

The popularity of laptops has encouraged many newcomers to computing primarily for the Internet, E-Mailing, Social Networking, Photography etc. So after browsing round shops, reading reviews, comparing prices, reading specifications you finally hand over your credit card at your local computer shop, or purchase online, and walk away hoping you have made the right decision. One consolation is that it is more or less up to date than a friend of yours who bought one last month ( and it is probably cheaper). If you decide to buy a laptop or desktop the two most important things to consider are the price and specification of the computer, although each depends on the other. Decide what you are going to use it for. Will it be for Internet, E-Mail, Word Processing or Video Recording, Photographs, Music, Record TV Shows or even online Gaming as this will decide the specification you require. Both laptops and desktops have pros and cons with some listed below:

**Desktops** require more space, are not portable, but have larger hard drives, bigger monitor screens, a proper mouse and generally better keyboard. They are easier and cheaper to upgrade and repair and are usually cheaper to buy.

**Laptops** take up less space (but if you require a printer, a place has to be found), obviously they are more portable which is probably their main attraction, but are limited in hard drive and screen monitor size, They have a pad that substitutes for a mouse (which a lot of people have difficulty in using). Upgrading is very difficult, but not impossible, and repairs can be expensive.

At the end of the day a choice has to be made, and generally price will have a major part in the final decision.

### MICROSOFT SUPPORT

Microsoft is reminding users that support for several editions of Windows will end on April 2010. It means no more security updates, which will leave many users vulnerable to Web browser attacks, Spyware infections, and ID theft. Vista support will also end on April 30 2010 while XP SP2 maintenance concludes July 13, 2010. After that, people running the relevant editions will no longer be able to get monthly updates from Microsoft. This is significant, as it means machines won't benefit from fixes to newly discovered problems and will become particularly vulnerable to security threats. You may have to think about upgrading.

### PROTECTING YOURSELF WHEN USING PUBLIC COMPUTERS

For people who use PCs in public places there is generally no visual clues to alert the user to what type of security the machine is using, unless you are technically minded. There are a few things however you can check out as follows: How is the PC is set up? What operating system is it using? It shouldn't let you mess around in the system settings such as the Control Panel and User accounts. The less you can do on the PC, the better. You might even look behind the machine for any keylogger devices attached to the keyboard cable, where it plugs into the PC. Avoid tasks such as online banking and credit card purchases that might leave sensitive information behind. If you must do so, uncheck any box offering to remember your information and then change your passwords as soon as you are on a PC you know is secure. If you have access to browser options that let you clear the cache and wipe out cookies, you should use them. The best systems warn you that they will clear stored information such as cookies when you exit. If you need to save a document, it's up to you to bring a flash drive to store it on — or e-mail it to yourself and then delete it from the public computer. Be sure to empty Windows Trash/Recycle Bin.

Take similar precautions when using public Wi-Fi networks. For example, log into a user account without administrative rights when browsing on a public Wi-Fi network, You don't need admin. rights just to browse the Web, create a document, and e-mail, especially at a public wireless hotspot.

### TIPS AND TRICKS

**Stack (W7)** - If you have a number of programs open you can “stack” them in various ways. Place the mouse on an empty area of the Taskbar (the blank part at bottom of screen), Right click to display a menu. Tick “Show Windows side by side”, and they will open alongside each other. To undo this operation Right click on an empty area of taskbar and tick “Undo Show side by side”

**Flip (W7 & V)** - If you have a number of programs open (at least 3), hold down the ALT key and tap the TAB key. This presents the thumbnails in a row showing the content of each open Window. Continue to hold down the ALT key and tap the TAB key until you highlight the thumbnail (program) you require. Let go and that program will open.

**Flip 3D (W7)** - An up-market preview of your open programs is to hold down the WINDOWS key (bottom row of keyboard, second left key) and tap the TAB key. This produces the 3D effect (wonderful). Continue to tap the TAB key to bring the required Window to the front. Release the WINDOWS key and the selected window opens in full screen. If neither of these Flips work your Windows versions may not have this option, or your graphics card does not support or have this facility.

**Snipping Tool (W7 & V)** - This program enables you to capture portions of the screen in 4 different ways. These are: An open window, a rectangular area of your choice, a free-form area or the entire screen. Using this tool only requires a few mouse clicks and the “snips” can be saved as PNG, GIF, or JPEG, this being the most popular. To open this tool go to All Programs/Snipping Tool, and on opening, the whole screen will fade and a dialog box opens, with the mouse turning to either a pair scissors or a plus sign (depending on your choice). You will be offered a choice of “snips” as stated above.

**Windows Logo Key (V & W7 & XP)** – This key can be used to perform a number of shortcuts without using the mouse.

Windows Key.....Opens Start Menu  
Windows Key + D.....Minimize or Restore open Windows  
Windows Key + E.....Opens My Computer  
Windows Key + F.....Opens Search  
Windows Key + U.....Opens Utility Manager (for narration and magnify)  
Windows Key + F1.....Opens Windows help

If you are having difficulty trying to resolve a problem, please e-mail me on [lakeside@timewarpuk.net](mailto:lakeside@timewarpuk.net). and I will endeavour to assist.