

# Cyberwalker.com's Computer Buyer's Worksheet

(<http://www.cyberwalker.com/buyacomputer/worksheet.html>)

(Thanks to Deborah K. Zinn for her refinements)

Print a copy of this sheet for each computer you look at to compare notes before you decide which one to buy.

## What brand and speed of PROCESSOR does it have?

TYPE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	SPEED IN MHz or GHz (1 GHz = 1,000 MHz)	NOTES
Pentium II	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____MHz	
Pentium III	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____MHz / GHz (circle)	
Pentium IV	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____GHz	
Pentium Celeron	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____MHz	
AMD Duron	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____MHz	
AMD Athlon	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____MHz / GHz (circle)	

## How much RAM (random access memory) does it have? /How much RAM can it be upgraded to?

AMOUNT OF RAM IN COMPUTER	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	MAXIMUM SPACE FOR RAM	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NOTES
32 Megabytes	<input type="checkbox"/>	64 Megabytes	<input type="checkbox"/>	
64 Megabytes	<input type="checkbox"/>	128 Megabytes	<input type="checkbox"/>	
128 Megabytes	<input type="checkbox"/>	256 Megabytes	<input type="checkbox"/>	
256 Megabytes	<input type="checkbox"/>	384 Megabytes	<input type="checkbox"/>	
512 Megabytes	<input type="checkbox"/>	512 Megabytes	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Other _____ Megabytes	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other _____ Megabytes	<input type="checkbox"/>	

**TIPS:** This is an important question because as the computer ages you are going to want to add memory. The amount of memory in the computer should be at least 128 MB. It should have room for a total of 384 MB of memory or preferably 512 MB or better.

## How big is the HARD DRIVE?

AMOUNT OF HARD DRIVE (also known as hard disk) SPACE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NOTES
10 Gigabytes	<input type="checkbox"/>	
20 Gigabytes	<input type="checkbox"/>	
30 Gigabytes	<input type="checkbox"/>	
40 Gigabytes	<input type="checkbox"/>	
50 Gigabytes	<input type="checkbox"/>	
60 Gigabytes	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Other _____ Gigabytes	<input type="checkbox"/>	

**TIPS:** With the move toward storage of music files, images & even video, big hard drives will be necessary as the years go by. However, 20 GB should be fine to get you started. Most computers allow for a second hard drive to be added internally or multiple hard drives externally. A mid to top end system should come with a 40 GB to 60 GB hard drive.

**Does it come with a CD-ROM drive (to read data and music CDs) or a CD-RW (rewritable) drive (to read and create data and music CDs)?**

<b>CD ROM DRIVE?</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	<b>CD WRITER (CD-RW)?</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	<b>NOTES</b>
<b>CD ROM SPEED?</b>	Read Speed _____ x	<b>CD WRITER SPEED?</b>	Read Speed _____ x Write Speed _____ x ReWrite Speed _ x	

**TIPS:** Most computers come with a CD-ROM drive rated on the speed of how fast a music CD is read in a stereo. Most CD-ROM drives today are rated over 20x (meaning 20 times as fast as a stereo's CD player). Some computers will come with a second CD drive that can "burn" or create a CD from a blank.

**Is the MONITOR included in the price? If not, how much does it cost?**

<b>MONITOR INCLUDED?</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	<b>NOTES</b>
<b>BRAND &amp; MODEL?</b>	_____ _____	
<b>TYPE?</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> CRT <input type="checkbox"/> Flat Panel (TFT)	
<b>MONITOR SIZE?</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> 15 inch <input type="checkbox"/> 17 inch <input type="checkbox"/> 19 inch <input type="checkbox"/> 20 inch <input type="checkbox"/> Other	
<b>PRICE?</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Included in Price <input type="checkbox"/> Not Included ~ Additional Cost \$ _____	

**TIPS:** They get you on this one. The price of a "complete" computer package is often quoted **without** a monitor. It's most common to add a 17inch monitor to your purchase for about \$400 CDN (\$300 US). 15-inch monitors are becoming less common. Unless you are on a budget, go for a 17 incher. By the way, a monitor "size" is measured diagonally, corner to corner. So, a 17-inch monitor is measured from the bottom left to the top right. Affordable monitors, called CRT's, look like TV's with the bulbous back end. Flat panel monitors are called TFT monitors and are much more pricey.

