

General PC Recommendations 2026

Laptops and Desktops

These recommendations apply to academic programs that do not require specialized hardware. Programs such as Computer Science, Multimedia, or CAD/Drafting may require higher-end systems; students in those programs should follow the technical requirements provided by their instructor.

Specification	Windows	Apple Macintosh
Operating System	Windows 11 (23H2 or newer)	macOS Sequoia
Processor	Intel Ultra 5, Ultra 7 AMD Ryzen5 or Ryzen7	M3 or M4
Memory/RAM	8GB minimum 16GB recommended	8GB minimum 16GB recommended
Storage/Hard Drive (HDD or SSD)	256GB or larger *SSD Strongly Preferred	256GB or larger *SSD Strongly Preferred

*Solid State Drive/SSD is highly recommended for best performance.

Tablets*

Tablets continue to be useful for note-taking and light coursework, but may not run the required software for some classes, especially those that require full-featured desktop applications.

***Non-Windows-based tablets may be unable to install the necessary software for some classes.**

Recommended Brands (2026)

- Microsoft Surface (Surface Pro 10 / Surface Go 5)
- Apple iPad (iPad Air M3 / iPad Pro M4)
- Samsung Galaxy Tab (S10 series)
- Google Pixel Tablet (2nd generation)
- Amazon Fire Max (latest generation)

Chromebooks*

Chromebooks remain popular for affordability and battery life, but—like tablets—may not support software required in some college courses.

***Chromebooks may be unable to install the necessary software for some classes.**

Acer	Dell	Google	HP	Lenovo	LG	Samsung
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***While Ridgewater College strives to support student success on a wide range of devices, opting for a tablet or Chromebook over a traditional laptop or desktop can be met with strict limitations of the device. For example, a student taking an accounting class may not be able to perform advanced spreadsheet functions that are only available in a full desktop application suite, which requires a traditional PC or Mac.**