Graphic Design Laptop Guide
School of Art and Design, Portland State University
(Updated October 2016)

Laptop Computer Ownership Requirement

All students majoring in Graphic Design are required to own a laptop computer that meets the minimum hardware and software requirements listed below. They are required to have the computer by the time they are enrolled in ART 200, although sooner is great!

HARDWARE:

Mac (recommended)
We strongly recommend students own a Macintosh laptop that is no more than two years old. This insures a level of compatibility with the resources available in the school and prepares you for a future in Mac-centric work environment. If any of this is unclear, associates at the Apple Store are very helpful. Here are the specs we recommend:

- No more than two years old
- 13” or 15” screen capable of 1920 x 1080 (full HD) resolution (if you choose a 13” computer, please consider getting a monitor to connect to at home for more efficient and precise work)
- Memory: 8GB RAM (or more)
- Processor: 1.2GHz (or more)
- Storage: 256GB (or more)

PC
Although PCs generally have a lower initial cost, they do not hold their value and can be less durable than their Mac counterparts. Additionally, all courses will be taught specifically for the Mac interface, so any differences or bugs that pertain to PCs will be the responsibility of the student. If you must purchase or already own a PC, your laptop must meet these minimum requirements. If any of this is unclear, associates at the store can be very helpful if you show them this information.

- No more than two years old
- 13” or 15” screen capable of 1920 x 1080 (full HD) resolution (if you choose a 13” computer, please consider getting a monitor to connect to at home for more efficient and precise work)
- Memory: 8GB RAM (or more)
- Processor: 1GHz (or more)
- Storage: 256GB (or more)

SOFTWARE:

All Graphic Design students must have the following software installed on their laptop:
• Adobe Photoshop, Illustrator, and InDesign (CS6 or CC)*
• Microsoft Office or Apple Keynote and Pages (formerly iWork).

*Keep in mind that PSU only supports CS6 products. When using our output rooms—such as printing in the MAC Lab or Green Room—please deliver your work in a format compatible with CS6.
Purchasing Your Laptop System

Your purchase of a laptop may be eligible for an extension of any student loans you receive through the PSU Financial Aid Office. Please contact the PSU Financial Aid Office at (503) 725-3461 or toll-free (800) 547-8887 (http://www.pdx.edu/finaid/). The form required to extend your student loan is available online from the PSU Art Department website and from the Art Office located in the Art Building.

Frequently Asked Questions

I already have a desktop computer at home; do I still need to purchase a laptop?
In order to participate fully in courses that meet in our classrooms, you will need a laptop. If your current desktop computer is an older model, perhaps you should consider selling it or using it as an auxiliary system.

I have a laptop, but it doesn’t meet the minimum requirements—what do I do?
While older and slower computers often can technically run software such as Photoshop and Illustrator, they often lag or crash and struggle to run multiple applications at once. Not only will a newer computer save you significant amounts of time by operating more effectively and saving you from losing work due to hardware crashes, a more capable computer will allow you to keep up with the rest of your class and work with larger and more complex files. It is highly recommended that students purchase and use a laptop that meets the minimum requirements.

When should I get my computer?
It is your responsibility to ensure you have access to a laptop computer before registering for any Graphic Design course that is 200 level or above.

How long will this computer last me?
It’s difficult to say exactly how long a computer will last — mostly because you can tax the capabilities of your computer system more and more as you integrate it into your daily work. The recommended configurations are designed to last for a four-year stay on campus or to accompany you into your chosen profession after you complete your degree program. If in the future you expect to upgrade to the latest software or are going to use your computer for applications beyond its current capability, you may need to upgrade your hardware more frequently.

Can I get financial aid to help purchase a computer?
Eligible financial aid recipients may receive an increase in the amount of their loan package that will help with a computer purchase. For more details, please contact the PSU Financial Aid Office at (503) 725-3461 or toll-free: (800) 547-8887 (http://www.pdx.edu/finaid/).