$30 Zoom Computer

Note: Amazon Associates links are used in this article and the author may receive a commission from them.

Zoom woes were prevalent in my home during the COVID-19 lock down in 2020. In 2021, I was so fed up of the Zoom issues on Windows 10, such as freezing, sound latency and unstable internet messages, that I decided to see if I could run it on a brand new cheap computer. The question I had was how cheaply could I do it?

Cheap Zoom Computers

Zoom on a cheap computer means you will be using an Android device or Chromebook. The Zoom software that runs on these devices is optimized for low processing power computers. I already had a Samsung Chromebook 3 that was running Zoom as a Chrome extension and my daughter was constantly complaining about this computer. The Zoom software has a poor 2 star rating for the Chromebook.

So this meant running it on an Android device, as the Android Zoom app has a good 4 star rating and has more features than the Chrome version. However, I did not want to run it on an Android phone, I wanted an Android computer that plugged into a TV. The only device that appeared to match this was an Android TV box. But could it run Zoom? There was only one way to find out and that was to purchase one and see if the Zoom app would load and run correctly on it. The following Android TV box was purchased due to its good reviews:

$30: Android 10.0 TV Box with Backlit Wireless Mini Keyboard, T95 TV Box Allwinner H616 Quad-Core ARM Corter-A53 CPU Mali G31 MP2 GPU 2GB RAM 16GB ROM 6K Resolution 2.4GHz/5GHz WiFi BT5.0

https://amzn.to/3cXXPJ1

It came with a keyboard and mouse track pad, so the only extra thing it needed was a webcam. I already had an Android compatible webcam (DYY Webcam with Microphone: https://amzn.to/38XUSa3) and I plugged this into it and downloaded Zoom. To test it out, I opened the web browser and entered the Zoom join meeting test web address:

https://zoom.us/test

Up popped Zoom with my webcam image. Later that night, I ran a proper Zoom test by joining a Zoom meeting and it ran perfectly. The big difference to Windows 10 is the gallery view. It is limited to four people on screen at a time on Android, due to the low processing power.
School Use

Regarding school use, a problem did occur during using the Waterford web app. The mouse could not select items. This was fixed by removing the Chrome web browser from the Google Play store and reinstalling it from the Aptoide store. I had not realized that these Android TV boxes work a little differently from Android phones and they have apps that are optimized for them. These optimized apps are in the Aptoide store, which is an app already installed. The Google Play store is to be avoided with an Android TV box.

An app on www.flippity.net was an issue with Zoom screen sharing. It seems that Android screen sharing allows left and right clicks of the mouse, but it does not allow the mouse to move items on the shared screen. We had to abandon this particular app. The teacher informed me that she commonly sees this screen sharing problem on Chromebook computers, so it seems to be a feature of the Zoom software on Chromebooks and Android.

I was observing a jumpy mouse pointer with the Android TV box when on some Chrome web pages. It does not stop the web page from working, but was a distraction when it occurred. This was solved by replacing the Chrome web browser with Firefox from the Aptoide store.

To sum up, the following Aptoide apps were installed to make it functional for school:
- Firefox.
- Jamboard.
- PDF Viewer Lite.
- Zoom.

Entertainment Use

The following Aptoide apps were installed for entertainment purposes:
- Disney+.
- Netflix.
- Hulu.
- Prime Video.
- YouTube.

I have tried the Android TV box on a television, a computer monitor and a projector and it works with all of them. We use the Android TV box as an excellent streaming device when not being used for school.
Summary

A good Android Zoom computer can be purchased for just $30. Cheaper Android 10 TV boxes are available, but I have only verified it works on the one I have. My daughter successfully transitioned from the troublesome Windows 10 computer to the Android TV box. It works with the school website and their web applications. It runs her school Zoom sessions well and problems are rare. We no longer see ‘Unstable Internet’ messages, video freezes and voice dropouts. The Android TV box has been reliable and my daughter now prefers it due to the larger screen size.

The only issues identified with long term testing were:
- Lower functionality of the share screen feature as compared to the Windows 10 version of Zoom.
- Gallery view is limited to four people at a time.
- Only one app can be on the screen, it can run multiple apps simultaneously but cannot display them at the same time.
- Zoom functionality appears to be the same as an Android phone.

Once testing was complete, I set the Android TV box up as a desktop computer with the following additions:
- 24” monitor.
- External speakers.
- USB hub.
- Wired USB keyboard.
- Wired USB mouse.
- Wired Ethernet.

The $30 Android TV Box is amazing value when compared to a new Zoom recommended Intel Core i5 processor Windows 10 computer which start at $400 at the time of writing this article.

I hope you enjoyed this article and I wish you the best of health.

Internet Links

- Zoom system requirements for iOS, iPadOS, and Android: [https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/201179966](https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/201179966)
- 7 Differences Between Zoom On Your Phone Vs. Laptop: [https://www.bustle.com/p/7-differences-between-zoom-on-your-phone-vs-laptop-22678806](https://www.bustle.com/p/7-differences-between-zoom-on-your-phone-vs-laptop-22678806)
Changing the video layout (Speaker view and Gallery view): https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/201362323-Changing-the-video-layout-Speaker-view-and-Gallery-view-
The Trouble With Chromebooks: https://blogs.vcu.edu/zoom/2020/11/02/the-trouble-with-chromebooks/
Aptoide: https://en.aptoide.com/
#Zoom
#UnstableInternet
#Windows10

“A good Zoom computer can be purchased for just $30.”
Steven Magee