

How much netbook can you get for \$400?

April 9 2009, By Etan Horowitz



ASUS Eee PC 1000HE

The hottest segment of the computer market right now is not fancy new Apple laptops or PC gaming machines. It's tiny laptops with older operating systems, cramped keyboards and designs that look like they might have come from Playskool.

Netbooks are small PCs perfect for travelers who want to do Web browsing, e-mail and other tasks without having to lug around a heavy laptop. In early 2008, I reviewed the ASUS Eee PC 4G, one of the original netbooks. It cost \$400, had a 7-inch screen, 4GB of storage space, 512MB of RAM and ran the Linux operating system.

A whole lot has changed in a year. Nearly every computer maker has released a [netbook](#), which can range from a few hundred dollars to \$900, and most typically feature Microsoft's Windows XP operating system. Instead of smaller, solid-state drives for storage, many netbooks feature large hard drives.

Since \$400 was the price of the first netbook I reviewed, I decided to see how much netbook you can buy with \$400 today. You can get a great machine at this price, but you will have to make some compromises.

All of the ones I reviewed have at least a 10-inch screen, 1GB of RAM, 160GB hard drive, built-in webcam, memory card reader, at least two USB ports, Wi-Fi, ethernet jack and a port for connecting to an external monitor.

ASUS Eee PC 1000HE (\$399)

The latest model in ASUS's landmark Eee PC line features a battery the company claims will last a whopping 9.5 hours. It's the only one of the bunch that features Intel's Atom N280 processor, which is supposed to let you do things faster.

PROS: Battery lasts a long time (about six hours without adjusting Super Hybrid Engine settings that slow processing but extend [battery life](#)). Touchpad supports multitouch gestures, such as using two fingers to scroll up and down a Web page. Includes Bluetooth capability and carrying case.

CONS: At about 3.2 pounds, it's heavier than the others and when the touch pad gets sweaty, it's a little hard to use.

BOTTOM LINE: If you can stand the extra heft, this is the best of the bunch.

Acer Aspire One AOD150 (\$349)

One of the most popular netbooks, the Aspire weighs 2.95 pounds.

PROS: Trackpad is sturdy and not affected by sweat. Includes carrying case.

CONS: Battery juts out and it only lasted about three hours in my tests.

BOTTOM LINE: A lightweight netbook with a comfy keyboard. Although it's not as full-featured as the ASUS, it is cheaper and more stylish.

MSI Wind U100 (\$350)

The model I reviewed is not the newest offering, but it does feature a 160GB hard drive and a six-cell battery. The newer model, the U120, has a new casing and costs \$430.

PROS: Comfortable keyboard, battery does not jut out.

CONS: Computer hums when it's running, does not seem to be as sturdy as the others. Battery only lasted about three hours.

BOTTOM LINE: A good deal at this price.

Lenovo S10 IdeaPad (\$399)

These netbooks come in a variety of vibrant colors (I tested the pink one) and weigh just 2.43 pounds.

PROS: Very lightweight and attractive.

CONS: Small touchpad, keyboard is not as comfortable as the others, battery life only about two hours. Only two USB ports; others have three.

BOTTOM LINE: The smallest and lightest of the group, this netbook will take up the least space in your bag, but you may be frustrated by the battery life and cramped keyboard.

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