

TITLE – Is a Netbook right for you?
AUTHOR – Alicia A. Slade
PUBLICATION – Pennsylvania Family Lawyer
ISSUE / DATE – September 2009

Today, we email, text, chat, blog, and IM (Instant Message), to communicate quickly with others. We use Facebook, MySpace, Classmates, LinkedIn, and other professional organization websites to stay connected with one another and we use our Internet capable pc's, notebooks, and smartphones to accomplish this. We have become a society where everyone wants all communication with others, right this minute. And to capitalize on society's craze for instantaneous communication, hardware manufacturers are heavily marketing their latest technology device, the netbook, also referred to as a mini. This device fits in between the capabilities of a smartphone and a notebook computer. According to sales figures of netbooks for the past year and the projected figures for this year and next, manufacturers are cashing in big! These devices have been around for a few years, but now, mainstream hardware manufacturers, such as HP (Hewlett Packard) and Dell have their own offerings and are making a huge effort to get these devices into your hands. There are many commercials on television for netbooks, especially since it is back to school time for college students. They are attractively priced between \$300 to \$500, but what are you getting for your money? It looks very similar to a notebook, but what is different about them other than the name. It is important for you to understand the functionality and capability of a netbook so that you can make an informed decision about whether one is right for you.

The name for the device has been around for over ten years and there were some early releases in the late 1990's, but they did not catch on and were discontinued. It has been within the past two years that consumers have become aware of netbooks. The reason for the failed attempts in the past was that the technology industry needed to mature and more importantly, consumers consumption and usage of the Internet: emailing, IM'ing, chatting, and blogging. The word netbook is a general term for these technology devices, similar to the word laptop or notebook. It is a small light weight notebook that is designed to be used for wireless access via LAN and Internet. No more than an inch thick and weighing less than 3 pounds, with a built-in web camera, it is no wonder why these devices are catching on and so attractive to the mobile computing user. Screen sizes are typically between 8 to 10.1 inches, but not much larger since there are size limitations due to licensing agreements with Microsoft (MS). In order for hardware manufacturers to purchase very inexpensive versions of Microsoft Windows XP and the soon to be released Microsoft Windows 7 operating system, they must adhere to size restrictions for the screen, processor speed, storage size, and amount of RAM so their device will qualify to have a very inexpensive Microsoft operating system license, around \$15/license. This of course is crucial to keeping the netbook costs low. So, some of the netbooks have Windows XP, while others have a Linux operating system.

Netbooks have lower end processor chips; many use the Intel Atom chip. They do not have the latest and greatest processor chip from Intel powering them like a pc or notebook computer. Also, they do not have the typical hard disk drive like a pc, but instead, have a solid storage device, similar to a flash drive. Hence the reason they are really for surfing the Internet, emailing, chatting, online applications, and using them for some other basic functions like word processing. Netbooks are not a replacement for your computer that runs all of your software applications at your office. Instead, they are a supplemental device, like your handheld or smartphone (Blackberry, Palm, iPhone).

You will find many different manufacturers of netbooks. Many hardware manufacturers call their model a Mini. It seems like every hardware manufacturer wants to capitalize on this new market, even the wireless companies; such as, AT&T and Verizon. And why not, the number of units sold has tripled for each of the past two years and it is expected to continue to do so throughout the next several years. HP (Hewlett Packard), Dell, Toshiba, Acer, Samsung, are just a few of the manufacturers of these devices.



(Pictured is the HP Mini 110 XP Edition.)

The HP Mini 110 XP Edition has the following for \$399:

- Three colors: black swirl, white swirl, or pink chic
- Intel Atom Processor N270 (1.6 GHz)
- Windows XP Home Edition
- 1GB RAM
- 16GB or 32GB Solid State Hard Drive
- 3 USB Ports
- Intel Graphics Media Accelerator Card
- 10.1" Display
- Mini Webcam
- Wireless Card Capable
- Mobile Broadband Capable (AT&T, Verizon, Sprint)
- 3 Cell or 6 Cell Lithium Battery
- Bluetooth Capable
- Norton Internet Security Software
- 5-in-1 Digital Media Card Reader
- RJ45 Port
- VGA Port
- Built-in Stereo Speakers
- Microsoft Office 2007 Home Edition
- 2.25 lbs.
- 1 Year Manufacturer Warranty

Is a netbook right for you? If you want or need a light weight mobile wireless device for email, web surfing, IM'ing, chatting, and blogging with additional minimal computing capability, it is perfect for you! Great for traveling or for home use, plus, the price is right! I have my pink chic HP 110 XP model on order as I write.

Alicia A. Slade is a Technology Consultant and the President of Plummer Slade, Inc., a computer networking firm that has been specializing in providing computer networking and business solutions to law offices since 1988.