Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) Guidelines 2024-2025
Department of Information Science

Each semester, students taking classes from the Department of Information Science need to bring their own device to the classroom so they can complete any in-class computer exercises. To help our students have the technology they need to successfully participate in class, we have put together this resource describing several solutions for students to consider.

Question 1: Should you buy a Chromebook or a laptop?

A Chromebook is a lower-cost alternative to traditional laptops. The main difference between Chromebooks and laptops is the operating system. While laptops run on a full PC operating system like Windows, Chromebooks run on web-based Chrome OS, which is basically a slimmed down version of the Chrome browser with some added functionalities. Chromebooks are very good for online tasks such as reading websites, checking email, watching videos, and using cloud based tools. Chromebooks often have less hard-drive space (e.g., Google expects you to use your Internet access to store your files in the cloud) and because of the Chrome OS, you cannot install traditional Windows software like Microsoft Office or Adobe Photoshop. Consequently, if you use a lot of third-party software or like to install games on your computer, a laptop will be a better choice.

A **Chromebook** will work fine for our IFSC 1105 First Year Experience for Computing Majors, IFSC 1202 Intro to Object Oriented Technology class, and IFSC 1310 Web Technologies classes which use cloud based tools.

For our major courses such as IFSC 2300 Object Oriented Technologies, IFSC 2340 Human Computer Interface, IFSC 3320 Database Concepts, IFSC 3330 Database Technologies, and IFSC 3360 Systems Analysis and Design, a **laptop** is a better choice.

Note: We do not recommend students using a tablet or phone for our classes. Those options are not good choices because there are times when a student needs to intensely use a keyboard to type and a mouse to scroll and point.

Question 2: Should you buy one device for both home and the classroom or should you buy separate devices?

Option A: ***Buying one device for both home and the classroom.*** The advantage of this strategy is that you have one computer for everything and this option is the more economical overall. The disadvantage of this strategy is that you will need to find a device that is big enough (i.e., enough screen, CPU, RAM, storage) for home use while portable enough for school use. It also means that if the machine breaks, you do not have a backup handy.

Option B: ***Buying one device for home and buying a separate device for taking to class.*** The advantage of this strategy is that you can purchase one machine to satisfy your home needs (e.g., a desktop with extra big monitor, keyboard, mouse, external disk drive, etc. for your school work, gaming, and hobbies) and you can purchase another device specifically based on its portability for taking it to class. The disadvantage is that you may find the combined price of two computers is more expensive (e.g., a more costly home machine plus a budget laptop) plus you will have the overhead of transferring files between machines and/or the cloud.

Question 3: Where to get funding and the best price on a device?

Here are some suggestions for where to obtain funding ranked from least to most expensive.

A. **Request Support from the UALR Care Team**: Students can request to checkout laptops and webcams from the UA Little Rock Care Team. The Cares Team is a group of professionals on campus representing student support services and the academic colleges who respond to student requests for support. A student can submit a request for assistance via a short form and the appropriate staff member will respond within 48 business hours. Common requests include support for academic success skill development, work/life balance, time management, emergency financial assistance, need for technology/laptop for online learning, reporting absences due to emergencies or life events like a broken bone, car accident, etc., and requests for community resources including shelter and food insecurities. ***Note: Since the end of COVID, the Cares Program has greatly reduced the number of laptops available for loaning out.***

B. **Work with UALR Financial Aid**: If students have aid in excess of their balance owed to the University they are able to use it at the bookstore for whatever they need. UALR calls this a "bookstore voucher" and it includes making purchases through the online bookstore (https://ualr.bncollege.com/shop/ualr/home). In addition, federal regulations do allow UALR to increase a student's COA (cost of attendance) for a one time laptop purchase.

C. **Apply for a UA Little Rock Private Scholarship at https://ualr.edu/scholarships/scholarships-for-all-students/**: The Department of Information Science has several scholarship funds such as the Joseph and Mary Kaufman Scholarship which we can use to award students funding for tuition, books and fees. Although not directly meant for computers, students can use the scholarship to pay for their other college costs, leaving more money to pay for a laptop to bring to class.

