



COMPUTERS AND YOUR LEGAL EDUCATION

Computers are playing an increasingly important role in legal education for conducting legal research, making notes and writing exams. This flyer sets out information to help University of Toronto law students consider whether they want to have their own computer at law school and the advantages and disadvantages of having either a laptop or a desktop computer. The Faculty's Financial Aid program permits eligible students to include the costs of purchasing a computer and computer-related items in their financial aid assessment. For more information on the Financial Aid Program's eligibility criteria please go to <http://www.law.utoronto.ca>.

A. Computing Facilities at the Law School

1) Desktop computers: On-site facilities at the law school

The Bora Laskin Law Library has the following desktop computers available to law students:

- 18 networked computers in a law student-only computer lab
- 10 networked computers on the Library's main floor Law Student Alcove, password protected for law students only
- 29 computers for access by UofT students with a valid UTORid account
- 5 Library and Internet Resource (LIRA) Computers accessible to anyone

All of these computers have access to the Internet (including online legal research databases such as LexisNexis Quicklaw, WestlawCanada and CCH Online) various electronic resources available exclusively for U of T students and various legal subscriptions (available only locally within the library). Computers that are restricted to law students only have the full Microsoft Office suite as well as additional software. These Law Library desktop computers are available to J.D. and graduate law students during normal Law Library hours. The Library has two high-speed laser printers. Currently it costs 15 cents per page at the laser printer in the Law Commons and 10 cents per page at the laser printer located in the computer lab (both printers require a student card for printing).

2) Laptop computers: On-site wireless access to the UofT Campus Wireless Network

In addition to the foregoing desktop computers, the Bora Laskin Law Library has a wireless network that is part of the UofT's Campus Wireless Network. Students with their own laptop and wireless capability are able to access the Internet (and other research databases available at the

law school and the University). The library's wireless network supports 802.11b/g/a, 11-54 mbps and requires 128-bit encryption.

For more information on the UT Campus Wireless Network, check out the following website <http://www.wireless.utoronto.ca>. For more information about computing support at the Bora Laskin Law Library check <http://www.law-lib.utoronto.ca/services/cs>.

3) Typing of Examinations, Requirements and Cost

General: The Faculty of Law allows students to type their exams. Many students take advantage of this option. A detailed memo setting out the available options and the procedure is sent out from the Records Office at the beginning of each term. Each examination period students **MUST** sign up for the option of typing exams by the deadline set by the Records Office. Once students have opted to type or handwrite for an exam period, they may not change their minds and choose another option. Students who opt to type their exams are charged a fee per academic year to cover the costs associated with the software.

Secure Software: In the interest of fairness and perceived equality, **all students who type their exams must purchase Examssoft, (security software)** and sign an Acknowledgement and Undertaking Form. Majority of students type on their own laptops*. On beginning an examination students must ensure that their computers are in excellent working condition. Students should also note that the ExamSoft secure exam software will only work on laptops that can run the Windows operating system (this includes the new generation of Intel-Macs such as the MacBook Pro). **Students who own Mac laptops must ensure that they have Windows installed in order for their laptops to be compatible with the Examssoft software.** Detailed information about minimum requirements to run Examssoft software is available below.

***Subject to availability**, the Faculty will make an effort to secure a limited number of computers to accommodate **only** those students who wish to type exams but who do not own their own laptops or whose laptops are *incompatible* with Examssoft, as determined by the Registrar. If this option is not available, students must handwrite their exams or arrange to borrow a compatible laptop.

B. Should I buy a personal computer?

The following information may be helpful in deciding to buy a computer. Students may wish to consider waiting until law school has begun to talk to other law students for their ideas and recommendations.

1) Advantages and disadvantages of laptops

Laptop advantages:

- Portability - can be used for taking notes in classes and writing exams
- Wireless access - can be used to access the Internet and the UofT campus wireless network within the Law Library and other selected location on campus.

Laptop disadvantages:

- expense – laptops tend to be more expensive than desktops
- security – you cannot leave a laptop unattended or it might get stolen
- weight – lugging around a laptop can be tiring
- fragile – laptops tend to break down or have problems more easily than desktops
- batteries – battery life tends to deteriorate over time; you therefore need to regularly charge your battery or seek out electrical plugs

2) Advantages and disadvantages of desktop computers

Desktop advantages:

- price – desktop computers tend to be cheaper than laptops and provide similar features for the same price
- full-size keyboards – some people do not like typing on laptop keyboards, which tend to be smaller

Desktop disadvantages:

- lack of portability – desktops, by their very nature, require a fair amount of desk space and are not portable

3) Things to keep in mind when buying a computer:

When buying a desktop or a laptop computer, the main trade-off is between price and convenience. To help you assess the features you will need, consider how you will use the computer. If your main purpose is word processing, and basic Internet searching and legal research, you can likely do well with the basic minimum features available on any new computer being sold today.

4) Things to keep in mind when buying a laptop:

If you prefer to buy a laptop instead of a desktop computer, consider the following points:

- You should try out various laptops - go to a computer store and try typing on one to see if you like the keyboard.
- The "look & feel" of a laptop is very important - screen size, keyboard layout and pointing device are all important. See if you prefer a tracking ball, tracking pad or external mouse.
- The weight of the laptop may also be an issue for you if you're going to be carrying it around a lot.
- Security: you will definitely wish to consider buying a cable lock or other security device for affixing your laptop to solid objects. Some locks come with a motion alarm.
- Extended warranty: since laptops tend to be more fragile than desktop computers, you may wish to consider obtaining an extended warranty from the manufacturer, if available.

