

07/09/09 - Netbooks in the spotlight

As rapid innovation produces faster and smaller computers, a new sub-category of the notebook class—the netbook—has entered the spotlight. Netbooks are optimized for portability, accessing the internet, and running basic applications. They typically have a screen size of 13 inches or less, weigh two or three pounds, and cost less than \$500.

Most netbooks use Intel's dime-sized Atom processor—the Atom N270 processor's performance is roughly equivalent to a Pentium 4 2.4Ghz.

Some of the leading netbooks of today would include Dell's Mini Netbook, Acer's Aspire One, and Asus' Eee Pc. Out of these, Asus' Eee Pc was first to the field, and I think they still have an edge over the competition. I've been using an Eee Pc for about a year, and I love it.

My favorite netbook at the moment is the Eee Pc 1005HA with 10.5 hours of battery life! I doubt that the battery would actually perform quite that well outside of the lab, but that's still quite impressive! When I got my earlier generation Eee Pc a year ago, they were advertising a 7 hour battery life, and I got about 5 hours of juice.

The various Eee PC models have a lot of variety—with different screen sizes, processor speeds, storage types, and battery life. Amazon.com carries a lot of the varieties and older models, so it's a great website for comparisons of features and prices.

One thing that disappoints me is that netbooks typically only come with 1GB of memory, which is definitely a performance bottleneck. The good news is that it's easy to upgrade to 2GB, and it only costs about \$25. Changing the memory is as simple, and here are directions.

Another thing to keep in mind is that netbooks can be hard on your eyes if you use them a lot. If you're going to want to use a netbook as your primary computer, you may want to consider getting a LCD monitor that you can plug into when you're home.