

Sony belatedly to join 'netbook' market in August

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In this product image provided by Sony Electronics Inc., VAIO W series "netbooks" are shown. Sony Corp. on Tuesday, July 7, 2009 said it will launch the tiny new laptop starting in August, the company's belated entry into the growing but cutthroat netbook PC market. (AP Photo/Sony Electronics Inc.)

(AP) -- Sony Corp. said Tuesday it will launch a tiny new laptop starting in August, the company's belated entry into the growing but cutthroat "netbook" PC market.

The new addition to its Vaio line of computers will cost about 60,000 yen (\$630) when it goes on sale in Japan next month, with launches in the U.S. and Europe to follow shortly after. It will be about the size of a hardback book and run on lower grade hardware than other [Sony](#) models.

Netbooks - small, cheap laptops with stripped-down components - have been a lone bright spot in the PC market, expanding even as consumers cut back on more expensive purchases. But the tiny computers have low profit margins and can put well-known brands in direct competition with budget manufacturers.

"The [netbook](#) market is expanding, and Sony is following this trend," said company spokesman Shinichi Tobe.

Sony, with its well-known Vaio line, is one of the last major PC makers to enter the market. Apple Inc. is another holdout, with CEO Steve Jobs saying the company doesn't know how to build such a computer "that's not a piece of junk."

Sony already sells a similar product, a petite Vaio [laptop](#) it bills as a "Lifestyle PC," but that computer has slightly higher specifications and software, and the company was careful to avoid the netbook label.

The new line of Sony netbooks will be about 10 inches (25 centimeters) wide, 7 inches (18 centimeters) long and 1 inch (2.5 centimeters) thick. Their screens will have a resolution of 1366 by 768 pixels, higher than is commonly found in other netbooks.

The computers will come in white, black or pink, with matching mouse and case.

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