



Eight Reasons Your Next Computer Should Be a Mac

Macs can leave you happier and more productive than you would have been if you'd bought a Windows system, and feeling you got good value for your money even though a Mac is never the cheapest option.

1. Macs are consistently consistent.

Every time Microsoft does a redecorating job (also known as an upgrade), it moves some stuff around for no apparent reason. OS X's logical, minimalist interface simply involves fewer things that must be learned and relearned, and Apple messes less with it in new releases such as Leopard. Bottom line: It's easier to get stuff done.

2. The joy of predictability.

Anyone who's ever suffered the indignity known as a Kernel Panic knows that Macs aren't bulletproof. But logging thousands of hours both on Windows PCs from multiple manufacturers and on Macs has convinced me that the average Mac is meaningfully less flaky than the average PC. In my experience Macs crash less, suffer from fewer inexplicable slowdowns, deal better with tight memory situations, and boot up and shut down quicker and more reliably.

3. Who needs security headaches?

If the Internet's bad guys ever decide to pummel OS X with the same intensity that they've pounded on Windows for years, the free ride for Mac fans may end. But for now, this fact is indisputable: A Mac owner who uses no security software at all runs less risk of being infected by spyware or a virus than a Windows user who obsessively protects his or her PC. In the last week alone, two Windows-using pals have been crippled by attacks; I've never heard even one real-world horror story from a friend about a Mac security meltdown.

4. Crud, or the lack thereof.

Windows is an infinitely better operating system when it isn't smothered by the demoware, adware, and other unwantedware that so many PC manufacturers splay onto the Start menu, the desktop, and the System Tray. Macs are utterly free of such junk, as well as native-to-Windows irritations like word balloons burbling out of the System Tray, Windows Activation, and User Account Control.

5. Details count.

You can buy a perfectly pleasing Windows PC that matches a Mac's CPU speed, RAM, hard-drive space, and other specs for a lot less money. But it won't have an AC adapter with hooks that let you wrap up the cord for travel, or a MagSafe connector that won't get damaged if it's accidentally yanked out of the computer. It won't have an oversized touchpad with multitouch gestures that help you navigate through documents and around the Web. And it will likely be heavier and bulkier than a comparable Mac.

6. Apple is one of the world's best software companies.

Apple's applications are useful, enjoyable, and innovative, from the iLife creativity suite (whose presence on every new Mac is in itself an argument for the platform) to industrial-strength tools such as Final Cut Pro. Most run only on OS X. (The Windows versions of iTunes, Safari, and QuickTime are okay, but Apple does its best work on its own operating system and hardware.)

7. The Apple Store's Genius Bar rocks.

Buy a Mac, and you qualify for free in-person technical support from a patient rep with a deep knowledge of your system. I've had Geniuses do everything from reinstall my OS to replace broken keys on the spot.

8. Hey, Macs are PCs.

By which I mean that Leopard's Boot Camp feature--and better yet the Parallels Desktop and VMware Fusion virtualization utilities--let you run Windows, and Windows applications, on a Mac. (I do it myself on my Macs to use such Windows-only apps as TurboTax Business, as well as Office 2007, which I prefer to Microsoft's Mac version of Office.) I'm listing this last because I ultimately see running Windows on a Mac as a last resort: It's usually not necessary, and it degrades some of the other virtues of the Mac, such as protection from Windows security risks.