Purchasing a Computer to Use at Elizabethtown College

This information was prepared by the Elizabethtown College Information and Technology Services (ITS) Department for students entering in the fall of 2025. Please visit our website for the most up-to-date information: http://www.etown.edu/its.

Recommendations

Information and Technology Services (ITS) supports both Windows-based and Macintosh computers on campus. 90% of the college-owned computers on campus are Windows-based computers and therefore most support is focused on the Windows machines. Macintosh computers accounted for 30% of student machines last year.

Generally, students find that laptops are more convenient to use throughout the campus and are easier to take home during breaks. Approximately 95% of student computers are laptops.

We do not recommend a specific computer brand. Therefore, we recommend using an independent reviewer of manufacturers. For example, Consumer Reports reviews computers each year in a variety of categories. We recommend reviewing the **repair history** of the various brands. Any of the brands that have been reviewed should work with our campus network.

We also do not recommend using tablets or devices running mobile operating systems (e.g., Apple iPhone and iPad, Android phones and tablets, Chromebooks, and other mobile devices) as replacements for a laptop. They have limited processing power and can only run mobile-compatible apps, which limits what software can be installed on them.

Elizabethtown College has purchasing arrangements with both Dell and Apple. You may purchase a computer at a small discount (5-8%) from these vendors by going to http://www.etown.edu/computers.

Microsoft Office will be provided to all actively enrolled students through the Microsoft Student Advantage program. Download and installation instructions will be provided to students later in the summer. Additional software can be purchased at an educational discount through academic resellers like JourneyEd (http://www.journeyed.com/select/).

We recommend the same specifications for students as we purchase for our faculty and staff.   These specifications are machines that we expect to last for four years without hardware upgrades. We also recommend an extended warranty with onsite service and accidental damage coverage. These systems may be a little more expensive but can balance out over lower priced systems which may not last for four years or have a limited warranty.

Recommended Computer Specifications for the Elizabethtown Campus Network

This information was updated in April 2025 for students entering in the fall of 2025.

	Windows-based Computers		Macintosh	
	Recommended Specifications (new computer)	**Minimum Specifications*** (used computer)	**Recommended Specifications** (new computer)	**Minimum Specifications*** (used computer)
Processor	Intel Core i5/i7 Quad *11th- 14th (current) generation*	Intel Core i5 8th generation	Apple M3, M4	Apple M1
Memory	16 GB	8 GB	16 GB	8 GB
Hard Drive	250+ GB *Solid State Disk (SSD) will provide better performance*	120 GB	250+ GB *Solid State Disk (SSD) will provide better performance*	120 GB
Wireless for Laptops	802.11 ac	802.11 g/n	802.11 ac	802.11 g/n
Laptop Warranty	3-4 year onsite next business day with insurance against drops and spills (e.g., Dell's CompleteCare)		3-year AppleCare+ Accidental Damage Protection	
Desktop Warranty	3-4 year onsite next business day		3-year AppleCare Protection	
Operating System	Microsoft Windows 11	Windows 11	MacOS 15 Sequoia	MacOS 13 Ventura
Microsoft Office	Microsoft Office 365		Microsoft Office 365 for Mac	
	Microsoft Office will be provided for free to actively enrolled students through the Microsoft Student Advantage Program. Download and installation instructions will be provided to students later in the summer.			
Webcam & Microphone	A webcam and microphone are recommended for videoconferencing. Most new laptops have a webcam and microphone built in. An external webcam or microphone can be connected to desktops.			
Network Connections	All campus buildings have wi-fi coverage, and each room has wired Ethernet jacks. To use the faster speeds of the wired connections, computers need a compatible Ethernet card and an Ethernet cable (25 foot recommended) with RJ45 connectors. These cables are available at the College Store or other electronics retailers. For machines without an Ethernet card, external USB to Ethernet adapters are available for purchase.			
Recommended Antivirus Software	ITS recommends that all computers have antivirus software protection installed. We do not endorse a specific brand, but some common options are Norton, McAfee, and Malwarebytes.			

* A computer with the minimum specifications will work on the campus network at this time, but may no longer be supported over the next few years. These machines may need to be upgraded or replaced at that time.

Additional questions? Please feel free to contact the ITS Help Desk:
helpdesk@etown.edu | Nicarry Hall, room 125 | www.etown.edu/its