

architecture enables a broad community of software developers to create applications that run on the phones. There are more than 60,000 applications currently available on Android Market.

BlackBerry. This well-established device is best known for its messaging capabilities and easy e-mail setup and account management. Most BlackBerry phones have easy trackball navigation but lack touch-screen support. And on many models, you can't create and edit Office documents such as Word and Excel files. Some models have a more powerful operating system, Office document editing, and even a touch screen. There are more than 5,000 applications currently available on BlackBerry App World.

iOS 4. Known for innovative features, including the best of the iPod multimedia capabilities, iOS 4 has the largest, most diverse body of applications, with more than 200,000. This OS drives a large, high-resolution, multitouch display and provides intuitive navigation and support for rich HTML and advanced searching and map functions, but you can't edit Office documents out of the box.

Palm webOS. Palm is recognized for its strengths in organizing, contacts, and calendar features. Found on the Pre and Pixi, this operating system drives the user-friendly touch-screen interface that provides easy access to many features and applications. It enables multiple apps to run concurrently, links functions more intuitively, and adds more-advanced Web, multimedia, search tools, and messaging. You can shuffle apps on the touch screen much as you would a deck of cards. More than 1,500 apps are now available in the Palm App Catalog.

Symbian or Series 60. Found primarily on Nokia phones, the basic version can be a bit difficult to use, especially when setting up and using e-mail. And it can be tricky to navigate. Also, you can't create and edit Office documents, such as Word and Excel files. The more powerful version, available on touch-screen models, is easier to manage and better at those tasks. The home screen offers customizable shortcuts to applications, contacts, and widgets. Some advanced Symbian models let you edit Office documents. There are more than 6,500 "content items," videos, and applications on the Nokia Ovi Store.

Windows Mobile. Entrenched among business users for its Microsoft Office and Outlook capabilities, this OS's familiar interface makes navigation intuitive for PC users. It synchronizes easily with Microsoft Outlook. It's easy to switch between apps and run multiple programs, though that might slow performance. The basic version only allows you to view documents in Office apps and lacks touch-screen support. A more powerful version supports a touch screen and full-featured e-mail and Office programs. Microsoft's Marketplace for Mobile has more than 1,000 applications.

Consider the data plan. Using a phone's extra, network-dependent capabilities requires a regular (voice/text) phone plan and a data plan for Web surfing and sending and receiving e-mail. Depending on the carrier, prices for the two combined start at \$45 to \$80 a month with a two-year contract. But you can easily spend much more than that as you add minutes, messaging, and other services.

Consider syncing options. Syncing your phone with your computer has some advantages. For example, you'll most

likely find it easier to update calendar events and contact data using your computer's larger keyboard and display. You'll also have peace of mind knowing all your documents and personal data will be safely backed up should your phone be lost or stolen. But before you buy, check with the carrier or phone maker to be sure the phone is compatible with your computer or its operating system. Also confirm phone compatibility with your company if you plan on setting up corporate e-mail and calendar access.

Check for updates. Manufacturers and carriers often use updates to improve talk time or even add new features. To update your phone, look for "update" under the settings menu, and follow the instructions. Make sure you're in a good reception area to ensure that the file downloads fast and error-free. You should also periodically look up your phone on the Web sites of your carrier and phone's manufacturer.

Look for useful features. Today's phones come equipped with many useful calling and multimedia features, including a media player, a camera, and Web browsing, as well as child-location and call-management services. Some features, such as programmable shortcuts, Bluetooth, speakerphone, and voice command make the phones easier to use.

Check for special prices and promotions. Rebates and special offers can be substantial, but they change frequently. To get the best deal, check the carrier's offerings online and in its retail stores, and then see what independent dealers offer at their Web sites and in their outlets. If at all possible, buy a new phone when you're switching carriers or signing a new service commitment with your existing carrier. You almost always get a

better deal—either a deeply discounted price or even a free phone—when you're signing a contract. Be aware that some rebates are offered only if you also sign up for a data plan.

Check the return policy. Make sure you can return the phone if you're not happy with it. Some stores attach stiff service-cancellation fees on top of what a carrier might charge.

