

UPGRADE or BUY A NEW COMPUTER?

UPGRADE OPTIONS:

Software

Updating to the latest software versions will help avoid security issues and other flaws the manufacturer uncovered and published a fix for.

Upgrading may involve additional cost. It is important to thoroughly research the new software to be certain it is compatible with your current system.

Anti-virus software, anti-spam software, operating system are all examples of software you should have 'automatic updates' for. Others may be recommended as needed.

Additional memory (also called RAM)

Increasing your RAM will speed up processing time which is how fast programs open and general response time to commands. This will NOT affect the speed of your internet connection.

RAM is relatively inexpensive and easy to replace but it is critical to purchase the right type and size of RAM for your system and to install the cards properly to prevent serious issues.

Replace your hard drive

If a virus destroyed your data and you cannot retrieve it using your anti-virus software, you can try reinstalling your operating system (i.e. Windows XP or Vista). If your drive fails to format, you may need to replace it. This should be done by a professional or someone who has successfully accomplished it before. Although more expensive than replacing/adding memory, this is still cheaper than a new system.

Motherboard and Microprocessor upgrades

NOT recommended! This can be expensive and may not be compatible with your existing configuration.

Other parts you can replace or add:

Replace your CD with a DVD player

Upgrade your USB to a faster USB2

Replace your large CRT monitor with a flat panel to save space

Video card upgrade

Add a TV tuner

Connect to a SlingBox to watch cable TV on your computer

BUYING A NEW COMPUTER

To CONSIDER:

Mac or PC – If do a lot of work with graphics (photos or videos) you'll want a MAC. The images are much more vivid and real. Basically, MACs are easier to use and are generally not susceptible to viruses or intrusions but you will need to purchase software that is MAC compatible.

You can do all the above on a PC and, unless you are a graphic professional, you will probably not even notice the visual difference.

Laptop or Desktop – Desktops are generally cheaper but laptops can double as portable entertainment systems when you travel. They can also take the place of an expensive Blu-ray or DVD player (check for HDMI ports on TV and computer).

If you choose a desktop, consider all-in-one (iMac, Dell XPS One or Gateway One) to save desk space. These combine the monitor, computer and CD drives into a single unit. If cost is an issue, consider a standard mid-tower which is the least expensive option.

Specs

RAM – minimum 2 GB (gigabytes). More if you plan on running Vista. Generally buy the most you can afford

Hard drive – purchase the most you can afford if you need to store a lot of pictures or videos.

Processor – AMD or Intel

Choose AMD if price is your main concern but Intel is generally faster, allows for longer battery life (for laptops) and causes less freeze-ups than AMD. If AMD is your only option, be sure to get the top of the line version (Phenom X4 for desktops or Turion 64 x2 for laptops). Avoid Sempron and Celeron which are much too slow.

Optical Drives

The standard is still DVD +/- and will handle most formats.

Blu-ray drives will also play other formats (downward compatible) in addition to playing high-definition movies.

Graphics Card

Integrated graphics are built into the processor and share RAM which is fine for general use but if you are a gamer or running Vista, you'll a graphics card with its own memory. ATI and Nvidia are good choices.

Networking options

Wireless (802.11a, b, g or n)

The latest is 802.11n which is twice as fast as 802.11g.

