

# Desktop computing hardware standards

BY NOAM ARZT

Information Systems and Computing, in cooperation with the Penn community, annually publishes minimum standards for purchasing new desktop computers. The standards help hold training and support costs in check and make it possible for people across campus to work together. They clarify buying decisions and help in planning equipment life cycles. ISC provides support—training, documentation, and hardware and software problem diagnosis—for the standard configurations for a guaranteed time period.

## What are the new standards?

Macintosh and Windows computers in the *minimum* configurations shown in [the top two charts on the next page](#) are the new desktop hardware standards at Penn. (Research and instructional computing may require more specialized machines.) As in the past, configurations are “freshness dated”; ISC support for the new 1995 standards is guaranteed until July 1999. ISC does not recommend mixing Macintosh and Windows computers within an office or workgroup, where a single standard is much easier to support.

There are two levels of standard configurations: one for general-purpose computing (like e-mail, word processors, and spreadsheets), and one for new administrative systems (like Project Cornerstone systems). The standard for new administrative systems is somewhat higher than the standard for general-purpose computing. A machine that can access Cornerstone systems can handle general office functions, but the reverse is not necessarily true.

The Computer Connection offers configurations that match the purchase recommendations. Buying the best computer you can afford usually pays off in extra years of service from the machine, so you may prefer to buy a more powerful configuration than you currently need. Buyers with limited budgets may choose to trade off various components of a desktop system depending on specific needs: for example, memory versus additional hard-disk space versus a larger monitor. Remember, it is easier to add additional memory or peripherals later, but some components (like a smaller monitor) need to be replaced rather than upgraded.

ISC does not support the initial release of Windows 95. Generally, you should not install Windows 95 until

either ISC or your local support provider can provide appropriate assistance.

## When should I buy for Cornerstone systems?

Cornerstone systems will evolve over time. Some products will be rolled out in fiscal year 1995-96 (like the Data Warehouse); other products will arrive in fiscal year 1996-97. Initial products will be graphical, in some instances requiring the Cornerstone standard configurations. Contact Robin Beck, Program Manager of Project Cornerstone (898-7581).

If you are buying a new Macintosh primarily for Cornerstone, wait as long as possible to make sure that Macintosh user interfaces are available as expected. Note that Macintosh computers with DOS co-processors are not powerful enough to satisfy MS-Windows standards.

## Can I get additional advice?

If your school or department is considering major changes or investments, ISC strongly recommends a consultation to weigh pros and cons in today’s rapidly changing environment. Contact Noam Arzt, ISC Director of Information Technology Architecture ([arzt@isc.upenn.edu](mailto:arzt@isc.upenn.edu); 898-3029). Up-to-date standards and additional information are available on the Penn Web (<http://www.upenn.edu/isc/> under “Information Technology Architecture and Standards”).

## What about support of older configurations?

Desktop systems purchased under previously published standards will continue to be supported until expiration of their support guarantee. Thus, systems conforming to the January 1995 standards will be supported until July 1998. Systems conforming to recommendations made three years ago will be supported until July 1996. Replace or upgrade systems that are at or below the following configurations: Macintosh 68030 (25 MHz), 5 MB RAM, 80 MB hard disk, and 13" color monitor; PC/compatible 486SX (33 MHz), 8 MB RAM, 120 MB hard disk, and 14" color VGA monitor.

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## MINIMUM CONFIGURATIONS FOR NEW GENERAL-PURPOSE MACHINES

		<b>MS-Windows</b>	<b>Macintosh</b>
<b>Hardware</b>	Processor	486DX4 (100 MHz)	PowerPC (60 MHz)
	Memory	8 MB	16 MB plus RAM Doubler
	Hard disk	350 MB	500 MB
	Monitor	15" color SVGA; 17" recommended	15" color; 17" recommended
	Support guarantee Today's est. price	Until July 1999 \$2,400	Until July 1999 \$2,400
<b>Operating system</b>		Windows 3.1	MacOS System 7.5
<b>Network connection</b>	On campus	Ethernet	Ethernet
	Off campus	PPP (28.8 Kbps)	PPP (28.8 Kbps)

## MINIMUM CONFIGURATIONS FOR NEW CORNERSTONE MACHINES

		<b>MS-Windows</b>	<b>Macintosh</b>
<b>Hardware</b>	Processor	Pentium (75 MHz)	PowerPC (60 MHz); not 603; 603e is OK
	Memory	16 MB	16 MB plus RAM Doubler
	Hard disk	500+ MB	500+ MB
	Monitor	15" color SVGA; 17" recommended	15" color; 17" recommended
	Optional Peripherals	CD-ROM, SoundBlaster with speakers or headset	CD-ROM, sound built-in
	Support guarantee Today's est. price	Until July 1999 \$2,600	Until July 1999 \$2,600
<b>Operating system</b>		Windows 3.1	MacOS System 7.5
<b>Network connection</b>	On campus	Ethernet	Ethernet
	Off campus	PPP (28.8 Kbps)	PPP (28.8 Kbps)