

# Upgrading RAM is a simple process

September 11 2009, By Jim Rossman

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Question: I'm in the market for a new laptop, and I want to be sure it has four gigabytes of RAM. My friends tell me to buy the cheapest configuration and upgrade the RAM myself. How hard is it to upgrade RAM in a computer?

Answer: RAM is one of the easiest upgrades you can perform on a [computer](#), but you'll need to do your homework.

First, you'll need to figure out what kind of RAM to buy. Fortunately, there are a few sites that make this easy.

Go to [Crucial.com](#) and enter your computer's manufacturer and model information and it'll return not only the type of RAM you need but also how many RAM slots your computer has and the maximum RAM configuration for your system.

It'll also let you know if there are any "gotchas" to watch out for, such as needing to add RAM in pairs.

I've purchased from Crucial before with good results, but if you want to do some comparison shopping, try [ramseeker.com](#), which uses Crucial's [Memory Advisor](#) tool but also checks other RAM sellers for the best price.

The next step is to find out how to access the RAM inside your computer. Turn off the computer, unplug it from the wall, and remove the battery if it has one.

Most laptops have a small access door on the bottom to expose the RAM slots. The manual usually has upgrade instructions. If all else fails, try a Web search for your computer's model and the words "install RAM."

Once you open the case to expose the RAM, you'll need to remove the old RAM chips and install the new ones.

Laptop RAM is held in by small metal retaining clips. Look for the outer edges, where there are indentations in the RAM chips, and move the clips apart with your fingers. Notice the RAM will spring up to a 45-degree angle before you pull it out.

You'll insert the new RAM at this same angle firmly into the slot and press it down to catch it in the clips.

Most laptops have two slots. You'll probably be removing two smaller RAM chips and adding larger ones. Try to find another use for the old RAM. One-gigabyte chips are worth only about \$10, so reselling them might be difficult.

There are plenty of RAM installation videos on YouTube to show you how easy it is.

Desktop RAM is not much harder to replace; only the case-opening instructions are different. Also, desktop RAM is usually held in place by plastic clips at either end, and the chips insert perpendicular to the motherboard.

Replacing RAM is easy, and if you mess up, you'll know right away, because your computer won't boot.

But don't worry. If that happens, put the old RAM back in, and you should at least be back where you were before you started.

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