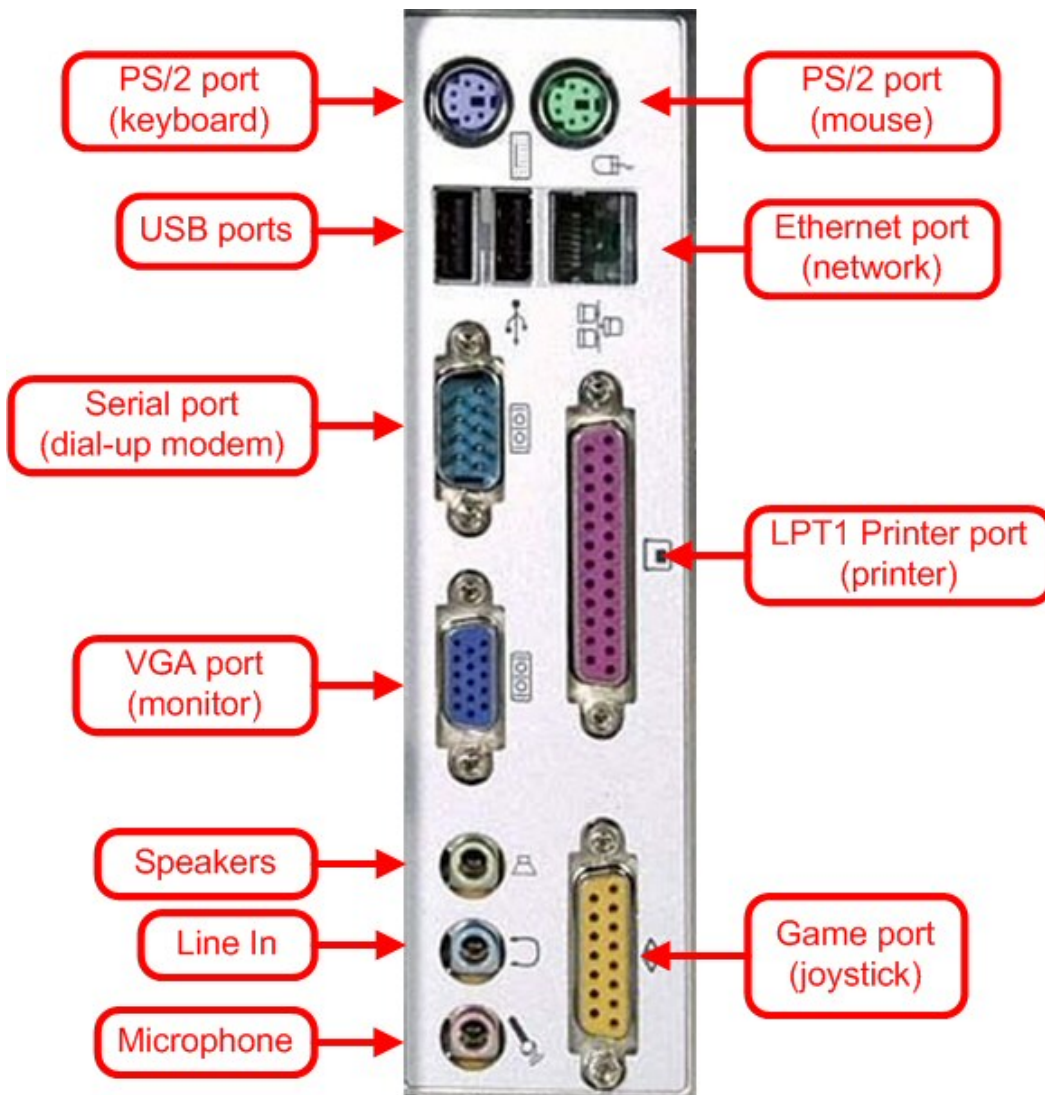
Bluetooth – connect to a headset for placing calls or listen to music, synchronize to your smart phone, connect wirelessly to Bluetooth keyboards, printers and mice.

Ports

Minimum of 2 USB2

HDMI (standard for Hi-Def connection to TV)

Firewire – for downloading pictures



USB

IEEE 1394



Check these sites for additional information on this topic:

<http://tech.yahoo.com/gd/deciding-whether-to-upgrade-your-old-pc-stuff/152963>

<http://www.switched.com/2008/10/01/five-things-to-consider-before-buying-a-computer/>

[CNet](#) (under "reviews" click on Desktops or Laptops)

[PCWorld](#) (click on Laptops or Desktops)