

Computer/Device Purchase Guidance – SY 26-27

Rochambeau, French International School

At Rochambeau, our student device protocol is as follows:

GS – CM1: iPads (Stay at School)¹

CM2: Chromebooks (Stay at School – Stylus/Touch enabled)²

6eme – 3eme: Chromebooks (Travel – Home/School - Stylus/Touch enabled)³

2nde – Terminale: Bring your own device (BYOD)

Rochambeau is a platform agnostic school, supporting all computing platforms equally. As students' progress in our educational program, we recommend the use of computing devices over the use of tablets as a primary device.

For parents of 2nde through Terminale or families looking to provide computer access to their children at home, here are some things you should consider if/when you are in the market to purchase a new device.

Things to consider:

1. Is this device going back and forth to school? (weight)
2. How much time will this device be used each day? (weight/screen size/battery life)
3. Does your child have advanced skills they will be exploring on the device? (video editing, advanced image editing or coding, 3D design or rendering)? (Performance, screen size)
4. How long should the computer be used before considering a replacement? (performance/specifications, grade level)
5. Do you predominantly use one platform or another at home? (Mac vs. PC vs. Chromebook – support, software purchases, etc.)
6. Larger computers are generally cheaper because they are less popular, but they weigh more, however, gaming laptops, thin/light OR workstation-level laptops are the opposite (cost more)
7. Computing platforms don't matter as much these days. What matters most is software compatibility/availability – Is there something your child needs to use that ONLY exists on one platform or another?
8. If you have different types of computers at home, support is typically handled through the manufacturer or third-party service (Apple, HP, Lenovo, for example or via Microcenter/Best Buy Geek Squad, etc.) – If you are using a single platform at home, consider the implications of adding a different one. Many families have a variety of devices at home (Mac/PC/iOS).
9. Generally speaking, newer processors, with increased RAM (16GB or more) and larger SSDs, will last longer, but will also be more expensive.
10. Average lifespan of a computer is 3-5 years (can be longer on some platforms and/or with advanced processor/RAM/hard drive configurations). NOTE: There is a relationship between cost, platform, and longevity
11. Business-class computers will typically last longer than consumer models and have potentially better warranties

¹Device assigned for in-school use. Additional uses may be allowed under certain circumstances

²Device assigned for in-school use. Additional uses may be allowed under certain circumstances – May change in the future

³Devices travel to and from school daily.

12. Where possible, try to avoid the three months to a year of a brand-new technology (processors, operating systems, etc.) as they may have bugs that you will need to work through
13. We are not going to talk about desktops here, but the specifications noted below will also apply. There are other features in desktops like video cards, etc. to consider if it will be used for more advanced tasks (gaming, programming, graphic design, video editing etc.)
14. Touch screens and 2-in-1 computers are more common now for PCs. Many are stylus enable as well – Small increase in price for more engaging input options
15. If you need a larger screen, consider purchasing an external monitor for your home

Specifications you should look for in a new computer:

Processors:

Apple: M-series processors (the current M5 chip is in the 13-inch and 15-inch MacBook Air, as well as the 14-inch MacBook Pro). M5 Pro and M5 Max chips are available on the 14-inch and 16-inch MacBook Pro for advanced workflows.

Chromebook: Intel N-series, Intel Core, AMD Ryzen, and MediaTek Kompanio processors (higher-end Chromebooks and Chromebook Plus models)

PC: Intel Core Ultra Series 2 (Lunar Lake) and Series 3 (Panther Lake) are the current Intel generations; older Gen 13 and 14 Core processors are still widely available on the secondary market. Intel Core Processors - <https://www.intel.com/content/www/us/en/products/details/processors/core.html> - We recommend a Core Ultra 5 or faster OR AMD Ryzen AI 5 or 7 (400 series or newer). Snapdragon X Elite ARM laptops are also an option for excellent battery life; most mainstream software now runs well on ARM Windows via emulation, but check any required niche or education-specific software before purchasing.

