

Differences Between Macs and PCs

1. User

One thing that both Mac and Windows PC fans have in common is passion for the brands themselves. Get a diverse group of computer users together and introduce the subject of Macs versus PCs and watch the sparks fly! Mac users will bring up concepts like security, usability and design. PC owners will counter with price, software compatibility and choice. It can get really ugly really fast (but it's fun to watch).

In 2011, an unscientific online study showed that the popular "Get a Mac" ads from the 2000s featuring John Hodgman and Justin Long as a PC and a Mac, respectively, were generally accurate representations of their stereotypes. Hodgman's PC was the boring, all-business machine, while Long's Mac was the more fun and creative computer.

Although Windows PC users often bring up the so-called "Apple tax" — Apple computers generally appear to cost more than PCs on store shelves, it appears that Apple computers, phones and tablets have become a sort of status symbol. Owning an iPhone or wearing AirPods says something about you.

For one reason or another, it looks like perception and politics will continue to play roles in the choice of devices to buy for years to come.

2. Operating System

The operating system has been a long-standing difference between Mac and PC; currently, Mac computers are preinstalled with the latest version of Mac OS, while most PCs come with the latest Microsoft Windows. In the 2000s and 2010s, Apple's computers used Intel's processors, which let consumers run both Mac OS and Windows on their machines. This was especially helpful for people who needed both operating systems for their daily work.

Apple upended that model in the 2020s, however, with the advent of its M1 processor. As of this writing, Windows will not run on these machines, forcing consumers to choose between the two — or buy one of each. But while Apple is moving away from Windows compatibility, it is moving toward compatibility with its own popular mobile devices running iOS and iPad OS. Apple's processor plans may make it possible to run the same apps on computers as it runs on higher-powered tablets and phones.

Windows, of course, runs on computers and tablets, but it dropped its dedicated phone OS in 2017 in favor of Windows Mobile. Microsoft is unlikely to let Google and Apple have all the fun, though, and will continue finding ways to operate between computers, tablets and phones. The

Microsoft Surface, a PC with a slim, light and tablet-like form factor is proof of that.

3.Choice

Perhaps the most obvious difference between a Mac and a PC is the number of configurations available for each brand. Currently, Apple offers just five computer lines: the MacBook Air, the MacBook Pro, the Mac mini, the iMac and the Mac Pro. Even if each configuration of these models is counted individually, as of this writing Apple only offers 20 unique computers. This limited selection is not a sign of weakness, but a part of the company's "less is more" approach to marketing.

PCs, on the other hand, come in a wide variety of shapes and sizes. Consumer Reports reviews 12 distinct brands of Windows-based computers, including familiar names such as Acer, Asus, Dell , Gateway, HP, Hyundai, Lenovo and Samsung, each offering numerous configurations of desktop and laptop models. Many consumers see this large selection as a benefit because they're more likely to find a computer that meets their exact needs.

4.Price

One of the most frequently cited differences between Macs and PCs is price. Few Mac products sell for less than \$1,000, while there are many PC models that fall within that price range. However, this doesn't necessarily mean that Macs are more expensive than PCs with similar specifications. Rather, in general, Apple has chosen to build its Mac line around higher-end computers with better — and more costly — components. The company has said on many occasions that it can make less-expensive computers, but that would affect the customer experience and Apple won't allow that.

The problem with comparing prices between Macs and PCs is that the computers are rarely comparable. Even if you did find two computers with the same processor speed, RAM, hard-drive capacity, graphics, memory, number of USB ports, and so on, each machine would be preinstalled with vastly different software packages. The user may have to purchase additional software for whatever computer he or she chooses, like a virus program for a PC or Microsoft Office for a Mac. The bottom line is this: The relative value of a Mac or PC really depends on the consumer's needs.

If you just need a computer to perform basic functions like web surfing or word processing, it might be hard to justify buying a Mac. There are plenty of PC choices out there that are less expensive. This is where Linux fans can chime in — even someone unfamiliar with the Linux operating system can buy a cheap computer, install a simple Linux distribution and access basic computer functions. And this also explains the jump in Chromebook sales, as they're inexpensive computers meant to handle everyday tasks.

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