Don't buy phone insurance. Cell carriers will insure your phone for about \$4 to \$8 a month with a \$25 to \$100 or more deductible, but they can replace your lost, stolen, or damaged phone with a repaired, refurbished one. We don't think insurance or extended warranties are worth it. Only 17 percent of buyers we've surveyed got a new phone because the old one broke, and only 3 percent because the phone was lost or stolen. A better idea: Keep your old phone until the new phone's contract ends. If you lose or break the new phone, reactivate the old one and use it until you qualify for a free or low-cost phone.

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COMPUTERS

Meaningful differences in speed between desktops and laptops have largely disappeared. But each design has its own advantages and trade-offs.

The choices among desktop and laptop computers can be confusing. New desktops can be smaller and less conspicuous than some laptops. Meanwhile, some portable computer laptops offer

features and capabilities that rival traditional desktops. Here are the types of computers—and the pros and cons—you need to consider.

TYPES

Desktops

The desktop computer has become just another appliance you use every day. However, consider these pros and cons of desktop computers in general:

Desktops deliver more performance than laptops. They are less costly to repair. They allow for a more ergonomically correct work environment. They let you work on a larger screen, and they can be equipped with better speakers.

Desktops are available in various styles and configurations, all designed to appeal to different tastes—and uses.

They take up a lot of desk space, even with a thin LCD monitor.

All-in-one. These incorporate all components, including the monitor, into one case. The components are tightly packed behind and underneath the display, making it difficult to upgrade or repair. Meant to be space savers, they're also designed to look less stodgy than a traditional computer. You'll pay a premium price for these models.

Compact. If you don't have the space under your desk or you plan to put the computer on top of your desk, consider a compact or slim desktop. These are less than half the size of a full-size desktop. Like their larger brethren, compact desktops tend to be inexpensive. But they may be more difficult to upgrade and repair.

Full size. If you have the space for a tower under your desk, consider a full-size desktop. While they are the largest

type of desktop, they are the least expensive and the easiest to upgrade and repair. Full-size desktops offer the most features and options.

Gaming. The sky's the limit for these, which are geared primarily toward gamers. You get the fastest quad-core processors, the most sophisticated graphics cards, multiple large hard drives, and plentiful RAM. Cases are usually large—and, in some cases, offer a fair amount of bling—with lots of room for expansion.

Laptops

Laptops let you use your computer away from your desk, but you pay for that mobility with a smaller screen and keyboard, and often at the expense of performance. Technological advances have lessened the performance compromises somewhat, though. Whether portability or power is your main consideration, screen size will be an essential factor in deciding which type of laptop is right for you:

12- to 13-inch. If you're planning to carry the laptop around with you frequently, a 12- to 13-inch model is probably the right choice. In our tests of 13-inch systems, we found that you might have to sacrifice some speed, and you'll spend a few hundred dollars more than you would for a larger laptop. But you'll also lighten your load by at least a pound, and you'll find many of the same features on these laptops that are available on larger models, including web cams and memory-card readers. Some models shave a few ounces by removing the DVD drive.

14- to 16-inch. Laptops with a 14- to 16-inch screen generally offer the ideal balance of performance, portability, and price. They weigh about 5 to 6 pounds or more. They're a good choice for those who

need to take a laptop along less frequently, and a system in the 14- to 16-inch size range can easily be configured to serve as a desktop replacement.

17-to-18-inch. For a full-blown, entertainment-oriented desktop replacement, consider a 17- to 18-inch model. You'll get better performance, a good-sized screen, and better speakers. It will cost more than a comparable desktop, but it's handy if you have space constraints or if you're planning to use it in areas of your house other than the home office.

Netbooks. Inexpensive and portable, netbooks are downsized laptops with a 10- to 12-inch screen that weigh 2 to 3 pounds and cost \$250 to \$500. They are designed chiefly for Internet use and light word processing. They are not meant to replace the full-functionality of your laptop or desktop. Many newer netbooks run Windows 7.

Not much larger than a hardcover book, netbooks are lighter, smaller, and less expensive than most standard laptops. They're great for travel and might also make a good computer for a child.

Netbooks have small displays, keyboards, and touchpads, and performance is slow. They have no optical drive (although you can add an external one), so you can't easily install shrink-wrapped software or play CDs or DVDs. Netbooks are a relatively new category, and we currently have no reliability data.

