

# Buying a computer for college

Kansas State University

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See [www.k-state.edu/infotech/buying](http://www.k-state.edu/infotech/buying) for more details, FAQs, and links.

K-State encourages new students to bring a computer to college. Computers are used for coursework, research, and communicating with instructors. The university's high-speed data network allows access from residence-hall rooms, off-campus, the K-State Student Union, the library, university computing labs, and high-technology classrooms. Online resources include the library's catalog of materials and full-text databases. See K-State's [www.k-state.edu](http://www.k-state.edu) homepage and Information Technology at [www.k-state.edu/infotech](http://www.k-state.edu/infotech).

If you plan to purchase a computer, the following guidelines should help select one that meets your needs for several years. For security reasons, **Windows 95, 98, ME, NT, and older systems are not allowed to connect to K-State's network.** *Be sure your system meets all the criteria listed in the security section (back page).*

••• **DO NOT buy antivirus software!** •••  
K-State's antivirus software is required (via free download or the CatPack CD).

Components and factors	Minimum requirements to use K-State's network (if you bring a computer)	Recommendations for buying a new PC or Mac
Operating system	Windows 2000 or newer, or Mac OS X 10.3 or newer	Windows XP Professional Service Pack 2, or Windows Vista Business, or Windows Vista Ultimate, or Macintosh OS X 10.4 or newer. <b>Before buying Vista, it is essential to review possible on-campus problems (<a href="http://www.k-state.edu/infotech/topics/vista">www.k-state.edu/infotech/topics/vista</a>) and check department/college recommendations.</b>
Processor speed (CPU)	500 mHz or faster	Dual-core processor or better
Monitor and video card	800x600 resolution or higher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>LCD 1024x768 resolution or higher, with 128 MB video RAM or more</li> <li>Dual-monitor capable video card</li> </ul>
Hard drive (HD)	20 gigabytes or larger	80 gigabytes or larger
Memory (RAM)	256 megabytes or more	1 gigabyte or more
Removable storage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DVD drive</li> <li>CD-R/W drive</li> <li>USB flash drive (requires USB port)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DVD recordable drive</li> <li>USB flash drive (requires USB port)</li> </ul>
Software	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Required:</b> K-State antivirus software (via free download or the CatPack)</li> <li><b>Recommended:</b> Basic office suite (word processing, database, spreadsheet, and presentation) such as Microsoft Office Suite or free tools like Open Office, Star Office, and others.</li> </ul>	
Networking	<b>At least one of the following is required:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ethernet card (for on-campus, residence hall, and broadband access): 10 Mbps minimum requirement, 100 Mbps recommended</li> <li>Wireless card (for wireless access on campus): 802.11b minimum requirement, 802.11a/g recommended</li> <li>Modem (for off-campus dial-in): 33.6 Kbps minimum requirement, 56 Kbps (v.90) recommended</li> </ul>	
Audio	Sound card with speakers/headphones to play CDs/DVDs and run RealAudio	
Estimated price range	<i>not applicable</i>	<b>\$1,000-\$1,500</b>

## Security

A vulnerable machine can be attacked and infected in a few seconds. **It is your responsibility to protect your computer and your data.** This helps protect the university's network and resources, and other K-Staters.

For security reasons, **Windows 95, 98, ME, NT, and older, and Mac OS X 10.2 and older systems** are not allowed to connect to K-State's network.

### To safely connect to K-State's network:

1. Install the university's free antivirus software from [antivirus.k-state.edu](http://antivirus.k-state.edu).
2. Set antivirus software to update DAILY.
3. Set Windows Update (or Mac Update) to apply updates automatically.
4. Set a good log-in password for the "administrator" account (Windows XP systems) or your Mac OS X account.

These precautions are needed because K-State actively scans its network to identify computers that are unpatched, vulnerable, or infected with a computer worm or virus. **If your computer is compromised, it will be blocked from accessing the network** until it has been repaired and/or patched. Once infected, often the only repair procedure available is to reformat the computer's hard drive. [www.k-state.edu/policies/ppm/3430.html](http://www.k-state.edu/policies/ppm/3430.html).

K-State's IT security site is at [www.k-state.edu/infotech/security](http://www.k-state.edu/infotech/security).

