

November RevAU: Microsoft Surface Laptop 5 review

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Microsoft Surface Laptop 5 review

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Microsoft Surface Laptop 5 review: Upgrade by numbers

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The Microsoft Surface Laptop 5 is an okay but not essential upgrade

[lead]

A by-the-numbers update to the Microsoft Surface line that feels like it would've benefited from waiting for better tech.

[excerpt]

Surface-level changes.

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The Microsoft Surface Laptop 5 offers an incremental but not essential upgrade. Read our in-depth review for a full breakdown.

[keywords]

Microsoft surface laptop, microsoft, surface laptop, 13 inch laptop, 15 inch laptop

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Surface laptop 5

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Microsoft Surface Laptop 5

3.5/5

Size

13.5 inches

Processor

Intel Core i7-1225U

Storage

256GB, 512GB

RAM

8GB, 16GB

From \$1,699 (at Microsoft <https://fave.co/3GyrrNw>)

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The Microsoft Surface Laptop 5 has been rumoured to release for what feels like the entirety of this year. But I can't help but feel it would've been better off had it been delayed into 2023 and powered by Intel 13th-gen CPUs.

This isn't a bad laptop by any means: it's got a decent screen, great performance and a killer keyboard. But as a tech enthusiast who constantly feels the pull towards upgrading, the refinements in the Surface Laptop 5 compared to the [Surface Laptop 4](/au/technology/microsoft-surface-laptop-4-review/) aren't enough to make this upgrade feel essential.

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[verdict]

If you're new to the Microsoft Surface Laptop range, the Surface Laptop 5 is a solid performer. For Surface Laptop 5 owners, though, the incremental refinements aren't enough to justify the upgrade.

[/verdict]

[pros and cons x3]

Pros

Compact, lightweight and quiet

Fast everyday performance

Keyboard feels great

Cons

Default screen brightness on battery

Limited ports

Still a 720p webcam

[/pros and cons x3]

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Value for money

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Microsoft Surface Laptop 5 value for money

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Reasonable starting prices for 13.5-inch models.

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Prices start at \$1,699 for the 13.5-inch Microsoft Surface Laptop 5 and \$2,149 for the 15-inch model. The 512GB versions of the Intel Core i5 13.5-inch models costs start at \$1,699 RRP for 8GB RAM and \$2,399 for 16GB RAM. There is no i5 option for the 15-inch models, which cost \$2,899 for double the memory (16GB RAM) and 512GB storage.

Strangely, CPU options are determined by the colour you choose if you shop via the Microsoft Store (uncheck the forced colour choice if you want to see all options). The AMD options from Surface Laptop 4 are also absent. Pricewise, the Surface Laptop 5 is competitive in terms of the 2022 pricing for the last-gen Surface Laptop 4.

Shop around for the best prices and configuration options, starting with the table below.

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Design and features

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Microsoft Surface Laptop 5 design and features

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The bezels loom large, especially on the 13.5-inch model.

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Microsoft sent the fastest version of the 13.5-inch screen for review. While the uniform screen bezels aren't massive, they are more noticeable than the similar ones on the 15-inch Surface Laptop 4 I used for comparisons.

Admittedly, the screen on the Surface Laptop 5 is great to look at most of the time, except that it's prone to reflections when in bright settings. It's a touchscreen, too, if that's your thing, but you run the risk of smudges. I strongly recommend hanging onto the thin keyboard cover to stop keys from making a mark on the screen over time (as was the case with the Surface Laptop 4).

The keyboard and trackpad are both still as impressive as what I'm used to from the Surface Laptop 4, which means they're ideal for writers, students or anyone else eager for a laptop that's built for extended use.

Despite how they're tucked away, the speakers offer solid sound. They may lack big-oomph bass, but the Omnisonic speakers offer a well-balanced soundscape with respectable volume. Unfortunately, the 720p webcam and microphone are still more serviceable than impressive.

