



Student Computer Ownership Policy and Purchase Recommendations

Congratulations on your decision to come to the UC Berkeley School of Public Health!

A reliable computer will be an essential tool during your studies here. Most classes will require the use of Internet access and email and many will require specialized software. Also, competence in the use of a computer is considered part of your professional development at SPH.

For these reasons, The School of Public Health requires all students to own their own computer. This formal requirement may be presented to the Financial Aid Office in support of student loan applications.

Most of you probably already own a computer, though you may be considering an upgrade. The SPH Instructional Computing Web Site provides information to help you in your decision. Please visit online at <http://socrates.berkeley.edu/~sphinstr> and click on the "Computer Purchase Recommendations" link. We have summarized the major points below.

What Kind of Computer Should I Own: PC/Windows, Macintosh, Linux?

For most of you, any computer that you have purchased in the last few years will be adequate for your needs as an SPH Student.

Macintosh users should be aware that the software used in some Public Health classes does not run on the Macintosh operating system. New versions of SAS (Statistical Analysis System) software, for example, and several programs that support Genetic Epidemiology do not run on the Mac OS. Note that SAS will not run on the "HOME" versions of Windows Vista or Windows XP. Newer models of Macintosh computers, however, are capable of running the Windows operating system – students with this setup should be able to run software designed for both Windows and Mac OS.

All SPH Instructional Facilities (classroom and drop-in labs) are equipped exclusively with PCs running Windows and, therefore, in-class presentations are usually performed in the PC/Windows environment.

If you are a knowledgeable Linux user, you will find that most software used in SPH Classes will be available.



Should I consider purchasing a laptop?

This is really a “computing lifestyle” decision. For those of you who envision using a computer on campus or when traveling, a laptop is a good idea. Most locations on Campus and in the School of Public Health facilities provide wireless internet access, so students who bring their laptops to campus are able to work online. Keep in mind that the SPH maintains drop-in computing on campus — see the SPH Instructional Computing web site for details.

Any suggestions on where to purchase a computer?

Any retail outlet or online vender that sells new PCs with a warranty should be adequate. The Scholar's Workstation (the campus computer store) is located in the Cal Student Store at Lower Sproul Plaza and offers educational discounts.

What about Application Software?

The Microsoft Office suite that includes Word, Microsoft Excel, and PowerPoint is widely used in the School. If you don't already own Microsoft Office, you can purchase a copy at The Scholar's Workstation at an educational discount. OpenOffice and other “open source” suites are mostly compatible with MS Office and are reasonable alternatives. Note that Microsoft Works – the scaled-down version of Microsoft Office – is *not* adequate. Depending upon your curriculum, you may need to purchase statistical or other software. Because many of these programs are available at substantial student discounts, it is best to wait until you are enrolled in the Fall Semester to make these purchases. The campus offers students free anti-virus and other software – go online to <http://software-central.berkeley.edu> for details.

What about a Printer?

We encourage you to own a printer. Printing is available in our drop-in facilities, but weekend and evening access is limited.

How can I get more information about SPH Computing?

Visit the SPH Instructional Computing Web site for a complete description of the facilities and services that are available to you:
<http://socrates.berkeley.edu/~sphinstr>.

