

COMPUTER GURU — by Don Benjamin

The Donald and Nancy Light Technology and Literacy Lab Programs sponsored by: Capital Health

My Laptop Is Also A Desktop

Using your laptop computer with a separate monitor, keyboard, and mouse combines the advantages of a large screen plus portability.

Some of you asked about my computer equipment. Actually, I don't remember anyone asking me, but I thought it made for a reasonably good excuse for this article. So here goes...

I use a 14-inch M1 Pro MacBook. It's fast, quiet, and doesn't weigh too much, which is handy when I have to schlep it to a meeting. (Of course, COVID has reduced my schlepping, but I assume that will come to an end at some point and we'll be making our regular treks to the PSRC computer lab.)

We tech volunteers usually recommend laptop computers for several reasons:

1. Laptops are portable and easy to bring to the Tech Lab when you need help dealing with your 125,783 emails, or to the Geek Squad or Apple Store when a fan belt breaks.
2. You'll always have all your files and applications with you.
3. By adding a monitor, keyboard, and mouse, a laptop morphs into a desktop computer at home. And this is the crux of this article.

When I'm at home, I connect my MacBook to a 27" high-resolution monitor via a single USB-C cable that powers the laptop and provides the data connection to the monitor, internet, and external backup drives. That's just one itty-bitty cable!

I usually keep the MacBook screen closed, but I can also use it as a second display, which is handy when I'm running several applications at the same time. I can keep my calendar open on my laptop while I write something on the desktop monitor.

My keyboard, trackpad, and mouse are rechargeable and wireless (Bluetooth.) The monitor has a built-in USB hub for other peripherals as well as my iPad.

Most Windows laptops can be configured the same way, though you may need separate connections for power and video to the monitor. Not a big deal. A 24" high-definition monitor costs about \$150. A wireless keyboard plus mouse can be had for around \$50. So for \$200 bucks, you can turn your laptop into a whiz-bang desktop computer that reverts to a laptop when you're on the go!

We'll be glad to help you select your next computer or tablet or smart phone, or any of the other doo-dads you see in the picture above (other than my pictures, pencil cup, or clock). Just fill out the tech request form at princetonsenior.org/psrc-tech-resources/ and we'll be in touch!



Sidney regrets not buying a laptop computer.



My computer setup. Where the magic happens.