

The Virtues of a Refurbished Computer



By Gary Eady - Surrey Coalition

If you are thinking of purchasing a new computer, it might be worth considering a refurbished Business machine. You can pick up a real bargain in doing this! These machines are usually from well-known and respected computer manufacturers, such as Dell, HP and Lenovo, that have been in use for only 3 years or so, in a corporate environment. You may think "if it is 3 years old, then it is surely past its best". Well, You couldn't be more wrong!

The best computer recycling companies are endorsed by Microsoft to do so, and work with them to ensure their refurbished machines are optimised to get the most out of the Windows Operating System. This usually includes an upgrade to the BIOS (Basic Input Output System). The BIOS is the underlying software that drives the hardware — it's the code that does everything from specifying the number of pixels that can be used when displaying text and graphics on a screen, to helping the processor communicate with the hard drive. This alone can make a refurbished machine run as smooth, and sometimes even smoother than a new computer. Refurbished computers also usually have high quality processors and additional RAM (Random Access Memory) installed. These are the two most important factors to consider when purchasing a computer, as together they are responsible for the speed you can carry out tasks!

One company which supplies excellent refurbished computers is 'Computer Recyclers UK Ltd', based in the Rhonda Valley in Wales. They are a Microsoft endorsed supplier of refurbished computers. I have used this company on behalf of clients over the past 5 years, and can honestly say that they have always provided high quality machines which come with Windows 10 and a version of Microsoft Office pre-installed. They are a family run business and provide excellent customer service.

You can purchase a computer for as little as £99 from Computer Recyclers UK Ltd, but this will be a pretty low spec machine. However, you can customise your build, by choosing from a wide range of processor types, memory sizes, hard disk types and sizes. Typically, for a high quality machine, you will be looking at paying in the region of £225, including VAT and delivery. All machines purchased from Computer Recyclers come with a 12 month hardware warranty and over the past 5 years, I have not needed to send a single computer back to them!

What to Consider When Purchasing a New Computer

The main things to consider when purchasing a new computer are as follows:

- **Cost.** The budget you have available will determine the type of computer you can buy. Realistically, a budget in excess of £200 will be required to purchase a reasonable refurbished machine.
- **Laptop or Desktop?** If you have a space in the home where you can position a Desktop computer, then I would definitely recommend this, as the choice of screen size and more importantly, the positioning of that screen, are far better than a laptop. Also, your posture will be better when using a Desktop computer. Additionally, using a standard Desktop Computer Keyboard is an overall nicer experience than that found on a laptop. However, if space is an issue, a laptop might be a better solution. If this is the case, then try to purchase a laptop which is light and has a screen in excess of 14".
- **Processor type and speed.** This is probably the most important hardware consideration! The processor is responsible for how fast tasks can be carried out by the computer. The faster the processor, the better! However, knowing what to look out for is not always easy. As a general rule, you should try to purchase a computer with an i5 processor, or even better, an i7 processor, as these are high quality and very robust. An i7 processor is more expensive than an i5 processor!
- **RAM (Random Access Memory).** Along with the processor speed, RAM is the most important consideration. RAM is very important. It is this that makes your programs open faster, allows you to multi-task better and provides the energy to your Assistive Technology programs, such as JAWS, ZoomText and SuperNova. As a general rule, you should look to purchase a computer with a minimum of 8GB of RAM installed. If you are using Assistive Technology, then I would strongly recommend 12GB or even 16GB.
- **Hard Disk Size.** The hard disk is where the Operating System (Windows 10) and your programs are installed to. In addition, it is where all of your files are typically saved to. It is not crucial to have a huge hard disk capacity. However, I would most certainly suggest a 500GB hard disk, as this will give you plenty of room for your photographs, music files and video files. The latest generation of hard disks are called SSD drives. This stands for Solid State Drive. They are a little like an enormous Memory Stick and make the opening and closing of programs and files quicker than the older type Optical drives. As you might expect, SSD drives are more expensive than Optical drives. Having said this, an Optical drive is absolutely fine for the vast majority of computer users.

What is a Typical Specification for a Refurbished Computer

A typical specification of a refurbished computer from Computer Recyclers is as follows:

- Dell, HP or Linovo Mini Tower
- I5 Processor
- 500GB Optical Hard Drive
- 12GB of RAM
- Surround Sound Stereo Sound Card

- High quality Graphics Card
- 19" Flat Screen
- Keyboard and Mouse
- Windows 10 Professional Operating System
- Microsoft Office Home and Business 2010 (Word, Outlook, Excel and PowerPoint)
- Windows Defender Anti-Virus and Anti-Malware Enabled
- 1 Year Hardware Warranty

The cost of a refurbished computer with the above specification will be in the region of £225. As a comparison, a brand new computer with the same specification will be in the region of £550!

If you already own a screen, keyboard and mouse, you can deduct these from the cost. Therefore, the likely cost of the System Unit, will be in the region of £195. A bargain for a quality refurbished machine!

How Long Will a Refurbished Computer Last?

As a general rule, you can expect a refurbished computer to work well for 3 to 4 years. In many cases, it will work well for even longer, depending on the type of everyday tasks you carry out.

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I am more than happy to support people in obtaining a quote for a refurbished computer, should they need it. In addition, I am able to provide support in the configuration of the Windows 10 Operating System and how to use it.

So, if you are thinking of purchasing a new computer, don't rule out a refurbished one, they really can prove to be an excellent choice. More importantly, it is really good for the environment, less land-fill!