



The Write Stuff

A quarterly compendium of writing tips and other useful information

DITCHING YOUR DESKTOP

By Sallie Goetsch

There are a lot of reasons why someone might want to trade in a desktop computer for a laptop.

I've been using laptops exclusively since 1993, when I bought my first computer. Laptops were new, they were cool, and I was a graduate student who fancied being able



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to read my conference papers off the screen, and I was traveling back and forth to Europe as often as possible. 240 volts? No problem. (The built-in voltage converter in laptop power supplies is also an advantage during rolling blackouts and lightning storms.)

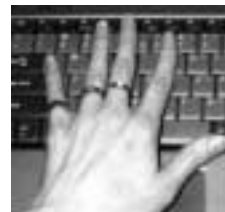
Eleven years later, I'm on my fourth generation of laptops. I don't hang out at Starbucks with my machine, but I do write articles in bed.

Laptops do have limits, but if you're not in the video editing business and you don't require the storage capacity of Fort Knox, then a laptop computer could well be the way to go for you. Almost any model of laptop can accommodate the average business user. I use mine for everything from tracking finances to photo editing and web design, and my 30 MB hard drive is only half full.

There are some things to consider. Laptops come with screens from 12" to 17" and weights to



HANDHELD PC



14" LAPTOP



FULL-SIZED KEYBOARD

match. If you want to take it with you everywhere, you'll want an ultra-light model with fewer built-in drives — if you can pass Sallie's Hand & Eye Test.

Hold up your hands to the keyboard of the laptop you're thinking about buying. If your hand covers more than half the width of the keyboard, the laptop is too small for you to use comfortably for any extended period.

If your vision is less than perfect, you will almost certainly want a larger screen (at least 14"), so you can keep your screen resolution to something reasonable, like 800 x 600, and still read more than one line of text at a time.

So, if you have large hands or poor eyesight, you're going to need one of the larger, desktop replacement types of laptops, and you might not be able to carry your machine everywhere, unless you plan to start a weightlifting program.

But you'll still be able to write articles in bed.

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