Tablets. Lightweight and highly portable, tablets are made to be carried wherever you go. They're multifunctional, serving as Web browser, e-book reader, digital picture frame, movie viewer, and music player. Some will also include phone functionality. Apple's iPad was the first major tablet to market. It weighs 1.5 pounds and uses a bright display that

rivals its 27-inch iMac counterpart. Battery life on the Wi-Fi version was 10 hours. Archos offers a 7-inch tablet for \$200. Others are expected from most major computer manufacturers.

FEATURES

Many components play a key role in how a computer performs, including the processor, memory, operating system, hard drive, video adapter (with video memory), optical drive, and display (monitor). Laptop computers have additional features and considerations that are important. Where applicable, we've noted feature information that is important and distinctive to the type of computer.

Processor. Also known as the CPU (central processing unit), the computer's "brain" is responsible for processing information. Speed is the most important factor when choosing a processor, so pay attention to the processor's family, the number of cores, and the clock speed.

Intel and AMD are the dominant manufacturers of processors. Intel's processor families include the low-end Atom, Celeron, and Pentium; the midrange Core 2 and Core i3; and the high-end Core i5 and Core i7. AMD's processors range from the low-end Neo, Sempron, Athlon, and Turion to the midrange Phenom and high-end Phenom II.

Processors with multiple cores can process more data at the same time. You can usually tell how many cores a processor has by looking at its name. A Core 2 Duo has two cores and a Core 2 Quad has four cores. A Phenom X3 has three cores. But it's not always that clear; a Core i5 or i7 has four cores.

Clock speed, measured in GHz (gigahertz), determines how quickly it can process information. Within a processor

family, the higher the clock speed, the faster the computer. Clock speeds typically range from 2 to 3GHz.

Power consumption is another important factor when choosing a processor. This is especially true for laptops—lower power consumption translates to longer battery life.

When buying a computer, make sure the processor will be fast enough to handle your needs. If you are buying a desktop or a laptop, avoid computers that use the AMD Neo or Sempron processor, the Intel Atom or Celeron processor, or the Via Nano processor. For basic tasks like browsing the Web and checking e-mail, you'll do fine with a low-end dual-core processor like the Intel Pentium Dual-Core and AMD Athlon/Turion X2. If you plan to use your desktop or laptop for entertainment like watching videos or playing games, get a faster processor such as the Intel Core 2 Duo/Quad, Intel Core i5, or AMD Phenom/Phenom II. If you're a hard-core gamer or plan to edit high-definition video, buy a computer with a high-end processor like the Intel Core i7. For less intensive uses like productivity tasks, the Core i3 should suffice. If you're in the market for a netbook, stick to the slow but low-power-consuming Intel Atom processor.

Memory. The computer's memory, or RAM (random access memory), is used to temporarily store data while in operation. Computers with more memory tend to be faster than those with less, up to a point. Memory is measured in GB (gigabytes). Most brand-name desktops and laptops sold today have at least 4GB of memory, although 3GB is sufficient for most people. Any more than that is probably not beneficial unless you plan to run multiple memory-intensive applications

at the same time and use a 64-bit operating system. Netbooks typically come with 1GB of memory, which is adequate.

Log-on security. For laptops: Some notebooks include fingerprint scanners as a convenient alternative to typing a password when logging in. Some of Lenovo's laptops use face-recognition technology, as do some from Toshiba and other manufacturers. Lenovo's new IdeaPad uses VeriFace technology when you log in. With VeriFace, your face is scanned, via the laptop's webcam, and then scanned again to make sure it matches the initial scan every time you log in.

Operating system. Many people choose PCs running Windows because they're less expensive than Macs. Others choose PCs because they have a wider selection of games or they want to be fully compatible with Windows programs. If you go with a PC, you have a choice of several versions of Windows 7, each with its own hardware requirements. We recommend Home Premium as the Windows 7 version for most home users.

Macs are more expensive but are stylish, and they're also immune to most, if not all, viruses and spyware. Apple's support has been tops in the industry in our surveys. While the company's phone support is only available free for 90 days, you can get unlimited technical support through the Genius Bar if you live near an Apple store. Apple released its most recent version of OS X, called Snow Leopard, in September 2009.

Video adapter and video memory. Also known as the video card, video accelerator, or graphics card, this is responsible for drawing what you see on your screen. There are two types of video adapters: integrated and discrete. The vast majority of computers sold have integrated video,

which is slower and uses up part of your system's memory. That said, integrated video is perfectly fine as long as you don't plan to play complex 3D games like *The Sims* or *World of Warcraft*. Otherwise choose discrete video, which is faster and uses its own video memory. If you choose discrete, make sure that it has at least 256MB of video memory. Hard-core gamers should get 512MB to 1GB of video memory.

