input type="checkbox"/> 64Mb (128Mb is recommended)
Modem	<input type="checkbox"/> <u>Integrated 56k Modem</u>
Network Card	<input type="checkbox"/> <u>Integrated 10/100 LAN Card</u> (Gigabit, 10/100/1000 is much better) <input type="checkbox"/> <u>Integrated 54Mbps Wireless LAN Card</u>

<b>Card Reader</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>SD / MMC / SM / xD / Sony Memory Stick</b>
<b>Battery Life</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>1.5 hours absolute minimum</b>  <p>Do not automatically view a high battery life as an absolute necessity. For example, nowadays many users have laptops purely so that they can use their own computer in any of the rooms of their wireless networked house. Wherever they eventually settle to work, be it the kitchen, the study, or the bedroom, they almost always connect the laptop to the mains – in such cases the Battery Life is irrelevant as the laptop is very seldom used working solely off its battery.</p> <p>Understanding how you will be using your new laptop is therefore crucial as regards Battery Life requirements, and, in turn, as regards the range of laptops that will fit your preferences. For example, at the time of writing, December 2006, Acer have for the whole of 2006 and up to mid 2007 produced fantastic high specs semi-entry level laptops (e.g. 3GHz to 4.4GHz AMD Sempron WLMI laptops, single core and dual core) which had, however, a very low battery life of 1.5 hours. For those users who did not need a long battery life, those Acer laptops proved a fantastic deal in terms of features, eye catching design, processor, memory, and hard disk specs, and a general high overall quality from a top-tier manufacturer. On the other hand those users who had a requirement to use their laptops on trains, at airports, or other places where they could not “plug them into electricity”, would have needed to look at other brands such as HP or IBM.</p>
<b>Additional Considerations</b>	
<b>Floppy Drive</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Most laptops do not come with an integrated Floppy Drive nowadays. Therefore, if you still have a need to use floppy disks, make sure you include the purchase of an <b><u>external USB Floppy Drive</u></b> with your new laptop.

<p><b>Weight</b></p>	<p>☐ If weight is an issue for you when choosing a laptop, make sure you consider the following <u>very carefully</u>. The lighter the laptop, the more expensive it will be, and the slower it will be compared to the heavier standard-weight laptops. The latter is because speed means a fast processor; a fast processor means a lot of heat; heat means “<i>we need to have enough air circulating inside this laptop otherwise we will end up having to repair endless laptops which have failed through overheating</i>”; air circulation means size; size means bulk; bulk means weight ! Reduce the weight and you have to reduce everything else, including, at the other end of the scale, the processor speed.</p> <p>The standard weight for a normal-size laptop is between <b>2.6Kg</b> to <b>3Kg</b>, and this is with everything integrated, including the DVD-Writer. If you choose a laptop that weighs, say 2Kg, the likelihood is it will have an <u>external</u> DVD-Writer which you will need to lug around with you whenever you think you might need it, and, as explained above, the processor will be significantly slower than the processors used in standard weight laptops.</p>
<p><b>Operating System</b></p>	<p>☐ If you are a home user, <u>Windows XP Home Edition</u> is fine. However, if you want to use the laptop as a business laptop where you connect it to a network, you will need <u>Windows XP Pro SP2</u>.</p> <p>If you are buying for a business, do not automatically go for Vista which is on 70% of new laptops. In June 2007 a number of manufacturers are now re-introducing <b>XP Pro</b> laptops in response to serious dissatisfaction with Vista in some business environments. Check with whoever set up your business IT systems.</p> <p><b>Home users :</b> if you go for <u>Windows Vista</u>, avoid <u>Vista Starter</u> or <u>Vista Home Basic</u> at all cost – it is our view that no laptop manufacturer should put such restricted versions of Vista on a laptop which will cost \$400 or much more. Go for either <u>Vista Home Premium</u> or <u>Vista Business</u>.</p> <p><b>Business users :</b> if you go for <u>Windows Vista</u>, choose either <u>Vista Business</u> or <u>Vista Ultimate</u>.</p>

**The Top Brands**

There are many good brands of laptops out there. Some are totally unknown in some countries, or outside of the Far East, but are nevertheless very good. The list below concentrates purely on those brands which are considered to be “**The Top Brands**”. If you are considering a laptop manufactured by a company that is not listed below, simply do a little research – you may be pleasantly surprised by what you find out.

