



## Student Computer Buyer's Guide

What computing device should you buy? A Chromebook? iPad? MacBook Air? This question used to be simple to answer, as the options were limited; however, the current market has a myriad of different options. Historically, PCs were cheaper and ran more popular software while Macs were more expensive and appealed to more creative individuals. Today, however, these differences are not nearly as great and new entries into the computing world, such as Chromebooks, are further complicating this decision. To help guide you through this process, look through the questions and answers below.

### **Is your child entering Grade 6 or Grade 12?**

This has an impact on the size and weight of the laptop you consider as well as what they will need it for. A \$2000 MacBook for a 6th grader may not be necessary when a \$300 Chromebook can match most of the tasks being asked of the students. Conversely, by Grade 9, students start taking courses such as computer programming and graphic design when they will start to find some limitations with a Chromebook so it really depends on the courses they plan on taking and their creative interests.

### **What are your child's interests?**

If your child will only be using the laptop for typing notes, creating spreadsheets, writing essays and researching, a Chromebook is more than suitable. Alternatively, If your child enjoys playing video games, PC's are a better choice. Macbooks come with built-in audio and video software that many students find useful for media arts.

### **How much storage space do we need?**

Many people become confused between RAM and storage capacity. RAM affects the speed of the computer (how many things it can do at once before slowing down) and the storage capacity refers to how much data can be stored on the device's hard drive. In today's world 8GB of RAM is becoming a necessity for computers that plan on being used for a couple of years. Since we encourage cloud-based processing, it is very unlikely your child's hard drive will ever run out of storage space, unless he or she is storing a large volume of photographs, songs and movies. Solid State Drives (SSD) are faster and more reliable than Hard Disk Drives (HDD). They often cost more money and often have less storage space on them but the better performance makes it worth it.

## Should I buy the extended warranty?

Some laptops come with a 3-year warranty while others have only a 1-year plan. Purchasing an extended warranty that covers everything from drops to spills is another option. When making your decision, consider asking yourself, "If I had to replace this computer in XX months (years), would I be frustrated because I didn't buy the warranty?"

## Do I need any special software?

In short, no installation of any specific software will be necessary. To improve communication with their teachers, students will be working on a Google Apps for Education (GAFE) platform at school, which is a free web-based service that works with all devices. For subjects such as media arts and publishing, specialized software such as Adobe Creative Cloud may be required, but the school will issue copies of this for students to use on their own devices.

## What else do I need?

Do not underestimate the importance of battery life. The freedom of not having to find an outlet during the school day will be of great benefit to any student. A good laptop bag should also be considered. The laptop will be transported to and from school every day and will surely get bumped along the way.

Below is a comparison of some of the options available:

<b>Chromebooks</b>	<b>PC / MacBook</b>
<p>If you are looking for a device to type notes, create spreadsheets, write essays and do research, a Chromebook is the perfect option.</p> <p>They are fast, affordable, light and have good battery life. There are numerous manufacturers to purchase from, but the differences between them are minimal.</p> <p>One drawback is that they currently lack the ability to run high performance software. However, they are continually developing new web apps to overcome these shortfalls.</p> <p>Price Range: You can get a Chromebook with 4-8GB of RAM, a SSD and a long battery life for around \$300.</p>	<p>These devices have the most versatility in terms of the programs they run and storage capacity. The differences between a PC and a Mac are mostly based on personal preference.</p> <p>For portability (thin and light) and battery life, a MacBook Air offers great performance and are common around the school. Support will be plentiful.</p> <p>PCs offer much greater variety in their price range and features (touch screen, screen size, detachable screens, etc.).</p> <p>Price Range: To get a Macbook Air or comparable PC (8GB RAM, a SSD and a long battery life) you are looking at around \$800 - \$1200.</p>