This article reviews general guidelines for a typical student purchasing a laptop for four years of College.

See also:
- New to Bryn Mawr College? Start Here!
- Students: What tech to bring to College
- Software for Personal Devices

For information regarding specific requirements, please contact the department of your major.

Operating system

Both Microsoft Windows and Apple’s macOS will work at Bryn Mawr. If you aren’t sure which you’d prefer, consider what software you’ll need to use as well as any differences in pricing.

LITS does not recommend Chromebooks/ChromeOS due to their limited support for third-party software. See Example configurations for low-cost alternatives.

Recommended hardware

CPU/Processor: 4 or more cores

Your CPU is integral to the performance of your laptop; we recommend at least a quad-core processor. For limited web browsing and word-processing, a dual-core can be sufficient.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CPU Manufacturer</th>
<th>Recommended Brands</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intel</td>
<td>Core i5 or Core i7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AMD</td>
<td>Ryzen 3, Ryzen 5, or Ryzen 7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comparing two laptops?
Memory/RAM: 8GB or more

Memory matters when multiple programs, windows, or browser tabs are running or open. We recommend at least 8 gigabytes (8GB), but 12GB or 16GB can make a significant difference.

Can I upgrade RAM later?

RAM vs. Intel Optane Memory

Storage Drive: 256GB (or larger) SSD

Your storage drive holds all the data on your computer. Its performance is based on size and type.

- **Size:** We recommend at least 256GB; keep in mind your operating system can use up to 30GB!
- **Type:** There are two types of storage: HDDs and SSDs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HDD (Hard Disk Drive)</th>
<th>SSD (Solid-State Drive)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>✓ More affordable</td>
<td>✓ Much faster</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Larger storage sizes</td>
<td>✓ Resistant to physical damage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✗ Much slower</td>
<td>✗ More expensive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✗ Very vulnerable to physical damage</td>
<td>✗ Smaller storage sizes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Small Solid State Drive (SSD) vs. Hard Disk Drive (HDD)?

What does an "NVMe drive" mean?

Warranties

Extended basic warranty

While most laptops come with a brief pro bono warranty, we highly recommend purchasing a 4-year
extended warranty. For those four years, this will ensure any failed components will be repaired at no additional cost.

Can I extend my warranty?

Accidental damage protection

A basic warranty won’t cover spilling coffee on your new laptop or knocking it off a desk. As such, we also highly recommend purchasing a **4-year accidental damage protection plan**. This may eat into your budget, but it is usually much cheaper than the price of repairing or replacing a laptop.

Additional considerations

- **Get hands-on**: go to a store and physically interact with it
- **Size and weight**: Is it comfortable to use and easy to transport?
- **Overall build quality and design**:
  - How do the trackpad and keyboard feel?
  - How much does the chassis flex when you type?
  - Does the hinge feel strong and durable?
  - How bright is the screen’s max brightness?
- **Available ports**: How many & what types of ports are present?
- **Battery life**: many reviews include battery life tests
- **Wireless connectivity**: must support WPA-2 Enterprise

MacBooks and Keyboard Reliability?

1. *Otherwise, pay close attention to the return policy.*
2. *Some USB Type-C ports support charging, data, and video output; other’s don’t. Be sure to check.*

Example configurations

Last updated: June 5, 2020

Below are recommended specifications we would look for at a range of price points.

**NOTE**: You should always research what is available to you. This list is **not** comprehensive or necessarily up to date, and the models linked below are examples, not recommendations.
**Before Purchasing:** Always look for reviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CPU</th>
<th>Affordable (Less than $600)</th>
<th>Mid-Range ($600-$900)</th>
<th>High-End ($900+)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intel Core i3/i5</td>
<td>AMD Ryzen 3/5</td>
<td>Intel Core i5</td>
<td>Intel Core i5/i7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AMD Ryzen 3/5</td>
<td></td>
<td>AMD Ryzen 5</td>
<td>AMD Ryzen 5/7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RAM</td>
<td>4-8GB</td>
<td>8+ GB</td>
<td>16+ GB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Storage</td>
<td>256GB SATA SSD</td>
<td>256GB NVMe SSD</td>
<td>512GB NVMe SSD</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Prices listed do not include the recommended warranty & protection plans.*

**Considering a MacBook?**

**Questions?**

If you have any additional questions or problems, don't hesitate to reach out to the Help Desk!

**Phone:** 610-526-7440
**Email:** help@brynmawr.edu
**Location:** Canaday Library 1st floor