[Multiple Monitors] How many?

Technology both helps and hurts my law practice. I do lots of appellate work, so I frequently must refer to what we call here the "reporter's record" (the court reporter's transcription of testimony plus trial exhibits) and the "clerk's record" (copies of pleadings and so forth filed with the clerk of court). In addition, I am trying to write a brief plus do research. In yet another window I might have the Texas Family Code pulled up (I do family law appeals).

I use 2-3 monitors, but I'm thinking of going to 5 or 6. As it stands now, if I want to look up something in (say) the reporter's record, I have to close a window or superimpose another on top of the first so it gets messy fast. Tabs help, but you can look at only one thing at a time, and I like to be able to see it all at once.

In the past, I would have simply laid out everything physically on a table, then physically moved from one stack to another. I suppose I could go back to doing that, but it would amount to a LOT of printing.

So - has anyone tried to use more than 3 windows? I really am serious about 6. I'm willing to invest some money in buying what I need to get this done. I think I could 2x my productivity.

I'm a Mac user but am willing to go Windows if necessary. The programs I most often use are a web browser, LibreOffice as the word processor and anything that reads Adobe files so I can view, for example, reporter's records. In other words, the software I use is common stuff.

Anyhow, any thoughts or insights would be much appreciated.

TIA

I have a 27" iMac. I put two documents on screen side-by-side at full size. Perhaps this would help you to reduce the number of total monitors.

Bruce L. Dorner, New Hampshire

Have you considered the eye strain from all those monitors?

Gene Thompson, Texas

Beyond four it gets cumbersome, but you can increase the size of the

monitors. On a 27 inch screen I can easily see two full size pages. With

four screens, you could see 8. You can also further increase screen size.

For example, a 34 inch screen:

http://www.newegg.com/Product/Product.aspx?Item=9SIA6R42K36587

Darrell G. Stewart, Texas

One thought: if you used three monitors, but two were BIG ones, you could

place a PDF document, full-page, side-by-side with another on the same

monitor. Should not have to superimpose or tab between them. Two big

monitors gets you to four open PDFs at a time, plus whatever you are

editing.

Tim Ackermann

Yes, but I think I have it under control. One of the tech people on this list made come comments a few years back about avoiding eyestrain from monitors. I implemented his suggestions and they have helped a lot. For example, I keep the light level in my office low so that the screens don't have to be excessively bright to be seen. I do get headaches if I work on the computer too long, but it takes a good full working day before I begin to feel it.

Nice! I guess I¹ll need a bigger desk, too!

Thx.

I think Tim Ackerman was right - at about 4 monitors you are going to max

out. At that point you will be covering so much vertical real estate that

it would be cumbersome to use. Think about when you laid everything out on

the conference room table - you were probably still shuffling stacks.

You might want to get to three big monitors and use one of them as a

"scratch pad" where you shuffle things up and down, one as a "reference

window" and the other as the "working" window.

What you really want is probably 5-10 years away - a 4x8 interactive

monitor/whiteboard you can swipe things around on (kind of like in Minority

Report). (And yes, somebody probably can provide that, but not at consumer

pricing)

Bruce Wingate, New York

Another Attorney posted this 5 years ago...

[image: Displaying 7 monitors now 800 x 600.jpg]

Nicholas I. Fuerst, Arizona

I at one point i was with 3 monitors, but I think it all depends on the type of work that you do and if you need multiple documents opened and viewed at the same time.

Dan X. Nguyen, California

I have four monitors--two 22" and two 23"--and I find them excellent for writing briefs the way you describe. I counted sixty-some documents open at once on the last complicated one (mostly cases, but including the pleadings of opposing counsel, the court record, and the transcript). Most of the time when I have a lot open, I am chasing the interpretation and application of a holding or a statute through the citation strings (not usually planning to cite them all, but making sure my positions are current and checking to see if I can find one directly on point) within a research engine that allows/defaults to new windows for results. I tend to save a copy of the cases I find most useful, but I usually cut the piece I want from each as I find it. Obviously, I had a word processor, a browser with multiple windows, and multiple .pdfs running, along with my email and a few Windows Explorer instances open.

I think you could find five or six monitors very useful, if you can set up the space to have them in the right positions--I have mine stacked on a

single stand in landscape orientation 2x2; with six, I would use three wide

and two high. I found a monitor stand supplier who has the stands for these

arrangements, if you are interested. Of course, you have to have the

computing and graphics power to manage all of these monitors and documents,

but as long as you don't have too much active streaming, a decent desktop

should not choke. Good luck!

T. B. Patterson, Jr. ("Brownie"), South Carolina

Hopefully you tech guys will let me pick your brains. And here¹s an

argument against outsourcing:

Me to TigerDirect pre-sales inquiries:

I would like to get your advice on the best system for my needs. I'm

thinking about buying three 27" monitors and a desktop. Normally, I have a

web browser, a word processing program, Acrobat reader, and Outlook

running at the same time. I want everything to run really, really fast.

What desktop would you recommend? And what else would I need to run three

monitors? Thanks.

