

You get what you pay for.

And, while you will save money in the short term by buying a cheap Windows laptop, you'll pay for it in time, frustration, and ultimately money when you have to pay to replace or fix the laptop after it breaks.

It's great that cheap Windows laptops exist, but let's be honest: They're not great. If you can afford to spend more on a laptop, you should. And if you can't, you should seriously consider a cheap Chromebook rather than a cheap Windows laptop.

Why You Don't Actually Want a Cheap Windows Laptop

These cheap Windows laptops have a lot of problems. It's hard to list them all, but here we go: A cheap laptop's touchpad is generally terrible, making the experience of moving the mouse cursor horrible unless you buy an external mouse. So you may need to spend extra on a mouse just to make the thing halfway usable. Don't expect a great keyboard, either. A cheap laptop is often on the smaller side, so you may get a smaller-than-normal-size keyboard that's obnoxious to type on. Aside from the size, the keyboard may just have terrible action and not feel bad to type on. (Not to mention the keys may be more prone to popping off down the road.)

The screen will probably not be great, with muddy colors and not enough brightness. Terrible viewing angles are also common, so you may have to look dead-on just to see the screen properly. Expect a lower resolution screen that isn't great to look at and doesn't give you much of a "real estate", even if it's decent.

Overall, the build quality is usually pretty bad, as manufacturers cut corners here to save money. Cheap laptops are generally made of plastic and they may creak and flex when you pick them up. The hinge may break after a year or two.

The internal hardware will also give you problems. Expect slow CPUs that chug while handling modern software, the bare minimum of 2 GB of RAM for Windows 10, and certainly not much graphical power at all. This can make even web browsing feel like a slog.

Some cheap laptops have eMMC storage, which is kind of like an SSD in that it's solid-state storage—but, unlike an SSD, is very, very slow. It's also probably very small, with 32GB of space being common. Windows 10 alone needs 20GB of storage. With that little storage, there's a good chance you'll be shopping for a microSD card or USB drive just to have somewhere to put your files.

If you don't get stuck with slow, small eMMC storage, you may have the opposite problem. Your cheap laptop of choice may have a large mechanical hard drive, which will be very slow compared to the solid-state drive you'd find in a decent laptop. A solid-state drive is the best upgrade you can make to noticeably speed up your PC if you don't have one, so avoiding solid-state storage comes at a serious performance cost.

Other things you may not even think of may give you trouble, too. We hope you don't want to use the webcam on a cheap laptop, as it will often be low quality and make you look terrible. The speakers may be atrocious, too.

And that's just the hardware. We haven't even gotten to the software on these computers. They'll often make up for their low cost by packing the system with bloatware and other junk by default, making you waste time cleaning up the operating system before using it or waste time waiting for your system tray to fill up every boot.

Ultimately, you'll probably be frustrated with the laptop, miss out on a better laptop experience, and find yourself waiting for the laptop to slowly perform actions. You may end up buying peripherals

to make up for things that don't work like you want them to. In a year or two, there's a good chance you'll find yourself wanting to replace the laptop because something broke or it's just too slow.

Why You Should Spend More Money

You can avoid this problem by spending a bit more money on a laptop. We love deals too, but that \$200 laptop isn't necessarily a good deal when you factor in what you'll get.

If you're buying a Windows laptop, it's probably because you actually need (or just want) Windows for some reason. Spending a few hundred more bucks to actually get a decent touchpad and keyboard, a more readable screen, hardware that won't break in a year, speedier internals, and other goodies just makes a lot of sense. Everything is better, and your machine will probably last longer and hold up better than a cheap Windows laptop you have to replace every year or two. You may even save money in the long run. After all, why buy a \$200-400 laptop every two years when you could buy an \$800 laptop you can keep around for a long time?

We recommend you read some reviews before buying a laptop and don't just jump at whatever is cheap or on sale. If a laptop is that cheap, beware—it probably has some problems, and there's a good chance they'll wear on you after a lot of time with the machine.

If You Can't Spend More Money (or Just Don't Want To)

Of course, a lot of this assumes you can afford more computer—and not everyone can. If you don't have the money to plop down on a quality \$1000 laptop, consider avoiding Windows laptops entirely—you have other options.

If you need Windows, and you mostly use your computer at home, consider getting a desktop. You'll get a much better computer for the same price, and you won't have to fix or upgrade it nearly as often.

If you need a laptop but don't really need Windows, consider buying a Chromebook instead. Chrome OS needs less overhead than Windows, so you can buy a less powerful laptop for less money and still get by much better than on Windows. A cheap Chromebook still won't feel like a premium product, but these web-browser-and-Android-apps machines often give much more bang for the buck than equivalent Windows systems. You can't run Windows software, but maybe you don't need to.

If you do require a Windows laptop and only have the money to get a cheap one, you have to do what you have to do. But go in with your eyes open, and don't cheap out if you don't have to. This isn't like buying a store brand product instead of a name brand, where you won't notice a difference—cheaping out on a laptop will get you a noticeably worse experience, and possibly even cost you more in the long run.

Cheap Windows laptops are a big reason why people think so highly of Macs. People compare a \$1000 MacBook to a \$400 Windows laptop and proclaim that Macs are much higher quality than Windows laptops. But that isn't true—there are plenty of Windows laptops that cost as much as a comparable Mac, and they're often just as high quality. You can't buy a \$200 MacBook. But just because you can buy a \$200 Windows laptop doesn't mean you should.

Thanks to [How To Geek](#) and [Chris Hoffman](#) who is a technology writer and all-around computer geek. Connect with him on Twitter.