



AGE
Concern

Buying a computer

A simple guide providing useful tips to help you buy a computer

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The four national Age Concerns in the UK have joined together with Help the Aged to form new national charities dedicated to improving the lives of older people.



Context

The document is a page from a book or a manual. It contains several paragraphs of text and a table. The text is in a serif font and is arranged in a columnar format. The table is located in the upper right corner of the page and has several columns and rows. The text is somewhat blurry, but it appears to be a technical or instructional document.

Text on screen:

The first paragraph discusses the importance of understanding the context of a document. It mentions that the context can be found in the title, the introduction, and the table of contents. The second paragraph discusses the importance of understanding the structure of a document. It mentions that the structure can be found in the headings, subheadings, and the flow of the text. The third paragraph discusses the importance of understanding the content of a document. It mentions that the content can be found in the main body of the text, the tables, and the figures. The fourth paragraph discusses the importance of understanding the style of a document. It mentions that the style can be found in the font, the spacing, and the overall appearance of the document.

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Row 3	Row 3	Row 3
Row 4	Row 4	Row 4



Introduction

We live in a world where technology is a part of our lives. Computers have become an essential tool for accessing important information, communicating with family and friends, shopping for deals and discounts and much more. A computer can arguably make the biggest difference in our lives but could also be one of the most dreaded things we have to get to grips with.

Buying a computer is no easy task. There are so many choices available and so many points to consider. So where do you start?

Age Concern has produced this simple guide to help you decide whether or not to purchase a computer and how to go about doing it.

What are my computing needs?

If you are planning to use your computer to do basic tasks like managing personal accounts, making cards and documents or playing the odd game of solitaire, then any computer with good word processing software will do. However, if you would like to surf the internet, email family and friends, chat online, play online games or download and print photographs, then you need a computer that has the necessary software, memory and processor to get online and carry out complex tasks. When looking to buy a computer, make sure you find out what the minimum computer requirements are to carry out the tasks you want to do.

Tip: In order to carry out tasks on the internet, such as email and surfing the web, you must make sure your computer has a modem or network card, which can connect to an Internet Service Provider (ISP).

Many resources are available to help modify a standard computer if you find it difficult to use. Free software programs are available that make text on a computer screen bigger or even read the words aloud if you have difficulty seeing them. Other adaptations include touch-screen monitors and special keyboards with large keys and mice.

Tip: Always research adaptations that are available and make sure they can be used on your computer.

What is my budget?

There are different payment options available to purchase a computer. Your final decision will depend on what you can afford and the option that best suits you.

Points to keep in mind:

- Always ask about the payment options available.
- You will generally find that a laptop is more expensive than a desktop computer.
- Second-hand reconditioned computers (also known as 'refurbished' computers) are generally cheaper than new ones.
- Prices depend on the make and model of the computers. Newer models are always more expensive than older ones.



What types of computers are available?

Desktop and laptop computers are the two main types of computers.

- A desktop is a larger computer that comes with a processing unit, a monitor, a keyboard and a mouse. As the name suggests, a desktop computer is generally placed on top of a desk and cannot be easily moved. Desktop computers require dedicated storage space.
- A laptop computer is a smaller, portable computer which can be easily moved. It has a built in monitor, keyboard and mouse and is also referred to as a 'notebook'.

Tip: When purchasing a computer, consider which type of computer would suit you best, a desktop or a laptop.

You may have heard of desktop and laptop computers which come in the Mac range (also known as Macintosh and built by Apple) or PC (also known as personal computer). Macs and PCs operate very differently. Some users find Mac computers easier to use than PCs, while others find the opposite. It is a good idea to try using both, before you buy, to see which suits you better.

Should I go with a new or used computer?

Your decision to buy a new or second-hand computer (also referred to as 'reconditioned' or 'refurbished') depends on what you want your computer to do, what type of ongoing support you require, and what your budget is. Although a reconditioned computer may look more appealing due to its price, it is worth considering its long term reliability, upgrade options and ongoing support available.

Tip: Whether you decide to buy a new or used computer, keep in mind your minimum computer requirements, look at what comes with the computer (hardware and pre-installed software) and the opportunity to try before you buy.

