

Macbook Recommendations for Student

My 17 year old daughter (swmbo2) really wants a MacBook for Christmas. I am a die hard PC user and have not used a Mac since the mid 1980s (it was called a Macintosh back then). I suspect that a lot of the appeal to a MacBook is the fact that Dad is clueless about how to use it. She wanted an iPhone for Christmas last year for probably the same reason (Dad uses Android).

She will be going to college next year. I have been resistant to getting her a new notebook until she gets there (and can take advantage of college student discounts), but her current notebook is getting pretty old (Windows XP).

Amazon has the base 13.3" models of the MacBook Air and the MacBook Pro for \$1049.

><http://www.amazon.com/Apple-MacBook-MD760LL-13-3-Inch-VERSION/dp/B00746YPQI>

><http://www.amazon.com/Apple-MacBook-MD101LL-13-3-Inch-VERSION/dp/B0074703CM>

Any recommendations as to which version would be best for a high school senior soon to be college freshman? Also, are there any upgrades I need to get (memory, storage, etc.) from the base models?

On top of either one I would also need to get her the Mac versions of MS Office and Adobe Photoshop Elements, since she uses both programs in her current classes.

I am not planning to buy anything until closer to Christmas, but want to narrow down my choices now so I can snag a good deal whenever it comes along.

We bought my oldest a basic macbook in her junior year of HS. She's now a sophomore in college, and we've heard no issues about having enough bells, whistles or horsepower.

So I think any mac would be acceptable. You may be able to get a student discount now, but, IIRC, Apple's student discounts are pretty minimal.

Patrick W. Begos, Connecticut

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I believe updated macbooks are going to be released soon so there may be discounts coming on existing models.

Josh Friedman

While the MacBook Air is pretty cool (especially in the category of "form factor"), it does have its limitations (SSD instead of hard drive, no CD/DVD slot, etc.). As a result, you will need to consider those issues if you are thinking of getting one for your daughter.

When our kids started to college, we got each of them some flavor of MacBook. The boys both got 15" MacBook Pros; the daughter got a 13" MacBook (the white one). The oldest (who is an engineer, and an "early adopter") has upgraded *at least* twice in the 7-1/2 years since we got him his, although I think he would have been fine with the original one. The daughter and younger son are still using the original computers (after 5-1/2 and 3-1/2 years).

Depending on what your daughter plans to study (and how she uses her computer), my experience with our three kids would say that a 13" (white) MacBook is likely to be fine for a student that is not doing something like engineering or graphic arts (things that require lots of processing power). I would suggest getting more RAM than the basic level, however, but that's true for all computers.

One last thought (or which you are probably aware): computers at college tend to grow legs and walk out. Our youngest had his computer stolen (it was later recovered, undamaged). Nevertheless, a lock is a great investment, as long as your daughter will use it.

Brian H. Cole, California

The Apple store has discounts on refurbished models a year or two out of cycle. So far I've gotten 4 Macbook Airs (three as gifts) and have been completely satisfied with the refurbs, which have full warranty.

<http://store.apple.com/us/browse/home/specialdeals/mac>

I got a 13" MBA for myself, and if I had a do-over would get the 11", which is perfect size for tossing in a briefcase for court.

Wendell Finner, Florida

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You mentioned Photoshop Elements. If you want the horsepower to run Photoshop or any other part of the Adobe Suite, go for the MacBook Pro. When I got tired of that malfunctioning mistake that is Windows 8, I returned to Macs and got a MacBook Pro. My background is media so I have the full Adobe Suite and used it fairly often.

You should be able to get the Apple student discount in high school (all \$200) and the Adobe educational discount is awesome -- as in forego Photoshop Elements and buy the entire Master Collection or the new cloud service.

Patrick Nolan, law student, Missouri

My 13" MacBook is 5 years old now and I have never, ever had a problem. It runs almost as fast as when I bought it (albeit startup takes a bit longer) and the battery lasts a good long while. I can simply close the lid to put it into sleep mode and open it the next day without a serious diminution in battery life.

The problem with MAC is that you will have to get MS Office for it, as the university will likely be using PCs. Mac's own programs (Pages, etc.) do not work well with PCs.

I will never go back to a PC. Note for the record that I am not an Uber Mac-Fan. I hate the iPhone and cling to my Blackberry. Once RIM goes under, I will get an Android.

The only benefit to a PC is cost, but that it because they are pretty much disposable unless you know how to program and upgrade them. Getting a new one every four years gets old quick.

Brian J. Hughes, Massachusetts

If you are looking for extremely light and portable go with the Air - it is brilliant and you can get an external cd/dvd drive for not much more. The new MacBook Pros are now also made without the cd/drive and need an external one also - so that is no longer a clear difference between the two.

