

A \$500 Desktop for Solo Practice

What would you recommend for a desktop computer for a solo practitioner with \$500 budget for desktop? I am looking at a few options including Dell, HP, and LG, but probably not LG as it is Chrome-based.

I got a custom built desktop on eBay for less than \$400 and I am very happy with it. It was my best option to avoid Windows 10.

Robert Louque, Louisiana

I see no reason to avoid windows 10. I upgraded my existing desktop from windows seven pro to windows 10 pro and it's running much faster than before and is quite stable. I just was careful to adjust security and other settings to suit myself. I have since also bought a windows surface pro 4 which comes with windows 10 pro installed and I am happy with it.

Whatever computer you buy, you will have to just remove the crap where that comes installed.

Don't scrimp on the hard drive or ram because you will need them to run the programs that you will use. Also, look into buying a refurbished computer from a reputable, MS windows certified dealer. You can get a very good deal for under \$400 that way.

Miriam Jacobson, Pennsylvania

I purchased my last two computers from HP through heir business outlet.

<https://h41369.www4.hp.com/pps-offers.php>

You can get an HP EliteDesk 800 with i5 processor for \$419.

Dennis Chen, Florida

Dell also has an outlet (<http://dell.com/outlet>). Whichever way you go my primary advice is to not skimp on RAM. If you have to choose between a faster CPU and more RAM for most attorneys more RAM will give you a better bang for the buck.

Disclaimer: Still never been a lawyer at Microsoft or any other company

Ben M. Schorr, Washington

I forgot to mention that a lot of the computers have Windows 7 Pro but I upgraded mine to 10 and they work very well.

Dennis Chen

What do you need to be able to do?

Lesley Hoenig, Michigan

Also, you can find some good deals if you follow woot.com.

Bert Krages, Oregon

Both of my computers came with 4 GB RAM and I added RAM to get them to 16GB.

Dennis Chen

16GB is a lot better experience than 4GB for most users. ☺

My desktop at the office has 32GB and I've never wished I had less.

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Ben M. Schorr

Thank you everybody for your kind inputs on my research. It looks like I am down to HP Pavillion or Dell again for my budget. I have been using one of these brands forever. One question I have is this/

What does it really mean when they say it is refurbished or factory reconditioned? I equate that to mean it has been used before. Right? My wife will be so upset if I buy used computer for \$500. She used to be a business owner herself and thinks it's ridiculous if I spend \$500 on a used computer. But, it sounds like many of you have good experiences using them.

I need the computer to store client data, run legal software, use Microsoft--office. I also prefer a good speed and good security.

I plan on ordering by COB this Friday.

Thanks,

The short version is that refurbished or factory reconditioned means someone else has used it before. However, the specifics of it can vary tremendously. I think of it like a used car. "Used" for a car means that someone has held title to it before, I think. A used car might have have 100,000 miles of hard use from a single owner or a used car might have been a demonstrator at a dealer used for test drives, as a loaner for their service department, etc. and only have 15,000 miles on it. The latter would be practically indistinguishable from new.

I'd look more at the warranty that comes with refurb or reconditioned stuff. If it's the same as for new stuff, I'd pull the trigger on it.

Andy I. Chen, California

When you pick out your computer, call the number and you will speak to a live person about the unit. Ask them about the condition. Each time I ordered one I was

told the computer is not used. Many are placed on their outlet list as refurbished when someone orders the computer and cancels. I believe some are returned in the first 30 days. My computers both appeared to be new and in excellent condition. No scratches, wear marks or anything indicating that they had been used.

Dennis Chen

I am skeptical of factory reconditioned units. To me, they are computers that were returned with little use but with a problem. I worry that the problem wasn't fixed, just a software reload and a kiss and a prayer before it is out the door again.

Bruce Wingate, New York

I purchased one this summer and another about three years ago and they are excellent machines. I have not had problems with them. The old one had some hard drive issues earlier this year and I replaced the old drive with a solid state drive. It is still working well.

Dennis Chen

My current desktop is it a refurb that I bought a year ago to replace a four-year-old desktop. It came from a dealer that my consultant told me was a Microsoft certified refurbished source. It didn't look at all banged up and came with a clean hard drive and windows 7 pro installed and no bloatware. I installed my own software and peripheral drivers and it's been functioning just fine. I allowed it to update to Windows 10 pro recently. It's still humming along perfectly well. It's a Dell. And it replaced in HP.

Miriam Jacobson

I've bought refurbished from TigerDirect many times in the past with great results. They guarantee the machine and make good if anything goes wrong.

I've practiced 17 years continuing to buy refurbished or less expensive. It's the work you turn out that's important.

Go for it!

Reta McKannan, Alabama

I routinely buy almost all my PCs from the HP Business Outlet. They have a daily Excel sheet (you need to get on their mailing list) which shows all available machines. They run rotating specials as well, which drop machines below the normal factory outlet price.

All are available with a three year warranty, which not incidentally also makes them ship for free.

As some examples of things at or near your price range:

HP z240 W10P-64 i5 6500 3.2GHz 500GB SATA 4GB DVDRW NIC Intel HD Rfrbd TWR WS T

Erik Hammarlund, Massachusetts

Oops.

Trying again:

\$522: HP z240 W10P-64 i5 6500 3.2GHz 500GB SATA 4GB DVDRW NIC Intel HD Rfrbd TWR WS That's a tower workstation: large enough for expansion; nice chassis; good motherboard; decent power supply; four mem slots and four HDD slots too. I have one on my desk, though mine is an older generation.

The same model in a non-workstation minitower is less money:

\$399: HP ProDesk 400 G3 W10P/W7P-64 i5 6500 3.2GHz 500GB 4GB(1x4GB) DDR4 2133 DVDRW Rfrbd MT PC

\$493: HP z240 W10P/W7P-64 i3 6100 3.7GHz 1TB 4GB(1x4GB) DDR4 2133 DVDRW HD 530 Rfrbd SFF WS

That's a "small form factor" workstation. Room for two HDD and another memory chips. You can squeeze in a small graphics card as well, though you probably don't need one.

w/r/t security, you should aim for windows 10 or at least 8.1. W/r/t speed, any of those will be fine for what you need.

You'll want to upgrade memory to 8G; that is simple and cheap.
If /when you have extra cash, you may want to add more hard disk drives.

Erik Hammarlund
