Technology for New Students
Frequently Asked Questions

Do I need a computer on campus?
Students are not required to bring a computer with them to campus. There are over 200 computers available in public areas on campus that students may use, including the High Library (open for extended hours) and a 24-hour lab. However, most students find the convenience of having a computer in their room extremely beneficial. Computers are a primary communication tool and help students stay connected. Students will, at times, find themselves having to visit a computer lab even if they have their own computer. Some software or hardware is only available in a computer lab, and it would be cost prohibitive for students to purchase it themselves.

Should I buy a Windows computer or a Macintosh computer?
Approximately 90% of the computers purchased by the College are Windows-based Dell products and the other 10% are Macintosh. ITS supports both platforms on the network, but most of the focus is on Windows computers due to the higher number of users. Students should purchase the computer they are most comfortable with. Last year, the incoming class brought approximately 30% Macintosh and 70% Windows computers. In the School of Engineering and Computer Science, students will be expected to use software that runs only on Windows. Mac users may need to use an on-campus Windows computer lab or borrow a Windows laptop from the High Library for a short term.

Should I buy a laptop or a desktop?
Desktops generally provide more computing power and may be equipped with a larger screen. Portability is the number one reason students choose a laptop. Students can take it to class, the library, or just outside. There is also the added convenience of being able to take a laptop home over breaks. We estimate that 95% of student computers on campus are laptops. Unfortunately, with this portability also comes a higher likelihood of damage. For this reason, ITS strongly recommends that students buying laptops also purchase a warranty that covers accidental damage (e.g., Dell's CompleteCare). We recommend you treat your computer the same way you would valuables or cash - don't leave it unattended. For added security, we also suggest keeping it locked up with a security cable (not provided by ITS) when not in use.

What else should I know about buying a computer?
Each year, ITS provides guidelines for purchasing new computers. These guidelines provide recommendations for the hardware and software that should be considered when purchasing a computer. These guidelines are a best effort to suggest a machine that will last four years without requiring any hardware upgrades. These specifications are available [on the ITS website](#).

Can a phone, tablet, Chromebook, or other mobile device replace a laptop?
Tablets like the Surface Pro or convertible ultrabooks that run full versions of the operating system, can provide the same processing power of a laptop computer, and can run most software packages. These tablets can replace laptops. However, tablets and devices that run *mobile operating systems*, like Apple iPhones and iPads, Android Phones and Tablets, Chromebooks, and other mobile devices, *should not be considered a replacement for a laptop*, as they have limited processing power and can only run mobile-compatible apps. Use of Chromebooks and other mobile operating systems can make course work difficult as software installations may be limited, including Zoom, Microsoft Office, and other integral applications that are salient to the College.

What operating system version should I have when I come to campus?
We recommend that computers run the most recent operating system when coming to campus. Currently, that is Windows 11 or MacOS 15. We currently also support MacOS 13/14, however these older operating systems will be phased out over the coming years and will require an upgrade at that time.

What do I need to connect my computer to the wired network?
An Ethernet card is required to connect to the College's wired network. Many machines have integrated Ethernet cards, but some ultraportable machines do not. For those machines, USB to Ethernet adapters are available as an additional option. You will also need an Ethernet cable (25' recommended) which can be purchased at any computer store or the College's bookstore.

Is there wireless Internet available on campus?
All buildings on campus have wireless coverage. The wireless network supports up to 802.11ac wireless cards. Configuration instructions can be found on the [ITS wireless access webpage](#). Please note it is against the College's [Acceptable Use Policy](#) to install your own wireless router, access point, or gateway. The wired Ethernet network is still the fastest and most reliable method for connecting to the network.

Will my iPad, Kindle Fire, tablet PC, or other device work with the wireless network?
The College utilizes a standard 802.11ac wireless network, which is commonly supported by most computers and mobile devices. All devices connected to the network need to be registered with ITS.

Should I buy 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.

Do I need Microsoft Office?
Microsoft is collaborating with Elizabethtown College to provide free Microsoft Office to students for free to actively enrolled students through the MicrosoftStudent Advantage Program. This program allows students to install Microsoft Office on their computers and personal devices (up to 5 PCs or Macs, 5 tablets, and 5 smart phones). Download and installation instructions for this software are available in the ITS knowledge base.

What other software should I install before arriving on campus?
The operating systems for computers and devices should be regularly updated with security patches from their respective vendors. Windows users can get their updates from the Windows Update menu in Settings and Macintosh Users should go to the Apple Menu > System Settings > General and select Software Update. It is good practice to regularly check for new updates. *These updates are as critical to your computer as running antivirus software.*

Do I get a college e-mail account?
All students are provided with a college e-mail account (@etown.edu). These accounts are considered the official method of electronic correspondence and students are required to check this e-mail account on a regular basis by going to http://mail.etown.edu. Students will be provided with their account information (username and password) at the beginning of May.

Does the college provide data storage?
Students have access to two types of data storage:
1) 1GB of storage on the College's "Public and Private" folders. These folders can be used to access files from anywhere on the campus network.
2) 1TB of cloud-based storage is available to students through Microsoft OneDrive. OneDrive can also be accessed off-campus through Microsoft's website.

Is there cable television available on campus?
Residential students can access the standard Comcast cable lineup via the Xfinity on Campus (XOC) service, which includes over 100 HD and SD channels, as part of their room fee. XOC is available through a web browser on computers and mobile devices. Various television and streaming device vendors also support the XOC stream app to stream directly to these devices. XOC also offers on demand, DVR, and premium services for an additional fee, coordinated directly with Comcast.

Do I need to bring a printer to campus?
Students should not need to bring a printer to campus. Every lab on campus has a high-speed laser printer and express print stations are available throughout the campus, including in the residence halls. Students are provided 500 pages of free printing each semester at these locations. That said, some students may still prefer the convenience of a personal printer in their room. Printers can be connected directly to their computer via USB cable or connected to the wireless network in client mode. Wireless printers may not be run in Wi-Fi Direct or access point mode as this configuration can degrade the wireless service for other devices.

I have some additional questions, who can I talk to?
The staff at the ITS Help Desk would be happy to answer any questions you may have about purchasing a computer or any technology at Elizabethtown College. The ITS Help Desk can be reached by submitting a ticket at helpdesk.etown.edu or via e-mail at helpdesk@etown.edu. Additionally, detailed information is available in the ITS knowledge base.