

# Ideal laptop for me

## Introduction

What's ideal for me may not be ideal for others. Since my primary computer is my desktop, my laptop requirements may be different than those that use a laptop for everything. When I saw the new Dell XPS 13 at the Microsoft store I thought, wow, I'd actually buy that if and when I needed a laptop. So I got to thinking – two things – why do I like it and are there any others like it. This led me to searching for another comparison model and I found one.

I compared two contenders below since I didn't find any others that compared. Here are my main requirements.

1. Light weight
2. Matte finish screen with not too much resolution (see notes at the end)
3. Good connectivity – ample ports
4. Fairly fast
5. Ample storage and RAM
6. Good battery life
7. Touch screen only if it is a matte finish (not likely)

## Ideal Specs.

- Processor Intel i5 5<sup>th</sup> generation such as i5-5200U 2.20 GHz or better
- Memory 4GB, 8GB preferred
- Hard drive 256 GB SSD
- Weight 3 lbs. or lighter
- Media Drive SD card reader
- Ports 2 USB 3.0 or better, Sound, VGA, Network and HDMI would be nice
- Bluetooth Optional but nice to have
- Keyboard Backlit
- Display Flat, no reflections, max resolution of 1400 or 125 dots/inch
- Touch Not required
- Optical Drive Optional
- Camera Integrated webcam
- Battery 10 hours would be nice

## Candidates -

**Dell** see product [here](#)

- XPS 13 Non-touch
- Intel 5<sup>th</sup> generation i5
- 8 GB RAM
- 256GB SSD
- Mini display port, 2 USB ports
- Screen non-glare, 1920 X 1080 (166 dots/inch)
- Weight 2.6 lbs.
- Network port - no
- Keyboard matte finish, backlit
- Memory card reader
- Battery rated at 15 hours
- Return policy within 30 days of invoice including shipping

- Chat line works pretty well
- Price \$1,099.99

**Toshiba** see product at <http://www.toshiba.com/us/computers/laptops/portege/Z30/Z30-BST3NX4>

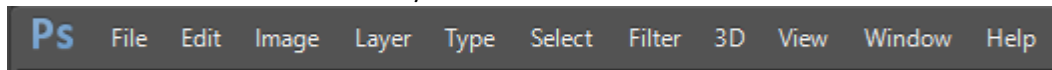
- Z30-BST3NX4
- Intel i7-5500U 5<sup>th</sup> generation
- 8GB RAM
- 256GB SSD
- VGA, HDMI, 3 USB ports, network & docking connector
- Weight 2.6 lbs.
- Screen non-glare, 1366 X 768 (118 dots/inch)
- Keyboard backlit, spill-resistant, matte finish
- Battery rated at 15 hours
- Memory card reader
- HDMI port
- Toshiba has a great chat line, even on a Sunday
- Return Policy 15 days after receipt of product
- Price \$1,079.99 through 3/30/15. \$1,299 after that.

### Notes

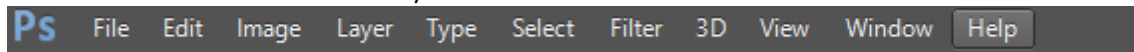
- Toshiba has better connectivity and for the same price as Dell it has an i7 Intel Processor. The Dell has higher screen resolution but too much can be a problem.
- Dots per inch is calculated by dividing the number of horizontal pixels (the first number) by the width of the screen in inches. For example the Dell is 11.5 inches across with a resolution of 1920 X 1080. Therefore, the dots per inch is 1920 divided by 11.5 or 166 dots/inch.
- My laptop resolution is 1366 X 768 (16 X 9) or 118 dots/inch
- My desktop is 1920 X 1080 (16 X 9) or 91 dots/inch
- One of the new Dell XPS 13 models is 3200 X 1800 or 265 dots/inch. This is great resolution for games and movies but the menus in programs such as Word will be almost unreadable unless font sizes are changed in the Control Panel.
- The Surface resolution is 2160 X 1440 or 200 dots/inch
- The Toshiba mentioned above comes with a lot of software that has to be removed but this can be done in 30 minutes or less.
  - 1 month trial for new Microsoft® Office 365 customers\*, Adobe Flash Player, DTS Studio Sound™, Hard disk (HDD) recovery, McAfee Live Safe™ (30-day Trial), TOSHIBA Media Player by sMedio Truelink+, TOSHIBA PC Diagnostic Tool, TOSHIBA PC Health Monitor, TOSHIBA Recovery Disk Creator, TOSHIBA Service Station, TOSHIBA Password Utility, TOSHIBA eco Utility™, Trusted Platform Module (TPM v1.2).
- Dell claims that it only has the following software
  - Skype™, Internet Explorer, My Dell Support application, Dropbox. I'm sure that there is more software.
- An advantage to buying from Microsoft is that they clean up all of the software but they don't carry the Toshiba.
- My guess is that most laptops also include trial versions of MS Office.