**What OPERATING SYSTEM and SOFTWARE comes with the computer?**

<b>OPERATING SYSTEM?</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Windows XP <input type="checkbox"/> Window 2000/ME <input type="checkbox"/> Windows 98 <input type="checkbox"/> Windows 95 <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____	<b>NOTES</b>
<b>SOFTWARE INCLUDED?</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Microsoft Works <input type="checkbox"/> Microsoft Works Suite <input type="checkbox"/> Microsoft Small Business (WORD, EXCEL, PUBLISHER) <input type="checkbox"/> Microsoft Office Standard (WORD, EXCEL, POWERPOINT) <input type="checkbox"/> Microsoft Office Professional (WORD, EXCEL, POWERPOINT, ACCESS) <input type="checkbox"/> Microsoft Money <input type="checkbox"/> Antivirus Software <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____	

**What is the WARRANTY? What happens if it needs servicing?**

<b>WARRANTY INCLUDED?</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> YES ~ __ Years <input type="checkbox"/> NO	<b>NOTES</b>
<b>RETURN TO STORE WARRANTY?</b>	Length of Warranty _____ Days _____ Months _____ Years	
<b>RETURN TO MANUFACTURER WARRANTY?</b>	Length of Warranty _____ Days _____ Months _____ Years	
<b>SERVICE LEVEL?</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> In your home or office <input type="checkbox"/> In store of purchase <input type="checkbox"/> Return to manufacturer <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____	
<b>RESPONSE TIME?</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Same Day <input type="checkbox"/> Next Day <input type="checkbox"/> Next Week <input type="checkbox"/> One Week <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____	
<b>EXTRA CHARGE?</b>	\$ _____	

**TIPS:** Find out how long the warranty is on the computer and the monitor. Find out what you have to do if you need servicing (bring it back to the store?; ship it back to the manufacture?) SKIP the extended warranty unless they offer same-or-next-day in=home or in-office repair.

**Is a PRINTER included in the price? If not, how much does a PRINTER cost and how much do the replacement toner/inkjet cartridges cost?**

<b>PRINTER INCLUDED?</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO		<b>NOTES</b>
<b>TYPE?</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Inkjet <input type="checkbox"/> Laser (Monochrome) <input type="checkbox"/> Color Laser <input type="checkbox"/> Solid Ink (color)		
<b>PRICE?</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Included in Price <input type="checkbox"/> Not Included ~ Additional Cost \$___		
<b>SPEED?</b>	Pages per minute Black/White _____ Color _____	<b>NOTE:</b> Some printers will quote speed in "draft" mode, which is the worst quality output. Check speed for "photo" or "best" quality – which will be much slower.	
<b>RESOLUTION?</b>	_____ x _____ dpi	<b>NOTE:</b> dpi means "dots per inch"	
<b>PAPER SIZES?</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Letter Size (8 1/2" x 11") <input type="checkbox"/> Legal Size (8 1/2" x 14") <input type="checkbox"/> Tabloid (12" x 18") <input type="checkbox"/> Envelopes <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____		
<b>PRINTER CABLE INCLUDED?</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO Price (if not included) \$__		
<b>COST PER PRINTED PAGE?</b>	<u><b>MONOCHROME:</b></u> Pages per cartridge: _____ Replacement cost: \$ _____  <u><b>COLOR:</b></u> Pages per cartridge: _____ Replacement cost: \$ _____	<b>NOTE:</b> Ask how many pages can be expected of each cartridge.	

**TIPS:** You will want a printer, if not immediately, soon after you buy the computer. Be wary of FREE printers. They are probably bottom end inkjet printers that print very slowly. AND, when it comes time to buy a replacement ink cartridge or toner (ink powder) it will cost you \$40 CDN (\$25 US) for black and \$60-\$80 CDN (\$35 to \$55 US) for color. Most color inkjet printers have two cartridges; one for black and one for color. It is unlikely that you will be offered a laser printer "for free" as they tend to be more expensive; in the \$300-\$800 CDN (\$200 US to \$600 US) range. Toner replacements run \$120 to \$300 CDN (\$80 to \$200 US).

**What ELSE does the computer come with?**

<b>3.5 inch FLOPPY DISK DRIVE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	All computers should come with a 2.5 inch floppy disk drive	
<b>ZIP DRIVE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	100 MB or 250 MB floppy ZIP Drive	
<b>DVD DRIVE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	DVD Drives can be used to view movies in DVD format	
<b>MODEM</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	A dial-up modem should not be rated slower than 56 kilobits per second (it is obsolete if it is).	
<b>MOUSE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	All computers should come with a mouse. Look for one with two or three buttons with a scroll wheel.	
<b>KEYBOARD</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	All computers should come with a keyboard. Some have special keys for ease of Internet use. Some are ergonomic. These options are personal choice.	
<b>USB PORTS</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	USB ports are used to add many external devices. Most computers have two ports; the more the better, especially if they are mounted in the front as well as the back.	
<b>SERIAL/ PARALLEL/ PS/2 PORTS</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	All computers should come with at least one serial port (for external modems, etc), one parallel port (for older printers) and two PS/2 ports (for an older keyboard & mouse).	
<b>SPEAKERS</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	Speakers allow you to have sound on your computer.	
<b>SCANNER</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	Computers usually do not come with scanners. They can be purchased separately to scan photos, text, graphics and even 3-D objects.	
<b>SURGE PROTECTOR</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	Allow you to plug all computer components into one outlet, but more importantly protect the electronics in the computer from power surges.	
<b>NETWORK INTERFACE CARD</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	For high-speed Internet or network connection.	
<b>WIRELESS NETWORKING KIT</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	Some computers now ship with wireless networking capabilities	
<b>OTHER</b>	_____		
<b>OTHER</b>	_____		