



FREE CHECKLIST

The Laptop Buying Checklist

Stop overpaying for specs you'll never use. Pick by what you actually do, tick the specs that matter, and inspect it before you pay.

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|----|---------------------------|----------------------|
| 01 | Decide by use case | Match specs to you |
| 02 | The spec checklist | What matters |
| 03 | Ports & build | The overlooked stuff |
| 04 | Before you pay | Inspect & protect |

By Gaurav Tiwari. After buying and setting up laptops for myself and 800+ client projects.

START HERE

Decide by use case first

The right laptop depends on the job, not the marketing. Find your row, buy to that, and ignore the specs that don't serve it.

■ Student / writing

14", 16GB RAM, 512GB SSD, 10-hour battery.
Light and quiet beats powerful. Skip the gaming GPU.

■ Creator / design

Color-accurate display (100% sRGB+), 32GB RAM, discrete GPU, fast SSD. Screen quality is the whole job.

■ Developer

32GB+ RAM, strong multi-core CPU, comfortable keyboard, Linux-friendly. RAM and thermals over clock speed.

■ Business / travel

Under 1.4kg, 12-hour+ battery, bright screen for daylight, optional LTE. Portability and battery win.

Buy for the next 3 years, not today. 16GB RAM is the floor in 2026; 8GB ages badly. An SSD is non-negotiable. Everything else is preference.

The Spec Checklist

What actually matters

CORE

- ☐ CPU tier matches your use case
- ☐ 16GB RAM minimum (32GB for pro work)
- ☐ SSD, never a spinning HDD
- ☐ 512GB+ storage
- ☐ RAM / SSD user-upgradable (bonus)

DISPLAY & BATTERY

- ☐ 1080p minimum (2K/Retina for design)
- ☐ IPS or OLED panel, not TN
- ☐ 300+ nits brightness
- ☐ Matte finish if you work in daylight
- ☐ Real-world battery 8+ hours

BUILD & INPUT

- ☐ Metal chassis over flexy plastic
- ☐ Comfortable keyboard with real travel
- ☐ Large, accurate trackpad
- ☐ 1080p webcam (720p is dated)
- ☐ Weight you'll actually carry daily

CONNECTIVITY & PORTS

- ☐ USB-C / Thunderbolt for charging + display
- ☐ At least one USB-A for accessories
- ☐ HDMI or a dependable dongle
- ☐ SD / microSD if you shoot photos
- ☐ Wi-Fi 6/6E

Before You Pay

Inspect & protect

INSPECT (ESPECIALLY REFURB / OPEN-BOX)

- ☐ Screen: no dead pixels or backlight bleed
- ☐ Hinge firm, no wobble
- ☐ Every key registers
- ☐ Battery health / cycle count checked
- ☐ All ports tested with a device
- ☐ No dents, deep scratches, or heat damage
- ☐ Fans quiet under light load

PROTECT THE PURCHASE

- ☐ Warranty length and what it covers
- ☐ Return window (14–30 days)
- ☐ Price checked against its history
- ☐ Student / education discount applied
- ☐ Not last-gen at full price
- ☐ Invoice + serial number saved

— BUY WHEN

The spec matches your use case, it passed inspection, and you have a return window in writing.