



Get the right gear

Costco offers value on desktop, laptop and tablet computers

by MARK RAY



LIFETOUGH

Mark Ray fills this month's consumer reporter slot with this behind-the-scenes look at a Costco program. Email questions about this article to connection@costco.com.



Back in 1965, computer chip pioneer Gordon Moore predicted that the number of transistors on computer chips would double every two years. His prediction is surprisingly accurate. And it explains why each year brings a crop of desktops, laptops and tablets that are faster, more powerful and more capable than ever. Features that were once rare, like solid-state drives and facial recognition, now appear on many entry-level products.

Computing power progresses so fast that shopping for a new computer can be overwhelming. Should you go with a Mac or a PC? Will a Chromebook fit your needs? Can a tablet serve as a laptop replacement? Which specifications really matter?

When you're ready to upgrade, Costco is there to help. Costco buyers work with the brands you trust—including industry heavyweights like Dell, HP, Lenovo and Apple—to bring you the value you expect. "We go after brands that everybody knows and we

show members value," says Costco buyer Troy Fisk.

What's in it for you?

In some cases, increased value means offering a product at a discounted price. In other cases, it means offering better features for about the same cost. "For Windows PCs, one of the ways that we drive value is that we specifically focus on making sure that we are offering a better spec for a similar price point, instead of just having the lowest price out there," Fisk says.

A good example is the MSI Cyborg gaming laptop, which is available at Costco.com and in most warehouses. It features an Intel Core i7 processor, instead of the usual, and less-speedy, Intel Core i5 processor. The processor, or CPU, is the computer's brain, so this is an important upgrade.

The Cyborg laptop also includes the Nvidia GeForce RTX 4050 graphics card, which supports graphics-intensive tasks like gaming and video editing.



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Need a little guidance?

If you don't know which specs matter, don't worry. Besides offering a range of computers, Costco offers a couple of ways to help you find just the right product.

At Costco.com, you'll find overviews of the main types of computers, plus an in-depth *Computer Buying Guide* that dives deeper into key PC features. Just search "computers" on the Costco.com homepage. The guide has all the details you need about processors, graphics cards and storage.

Once you're ready to shop online, you can quickly narrow your search by more than a dozen criteria, including

price, brand, processor, specific features and storage size. That will give you a smaller list of models, making your decision a little easier.

If you'd rather shop in person, look for warehouse employees wearing red vests in the consumer electronics department. They've been trained to help you find the right computer for your specific needs and budget. If you simply want to stream movies and use Microsoft Word, they might suggest a basic Microsoft Surface laptop. If you're a serious gamer, they might steer you toward a high-end gaming desktop or laptop computer from MSI.

Need to rethink your purchase?

"Costco has a varying range of the most current technology to meet the many needs a creator, gamer, streamer or everyday PC user needs," says Costco buyer Mac Benedict.

For added peace of mind, Costco offers a 90-day, no-questions-asked return policy on all computers and other consumer electronics. "Having 90 days is huge compared to our competitors," Fisk says.

And if you do need to return your computer, you can. And you'll probably find the perfect replacement at Costco. After all, Costco specializes in helping you find the right computer with the right features at the right price.

Computers may advance at a staggering pace, but Costco is there to help you find just the right model. ■



SERVICE AFTER THE SALE

The benefits of buying at Costco don't end when you return home. Costco's Technical Warranty Services program gives you free technical support for as long as you own the computer. Call 1-866-861-0450 to speak with Costco's expert-level technicians who can help you set up your new device and troubleshoot problems.

Your new computer also comes with a 2-year warranty from the date of purchase; this doubles the protection many suppliers provide. Both English- and Spanish-speaking agents are available when you call for service.—MR

Deeper savings

Play your cards right, and buying a computer at Costco can really pay off. Which cards? Your Executive Membership card and

your Costco Anywhere Visa® Card by Citi.

Executive Members earn an annual 2% Reward on most Costco purchases, including computers. Costco Anywhere Visa

Card by Citi cardholders earn a 2% reward on most Costco purchases (even more in some categories). That's at least a 4% cash back reward for playing your cards right.—MR