

6 Tips for Buying a Used Computer

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Friday, 24 February 2012 16:43

Buying a used computer can be intimidating. How do you know you are getting a good deal and not a piece of junk? Do you take your friend from the IT Department out for lunch and “stop by” to take a look at a used computer on the way back? (We know what you’re up to, by the way) Do you go alone? Here are a few tips to help you get the best deal for your money.

1. **Make sure the computer turns on** - This goes without saying, but you wouldn’t believe how many times someone, who got a great deal in the classifieds, has brought a used computer into our shop and just needs to buy a power cord. Are you willing to guess how often the power cord was the only problem? Not once.

2. **Look for a computer that has been restored to factory settings** - Any reputable computer repair shop and some trustworthy classifieds sellers will do this. If you buy a used computer that has not been wiped, you are also buying any viruses or software problems that may be on the computer. If you know how to clean it yourself, you may be able to get a better deal by bringing this up. Otherwise you may end up paying extra cash to have a computer repair technician do it for you.

3. **Ask for software keys and disks for any installed software** - There is a common practice to sell a used computer with Microsoft Office, Adobe Photoshop, etc. and use this to drive up the price. The problem is, without the disks and keys, you can’t reinstall the software if you ever have a problem. This practice is in fact illegal and you could be getting pirated software. Don’t pay more just because of installed software, unless, that is, you will be getting the keys as well.

4. **Look for a business class PC vs. a consumer class** - Business class PC’s are built to last and will still have many years of use left in them, while most consumer class PC’s are lucky to live 3 years. A used computer from a business will usually have been better maintained as well. Some good models are IBM or Lenovo ThinkPads, or the Dell Optiplex and Latitude lines.

5. **Buy from a reputable computer repair shop** - You should expect to pay a little more from a dealer than from a private party sale, but there are some definite benefits to doing so. Used computers from a computer store will usually have been fully tested and properly prepared for sale. Look for a shop that offers at least a 30 day warranty. If the shop offers an extended warranty, this is usually a good sign that they stand behind their product.

6. **Buy the extended warranty** - Used computers can be unpredictable, especially the cheaper consumer grade laptops. I’m on the fence as far as extended warranties on new computers, but as far as used computers are concerned, you’ll get your money’s worth.