## Department requirements

**Before any purchase**, check your K-State college and departmental requirements for your field of study: [www.k-state.edu/infotech/buying/collspecs.html](http://www.k-state.edu/infotech/buying/collspecs.html). **Macintoshes** are recommended for Art, Education, and Journalism majors.

## Computing labs at K-State

About 400 PCs for use by K-Staters are in the **university computing labs** and the **InfoCommons** (in Hale Library): [www.k-state.edu/infotech/labs](http://www.k-state.edu/infotech/labs). Some **departmental labs** are for students in specific fields of study. **Residence-hall labs** are for residents only.

## Software

**1. K-State's free antivirus software MUST be installed** on any computer connected to the campus network directly, via dial-in, or wireless. It is free to all K-Staters via download from [antivirus.k-state.edu](http://antivirus.k-state.edu) and the CatPack.

**2. The CatPack** is a collection of free and licensed software only for K-Staters. [www.k-state.edu/infotech/catpack](http://www.k-state.edu/infotech/catpack)

**3. A basic office suite is needed** (word processing, database, spreadsheet, and presentation application) such as Microsoft Office Suite or free tools like Open Office, Star Office, and others.

**4. Big software savings** are available at the K-State Student Union Computer Store, [computerstore@k-state.edu](mailto:computerstore@k-state.edu), 785-532-7319, due to educational pricing (lower than retail) on software. [www.k-state.edu/computerstore](http://www.k-state.edu/computerstore)

**5. Bring copies of your operating system, office suite, and other software application installation media** (including product keys) in case a reformat or reinstall becomes necessary.

## Contact information

The latest computer recommendations are at [www.k-state.edu/infotech/buying](http://www.k-state.edu/infotech/buying).

• **General questions about a computer you own:** IT Help Desk, 785-532-7722, [helpdesk@k-state.edu](mailto:helpdesk@k-state.edu).

• **Access to special assistive technology:** Disability Support Services, [www.k-state.edu/dss](http://www.k-state.edu/dss), 785-532-6441, [dss@k-state.edu](mailto:dss@k-state.edu).

• **Residence-hall computing:** Residential Networking, 785-532-2711, [housing.k-state.edu/resnet](http://housing.k-state.edu/resnet).

• **Computer repairs and service:** K-State's Technology Service Center provides fee-based computer services and is an authorized service center for Dell, Gateway, and Apple. 785-532-6314, [techservices@k-state.edu](mailto:techservices@k-state.edu), [www.k-state.edu/cts/tsc](http://www.k-state.edu/cts/tsc)

## Buying tips

Review these tips before you purchase a computer.

- **Doublecheck price quotes.** Sometimes the prices don't include a keyboard, mouse, monitor, or the recommended operating system.
- **Laptops and Tablet PCs** cost more than a comparable desktop computer, are less capable of being upgraded, and are at greater risk of theft. Laptop locking cables are recommended.
- **Printers are usually sold separately.** Inkjet and laser printers provide high-quality printing. Before you buy, compare prices, features, and cartridge-replacement costs.
- **USB ports and audio jacks on the front of a computer** are highly preferred for easy access.
- **Cables.** Ensure you have everything needed to connect and use your systems, including power cables, USB cables, and Ethernet cables.
- **Protect your investment.**
  1. Purchase a surge protector or uninterruptible power supply.
  2. Add an extended warranty to cover the length of your academic use of the computer.
  3. Check your homeowner's or renter's insurance to see if your computer is covered for damages or theft while used on campus, and get additional coverage if needed.

## Computing news

K-State's weekly IT newsletter has events, news, security tips, and more. [www.k-state.edu/infotech/news/tuesday](http://www.k-state.edu/infotech/news/tuesday).



### Notice of Nondiscrimination

Kansas State University is committed to nondiscrimination on the basis of race, sex, national origin, disability, religion, age, sexual orientation, or other nonmerit reasons, in admissions, educational programs or activities and employment (including employment of disabled veterans and veterans of the Vietnam Era), as required by applicable laws and regulations. Responsibility for coordination of compliance efforts and receipt of inquiries concerning Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, and the Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990, has been delegated to Clyde Howard, Director of Affirmative Action, Kansas State University, 214 Anderson Hall, Manhattan, KS 66506-0124. (Phone) 785-532-6220; (TTY) 785-532-4807.

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