

Recommended Minimum Computer System Specifications

If you are planning on purchasing a computer for use during law school, CWSL recommends and supports laptop computers running Windows or Mac OS X.

Note: Mac OS X 10.5 Leopard, is not compatible with systems at CWSL

Most students purchase laptop computers. We recommend that a new computer purchase meet or exceed the following specifications (note, these specifications are for Windows systems):

- ★ **Processor:** Intel Core i5, 2Ghz or faster.
- ★ **RAM:** minimum 2 GB. Recommended 4 GB or better
- **Hard Drive:** 120 GB or more;
- **Optical Drive:** CD-RW, DVD Combo or DVD-RW
- **Wired Network Card:** 10/100 MBPS
- **Wireless Network Card:** 802.11B/G compatible

Software:

- **Operating System:** Windows 7, 32 or 64 bit versions.
- **Antivirus program.** Make sure you have current antivirus software, and that it is set to update automatically.
- **Word Processing Software:** Microsoft Word or Corel Word Perfect or equivalent

Optional Hardware:

USB Flash Drive, commonly called a thumb drive.

Miscellaneous:

- Make sure a renter's or homeowner's insurance policy covers your computer in case of theft or damage.
- It is a good idea to get an upgraded warranty with a quick replacement or repair guarantee.

NOTE: Mac OS X 10.5 Leopard, is not compatible with exam software (Examsoft). Mac OS X 10.6 Snow Leopard, and above, can be used with exam software.

A few hints about buying a new laptop.

Law school is expensive. Really expensive. Especially when you are first starting out. There are a lot of expenses, and you have no control over most of them. So when it comes to an expense that you can control, like your new laptop computer, there is a strong temptation to try to save some money, and go with one of the least expensive models. DON'T DO IT! We see many students who opted for an inexpensive laptop, and they end up frustrated by their slow computers. Remember, this will probably be the computer you will use for the next three years. You will probably be using this computer to take the bar exam. Get a good one!

Take a good look at the specifications we have posted, and make sure your new computer meets or exceeds those specifications. The two most important are the processor, and the RAM. Get the fastest processor you can afford, and as much RAM as you can afford. Right now, the Intel Core I5 is your best bet for processors. You want one that runs at two gigahertz or better. For RAM, get at least a two gigabytes, more if you can afford it. Now days you can normally get 4 gigabytes of RAM for your laptop. All the other specifications are pretty standard for most laptop computers on the market today.

Once you have determined that a laptop has the power to do the job, make sure you are comfortable with the laptop:

- Screen size is important. Make sure you can clearly read everything on the screen.
- Test out the keyboard. Make sure you are comfortable with it, and you can type quickly and accurately.
- Check out the weight. Remember, you will be carrying this weight around almost everywhere you go. Get yourself a good bag to carry your computer and all the accessories that will go with it.

Remember to look at the software you will be using, and include that software in the total cost of the new computer. Many people buy new computers, and then are surprised when they have to turn around and spend more money for the software. Many times new computers will come with trial versions of the software, especially Microsoft Office and anti-virus software. These trial versions will only open a certain number of times, or will quit working after a few months.

CWSL offers deep discounts on selected software. Visit the Student Computer Lab web page for information on purchasing software with your CWSL student discount.

Taking Exams On Your Laptop

For exams, we use a program called SofTest, from ExamSoft. This is the same software used by the California Bar Exam. You can use this software if you want to use your laptop to type your exams, instead of writing your exams. The current version of SofTest will run on both the 32 and 64 bit versions of Windows XP, Vista, Windows 7, and Windows 8. SofTest also runs on Mac OS 10.6 or higher. We strongly recommend you do not attempt to take your exams using a netbook.

Questions?

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