

Buying a new computer

How to interpret the advertisements and the specifications to get the computer that you want.

Let's define some TLAs

- TLA - Two or Three Letter Acronym
- CPU - Central Processing Unit (puts the compute in computer)
- GPU - Graphics Processing Unit = video card or adapter
- GHz - Gigahertz ~ 1 billion cycles/sec
- MHz - Megahertz ~ 1 million cycles/s

More TLAs

- FSB - Front Side Bus
- RAM - Random Access Memory
- GB - GigaByte ~ 1 billion bytes
- MB - MegaByte ~ 1 million bytes
- DDR - Dual Data Rate (2x data/cycle)
- MPG - Miles Per Gallon

Some useful terms

- Chip - piece of silicon with legs
- Core ~ CPU (also brand of Intel CPU)
- Intel - largest maker of computer chips
- AMD - Advanced Micro Devices #2
- Memory - temporary storage
- Hard Disk - permanent storage

More useful terms

- Motherboard - see System Board
- System Board - where chips live
- USB - Universal Serial Bus
- ATA - Advanced Technology Attach
- PATA - Parallel ATA (fast disk)
- SATA - Serial ATA (faster disk)

Still more useful terms

- Bit - unit that can represent zero or one
- Byte - 8 bits ~ 1 character
- 16 bit - 2 bytes at a time
- 32 bit - 4 bytes at a time
- 64 bit - 8 bytes at a time
- Snakebit - once bitten twice shy...

Generalizations

- Bigger, better, faster...
- More is generally better
- More bits, bytes, MB, GB and GHz
- Larger screens 8.9" to 30"
- Except laptops - less weight is better
- You tend to get what you pay for...

Useful websites

- [Wikipedia](#) - definitions
- [ark.intel.com](#) - chips, specs, etc.
- [www.compUSA.com](#) - best descriptions
- [Google/Yahoo/Bing](#) - search for model number + review
- [Amazon.com](#) - free shipping + no tax