Video outputs. If you're buying a desktop, check to see which video outputs it has. Almost all desktops have an analog VGA output, which is compatible with flat-panel LCDs and older CRT monitors. Some have a digital DVI output for use with LCDs; this delivers a much cleaner and crisper image on the screen. If you're buying a laptop, a VGA output can be used with a projector for delivering presentations. The newest desktops and laptops might have an HDMI (High-Definition Multimedia Interface) output to feed video to an external HDTV.

Hard drive. Also known as a hard disk, this is where your programs, documents, music, photos, and videos are stored. Bigger is better. Hard-drive sizes are measured in gigabytes (GB) and commonly range from 160 to 1,000GB. While size matters, speed is equally important. Speed is measured in RPMs (revolutions per minute). A slow hard drive will take longer to start up programs such as Windows and complete tasks (such as installing programs or scanning your hard drive for viruses). For a desktop, make sure it has a 7,200RPM hard drive. For a laptop, make sure it has a 5,400RPM hard drive.

Hard drives often fail, and when they do you need to have a backup to recover your data. The best option is an external

hard drive. These connect to your computer through its USB, FireWire, or eSATA port. Some desktops offer portable hard-drive bays, which save space by letting you insert a removable hard drive inside the desktop.

Some high-end desktops and laptops can be configured with a RAID (redundant array of inexpensive disks) array. These computers have two or more hard drives. There are several types of RAID arrays, the most common being RAID 0 and RAID 1. RAID 0 distributes your data across multiple hard disks, which can greatly improve speed. But if one drive fails, you'll lose data on all your hard disks. On the other hand, RAID 1 automatically copies data from one hard disk to the other. There is no speed boost, but if one crashes, all your data will be safe on the other one.

SSDs (solid-state drives) are on the cutting edge of storage technology, allowing your computer to access data without the moving parts required by a traditional hard drive. So-called flash drives don't have the spinning disk of a conventional hard drive, so they use less power, work more quietly, and should be more resistant to damage from rugged use. And because there are no moving parts, they promise quicker access to data. Netbooks are an exception; they may be bundled with very small solid-state drives that perform worse than traditional hard drives.

Optical drive. This lets you read and write to CDs, DVDs, and Blu-ray discs. DVD burners (also known as DVD+/-RW) are standard gear on today's computers. DVD burners can read and write to CDs and DVDs so you can back up your home-video footage or digital photos, for example. Recordable CDs

(CD-R) can hold up to 700MB of data. Recordable DVDs (DVD+R, DVD-R, or DVD-RAM) can hold up to 4.7GB of data (single layer) or 8.5GB of data (dual layer).

Blu-ray Disc (BD) drives are the newest standard. BD drives are capable of playing the growing list of Blu-ray movies and can store up to 25GB of data (single layer) or 50GB of data (dual layer), almost six times the capacity of a DVD.

Monitor. For desktops: Most are wide-screen, which are designed to fit wide-screen movies better without the black bars, but

Tech tip

With no moving parts, solid-state drives promise quicker access to data.

give you less screen area per inch over a non-wide-screen display. Those who plan to edit photos or videos may want to pay attention to differences in color, viewing angle, contrast, and bright-

ness. You can often obtain a discount on an LCD monitor by buying it bundled with a new computer.

Display. For laptops, a 15- to 16-inch display, measured diagonally, should suit most people. Displays that are 13, 14, and 17 inches are also common. The screens on most laptops are glossy instead of matte. Glossy screens have more saturated colors and deeper blacks, but are also much more prone to glare. Like desktop displays, most laptops have wide-screen displays to fit wide-screen movies better.

LED-backlight displays provide more efficient use of power, resulting in longer battery life. Color on LED-backlight screens is in most cases not significantly different than that on other types of displays.

Battery. For laptops: When not plugged into a wall outlet, laptops use a recharge-

able lithium-ion battery for power. Laptops go into sleep mode when used intermittently, extending the time between charges. You can lengthen battery life if you dim the display, turn off wireless when not needed, and use only basic applications. Playing a DVD movie uses more battery power than other functions, but most laptops should be able to play one through to the end. Many laptops can accept an "extended" battery, adding size and weight but giving as much as twice the battery life.