The Surface Laptop 5 uses a familiar proprietary charger, which is the solitary port on the right of the chassis. On the left is a 3.5mm audio jack alongside a single USB-A port and one USB-C port. That's not a lot in the way of port options, even if there's a sneaky USB-A charging port on the power brick.

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Performance and battery life

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Microsoft Surface Laptop 5

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Speedy performer with okay battery life.

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The jump from 11th-gen to 12th-gen Intel CPUs makes for snappy everyday performance, whether going from powered off to [Windows 11](/au/technology/windows-11-review/) in seconds or multitasking between programs. The test Surface Laptop 5 had an Intel Core i7-1255U processor, 16GB of 5200MHz memory, 512GB storage and batter life rated up to “18 hours of typical device usage”.

That CPU includes Intel Iris Xe integrated graphics, which is great for indie gaming and okay for some mainstream gaming if you're willing to fully drop the resolution and visual settings (and treat 30 frames per second as playable). But this isn't a gaming laptop, so that's a nice-to-have. The memory and storage are standard these days, both of which are fast enough to keep up with everyday personal or business computing.

In terms of raw performance, here's how the Surface Laptop 5 compares to other recent laptops in Geekbench, Novabench and Cinebench benchmark tests.

[insert benchmarks widget here... *if it doesn't exist, please ignore and delete the line above*]

The battery life was somewhat underwhelming, particularly compared to better results from Surface Laptop 4 with AMD CPUs. My Full HD YouTube video test lasted a smidge over eight hours, and the screen isn't particularly bright on default settings. You can expect shorter longevity if you're boosting brightness for darker content.

Outside of CPU-intensive tasks on a full-brightness screen, the Surface Laptop 5 should comfortably make it through a full work or study day, but it's not a viable tablet entertainment replacement on long-haul flights. Recharging went from 0% to 94% in 90 minutes, which is fast. That final 6% of charge took a further 20 minutes, assumedly because slower charging towards the end is designed to help preserve battery longevity.

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Laptop comparison

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Microsoft Surface Laptop 5 vs Surface Laptop 4

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Incremental upgrades only.

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It's disappointing that Microsoft is back to offering Intel CPUs exclusively for the Surface Laptop 5 range, instead of the AMD/Intel split for the Surface Laptop 4. The Surface Laptop 5 has the latest available CPU and RAM, but the Surface Laptop 4 is slightly lighter.

Display resolution and screen bezels are functionally the same between generations, with the 720p camera returning. The Surface Laptop 5 ships with Windows 11, but the Surface Laptop 4 comes with Windows 10, though a Windows 11 upgrade is incredibly straightforward.

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Surface Laptop 5 worth it?

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Is the Microsoft Surface Laptop 5 worth buying?

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An unessential upgrade for Surface Laptop 4 users.

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The Microsoft Surface Laptop 5 feels more like refinement than revolution. If you own a Surface Laptop 4 and suffer from FOMO, you're better off waiting another generation. That said, the Surface Laptop 5 is a speedy, lightweight performer with a decent screen and a great keyboard. But it's far from an essential upgrade.

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Methodology

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How we review laptops

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<https://www.reviews.org/au/technology/microsoft-surface-laptop-go-2-review/>

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Surface Laptop 5 FAQs

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Microsoft Surface Laptop 5 FAQs

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Is the Surface Laptop 5 coming out?

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The Microsoft Surface Laptop 5 was released on 26 October 2022. There are 13.5-inch and 15-inch screen sizes to choose from, with some variety in CPU, RAM and storage.

[q]

How much is Surface Laptop 5?

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Prices for the Microsoft Surface Laptop 5 start at \$1,699 for the 13.5-inch version with an Intel i5 CPU, 8GB of RAM and 256GB storage. The most expensive Surface Laptop 5 costs \$2,899 for a 15-inch screen, an i7 CPU, 16GB RAM and 512GB storage.

[q]

Can the Surface 5 run Windows 11?

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Every Microsoft laptop released after the launch of Windows 11 can run the latest operating system, including the Microsoft Surface Laptop 5.