



Netbook, a new class of computers

What is a Netbook computer? A Netbook is a small, low cost notebook computer primary designed for web browsing and e-mailing.

So how did the Netbook evolve? Netbooks were originally designed for the "One Laptop Per Child project" a project created to provide the world's poorest children with a rugged, low-cost, low-power, connected laptop. Consumer awareness of the Netbook really began in 2007 when Asus launched the Netbook Eee PC. Designed for emerging markets the Eee PC weighed about two pounds and featured a 7-inch screen.

How does a Netbook differ from a laptop? While Netbooks share a number of common features with laptop computers the key differences are:

- 1) Lower processor power which limits the computing power or functionality of a Netbook
- 2) Smaller keyboard and screen sizes
- 3) There is no optical drive. CD/DVD drives have been left out to reduce both the size and cost.
- 4) While they do have Wi-Fi most don't include the fastest and latest version of Wi-Fi (N) or the older "A" version.
- 5) Most do not include a telephone modem. For many, communication is the main purpose of their Netbook and there are still places where the only means of getting online is by the telephone (dial-up).
- 6) Most don't include Bluetooth

Listed below are some of the typical core features found in today's Netbook computer. Since Netbooks are such a rapidly evolving product with newer, more expensive and featured loaded models being introduced weekly this list will not stay up to date for long. In the later part of this year we have already observed an increase in the standard screen size from the 7" to 8" range to 9" and 10" now. We've also recently seen the recent introduction of new operating systems and wireless network compatibility.

- Intel Atom CPU running at 1.6-GHz
- Wi-Fi B and G
- Ethernet at 100Mbps
- A slot for a flash memory card
- External VGA output jack
- Integrated graphics and speakers
- Two or three USB ports
- Built-in camera
- Headphone and microphone jacks
- Screen sizes in the 7- to 10 inch range



Aspire One (9" screen) & Asus Eee PC (10" screen)

So what differs between the models and brands or does spending more really make a difference?

- 1) Size and quality of the screen
- 2) The amount of ram
- 3) Battery life/power, with low-end models having 3-cell batteries and higher-end models having 6 cells. Larger batteries means longer operating time before the computer has to be recharged
- 4) Size and type of hard drive. Solid-state disks (SSDs) or spinning platter. Most new models now have spinning platter models to take advantage of their lower cost and larger capacities

While a Netbook is not a replacement for your desktop or laptop computer they should continue to be extremely popular because of their small size and low cost. The future looks bright for Netbooks as they may well prove to be the first computer for a new generation of users or a great portable option for those on the go!

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