RAM:

Apple: 16-24 GB of RAM (16GB is now standard; NOTE: RAM is an expensive upgrade on all Apple Products)

Chromebooks: 4-8 GB of RAM (Chromebook Plus models offer 8-16 GB)

PC: 16 GB of RAM minimum recommended; 32 GB for advanced workflows (NOTE: Some manufacturers charge quite a lot for RAM)

Hard Drive Capacity:

Apple: 512 GB-1 TB (512 GB is now standard on MacBook Air)

Chromebook: 32-64GB (NOTE: As this is a Google device, most of the files are stored in the cloud, higher-end Chromebooks will have storage like a PC/Mac 128-256GB)

PC: 256-512 GB (higher-end machines may come with 1-2 TBs)

Screen Size (Size should be based on use):

Apple: 13.3" - 16" (13" is "standard")

Chromebook: 11"- 15.6" (11" – 13.3" is "standard")

PC: 13.3"- 17.3" (13.3" – 14.1" is "standard")

Typical price range for a new computer

NOTE: Lower-priced computers will usually mean shorter lifespan. Price ranges represent the average price of a computer you would buy a student.

Apple: \$1099-\$1899

Chromebook: \$200-\$900⁴

PC: \$800-\$1500⁵

Examples:

Apple:

MacBook Air (M5 is the current standard; M4 still available, M3 and earlier on the secondary market) – 13" OR 15"

MacBook Pro 14" (M5, M5 Pro, or M5 Max; M5 Pro and M5 Max for advanced workflows)

Chromebook:

Acer Chromebook Spin – Various Sizes and Models with (314, 515, 714, etc.)

Lenovo 500e Chromebook (current Gen 5 is a 12.2" 2-in-1)

Lenovo Flex 3/5 Chromebook

HP Chromebook x360 14c

HP Elite Dragonfly Chromebook

Lenovo Chromebook Duet (3 or 5)

Acer Chromebook Plus models (Spin 714, etc.)

PC:

Dell XPS 14 and XPS 16 (current generation; XPS 13 expected later in 2026)

Asus Zenbook

HP Envy 13

HP Spectre x360 – Various Sizes/Versions

Microsoft Surface Pro (Current models are Surface Pro 11 (13-inch flagship) and the 12-inch Surface Pro variant; older Pro 9 and 10 are still available at significant discounts)

Lenovo X1 Carbon

Best Places to Purchase:

Apple:

Microcenter

Amazon

Best Buy⁶

Apple (usually have deals for students in the mid to late summer – Generally college)

Chromebook:

Microcenter

Amazon

Best Buy

Directly from the Manufacturer⁷

⁴Chromebooks are based on Google technology and are added here as it is a platform that we use at the school. It doesn't run programs like a traditional computer (Mac/PC). Higher priced Chromebooks should be looked at carefully for features/performance

⁵More if you are looking for more specialized computers with advanced screens, wireless, processors, storage, etc.

⁶Microcenter and Best Buy routinely have sales on Apple Products, where Apple does not

⁷Manufacturers typically will have regular seasonal and Back-to-School sales and may also offer student discounts

Costco⁸

PC:

Microcenter

Amazon

Best Buy

Directly from the Manufacturer⁹

Costco¹⁰

Links to Sale Sites (may stop working when sales/promotions are over):

Best Buy (will change as we get closer to the start of School (Mid-July through parts of August):

<https://www.bestbuy.com/site/back-to-school/parent-hub/pcmcat1530201105801.c?id=pcmcat1530201105801>

Microcenter:

https://www.microcenter.com/search/search_results.aspx?Ntt=5206&Ntk=Adv&N=4294967288

Apple:

No Current K-12 promotions – If you have a child in college, you can buy through those promotions:

<https://www.apple.com/us-edu/shop/back-to-school>

Costco:

<https://www.costco.com/laptops.html?keyword=OFF>

NOTE: If you have a child enrolled at a university, their bookstores also offer discounts to students and should be considered for students that may be graduating or for an additional home computer.

Final Thoughts

Purchasing a new device for your child or family is an important decision.

When are the best times to buy a computer?

- January
- Holiday weekends
- Back-to-school season
- Black Friday
- Small Business Saturday
- Cyber Monday

Refurbished computers are also available at places like Micro Center and Amazon. These computers will typically come with a 90-day to 1 year warranty and may offer much more computer for a lot less money. You can typically save between 20-40%.

Warranties on computers are tricky and usually add between \$200-\$400 to the price, depending on features like accidental damage coverage, battery coverage, data backup/protection etc. Check the base warranty on the device you are considering (90-days to 1 year; three years are sometimes standard for higher-end or business computers). There are dozens of devices out there to choose from so focus on specifications, needs, price, and online reviews to provide some guidance as you work through this

⁸Costco, on PC products typically offers a free, extended warranty on computers

⁹Manufacturers typically will have regular seasonal and Back-to-School sales and may also offer student discounts

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process. Make sure to invest in great accessories (padded bags/backpacks/cases) to ensure a long and happy life with your new device!