Case. For desktops: Form factors for computers are more varied now. In addition to the most common tower format, you can find all-in-one and small-form-factor (SFF) computers. Mainstream computers usually come in towers, which fit on top of or underneath a desk. The all-in-one form factor, such as the Apple iMac, packs all the components into the same enclosure as the LCD display. Only the keyboard and mouse are separate. Sony, HP, Dell, and Gateway also have all-in-one models. SFF cases include the Dell Studio Hybrid and the Apple Mac mini.

Networking. For connecting to the Internet, all desktops come with an Ethernet port that lets you run a wire between your desktop and your router. But if it's not possible to run such a wire through your home, you may want to consider a Wi-Fi wireless adapter. Some desktops have this feature built in, while others require you to buy one and install it separately. You'll also need a wireless router. All laptops come with wireless built in, and most have a wired Ethernet port as well.

Wireless adapters mostly use the newer 802.11n standard (which is backward-compatible to the older 802.11g). Unless

you have an exceptionally large house, there's no reason to buy an 802.11n wireless adapter. 802.11g is slightly less expensive and fast enough for most people's needs, and its range is wide enough to cover a medium-sized house. If you do select an 802.11n adapter, make sure your router supports 802.11n as well.

Mouse. Desktops typically come with a mouse to move the cursor on the screen. Most mice bundled with desktops are optical mice, which have light sensors on their underside to track movement. Apple offers its Magic Mouse, which has a touch-sensitive top surface that works in a similar manner to a multitouch touchpad. Mice come in all shapes and sizes. Some are ergonomically contoured to match the shape of your palm, while others are designed to be stylish. They can also be either wired or wireless. If you have a wireless mouse, you won't have to deal with a cord, but you will have to recharge or replace the batteries every few months.

Touchpad. Most laptops use a small touchpad in place of a mouse; you slide your finger across it to move the cursor. You can also program the pad to respond to a "tap" as a "click," or scroll as you sweep your index finger along the pad's right edge. Touchpads come in various sizes; the larger ones let you move the cursor farther across the screen without lifting your finger. Some models let you use multifingered gestures for zooming and rotating images. An alternative system uses a pointing stick the size of a pencil eraser in the middle of the keyboard. You can attach a USB or wireless mouse or trackball if you prefer.

Keyboard. Most computers come with a standard wired keyboard. Some key-

boards have CD (or DVD) controls that let you pause, play back, change tracks, and change the volume. Still other keyboards also have additional keys to expedite getting online, starting a search, launching programs, or retrieving e-mail. Like mice, keyboards can also be wireless.

Sound system. Computers for home use feature a high-fidelity sound system that plays CDs or downloaded music files, synthesized music, game sounds, and DVD-movie soundtracks. Some computers have three-piece speaker systems with a subwoofer, providing deeper, more powerful bass. Others with surround-sound systems can turn a PC into a home theater. Many computers have connections for an external audio source (such as a microphone) and for headphones.

For laptops: The small speakers built into laptops often sound tinny. And a brand name like Altec Lansing or Harmon Kardon doesn't guarantee that they'll sound good. Headphones or external speakers deliver much better sound. But some larger laptops include much better speakers and even a subwoofer for deeper bass.

Touch screens. Touch screens are beginning to show up on some desktops and laptops. These allow you to use your fingertip right on the display to control what you're doing, for example making the screen larger or smaller, selecting menu items, and more.

Ports. The ports to look for on a computer include USB, FireWire, Ethernet, and S-video or HDMI. USB ports let you connect many add-on devices, such as digital cameras or external hard drives, as well as a memory drive for copying files to and from the hard drive. Having these ports at the front of the case makes

connecting devices more convenient. An Ethernet port or wireless network card lets you link several computers in the household to share files, a printer, or a broadband Internet connection. FireWire or IEEE 1394 ports are used to capture video from digital camcorders and connect to other peripheral devices. An S-video or HDMI output jack lets you run a video cable from the computer to a television so you can use the computer's DVD drive to view a movie on a TV instead of on the computer monitor. Media-center PCs (equipped with TV tuners) can also capture video from a VCR, letting you copy tapes to DVDs. Other slots to look for on a new computer are memory-card readers for flash cards.