**Asus** (The world’s top motherboard manufacturer quality-wise. Their laptops, originally sold only in the Far East, are now being sold in the US and a few European countries)

**Acer** (Eye-catching designs & excellent specs for the money)

**Dell** (Our experience of their support is “unspeakable of”, and that’s over the last 5 years!! – Makes beautiful, well built, and excellently spec’d laptops nevertheless, at unbeatable prices; you simply have to hope yours never fails!)

**Fujitsu-Siemens** (Surprising quality problems, in our experience, coming from one of the world’s leading hard disk manufacturers!)

**Hewlett-Packard (HP)** (Solid features – First class support)

**Lenovo** (Used to be IBM which used to make the most long-lasting and best supported laptops in the industry – interesting design innovations and aggressive pricing under the new company)

**NEC**

**Panasonic** (We have no experience of their laptops – However, be aware that the name *Panasonic* almost always means absolute top quality, solidity, and longevity, whatever they try their hand at)

**Samsung** (Eye-catching designs)

**Sony** (Quality issues in our experience, and that does not even include their 2006 battery problems – Generally overpriced)

**Toshiba** (The original king of laptops is making a comeback)

Note : If you buy a laptop from one of the brands above where we have given the brand a [positive write-up](#), and you experience serious problems with your laptop in the first week or month of use of the laptop, this does not mean the recommendation is bad. All brands experience the odd dead-on-arrival or problematic-from-day-one laptop, all of them : HP, Lenovo, Toshiba, Dell, etc..., [all of them](#) – we have had this experience from every one of the above name brands, with the exception of Panasonic whose laptops we have not used yet. Occasionally the problem is a manufacturing problem with a particular batch of laptops, but most often these problems are caused by handling problems which have nothing to do with the manufacturer. Typically what happens is that the laptops leave the manufacturer in perfect condition, but the street or online retailer from whom you purchase the laptop uses a carrier which is less than careful with the laptops during transportation, or the retailer’s own staff is careless when handling the boxes in the shop or store room. Result – you get a faulty laptop. In most cases this is the real reason behind a dead-on-arrival or instantly-problematic laptop, which is why if you are unfortunate enough to be one of the very few to have a bad experience with a normally reliable name brand, it is worth trying that same manufacturer again rather than simply getting your money back. What you may want to do, however, is use a different retailer if the first one you used is not one of the “*majors*”.

Happy hunting !

<p><b>Productivity software (wordprocessor, spreadsheeting, presentation software)</b></p>	<p>If you are a <b>Microsoft Office</b> user (Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Access), as opposed to a Lotus SmartSuite or Corel WordPerfect Office user, then be aware that in 2007 you will automatically be offered <b>Microsoft Office 2007</b> by whoever sells you your new laptop.</p> <p>Beware : If you have never used it, <b>Microsoft Office 2007</b> is a million miles away from Microsoft Office 2003 or Microsoft Office 2000. The way it looks, the way it operates, and, above all, the terminology it uses, are completely different from anything you've ever seen before. Things like the <i>File</i> menu have disappeared completely – in fact, menus as you know them have disappeared completely, and it does not stop there.</p> <p>Some users like Microsoft Office 2007, some are not bothered by the difference, but, in our experience so far, <u>many many users do not like the new Microsoft Office 2007, and quite a few literally hate it and ask us to put 2003 back on their PCs.</u></p> <p>So, just in case you might prefer the 2003 version of Microsoft Office, before you automatically say YES for Microsoft Office <u>2007</u> for your new laptop, go to your nearest PC store and ask a sales person to let you try it on one of the demo PCs – that would be prudent !</p>
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