

*(Continued from inside)*

### *Optical Drive*

Now the specifications get a bit tricky with the notorious "alphabet soup" for read/write CD/DVD drives. I've learned that there are only two choices. If you want full flexibility to read from and write to (the latter is also referred to as "burn") DVDs or CDs, or to record then later retrieve or play back data, photos or music you stored on CDs, you need a DVD +/- RW drive. The other viable choice is a CD-RW/DVD-ROM (Read-Only Memory) combo which allows you to do all but burn to DVDs. If you select just a CD-RW, CD-ROM or DVD-ROM you will be restricting your options for storing and playing back data and media.

### *Monitor*

As for monitors, I decided that it was time to move away from the bulky CRT and upgrade to a flat panel LCD display. If you are going to need high end graphics or video you may want to consider DVI as well and the traditional VGA output ports. The prices have come down and there are many choices in monitor size..

When considering buying a new computer, think of it as an investment that should serve your needs for many years. Be willing to pay a bit more for a brand with a consistent reputation for reliability and good service. Like buying a vehicle, you should "kick the tires," read reviews, and ask to see a demonstration of the sort of computer you considering. Don't be bashful about talking to others, especially the sales people at electronic stores. The more you know, the more confident you'll be with your decisions — and the more satisfied you'll be with your purchase once you have made it.

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## **Purchasing a new Computer?**



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*A breakdown of  
what components  
to look at when  
buying a new  
computer.*

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## *I'm thinking about Purchasing a New Computer*

Perhaps you are currently in the market to purchase a new computer. It's been years since I thought seriously about this type of purchase. Every three months Computer technology changes and has advanced since the last time I had to think about components, so when I read through ads these days I'm confronted with an alphabet soup of new brands and terms. So I sat down to get educated on which components would be important for creating the best computer configuration for me. Knowing what I want to do with the computer can help define what configuration is able to do what I want.

### *Laptop Or Desktop*

Laptops are very popular right now. They're sleek and compact and perfect for someone whose office or desk space is limited. They can also be convenient, storing easily in a drawer for quick use at the kitchen table or while you're lounging in front of the television. Their size and convenience have made them a necessity for those who travel often. But laptops lack the comfort of a large, ergonomically-adjusted keyboard and monitor and are limited on the number of ports available for connecting extra devices like webcams, printers and scanners. They are more expensive up front and often have limited upgrade possibilities. For these reasons, I decided on a new desktop computer.

### *CPU*

The next decision was determining the best Central Processing Unit (CPU) for my needs. The CPU is like the engine "under the hood." Dual core is the buzz these days. A dual core is basically two processors that share the workload. You can continue surfing the Internet or working on a document while downloading digital pictures or completing a virus scan in background without having the activity of one operation impact the other. A dual core CPU has many advantages over a single CPU and is worth the expense.

### *Operating System*

Now which operating system do I want on this computer? While Windows XP is the old operating system at this time, it allows me to use older programs and hardware that are not Vista compatible. Experience is showing that both hardware and programs will need to be either the current version or next back from the current version. If I have any questions I try to check the vendor's web site to verify that what I have and/or need to use will work with Vista. If any thing I need is not Vista compatible I will opt for the XP version. If this computer is going to be used for business use or connected to a local area network I will want the professional or business version. It will also provide better security options as well.

### *RAM*

Since this will be a Vista machine my attention turned to memory or RAM (Random Access Memory). When my old desktop computer was new, 512MB was more than a sufficient amount of RAM, but after years of operating system service-packs upgrades, not to mention the installation of newer and bigger software applications, 512MB did become sluggish. For Vista, 1GB of memory is the minimum recommended, but I'm going to anticipate that

over the next several years 1GB will also slow down. With my new computer purchase, I decided to at least double-up to 2 GB, but may even go for 3GB of memory to ensure optimum operability for the long run.

### *Video*

If you have a young person that will want to play games or if you are interested in doing more intense graphics then you will want to research what video options are available. Graphics and gaming will take at least 256 megs of video memory and 512 megs is preferable. If you know what software you are interested in using check the vendor's web site to be sure you get what you need to run the software. Unless you're a heavy-duty gamer, the graphic card in most new desktop computers should be adequate

### *Hard Drive*

My digital camera is always busy, and I download lots of music for my MP3 player, so storage is important and I will want to pay attention to the size of my hard drive. The typical desktop computer sold today comes with 80 to 100 gigabyte hard drives. If you own an external hard drive for backup and storage, 100 GB of storage may be sufficient. However, if video editing or downloading DVDs is an important activity for you, you may want to consider a 320GB hard drive or larger.

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