

Mum and Dad's GUIDE TO BUYING A COMPUTER



So here is the list of all you need to know before you step foot inside the store.

By Ms Mega Byte

1 Ask your friends and colleagues for recommendations on what you need and where to get it. Even the IT guy at work can be a great help.

2 Set your budget upfront. You should get a good family computer with a printer/scanner combo for under \$1300. But take note of the power of the microprocessor (also called a CPU) at its heart. A budget processor will save you a few hundred dollars, but you may have to upgrade your PC in a couple of years to run newer software. Things to look out for are:

a Clock speed (eg: 2.0GHz) - the higher the number, the faster the processor will do your bidding.

b Front-side bus speed (eg: 800MHz FSB) - once again, look for the highest number available.

c Level 2 cache (eg: 1MB L2) - this is a small storage area right next to the processor which temporarily holds information that is frequently used. The more L2 cache, the faster your computer will be.

3 Visit the store and ask them to show you the computers in your price range - and to explain the differences. If they can't explain the terminology to you in everyday language, it's not the store for you.

4 Look for a computer with at least 2GB RAM (electronic memory which improves the

Walking into a computer store can be like visiting a foreign country, but doing a bit of research will give you the upper hand.



computer's performance) and a 256GB hard drive (for storing your data).

5 If you have a teenage boy in the family (or a young-at-heart dad!) who likes to play graphic-intensive games, consider a computer with a separate graphics processing card.

6 Go for a deal that includes a basic colour printer, or pay a little extra for a better printer which comes with an integrated scanner/copier.

7 Make sure you check what software comes with the computer. Most standard packages come with the very basic Microsoft Works package, but you'll need to upgrade to

Microsoft Office if you want the same suite as commonly used at work and school. This may cost an extra \$100-\$200.

8 Make sure the computer comes with a network card to access your broadband connection.

9 If you will need to send faxes directly from your PC, or if you want dial-up Internet access should your broadband service go down, make sure you get a fax modem included. It shouldn't cost more than \$20.

10 Consider disposing of your old PC properly, should you have one. Visit your local council website or www.ewaste.com.au

Jargon Buster

Processor or CPU the 'brain' of the computer.

Hard Drive the storage space inside the computer – where the programs and files/photos/music will be stored.

RAM built-in high-speed computer memory for running the programs and files you have open.