Response:

Thank you for your email.

We understand that you are asking about using a multiple monitors on your

desktop. Please be inform that in able for you to have a multiple

monitors, you need to work on your video card. Make sure that the video card that you have supports multiple monitors so that you will not have any compatible issues.

Anyone have any more specific suggestion? Even minimum specs for the desktop would be helpful.

Jimmy Verner, Texas

If you get higher end video cards, and double them, you can easily run four monitors. You can do it with splitters, but I prefer another option.

If you want better assistance, try some of the boutique builders. One of my favorites, and a source of numerous machines, is Velocity Micro. US-based with US-based support. You can also call them on the phone.

Darrell G. Stewart

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http://www.popularmechanics.com/technology/gadgets/how-to/a11710/how-to-set-up-multiple-monitors/

Above is from 2011 but is accurate. There are also some specific tools you can obtain by google.

Darrell G. Stewart

If you want to go the Mac route, then a mid-range Mac Mini (2.6GHz dual core i5, 8Gb RAM), a Matrox TripleHeat2Go DP and 3 monitors should suffice.

For Windows, you'll want a desktop box with specs similar to the Mini and also capable of supporting 2 graphics cards (any of Nvidia's Geforce GT series or the ATI equivalent should do), a copy of Ultramon and 3 monitors. One word of caution - be sure the system's power supply is large enough to handle the load. Just how big will depend on your specific hardware configuration.

Hope this helps.

Bruce

Bruce Cameron, Minnesota

I know from previous conversations around here that you are more than comfortable with opening up a PC and putting in a video card, but for ease of use I've used these USB adapters to add extra monitors to my rig and have been perfectly satisfied:

http://www.newegg.com/Product/Product.aspx?Item=N82E16812797001

Hope this helps.

Dave Rakowski, Pennsylvania

I run three monitors and just bought a new desktop computer this year. Whoever is spec-ing it out for you needs to know you plan to use three monitors, as some motherboards support only dual monitors. I don't think the size of the monitors you plan to run makes a difference (although I may be wrong on that). To be honest, I don't believe, offhand, that I even have a separate video card.

I highly, highly, highly recommend http://www.computerlx.com/. The sales process was a pleasure, and I felt the price was very fair. They also have free, US-based tech support (not 24/7), which I've used (I've been getting BSOD - first they helped me w/some malware removal, then they had me test my RAM chips separately).

Let me know if you want me to send you the detailed specs on my computer, which is an i5 with 16 GB RAM and a 256 GB SSD.

You're going to need a helluva desk to fit three 27" monitors on it (or at least a desk and perpendicular return). I have a 22" (maybe it's a 23") widescreen as my main (center) monitor, a 20" widescreen as my second monitor and a 19.5" widescreen as my third monitor; I had to mount the third one vertically because I didn't want to have to angle monitors 2 and 3 too much.

Lisa Solomon, New York

Thanks to all for the tips. What I was thinking is that I could have two decent sized windows open on a 27" monitor, so three monitors gives me up to six windows. I'll need a right-angled or horseshoe desk. However, for a while I ran three 22" monitors on a corner desk where I stood up to work, and it was OK. Plus it kept my neck from getting stiff . . . . But one of the monitors died, so it's time to rethink. Still standing, but down to two 22" monitors!

JV

Jimmy Verner

If you want a fast machine with lots of graphics power, go for a high-end

processor--i7-5960X (8 cores), i7-5930K (6 cores), i7-5820K (6 cores),

i7-4960X (6 cores), or i7-4930K (6 cores). For my newest, I built with the

4930K before the 59 series was available. Use a motherboard that matches

your processor and includes support for 64 Gb RAM and get it; a motherboard

that will do that will take multiple video cards--get two with multiple

outputs (it's best if they are identical--then there is only one video

driver); you will want a DVD or BLU-Ray drive, adequate storage (mirrored 2

Tb drives perhaps), an SSD for your operating system, perhaps a card

reader, and at least a 1500 watt power supply (the good ones are all

modular now--you won't have extra power cords cluttering the interior of

your case). Be sure to get a case that will accommodate all that hardware;

if you are at all tempted to overclock, add a water cooling system.

You can find stands that will hold your monitors--I suggest you consider

stacking, whether two over one or one on top (I use four, on a 2X2 stand).

With the right vertical spacing and height, they will tilt to give you

great viewing without the issue of spreading so wide that one end to the

other is a slide instead of a head turn.

Good luck.

T. B. Patterson, Jr. ("Brownie"), South Carolina

Does Jimmy really need all that processing power, RAM and multiple video

cards? Remember, he doesn't want the monitors for gaming - he just wants to

use them for relatively static displays. His program use is exactly the

same as mine, and I'm getting more than sufficient speed with in i5, 16 GB

of RAM and no separate video card (I believe), just a motherboard that

supports three monitors.

Lisa Solomon

He probably does not need all the power, but he said he wants real speed.

The only times I have seen all the processes in my computer maxed out was

when Photoshop Elements Premier was rendering a video.

T. B. Patterson, Jr. ("Brownie")