What Kind of Computer Should I Bring to College?

Chestnut Hill College students are expected to have laptop computers. We do not require any particular brand or model, but we have certain recommendations to make.

Laptop vs. Desktop Computing

We strongly recommend a laptop. Your desktop computer would be bound to your room and would only be useful there. You would quickly find that there are many other places on campus that you might want to work: in the library reference room, for example, or during a class.

New vs. Older or Used Computers

Your laptop should be a relatively recent model, able to handle modern software and networking requirements. Purchasing a used machine on eBay, or taking a hand-me-down from an older sibling *might* give you what you need, but it might not. You will be best served by acquiring something that will hold you through most or all of your four years in college—we all know how rapidly technology changes—and the best way to stay ahead of the curve is by getting as much technology as you can afford right from the beginning.

IBM-Compatible vs. Apple

While each has its strengths, probably 80% of Chestnut Hill Students have Windows computers rather than Apple computers. However, except for a few limitations, Apple computers can be made to work.

Printers

We definitely recommend the purchase of an inexpensive printer. All your hard work will pay off if you hand in great looking copy. You don't want to have to be finding a friend who has a printer, or rushing to the computer center at the last minute to get that final term paper into shape. We don't recommend any specific printer, but there are many excellent color inkjet and laserjet printers in the $100 to $200 range: Hewlett Packard, Canon and Epson are just a few of many excellent brand names to look into.

Insurance

Students who wish to be insured are responsible for insuring their own computer systems. Many homeowner policies will cover a computer at no additional cost, but only if it is specifically itemized on the policy. Check with your insurance carrier for the specifics on your policy. The College is not responsible for the loss of your computer.

New Computer Delivery

Do not drop ship or mail your computer to Chestnut Hill College before your arrival on campus as we will not sign to take delivery of it. We cannot accept shipments and are unable to secure or store them.

Computer Repairs

All manufacturers provide various levels of warranty at the time of purchase, and you should be sure that you have at the very least a two-year warranty. Major manufacturers such as Hewlett Packard, Toshiba, Lenovo and Dell (see further below) provide excellent warranty service including extended warranties. You should contact the manufacturer for support on hardware issues. Time permitting, our Information Technology PC staff are often able to make quick diagnostic tests that will help you in deciding how to proceed, but they do not make hardware repairs, which might void your warranty.

Software

We recommend that any Windows-based laptop or PC be running Windows 7 as its operating system. In order to be compatible with computers in the labs, your fellow students and your professors, you should be running Microsoft Office 2007 or Microsoft Office 2010, which provides you with Word (for your word processing), Excel, PowerPoint, Access, and Outlook. It is available for approximately $100 at http://efollett.journeyed.com/_landingPg/. (Choose USA, then Pennsylvania, and then select Chestnut Hill College from the list of schools.)

Virus protection

Virus protection is the sole responsibility of the user. This is not optional. We insist on it, and will remove network access for student machines that are not in compliance. We suggest Microsoft Security Essentials, Sophos, Norton, McAfee or AVG Free anti-virus programs as suitable products. Also, keeping virus definitions current and keeping computers free of viruses are maintenance procedures that students, like any other computer users, are responsible for performing themselves, and daily automatic updates over the Internet are recommended (the College updates its own computer systems every four hours!)

Basic System Requirements

As you shop for your laptop, be looking, as a minimum, for: a multi-core processor or better, a 150 GB hard drive, and a minimum of 4 GB of memory. In addition, the laptop should have a DVD drive that, if possible, can record DVDs and CDs. We recommend you get a USB drive (also called a "jump drive," or "flash drive") with at least 8 GB of storage. Finally, your machine should be network ready, with both wired and wireless - IEEE 802.11g or 802.11n (Wireless N) – interfaces available.

Recommended Systems
While the College cannot guarantee any system, we do feel that Dell laptops provided a great value backed by a major manufacturer. Other major manufacturers such as HP or Lenovo (formerly IBM) are fine as well. Warning: computers designed strictly for the home market are sometimes not compatible with business network hardware and software, and many colleges have found that the Compaq Presario, Fujitsu laptops, most Packard-Bell computers and many "no-name" models to be particularly troublesome, and we recommend that you avoid these as there is a chance that they cannot be successfully networked. You can check out Dell Computers on the web at http://www.dell.com.

Also, it is important that you purchase the professional version or better of Windows 7 operating systems as the home and starter editions are often problematic.

Note that PC purchases are at the discretion of the student, and the purchase contract is between the student and the manufacturer. Chestnut Hill College is not a party to the sale, and negotiations to resolve any disputes will be the responsibility of the purchaser.