

Computer Configuration, Related Recommendations and Resources 2021-2022 Academic Year

If you plan to purchase a computer before school starts, below are some minimum configurations and facts that may be helpful. If you are buying a computer, we recommend a new one. For a little more money, you get a much faster computer with a warranty: a much better value.

CPU

Within the same family of processors, higher clock speeds and more cache (up to 8MB) means better performance. The Intel Core i series (11th generation) is highly recommended as it offers good performance and long battery life. There are Core i3, Core i5 and Core i7 processors. The higher the numbers the more capable of running multiple programs at the same time. The new M1 chip for MacBooks offers very good performance and excellent battery life but may not be fully compatible with some older programs.

Operating System

Most software/applications work best with Windows 10; macOS 10.12.6 and newer

Hard Drive

256 Gigabytes (GB) minimum. If you will be using statistical or database software with very large data sets you may want at least 500GB. Solid state drives (SSD) offer better performance. Though they cost more, solid state hard drives offer the best performance and reliability but lower capacity for the money.

RAM

8GB is recommended as a minimum. 16GB is preferred as it will let you run more programs at the same time.

Webcam/headset

If your laptop does not include a webcam or you are using a desktop, you will want to purchase one to be able fully participate in online learning. The Logitech C615 or similar is recommended. Even if your laptop has built in microphones, we recommend a headset such as the Logitech H340. Using a headset will make it easier for your voice to be heard more clearly while reducing surrounding noise.

Optical Drive

Most newer laptops and small desktops no longer come with a DVD or CD drive. If you wish to view DVDs or Bluray disks, you may wish to opt for a larger laptop or desktop that has one built in or purchase an external drive that can attach to your computer.

Online Storage

LionMail Drive offers unlimited storage. You can access your LionMail drive using this link: <https://cuit.columbia.edu/email/lionmail/drive>

Removable Storage

USB flash memory/thumb drive: These devices are small, fast, come in capacities ranging from 16MB to over 1TB. They connect via the USB port, you may need an adapter if your laptop only has USB-C ports. Encrypted flash drives are highly recommended to ensure that your personal documents are kept secure. If your flash drive is not encrypted, we recommend password protecting your files. If your flash drive is lost or stolen, your personal information will be secure. For more information on encrypting files and setting passwords, see the link below. <https://socialwork.columbia.edu/wp-content/uploads/encryption-instructions.pdf>

Sound

Laptop audio is usually not configurable, but desktops often give you options better sound cards and speakers

Monitor

For desktops 19" minimum, 24" recommended. For laptops, 12" to 14.1" recommended. Smaller screens are lighter but offer less real estate. Larger screens make it easier to work on large spreadsheets, but make the laptop larger and heavier.

Tablets

A tablet or smartphone can also be used with most of the apps that facilitate remote learning (e.g. Canvas, Zoom, Panopto), but it may be more difficult to download some types of files or to submit certain types of assignments. The app versions will also be more limited in features and functions as compared to the laptop/desktop version.

Wireless

Wireless connectivity (WiFi) is highly recommended for all laptops. When purchasing this feature, keep in mind that the University uses 802.11n standard. The entire Social Work building has wireless internet. For more information see:

<http://cuit.columbia.edu/columbia-u-secure-wireless-network>

You can also setup your laptop to print to the Social Work printers. For instructions for printing from your laptop see:

<http://cuit.columbia.edu/pawprintquickstart>

Ethernet

Many newer laptops no longer have an ethernet port, though desktops usually still do. A wired ethernet connection can provide a faster, more reliable connection than WiFi. If your computer doesn't have an ethernet port, you can usually buy a Universal Serial Bus (USB) dongle that will provide one. There are also several places on campus you may plug into the network, including the Social Work building.

Bluetooth

You may choose to get Bluetooth on your computer. Bluetooth is a personal area networking technology that lets devices such as printers, mice, headphones, phones, etc. talk to each other.

Service/Warranty

If your computer vendor offers a 3-year extended on-site service warranty, and you are not comfortable fixing your own computer, we suggest you purchase it. If you are buying a Dell or Apple through the Columbia discount program, you receive additional discounts if you opt for a 3- year warranty. You may also opt for a complete care type package that covers accidental damage.

Software

Backup

It is highly recommended that you back up your important documents and files to another medium. This can include physical media such as a usb flash drive or cloud storage such as Lionmail Drive. There also backup services that use software to back up your files automatically such as Carbonite and Mozy.

Security

CUIT offers Malwarebytes for virus protection, and PC Phonehome at the following URLs:
<https://cuit.columbia.edu/anti-malware>
<https://cuit.columbia.edu/pc-phonehome>

Productivity

You will probably want Microsoft Office 2016 Professional or later. (All editions have Word and Excel; the Professional Edition includes Access, a database application.) Students are can download one free copy at the following page:
https://cuit.columbia.edu/cuit/software-downloads#/cu_info_card-8329

SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences)

Students interested in licensing SPSS (PC/Mac) may purchase/lease the SPSS at a discount for either a six or twelve month license through e-academy at the following web site: <http://www.onthehub.com/spss/>

Other Software

Columbia has various other software you may want at the following URL: <http://cuit.columbia.edu/cuit/software-downloads>

Training Opportunities

- (1) *Columbia Libraries*: You may choose to take workshops offered by the libraries (e.g., Zotero Citation Management and How to use CLIO): <https://library.columbia.edu/using-libraries/workshops.html>
- (2) *LinkedIn Learning*: Columbia University offers a wide range of online courses which are available to faculty, staff, and students: <https://cuit.columbia.edu/linkedin-learning>

Purchasing/Discounts

You may receive discounts on new computers when purchasing through these links:
<http://www.dell.com/columbia>
http://store.apple.com/us_edu_21516