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Apple Macbook 13-inch (Core 2 Duo T7200)

EDITOR RATING
very good

USER RATINGS (2)
good

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VIEW SLIDESHOW

Pros
Best software bundle in the industry. Price is not affected by a component refresh. Supports both Microsoft Windows Vista and Windows XP. Unique keyboard. Stunning design.

Cons
DVD burner should be standard. RAM upgrade is a little pricey.

Bottom Line
Even with more processor speed, hard drive capacity, and RAM size, the base-model MacBook is still one of the most affordable and best-looking laptops in the market.



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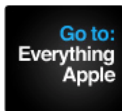
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SPECS

Apple Macbook 13-inch (Core 2 Duo T7200)



Ever since Apple switched to Intel CPUs, the Mac versus PC debate has transformed the Apple MacBook into a crowd favorite, a status that its predecessor, the iBook, never really achieved. This is especially true among teens and novice users. To

them, the MacBook is the epitome of what's cool in the computing world, and few have any quibbles about its gorgeous design. Every six months or so—at least that's been the trend with the past two releases—the MacBook also gets a component refresh, though the price remains the same. The new Apple MacBook 13-inch ([Core 2 Duo T7200](#)) (\$1,099 direct) moves from a 1.83-GHz to a 2.0-GHz processor and offers several other enhancements. It's not the new and faster Intel chipset (aka Santa Rosa) that many had anticipated, but that won't take anything away from your overall experience. (So far, an upgrade to the new Centrino Duo has been limited to MacBook Pros.) And as I have said in [my most recent MacBook review](#), the best place to start is at the base.

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The white-clad MacBook's appealing design has remained relatively unchanged since the

first MacBook was introduced last year. It's still very light at 5 pounds, an ideal weight for trekking across campus. (For those who'd rather lug a Windows-based machine to school, the [HP Pavilion dv2500t](#) comes in at 5.3 pounds.) The transfective 13-inch screen is a great starting point for novice video and photo editors. Although these screens are beautiful for watching your favorite videos, they are becoming generic. Once Apple moves to LED backlights, you'll see a thinner MacBook design and more vivid colors on the screen.

The MacBook keyboard keys are unique. Think of them as oversize pay-phone buttons, but a lot more responsive. I've learned to accept the one-mouse-button rule for MacBooks, because I don't think Apple is going to give in to the idea of a right-click mouse button. Heat is not really a factor, thanks to the thick polycarbonate plastic. The notebook doesn't get as hot as the [Apple MacBook Pro \(15-inch\)](#), which uses a thinner aluminum alloy.

Specifications

Type

General Purpose, Media, Value

Operating System

Mac OS X

Processor Name

[Intel Core 2 Duo T7200](#)

Processor Speed

2 GHz

RAM

1 GB

Weight

5 lb

Screen Size

13.3 inches

Screen Size Type

widescreen

Graphics Card

Intel Graphics Media Accelerator 950

Storage Capacity

80 GB

Networking Options

802.11n

Primary Optical Drive

DVD-ROM/CD-RW

You'll probably get more ports with a Windows machine like the HP dv2500t or the [Fujitsu LifeBook A6030](#). The MacBook 13-inch has two USB ports, and it could probably use at least one more. I would also like to see a memory card reader, an HDMI-Out port for when high-definition optical drives become readily available, and either an ExpressCard slot or integrated WWAN. Of course, the MacBook does offer plenty of features. It has a FireWire port and DVI-I Video out. You now have draft 802.11n support without having to download a firmware upgrade. The base configuration does have one drawback—you can't upgrade the DVD/CD-RW drive. You can get a DVD burner only with a midrange or high-end MacBook. By now, I really think a DVD burner should be standard across the board.

Apple offers an X factor, in the iLife '06 suite, that its Windows counterparts can't measure up to. iLife gives you software that you would have to pay a lot for if this were a Windows machine. The suite includes an excellent photo- and video-editing program. GarageBand is a wonderful tool for aspiring musicians and podcasters. iDVD is a competent DVD decoder that'll let you watch footage from your HD camcorder or movies from Netflix. If you want to sit back in your chair and operate movies with a sleek IR remote, you can with the Apple's FrontRow interface and the iPod shuffle-like remote that comes with the laptop. Novice users don't have to burden themselves with installing virus and spyware protection programs, because the Mac operating system is virtually impenetrable. Though there are programmers/hackers who will write virus and worm applications for the Mac OS, most of these attacks are targeted at the corporate sector, which is dominated by Windows-based machines—so Macs are not worth their time. (You still have to protect against virus attacks if you dual-boot. Vista is generally safe, but Windows XP Pro is another story.)

[More](#) This laptop is not a compelling upgrade if you already have a MacBook, but if you're a first-time buyer, this is a good time to get one. The processor moves up to an Intel Core 2 Duo T7200

from the previous MacBook's T5500. Storage capacity increases from 60GB to 80GB, and you can boost it up to 200GB for a substantial fee (\$250). If you're a student who downloads or creates a lot of videos, upgrading to a bigger hard drive is probably a good idea. More typical users will find that 80GB is more than enough. Apple doesn't give you a lot of wiggle room with processor configurations, and straying from the base model won't [improve performance](#) by all that much, either. The most important thing you can do is upgrade the RAM.

Depending on what you want to do with your MacBook, the amount of RAM may be critical. The base configuration comes with 1GB, which is modest at best. If you plan to run Parallels Desktop for Macs, which gives you virtual access to the Windows OS, I suggest upgrading the RAM to 2GB (\$175). If you're running both the Mac OS and Windows Vista or XP, you'll need to allocate 1GB of memory to the Apple OS and another 1GB to the Windows OS. If you run Apple Boot Camp with Vista, it's in your



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best interest to have 2GB of memory. You can get away with using 1GB of memory if you're running only Windows XP Pro in Boot Camp.

Most of my performance tests ran under Apple's Boot Camp, loading Windows XP Professional. The MacBook's SYSmark overall scores were very respectable. I did not test it with Vista—Apple is still working out buggy driver support for the OS. If my tests on the HP Pavilion dv2500t and Fujitsu LifeBook A6030 are anything to go by, though, performance will take a hit if you run Vista. The MacBook's slow Photoshop scores reflect its 1GB of RAM. It's not as fast (running Win XP) as the dv2500t and A6030 (running Vista), both of which have 2GB of memory. And because those two machines use Intel's latest Centrino Duo platform, they outperformed the MacBook 13-inch by a significant margin on tests such as video encoding and CineBench. Battery life is virtually unchanged from my last MacBook review. I got 2 hours 37 minutes playing a DVD movie continuously—which still beat out both the dv2500t and 6030.

The Apple MacBook 13-inch (Core 2 Duo T7200) moves to a faster processor, bigger hard drive, and more RAM, and the price hasn't risen. For those who are looking to add a Windows operating system, the only upgrade I would recommend is more RAM. Otherwise, it's an affordable and gorgeous companion for a wide range of users.

Benchmark Test Results

Check out the [Apple MacBook 13-inch White \(Core 2 Duo\)'s test scores](#).

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