Buying a used laptop, although much cheaper than buying a new one, obviously comes with some risk and is generally not advisable unless you are satisfied with the quality of the used laptop and confirmed that it meets any minimum requirements for your intended use of the laptop.

Advice on laptops is also posted on the library's Computing Services page at <http://www.law-lib.utoronto.ca/services/cs/index.htm>.

5) **Minimum requirements for laptops for ExamSoft**

To use a laptop to write exams at the law school, your laptop will need to meet the following ***minimum*** requirements:

ExamSoft/SofTest operates on any PC running 32-bit versions of Windows 2000, XP & Vista. SofTest also operates on Mac OSX running Windows XP or Vista. SofTest is not compatible with any virtual machine software. The minimum recommended system requirements are:

- CPU = 450 MHz Pentium III or Industry Equivalent
- RAM = 256 MB
- Hard Drive = 50 MB of free space
- Operating System = 32-bit Versions of Windows 2000 (Pro), XP & Vista (including Tablet PC)
- Software = Internet Explorer 6.0 or greater
- Minimum Screen Resolution = 1024x768
- Internet Connection = An Internet connection is required to download SofTest

Intel Macintosh users:

Please note that your computer must meet the minimum requirements listed above, be running Boot Camp, and must have Windows XP or Vista installed.

Wireless Access:

For instructions on how to configure your laptop for wireless access please check the Library's Computing Services page:

<http://www.law-lib.utoronto.ca/services/cs/wireless.htm>

If you require help to configure your laptop you can contact Computing Services staff:

<http://www.law-lib.utoronto.ca/services/cs/help.htm>

Macintosh laptops with an Airport card *do* work on the Law Library wireless network.

Instructions for setting up a Mac for wireless access can be found at:

<http://help.ic.utoronto.ca/category/48/mac-setup.html>

C. UTOReMail/Remote access to resources

Increasingly, students at the University are taking advantage of Internet technology to access e-mail and other online resources. Students should be aware that one of the main means for communicating information (e.g. cancelled classes, room changes) to students and members of the law school community is through email listservs managed by the Faculty. Students are required to “maintain a valid postal and university-issued electronic address and are expected to monitor and retrieve their mail on a frequent and consistent basis”. This means that students must obtain and use a **utoronto.ca** e-mail account for official correspondence.

1) Creating your “utoronto.ca” e-mail account

Incoming U of T law students are **strongly** encouraged to obtain as soon as possible a free “@utoronto.ca” e-mail address, usually being “firstname.lastname@utoronto.ca”. First-year admitted students are provided information on how to set up their utoronto.ca email address in July. Upper-year admitted students are given this information in their offer packages.

Notes:

Please note that you MUST NOT forward your utoronto.ca address to any other domain as other domains frequently regard listserv messages as spam and therefore reject them. We then cannot guarantee that you will receive listserv messages sent by the Faculty.

Each class has its own listserv which is used by the law school to keep students informed about important happenings (e.g. class cancellations or rescheduling, among other things). These are NOT discussion lists; students CANNOT reply to the messages or POST to the listserv. The lists only operate using utoronto.ca e-mail addresses.

2) Accessing Resources Remotely

There are a large number of resources at the University and at the law school that are available to students from both on- and off-campus. These resources include e-books, e-journals, online journal indexes and online newspapers. These online resources are available on all campus computers (including campus residences). When accessing these central resources from off-campus it is ordinarily necessary to use the My.Access service (if you use a commercial ISP - Internet Service Provider) to prove that you are a UofT student (for more information on the My.Access service go to <http://www.library.utoronto.ca/services/myaccess/>).

In addition to the online resources available to all UofT students, the Bora Laskin Law Library has a collection of Electronic Information Resources that are available only to UofT law students (see <http://www.law-lib.utoronto.ca/e-res/index.asp>). These resources are accessible 24/7 via the Internet Other resources, including past exams, online readings, study guides, useful research links and access to various law school Internet subscriptions for case law and other legal material are available from the students portal on the Library website (<http://www.law-lib.utoronto.ca/students.htm>). You will be given your password to these resources in September.

D. Viruses, Trojans, Worms, Malware and Spyware

One of the dangers of connecting to the Internet is that your computer is then susceptible to a variety of viruses, trojans and worms. To help protect your computer and the UofT network, the

University has provided free anti-virus software. The Symantec® AntiVirus (SAV) software is free to all faculty, staff and all students enrolled in degree-granting programs of the University for both on- and off-campus computers. Symantec AntiVirus Corporate Edition is available for download at: <http://www.antivirus.utoronto.ca>. You will need your UTORid to download the software. Once downloaded and installed make sure that you update your virus definitions on a regular basis - at least weekly if not more often. In order for a laptop to access the UofT's Campus Wireless Network it must have a fully updated Windows Operating System and have an up-to-date virus scanner. Laptops not meeting these requirements will be blocked from the network.

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