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What factors help define the best laptops for designers?

Hardware Recommendations 2024

Based on minimum (or recommended) specs for any designer or student using commonly available 2-D or 3-D or video editing software. Any other laptop that has similar specifications to any of the models below will meet the recommended performance to allow a student to explore their own creative potential.

Recommended Minimum specifications

Windows

- Intel i5/i7 (recommended) processor (Alder Laket, Raptor Lake or newer), AMD Ryzen 7 or 9 (ryzen 4000 or newer)
- At least 16GB Memory (32gb recommended)
- At least 512gb of storage space (1tb or more recommended)
- Screen with a resolution of at least 1920x1080px
- Windows 11 or newer update

Mac

- MacBook PRO 13” or 15” (16” Recommended) - 2022 models onwards
- Ideal Model - Macbook Pro 16” (M1/M2/M3 10-core CPU, 8gbRam- 16gb Recommended, 512GB storage – ideally 1TB)
- M1, M2 , M1 Max/M2 Max recommended or M3)
- At least 512gb of Storage space (1tb or more recommended).
- USB-C to Standard USB dongle/adapter (newer MacBook pro models do not include standard USB ports. Therefore you may need an adapter to connect peripherals such as external hard drives, keyboard, mouse or a drawing tablet to your computer.
- Ventura, Sonomma or newer MacOS

Recommended Models (2022 onwards):

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- Acer Aspire Nitro line (or newer), Triton or Helios Line.
- Lenovo Legion or equivalent models.

- Gigabyte Aero Line (2022 onwards)
- Asus TUF or ROG Line (2022 onwards)
- MSI: Alpha, Titan, Stealth, Raider or Leopard Line (2022 onwards)
- Toshiba Satellite - “Fusion” Line (2022 onwards)
- HP ZBook Studio 2022 onwards
- Microsoft Surface Pro **Laptop** - *not to be confused with “Surface tablet”* (2019 onwards)

*MacBook Air is not part of the “pro line” and doesn’t meet the recommended performance requirements for design students.

Other things to think about when making your choice

Performance

Laptop performance and speed are the sum of three parts: processor, RAM and Storage Drive. The more the better!

The processor is an integral part of a laptop that ensures that multiple open applications can run smoothly. There are numerous processors to choose from but here are the most suitable ones for design related projects include: Core i5, Core i7 (Xeon, Skylake or newer) and AMD Ryzen line. The minimum recommendation for most students includes: i5/i7 (intel), Ryzen 5/7 (AMD) - Intel processors are the high-end processor suitable for almost any design production environment.

RAM

Random Access Memory is a hardware that stores data inside the computer. RAM stores data temporarily so, when you switch off the computer, all RAM data gets lost. RAM allows the processor to process more data, which can dramatically improve laptop performance. A minimum of 16GBs of RAM is recommended for most design production applications (32 is recommended).

Storage

Usually supplied as a Solid-State Drive (SSD or Hard Disk Drive, HDD) – unlike RAM, Storage stores information permanently. SSD can enable super-fast boot and wake time and better processor performance. A minimum of 512GB (Ideally 1TB of space is recommended for design Students).

Screen

Perhaps, the most important part of a laptop selection process is choosing the right screen. A screen with higher resolution would mean better details and colour accuracy. The size of a screen matters too. A larger screen makes tinkering with the design a lot easier. A 15-inch screen size is an ideal standard in the design world.

Keyboard and touchscreen

Designers rarely design only. They usually work in a team or with clients, therefore, a convenient keyboard is a must. You don't want to keep missing the keys and spend hours on editing your emails. Additionally, designers often use keyboard shortcuts so proper placement of keys and ergonomic design can be critical for your work speed.

Looking to buy a laptop with a touchscreen? There is no universal approach among designers when it comes to touchscreens. Some love them as they provide a quick and easy way to zoom in and out, others hate the touch screens since they don't add much to the experience. But, certainly, after some time, you get used to the touch screen and it ceases to be a nuisance.

Drawing Tablets

A digital drawing tablet, pen tablet, or digital art board is a computer input device that enables a user to hand-draw images, animations and graphics with a special pen-like stylus. Many of those tablets are customizable and can allow the user to control a variety of functions such as pen pressure sensitivity, shortcuts, touch screen input (when available) among others. Wacom *Intuos S* (Small) or HUION *Inspiroy* line has affordable tablets, perfect for digital artists looking for a reliable drawing device. Wacom and HUION tablets are available in a variety of sizes such as small, medium and large. Both companies also sell pen display tablets such as Wacom's Cintiq line or HUION's Kanvas models**.**

Please Note: HUION tablets are currently not fully supported on the Mac Labs. HUION tablets are only recommended if you intend to use it in your own laptop.

Battery Life

Most graphic designers love novelty, as it brings inspiration and new ideas. You probably have a favorite workspace, but also venture out to coffee shops or co-working spaces. The absence of plugs at your favorite coffee shop can sometimes be frustrating. But with a good battery, you can take your laptop wherever you go and get the work done, all the while enjoying the digital nomad freedom. 12-14 hours of battery life will get you as far as across the Atlantic and through a long productive day.

Please let us know if this document can be improved in any way.

This document can be accessed at: http://bit.ly/332Ps97

This document was created by **Luiz Dos Santos** (Technical Demonstrator) and **Tristam Sparks** (Undergraduate Academic Coordinator). Please contact them with any suggestions or questions about this document. Information is also available CoCA's website here.

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