



WINDOWS OR MAC?

Many of our computer lab visitors ask which computer they should buy—a Windows PC or an Apple Mac? The answer is, “It depends.”

First, some nomenclature: The latest version of Microsoft’s operating system is Windows 10; the latest version of Apple’s is OS X 10.11, also called El Capitan.

Now, here are some things to consider:

Windows 10 is very stable and available on a huge variety of computers with prices that start around \$400. That said, the quality of PCs and clarity of their displays varies, so try them out first. Also:

- Windows runs more programs than a Mac (though Mac software is catching up).
- It supports Microsoft’s full suite of Office software, and the files are compatible with the Mac version of Office.
- It’s the most popular operating system in corporations.
- Windows also runs on some tablets and a few phones.
- It’s a bit more vulnerable to viruses and malware than the Mac, but up-to-date security programs should keep you safe.

Apple OS X 10.11 is also very stable, but available only on Apple computers that start around \$900. Mac quality is very high, and the software and hardware are designed with each other in mind, so every Mac computer works exactly the same. Also:

- OS X runs fewer programs than Windows (but is catching up).
- It supports Microsoft’s Office for Mac, which is a subset of the Windows version (though still very robust). Office files created by Windows and Mac are compatible.
- It’s the most popular operating system among students and graphic designers; less so in the business world.
- OS X is tightly integrated with Apple’s iOS operating system that runs on iPads and iPhones.
- It’s less vulnerable to viruses and malware than Windows (so far), but security software is still a good idea.

The bottom line: Both Windows and Mac run the majority of the programs you'll need for everyday tasks. If you're comfortable with Windows, there's no reason to switch to a Mac. If you love your Mac, stay with it. If you don't know, come talk to us—we speak both Windows and Mac in the PSRC computer lab, and will be glad to help you decide. We're available every Tuesday from 1 to 4 p.m. and Friday from 10 a.m. until noon.

In any case, we suggest your next computer be a laptop so you can bring it to us (or whomever you'd like) for help. Laptops can accommodate large monitors, wireless keyboards, and mice at home if you need the desktop experience. (I do.)