I currently use a 3 year old Air, which is great, but I find even the 13" screen a bit small for drafting; and a 15" 6 yr old MacBook Pro which has been a great 'mothership' but is beginning to show signs of failing and will soon have to be replaced.

Guess I'd vote for the Air unless she is going to be using programs - engineering, architectural or playing a lot of games that need the faster processor.

If you are an Amex user and have reward points - you can go to ShopAmex.com -- they are knocking 20% of the points needed on Apple products at the moment and if you don't have enough points for the

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whole thing, you can put your points toward the computer -- same with Amazon -- you can link your reward points to a purchase. I've been hoarding my points for ages as a way of 'saving' for my next laptop!

Good luck!

Laurie McFadden, New York

Here is a link to Bestbuy's apple laptop clearance in stores in your area.
The last time I was in the Apple Store the rep said that they will price match.

<http://tinyurl.com/my7f6ne>

Dennis Chen, Florida

Looks like my link doesn't work. If you go to bestbuy.com and select clearance, then choose computer > laptops > apple, you can find the open box macbooks on sale in the stores in your area. I saw some for about \$100 less than the amount you quoted, \$1,049.

Dennis Chen

Both my boys ended up preferring a desktop. One, after using a laptop for a year and the other as an initial choice.

By a year from now, an iPad or other tablet may be not only adequate but preferred.

I have bought a number of refurbished machines over the years from Apple and they were just like new with the same warranty and a 10 to 15% discount typically. I now suspect that some of their refurbished machines are really just surplus new machines sold as refurbs just to sell to (in my case) cheapskates, but you don't need to be a cheapskate to buy one.

Paul Hogan, California

First, I'd say that her interest in Apple products is 10% b/c its opposite of you, 90% b/c its what is most cool among her friends. Fortunately, it is also (generally speaking) a very well-made blend of software and hardware.

My practice (and home) is built on Apple products (these days it's best to pick a uniform ecosystem imho): 24" iMac, 13" MacBook Air ("MBA"), iPhone, and 2 Apple TVs. The MBA is a perfect compliment to having an iMac, especially when coupled with realtime, encrypted sync through SpiderOak.

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That said, I would 100% get your daughter (if you think she's ready to take care of a \$1000 to \$1500 laptop) a MacBook Pro ("MBP") if that is going to be her primary and only computer for the next 4-5 years: (1) dollar for dollar, the MBP will be a more powerful and probably durable machine; (2) it's not like she really benefit from the reduced weight; (3) [KEY POINT] the RAM in the MBP is upgradable -- buy a base model with 4GB, then manually upgrade to 8GB in a year (plenty of info on this if you do a quick google search). The RAM in the MBA is NOT upgradeable and getting more than 4GB is expensive!! Realistically, you should make sure any computer you buy her is at least capable of 8GB of RAM.

Two final thoughts. First, I would give strong consideration to a 15" MBP. The 13" screen is pretty small if that is going to be your workhorse. You could combine the 13" MBP with an external monitor to offset that issue though. Second, I would 100% buy refurbished direct from Apple (and budget for Apple Care) -- it's essentially the same as buying a new computer.

One of the advantages of buying Apple is that its products hold their value extremely well (especially when compared to PCs or android phones). The way to look at the additional expense of buying an iPhone or MBP is that you can resell at the appropriate point in the product's lifecycle and recoup 20-40% of your investment (if it's well cared for). I could sell my 2009 iMac (originally \$1200-1300) for \$350-400 easy. I sold my 2.5 year old 32GB iPhone 4S last week (with some accessories) for \$300!

Check out the refurbished MBPs here:
http://store.apple.com/us/browse/home/specialdeals/mac/macbook_pro/15

You can still get MBPs with optical drives through the refurb store as well.

Andrew J. Petesch, North Carolina

Just to underscore one of my points -- if RAM is manually upgradeable on the machine you purchase (it should be on a MBP and is not on a MBA), then do not upgrade RAM in the original purchase (typically stick with 4GB). You can buy quality RAM through 3rd parties and it's fairly easy to swap out yourself. You will save a couple hundred dollars most likely. Spend that on a bigger/better screen or processor.

Another plus for Apple is that they make upgrading to newer versions of their OS more affordable than MicroSoft.

Andrew J. Petesch

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MacBook Air is very popular among the kids & the MILO (Macs in Law Offices) googlegroup because it's lightweight. If she also uses the iCloud, then she gets iWork beta free.

Whichever laptop you choose, purchase an Apple extended warranty to go with it. Peace of mind is priceless.

Betsy Brazy, California

I am contemplating a similar purchase for a similar reason. I was in Best Buy yesterday and found that in the back of the store they had a number of discounted Apple computers that were either former display models or returns. They have all packaging. I was assured they were 100% okay and have been completely checked out. I may get one of those and purchase something slightly better than intended due to the price break.

Michelle Kainen, Vermont