Most laptops let you attach those devices without a docking station. At least two USB ports for easy hookup of, say, a printer, digital camera, or scanner are standard. A wired network (Ethernet) port is also standard. A FireWire port for digital-video transfer is common. An internal wireless-network (Wi-Fi) adapter is standard. Another option is an internal Bluetooth wireless adapter to link to a Bluetooth-capable cell phone, camera, or another laptop.

Docking station. For laptops: Some notebooks offer a connection for a docking station, a \$100 to \$200 base that makes it easy to connect an external monitor, keyboard, mouse, printer, network, and power in one step.

SHOPPING TIPS

Shop at an online retailer. Our subscriber surveys have found them generally superior to walk-in stores for selection and price. You can also save money by using sites such as Techbargains, Fat

Wallet.com, and Ebates, which tend to provide information on rebates.

Macs aren't often discounted, so it's a good idea to take advantage of the price cuts that usually occur around the time Apple announces new models. That's when other retailers, such as Amazon.com, MacConnection, and MacMall, tend to clear out older stock. Models from PC brands may also be discounted when their successors arrive.

Or buy à la carte. If you have special needs, order from the manufacturer's Web site. Menus show you all the options and let you see how a change affects the overall price. You might decide on a more-expensive processor and a bigger hard drive. Configure-to-order will often give you choices that you won't get if you decide to buy an off-the-shelf model. But be sure to double-check your choices before ordering, and look for unwanted items that some manufacturers include by default.

Shop at the right time. January, July, and October are good times to shop; new models are expected to show up in stores at those times, which means older inventory needs to be cleared out to make room. If a computer you like isn't on sale, ask for a better price. Apple usually offers free iPods and educational discounts to students buying computers during the back-to-school season. Otherwise, the best time to buy an Apple is right after the company makes a new-product announcement and retailers are selling off old inventory.

Try before you buy. Especially when you're buying a laptop, you should try it before you buy it, if you can. Look for a keyboard with keys that don't feel mushy. Touchpads should be large enough so that your finger can cover the span of the

screen without repeatedly lifting it, and touchpad buttons should be easy to find and press. The touchpad should also have a dedicated scroll area. Carry the laptop around for a few minutes and make sure it's not too heavy or too big. The laptop shouldn't get hot during use (89 to 100 degrees F is a good range), and it should run quietly.

Check the screen for glare. Glossy screens are now standard on most laptops. Several have added antireflective coatings, with mixed results, so view the screen under bright lighting to see if there's a problem.

Think green when you buy. Some computers meet the Energy Star standard for efficient power use. Energy-use guidelines cover three operating modes—standby, sleep, and running—with systems entering sleep mode within 30 minutes of inactivity. Power supplies also need to operate more efficiently. You probably won't notice much difference in the operation of your computer, but your electric bill might go down a bit. Look for the Energy Star label on qualified computers. Prices won't increase because of the new standard, according to a spokesperson for the Energy Star program. Another standard is EPEAT, which offers guidelines on what materials can be used in a computer. Depending on how well each computer meets their criteria, they are rated bronze, silver, or gold. A list of EPEAT compliant systems can be found at www.epeat.net.

Recycle when you toss. Most manufacturers also have recycling programs that help you to dispose of your old computer, but the programs vary considerably from one company to another.

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COMPUTER MONITORS

Like TV screens, computer monitors are continuing to go wider and bigger. The squarish 17-inch monitors are now almost obsolete, replaced by wide-screen models. Their larger size allows for easier side-by-side page viewing or more spreadsheet columns with less scrolling.

Prices keep falling on LCDs, even for bigger screens. You can now get a 17-inch LCD for not much more than \$100 and a 24-inch for as little as \$225. If you're buying a monitor bundled with a new computer, as many consumers do, you can often upgrade from the standard display to a larger one for a modest amount—\$50 to \$150 or so.

Before you start shopping, consider whether you really need a new monitor. If you're still using a CRT, it's probably time for an upgrade. Low prices on flat panels leave little justification for sticking with that space-hogging relic of the 20th century. If you already own a flat panel, good reasons to upgrade include switching to a bigger display for more screen real estate, or to a wide screen if you want to watch movies on your computer. Or you may want a monitor with a built-in TV tuner, speakers, or USB ports.

Which LCD? Even if you could still buy an old-style CRT monitor (they're essentially extinct), the reasons for choosing an LCD are many, among them no image flicker, sharper image, no glare, low electromagnetic emissions, reduced energy consumption and, the