D. **Take advantage of student pricing**. In addition to checking out Walmart's Back to College Electronics https://www.walmart.com/c/kp/student-laptop-computer) and Best

Buy's Student Hub (https://www.bestbuy.com/site/shop/computer-discount-for-students), check out these student deals:

    a. Acer - https://store.acer.com/en-us/student-discount
    b. Apple - https://www.apple.com/us-hed/shop
    c. Asus - https://www.asus.com/Laptops/For-Students/All-series/
    d. Dell - https://www.dell.com/en-us/member/lp/delluniversity
    e. Google - https://brokescholar.com/student-discounts/google-chromebook
    f. HP - https://www.hp.com/us-en/shop/cv/hp-education
    g. Lenova - https://www.lenovo.com/us/en/student
    h. Microsoft - https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/store/b/education
    i. Sansung - https://www.samsung.com/us/shop/discount-program/education/

E. If a chrome book will fit your needs, here are some suggestions for devices that got good ratings in 2024. ***Note: As a minimum chrome book configuration, you will need 4 GB RAM, 32-64 GB Storage (e.g., eMMC or flash storage) and Intel Celeron chip. Source: https://www.xda-developers.com/chromebook-cpu-ram-storage/***

    a. Tom's Guide Best Chromebooks in 2024 - https://www.tomsguide.com/best-picks/best-student-chromebook
    b. Best Reviews Guide 10 Best Chromebook for College Student of June 2024 - https://www.bestreviews.guide/chromebook-for-college-student
    c. TechRadar Best Student Chromebooks 2024 - https://www.techradar.com/news/best-chromebook
    d. PC Magazine Best Chromebook Picks for 2024 - https://www.pcmag.com/lists/best-chromebooks
    e. Buyers Guide's Top 10 Chromebooks 2024 - https://buyersguide.org/laptops/t/chromebook

F. If a laptop will fit your needs, here are some suggestions on laptops that got good ratings in 2024. ***Note: As a minimum laptop configuration, you will need 8 GB RAM, 250 GB Hard Drive, 512 MB Video Memory, and an Intel® Core™ i5 Processor. The recommended configuration is 16 GB RAM, 500 GB Hard Drive, 512MB Video Memory or higher, and an Intel Core i7 Processor. Source: https://www.du.edu/it/support/how-to/students/laptops***

    a. Best Laptop for College 2024 - https://www.cnet.com/tech/computing/best-laptop-for-college/
    b. PC Magazine Best Laptops for College Students in 2024 - https://www.pcmag.com/picks/the-best-laptops-for-college-students
    c. Laptop Magazine Best College Laptops in 2024 - https://www.laptopmag.com/articles/best-laptops-for-college
    d. US News Best Laptops for College of 2024 - https://www.usnews.com/360-reviews/technology/laptops/best-laptops-for-college

e. Tom's Guide Best Laptops for College Students in 2024 - https://www.tomsguide.com/best-picks/best-college-laptops
f. PCWorld Best Laptops for College Students 2024 - https://www.pcworld.com/article/557622/the-best-laptop-for-college.html

Other Comments for Consideration

Comment #1: Don't forget the need for Internet Access.

When you are on the UA Little Rock campus, you will have access to the university's wi-fi network. Since 2018, UA Little Rock has been working to update, expand, and strengthen its wi-fi coverage. When you are off campus, you need to have adequate connectivity to stream your data for your courses. Check out this article: https://www.asurion.com/connect/tech-tips/hotspots-for-students-what-are-they-and-how-to-use-them-for-remote-learning/ for tips on how to ensure you have enough bandwidth to support your schoolwork needs.

Comment #2: Think about your basic office software needs.

For Information Science, we are fine with students either choosing the Google G-Suite (Google Docs, Sheets, Slides) or Microsoft Office (MS Word, Excel, PowerPoint) for completing their assignments. When taking classes from other majors, check out what that department's preferences are. For example, Business classes often use Microsoft Office. If you want to use Microsoft Office then you do need to have access to a regular laptop or desktop (not a chrome book). On the bright side, UA Little Rock has partnered with Microsoft to provide MS Office 365 to every student actively enrolled in at least one class, free of charge. Check out https://ualr.edu/itservices/applications/v/office365/ to learn more.

Comment #3: Think about your data storage needs.

When comparing devices, you should consider the hard drive storage on the device itself. Many of the newer devices are coming with Solid State Drives (SSD) (https://www.businessinsider.com/what-is-ssd). SSDs have no moving parts so they are more rugged, but they are also pricier. In addition to your device's internal storage capabilities, you can also purchase external SSDs if you need additional storage (as well as storing files on USB flash drives). Also, you can use Google Drive to store and share your files in the cloud.

Here are some additional resources for you to consider.

- Chromebooks vs Laptops: https://www.techradar.com/news/chromebooks-vs-laptops
- How to Choose a Laptop for College: https://www.bestcolleges.com/blog/how-to-choose-a-laptop-for-college/
- Mac vs PC: https://www.crucial.com/articles/mac-users/mac-vs-pc-the-pros-and-cons