What other points should I consider?

Licensed software

It is important to make sure the programs installed on the computer are legally installed. These programs are also referred to as software. Computer programs are the instructions which make the computer work. They are copyrighted which means that all the information and graphics are owned by someone else and you need to either purchase the software or ask permission from the owner to use it. Anyone using copied software is liable for prosecution.

Warranty terms and conditions

Any bought computer should come with a warranty to confirm that it will be repaired if anything goes wrong with it. New computers usually come with either a one year or three year manufacturer's warranty. Some reconditioned computer suppliers also provide warranty options for their machines. It is important to ask about warranty options and the terms and conditions that come with the purchase. This can save you additional repair costs in the future.

Tip: Always keep all purchase receipts and product documentation as you will need this when requesting future support.

Ongoing support

All computer manufacturers provide ongoing support for their products. This covers anything from technical support, driver updates and downloads, to customer service support. Most computer suppliers also offer support packages for customers. Support packages can cover upgrades and this can even include the actual installation of a new computer.

Tip: Make sure you look into a support package that meets your needs.

Where can I buy a computer?

Research, research and more research is required to help you buy the right computer from the right place.

Buying online

The best computer deals and discounts are mostly on the internet. All computer manufacturers and suppliers have websites with details of their products and summary comparison tools. There are also specialised websites that review the market to find the best buys.

Tip: Search online (via Google, Yahoo, or Alta Vista) for good price comparison websites.

Buying from local and high street stores

Your local computer stores are good places to shop for your computer. You get the chance to talk to staff about what you are looking for and the various offers they have in store. This provides a good opportunity for you to test drive some of their computers. Some stores have sales and discounts during the year so it is always worth while keeping an eye on this.

Tip: Always ask family and friends about their experiences with different computers as this is invaluable honest advice. It is also worth keeping in mind that people have individual needs and will therefore have different experiences that may not be applicable to you.

Useful organisations

Contact the following organisations for useful information on learning materials and courses.

- Public libraries all offer computer and internet access through the People's Network, with library staff on hand to provide support to users who may lack the skills or confidence.
- UK online centres are available in over 6,000 locations throughout England offering access to computers and the Internet for first-time users of all ages. UK online centres are located in libraries and community centres. Contact UK online on 0800 77 1234 or visit www.ukonlinecentres.com
- AbilityNet provides information, resources and training on a range of adapted technologies (including screen-readers, voice recognition software and large-button keyboards) to support people with physical and mobility difficulties to use computers and the internet. Contact AbilityNet on 0800 269545 or visit www.abilitynet.org.uk
- Age Concern also has a range of best-selling publications, including: 'How to be a Silver Surfer', and 'Computing for beginners' and 'Your Digital Camera Made Easy'. Contact Age Concern books on 0870 44 22 120 to place an order or visit www.ageconcern.org.uk/bookshop
- Age Concern's Digital Inclusion Network is made up of over 150 local community projects delivering technology projects for older people across the UK. Contact the Network to find out about your nearest project on 0208 765 7231.

Glossary

Internet

A collection of networks that connect computers, around the world, via communication links (such as telephone lines).

Internet Service Provider (ISP)

A company which provides you with access to the internet from your computer.

Online

This means working on a computer that is currently connected to the internet.

Memory

This is where information is stored temporarily.

Mice

Plural of Mouse.

Processor

Also known as 'Processing Unit', this program is responsible for how 'fast' your computer can think and act.

Program

This is a series of instructions that tells the computer what to do. A program is also called 'software'.

Software

It is a collection of the programs and routines that control the function of the hardware. See Program.

Age Concern is the UK's largest organisation working for and with older people to enable them to make more of life. In England, we are a federation of over 400 independent charities which share the same name, values and standards.

We believe that ageing is a normal part of life, and that later life should be fulfilling, enjoyable and productive. We enable older people by providing services and grants, researching their needs and opinions, influencing government and media, and through other innovative and dynamic projects.

Every day we provide vital services, information and support to thousands of older people – of all ages and backgrounds.

Age Concern also works with many older people from disadvantaged or marginalised groups, such as those living in rural areas or black and minority ethnic elders.



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