

TITLE – Netbooks: Lightweight & Extremely Portable  
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Netbooks are small, light weight notebooks that are designed to be used for wireless access via the Internet or a network. They are between a smartphone and a notebook computer in size, weight, and capability. The word netbook has been around for over ten years and is a general term, similar to the word laptop or notebook. The first netbooks were released in the late 1990's; however, sales were extremely poor since there was not a demand for a small, notebook-like technology device during that time period. Also, most homes and businesses had just begun to install Internet access and use email. The demand at that time was for notebook computers with bigger and better features; full sized keyboards, larger screens, built-in CD ROM's, and more.

Now ten years later, there is a demand for such a device, because we email, text, blog, chat, and IM (instant message) for immediate communication with one another. We post pictures, messages, and other personal information to Facebook, MySpace, LinkedIn, Classmates, and other social websites, and we use Internet capable pc's, notebooks, and smartphones to accomplish this easily. Wherever we go, we can access the Internet. There is wireless Internet access in hotels, doctor's offices and coffee shops. We also use the Internet to remotely access our office network or pc's so that we can do office work at home or elsewhere. We have become a society crazed and obsessed for instantaneous communication and access. Hardware manufacturers are capitalizing on this market and are heavily marketing their different models of netbooks: HP (Hewlett Packard), Dell, Toshiba, Acer, Samsung, are just a few of the manufacturers of these devices. Wireless companies, such as, AT&T and Verizon, are also selling netbooks. According to recent sales figures of netbooks, the number of units sold has tripled for each of the past two years and is expected to continue to do so throughout the next several years.

Netbooks are no more than an inch thick and weigh less than 3 pounds. The screen size is typically between 8 to 10.1 inches, but not much larger since there are size limitations due to licensing agreements with Microsoft (MS). Plus, larger screens add additional weight to the device. In order for hardware manufacturer's devices to qualify for inexpensive versions of Microsoft Windows XP and Microsoft Windows 7 operating system, they must adhere to certain restrictions for the screen size, processor speed, storage size, and amount of RAM. This is crucial for keeping the cost of a netbook low, between \$300 and \$600.

Netbooks have lower end processor chips, such as, the Intel Atom chip. They do not have the latest and greatest processor chip from Intel powering them like a pc or notebook computer. It is not necessary, since the typical use is for wireless access to the Internet. Also, many netbooks do not have a hard disk drive like a pc, but instead, have a solid storage device, similar to a flash drive. A standard configuration has a three cell lithium battery (3 hours) or can be configured with a six cell lithium battery (4 hours) or a nine cell lithium battery (6 hours). Netbooks come standard with wireless Internet access since that is their main use. They also have web cameras built into them.

Netbooks are not a replacement for your computer that runs all of your software applications at the office. Instead, they are a supplemental device, similar to your smartphone, for surfing the Internet, emailing, chatting, and performing other basic functions like word processing or remote connection to the office. They are a wonderful technology device and fill a need in a time when everyone wants instant access to everything.

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