Buying Refurbished Windows 10 Computers

Refurbished computers are being sold by many major retailers. Are they really the bargain they seem? I bought four of them to find out.

Refurbished Computer 1

The following was purchased from www.amazon.com:

$130: HP EliteDesk 800 G1 USFF Desktop PC - Intel Core i5-4570S 2.9GHz 8GB 500GB HDD DVDRW Windows 10 Professional (Renewed)

The computer looked like it was manufactured yesterday! It was super clean inside and out and was immaculate. The computer components were dated 2014-2015. A Solid-State Disk Drive (SSD) was installed instead of the hard disk drive (HDD), as I have found Windows 10 to be infuriatingly slow on HDD’s. This computer was really fast compared to my i3 2016 laptop and I was very happy with it. However, after about two weeks of using it, it started showing strange behaviors. I downloaded the latest Windows 10 updates to try and fix it and it completely failed. It would not boot from its C: drive, the Windows 10 ISO or the Windows 10 recovery USB drive. As such, it was returned and a full refund received. There was no option to have the computer replaced during the return process and this gave me the opportunity to see if there was a better computer available.

Refurbished Computer 2

I found the next computer on www.walmart.com:

$195: HP Compaq Elite 8300 Desktop SFF i7 3770 3.4GHZ 8GB 500GB Win 10 Pro

After witnessing the failure of the first computer, I purchased the 3 year warranty for $22. This was an older 3rd generation Intel computer and everything inside of it indicated it was manufactured in 2013. The advert stated "This Desktop is in Grade-A condition, it is like new and performs even better." Unfortunately the computer was not in new condition, it was covered in scratches on one side. It did not match its description of "like new". The computer was corrupted when plugged in and took several hours for Windows 10 to go through a recovery. The keyboard was damaged and failed the HP diagnostics check. I suspect some damage occurred during shipping, as a corrupted hard drive is typical of the item being dropped, excessive vibration, excessive heat/cold, and so on. The keyboard was twisted which indicates heat damage or being dropped or crushed. As such I returned this computer and a full refund was received from Walmart.
Refurbished Computer 3:

I found the next computer on www.walmart.com:

$168: HP EliteDesk 800 G1 SFF Desktop Computer Core i7-4th, 16GB Ram, 1TB SSD, 2TB HDD, New 24"LCD, Keyboard & Mouse, WiFi, Bluetooth, Win10 Pro (Renewed)

I purchased the 3 year warranty for $22. There was no need to install an SSD, as this computer came with one. This was by far the fastest computer and could run my video editing software with no issues. It did come with a faulty keyboard and mouse and replacements were requested from the vendor. The vendor warranty was 90 days. This was the only vendor that was a Microsoft authorized reseller and it was surprising to find a loose metal washer and a jumper rattling around inside the computer case! These were removed and the computer appeared fine. It passed all of the HP diagnostics checks. The computer components were dated 2015. This computer did come with a “new LCD” monitor and inspection of the monitor settings revealed that it had over two hundred hours on its back light. The computer has been running for a month with some minor issues found at the time of writing:

- Computer monitor had an outline of an old window on it that had been closed. This was fixed by deleting the Windows 10 video driver.
- The new keyboard could not access the bios and this was fixed by using a very old Microsoft keyboard that could access it fine. It appears the new keyboard USB driver is incompatible with the old bios keyboard firmware.

The new keyboard and mouse arrived a few days later by FedEx and I was left with a fully functional computer that continues to be reliable, fast and pleasant to use.

Refurbished Computer 4:

I found the last computer on www.walmart.com:

$150: Refurbished HP 800 G2-SFF Desktop PC with Intel Core i5-6500 3.2GHz Processor, 8GB Memory, 256GB SSD, and Win10 Pro

I purchased the 3 year warranty for $22. There was no need to install an SSD, as this computer came with one. This was a newer 6th generation Intel processor with better graphics, specifically it has a built in H265 hardware encoder for video processing. It did come with a faulty keyboard and mouse and replacements were requested from the vendor. The computer was a lower grade class B refurbished computer and had a small scratch on the case. Inside it was immaculate and the computer components were dated 2016. It came with a 30 day warranty from the vendor.
This computer was specifically purchased to see if it could run Zoom without any issues. Zoom recommends a 6th generation Intel i5 or higher to run their Windows 10 software. Zoom was installed and ran without any issues on this computer, it had been problematic on several lower powered computers I had tried.

The new keyboard and mouse arrived a week later by UPS and I was left with a fully functional computer that continues to be reliable, fast and pleasant to use. Zoom continues to run well on this computer.

**Summary**

All four refurbished computers were much faster than what could be purchased new for the same price at the time. They had performance benchmarks that ranged from 4900 to 7,100. My previous computers had much lower benchmarks of 800 to 2400. Two out of four showed unreliability issues and were returned. I ended up with two reliable and fast computers running Windows 10 Professional for $362 and they have three year comprehensive warranties.

Buying through a major retailer like Walmart and Amazon does provide you with their return policies which are typically better than buying direct from a computer refurbisher. Be sure to purchase the three year warranty to cover return shipping fees and repairs if the computer does have a failure. Failure rates on refurbished computers are far higher than their new counterparts and be aware that shipping costs for repairing a faulty computer can be up to $100 one way.

My recommendation is to look for a 4th generation Intel processor or higher and make sure the equivalent new computer is at least twice the price. 6th generation upwards have the H265 hardware video encoder for video processing. Intel processors are now on their 11th generation and the latest i3 processors are faster than the old i7 processors. A new 4 core, 8 thread Intel 10th generation i3 Windows 10 desktop computer with 8GB RAM and a SSD drive could be purchased for $400 at the time of writing this article.

I do recommend that Windows 10 be ran on a computer with an SSD and a minimum of 8GB of RAM. Video editing, graphics and games should be done on a computer with 16GB RAM minimum. RAM is typically $30 to $50 per 8GB. SSD’s are relatively cheap and they start at $20 for entry level models.

Refurbished computers are a depreciating asset for resellers as the newer and faster generation of computer processors are released. With COVID-19 devastating the business world, refurbished business computers are likely to be plentiful for the next few years.

Remember the following new computers are also available:

- New mini Windows 10 PC: $85 upwards and tend to be slow. No display included.
- New laptop Windows 10 PC: $160 upwards and tend to be slower than desktops. Includes display.
New desktop Windows 10 PC: $300 upwards and are typically the fastest computers and are commonly upgradable. The display usually has to be purchased separately.

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

“Refurbished computers can be a deal, but do make sure they come with at least a three year warranty that includes return shipping costs.”

Steven Magee