## Here are some examples of how screen resolution affects your viewing.

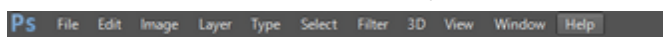
This is with a resolution of 60 dots/inch



This is with a resolution of 90 dots/inch



This is with a resolution of 200 dots/inch



While it's true that higher resolution packs more information on your screen, it may be more difficult to read.

## Here's another good candidate

Dell Inspiron 15 3000 Series seen [here](#)

If you are willing to go to a weight of 5lbs the Dell Inspiron 15 looks good on paper.

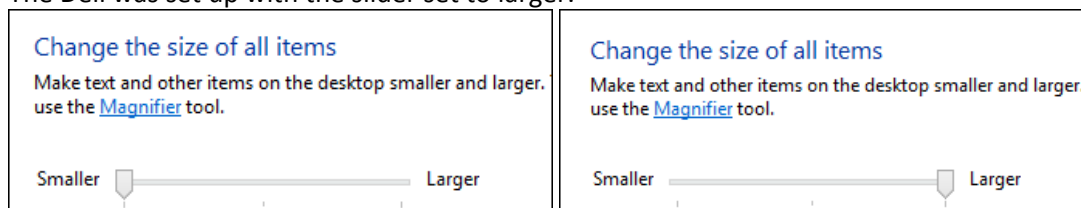
- Intel i5 5<sup>th</sup> generation
- 5 GB RAM
- 500 GB Hard drive
- Matte screen – non-touch
- Optical drive
- Screen 15" 1366 X 768 (98 dots/inch)
- Card reader
- 2 USB 2.0, 1 USB 3.0
- Network connector
- Weight 5.3 lbs.
- Price \$399

What do you give up?

- Speed, no SSD
- Weight, it's over 5 lbs.
- Maybe a port or two
- Only 4GB RAM – OK for most uses
- Battery life hard to find out

## Observation in Microsoft Store

- I noticed that a Dell XPS 13 with a screen resolution of 3200 X 1800 had program menus that were easier to read than a Surface Pro 3 with a resolution of 2160 X 1440.
- After 3 sales persons tried to explain it, a 4<sup>th</sup> sales person and I started to figure it out.
- The Dell was set up with the slider set to larger.



- This makes items easier to read without changing the screen resolution.

## Late breaking news

- New Surface 3 available by May 5<sup>th</sup>
- Slower processor, Atom x7 versus I3 4<sup>th</sup> Gen
- Less storage space, up to 128GB and 4GB RAM
- Lighter 1.36 versus 1.76 lbs. (22%)
- Thinner 0.34" versus 0.36" (5.6%)
- No fan
- Lower resolution 1920 X 1280 versus 2160 X 1440
- Same ports **except for Micro USB charging port**
- Pen is \$50 extra
- \$599 versus \$999 plus keyboard, etc.

Conclusion - It's lighter, slower and less expensive. Might run cooler also. This tablet is aimed at students and families and those who find the Pro model too expensive.

### **The following is courtesy of CNET.**

It has better (Dolby-Audio-enhanced) speakers, and two cameras, an 8 megapixel rear-facing one and a 3.5 megapixel front-facing one. The device is fan-less. It includes a full-size USB 3.0 port, Mini DisplayPort, micro SD card reader and Micro USB charging port, which works with both dedicated Surface chargers and any generic USB phone charger.

On the not-so-good news front, the Surface 3 is just as lappable (or, in my case, non-lappable) as previous Surfaces. Though not everyone wants or needs to type on their laps for extended periods of time, I do, and the Surface 3 is not stable enough for me to do so.

Bottom line: I think many will welcome a cheaper Surface, especially one that can run Win32 apps. But as long as the keyboard needed to turn Surface tablet into a laptop replacement continues to cost an additional \$130 (and the pen another \$50), that starting price of \$499 is more likely to be \$630 to \$680 and possibly more if you need adaptors for VGA, etc.