

What is a Mac?

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The nickname 'Mac' refers to the series of Macintosh computers made by Apple Inc. since 1984. With its very first model, Apple is largely credited with starting the trend of making computers that are easy for ordinary people to use and promoting the idea that anyone can find a computer useful. Macs are particularly popular with graphic and web designers.

Macs' main rivals are PCs running the [Microsoft Windows](#) operating system (i.e. the background software that runs everything else).

Key features and benefits of an Apple Macintosh computer

- Apple Macs come in a variety of models. Most famous today is the all-in-one iMac, in which the computer is built into a screen. There are also the more expensive (and powerful) Mac Pro machines, which are like PCs in that they consist of only the main 'tower' case; there is the small monitor-less Mac Mini and finally, there's the MacBook laptop - which has three varieties on sale today: MacBook, MacBook Pro and MacBook Air.
- All Macs come with Apple's 'Mac OS X' operating system installed, though on models made since 2006, it's possible to partition the hard drive and install Windows as well.
- Macs are capable of all the same general functions as PCs, such as word processing, playing music and videos, games, accessing the internet, and more. Most features require different programs than those on a PC, however.
- Apple Macs have a number of advantages over PCs. They're famously visually attractive and are known for the excellent quality of their build. The Mac OS is also largely regarded as much easier to use and 'prettier' than its Windows counterpart, and it's certainly safer from viruses (at the time of writing, there are no known Mac viruses).
- Unlike PCs, which have many manufacturers, Macs are made only by Apple. As a result, they have far fewer hardware incompatibilities than their PC counterparts.
- Macs used to be much less compatible with PCs than they are now. Sending Mac documents as email attachments to PCs was fraught with problems. However, nowadays it's extremely rare for there to be difficulties in Mac documents being accessed on PCs and vice versa.
- It's not all sunshine for Macs, though. For one thing, they're generally more expensive than PCs and have far less software available, especially games. They also are much less open to personal modification, if you're so inclined.

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