

I Need A Cheap Laptop So My Kid Can Play Minecraft!

It's not easy to buy a laptop for your child. Even this review site tends to be more focused on high-end devices and products with unique features than on budget models. That's partly due to reader interest, but also because vendors don't like sending us cheapo, low-margin devices they don't put much effort into. I've found that to be especially true in the laptop segment, where budget devices aren't that good. In recent years, however, there have been some worthy options.

These budget-friendly recent releases are what I'll be recommending to Ben in this week's "Which Gadget Should We Buy?" Ben is a business analyst project manager and is looking for a \$400-\$400 laptop for his child. He has only two requirements: that the system boot quickly and can play Minecraft.

Can my kid play Minecraft on a Chromebook?

When someone tells me that they are looking for a budget laptop, my brain immediately jumps to Google Chromebooks. They often offer better specs for the same price as Windows computers. Unfortunately, Minecraft isn't supported on Chrome OS unless you're an education user who can access the Play Store and download the Android app.

What about the Acer Aspire 5?

Bummer. Bob is left with Windows laptops (we're priced out of Mac territory here). Finding a decent \$400 laptop that runs Windows 11 is no simple task, but it's possible if you're willing to compromise on a few things. My first pick for Ben is the Acer Aspire 5. Although it isn't the most expensive device, it has the best specs for its price.

The Aspire 5 comes with a 14" 1080p display and an Intel Core i5-1135G7 cpu, 8GB of RAM, 256GB SSD, and a \$379 price tag. And since it uses an 11th Gen chip, the Aspire benefits from Iris Xe graphics, which will be more than enough to run Minecraft at decent frame rates.

So what's the deal? The Aspire 5 comes with a lot of bloatware, as is the norm for budget PCs. The webcam is also terrible and the design with its thicker display bezels is not modern. The webcam's large size (0.7 inch thick and 3.2pound isn't exactly thin nor light anymore) and its plastic touchpad are the bigger problems.

Maybe an HP Stream

While many people would recommend the HP Stream to others, not many people enjoy playing games on an 11 inch screen. I'm going therefore to nix it. There is a 14-inch version, but the screen is super low-res and the processor is fairly underpowered. Instead, I'd try scoring a deal (like this one) on the Lenovo IdeaPad 3. Although it may not be the laptop Ben needs, it's still affordable at \$330.

Minecraft on Surface?

Ben mentioned that he was looking at Surface devices. The Surface Laptop SE would be a great purchase for him if it were available to the public (not just through CDW). Let it sing I'll counter the SE with the Surface Laptop Go, which currently costs \$350 for the base model. While the specs aren't amazing (4GB RAM, 64GB of storage), you won't find a laptop at this price that feels more premium. The new Surface Laptop Go 2 is available for purchase at \$600 if Ben is willing to pay that much. It has twice the storage and a faster processor.

Would you recommend another? We'd love to hear from you in the comments. You can also fill out our questionnaire to help you decide which gadget is best for you.