

Types of Computers

Computers are electronic devices that perform many tasks. Some types of computers are better for certain jobs than others. Computers are categorized according to how they are used, what they cost, their physical size, and their processing capability. Knowing about computer categories can help you buy the computer that best meets your needs.

Learning Objective 3:

Identify the main computer categories

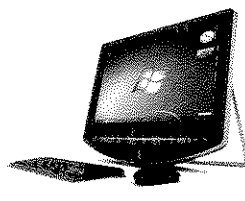
● **Which type of computer is right for me?** You will most probably use a personal computer. A personal computer is designed to meet the computing needs of an individual for home, school, or small business use. It typically provides access to a wide variety of software, such as word processing, photo editing, budgeting and financial management, email, and Internet access. Personal computers include **desktop computers**, and **portable computers** such as **notebook computers** (sometimes called **laptop computers**), **netbooks**, and **tablet computers**.

● **If I get a desktop computer, will it fit on my desk?** Probably, yes. That is why it is called a desktop computer. A desktop computer's system unit can be housed in a vertical case or a horizontal case. Most horizontal cases are placed under the display device to save desk space. A vertical case can be placed on the desk, on the floor, or in a space beneath the desk. The case for a vertical system unit is often referred to as a tower. Tower units are the system unit of choice for computer owners who want to upgrade their system, such as by adding additional storage devices or a more powerful graphics card. It is easy to get inside a tower case and swap parts. Some manufacturers of desktop computers create an all-in-one unit. These computers build the computer technology into the back of a flat-panel screen or into a keyboard. See Figure A-5.

FIGURE A-5: Examples of personal desktop computers



Tower computer

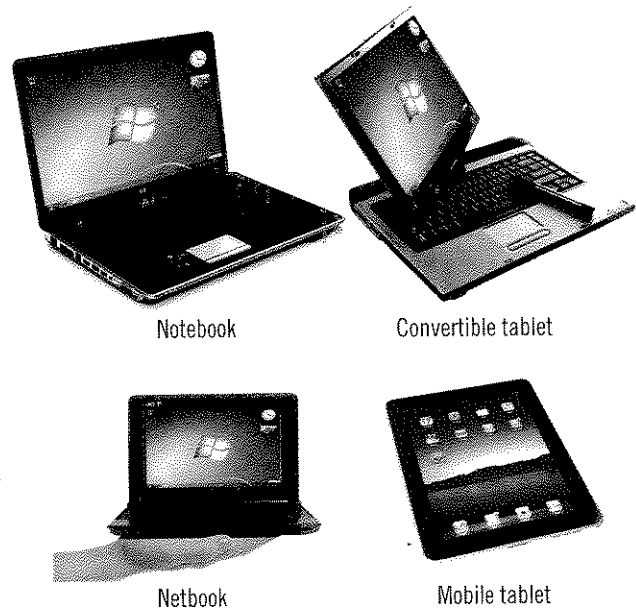


All-in-one desktop computer

Left: Courtesy of Media Techniques Corporation; Right: Courtesy of Gateway. Used with permission from Microsoft

● **What if I need to use my computer in different locations?** You will want to consider a portable computer. **Portable computers** include notebook computers, tablet computers, netbooks, and handheld computers. Examples of portable computers are shown in Figure A-6 and Figure A-7.

FIGURE A-6: Examples of portable personal computers



Notebook

Convertible tablet

Netbook

Mobile tablet

Top row, left: Courtesy of Hewlett-Packard Company; © Kevin Burns/Getty Images/Shutterstock.com; Bottom row, left: PRNewsFoto/Pablo Shuck Corporation; Courtesy of MediaTechnics Corporation. Used with permission from Microsoft

● **What are the advantages of a notebook computer?**

You might consider buying a notebook computer if you want to be able to move the computer from place to place, such as from home to school. Notebook computers have a clamshell design, which means they open and close on a hinge. When the computer is closed, the screen, pointing device, and keyboard are protected inside the case. Although notebook computers are much smaller than desktop computers, they are comparable when it comes to computing power. The two big differences between desktop and portable computers are their physical sizes and their cost.