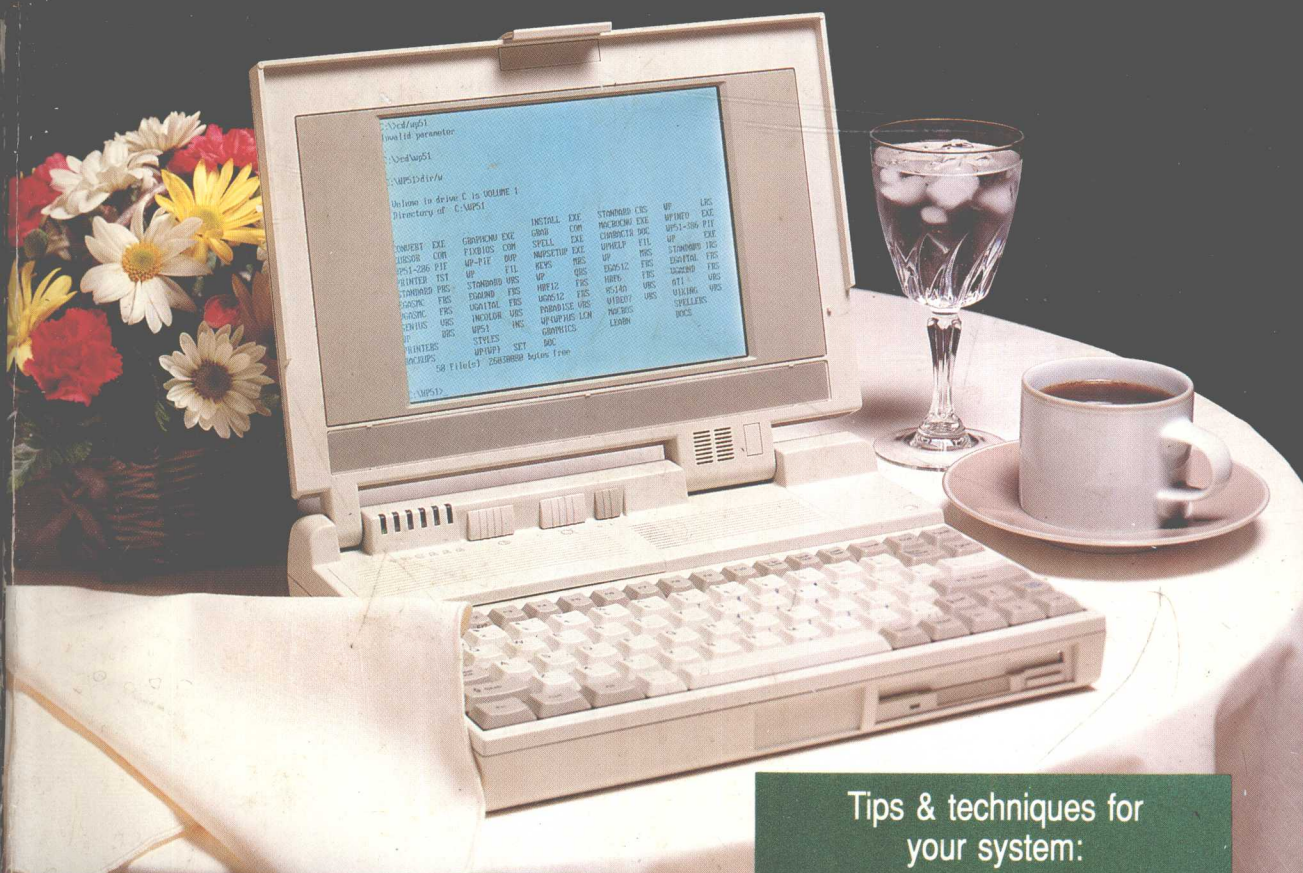


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The Concise PC Notebook and Laptop User's Guide



Tips & techniques for
your system:

- ▶ Configuring
- ▶ Communicating
- ▶ Optimizing
- ▶ Maintaining
- 3½" disk included

Dan Gookin

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The Concise PC Notebook and Laptop User's Guide

Dan Gookin

Windcrest®/McGraw-Hill

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Introduction

Welcome to *The Concise PC Notebook and Laptop User's Guide*, a long title about a tiny subject—the ever shrinking laptop computer. The idea of having a portable computer isn't a new one. However, the technology required to make a computer small and compatible—and useful—is only a few years old.

Today, nearly everyone is using a laptop computer, or at least considering purchasing one. Yet while some think a laptop is great, others have its greatness thrust upon them; a number of businesspeople and others are finding themselves in a position where they have to use a laptop computer. Where once you could assume that a laptop computer owner was experienced, that's no longer the case.

What this book does is to bring everything together. All laptop topics are covered here, including buying, using, and communicating with a laptop computer. It's all in here. And the language isn't rough or technical; I've carefully explained everything for all levels of PC owners.

Where to begin?

You can read the sections of this book in any order, whichever part interests you first. There are four main parts, each of which contains three or four chapters:

Part one: Buying a laptop

Chapter one deals with the reasons why you'd want a laptop, discusses what a laptop computer can do.

Chapter two covers laptop evolution, from the early suitcase-like luggables to today's computers-in-the-palm-of-your-hand.

Chapter three covers buying a laptop, including all the unique items you should look for in a laptop computer.

Chapter four concentrates on the handheld organizers and palmtop DOS machines.

Part two: Setting up your laptop

Chapter five is about using DOS on your laptop computer. It explains how to set it up and tells you just how much DOS you really need on such a small system.

Chapter six covers running your laptop system—specifically how to organize DOS and your applications on a floppy-only, hard-disk, or silicon-drive laptop system.

Chapter seven is called *Going on a software diet*. It covers tricks and techniques for paring down programs to fit in the compact storage space a laptop offers.

Part three: Using the laptop

Chapter eight deals with applications that help you get work done on your laptop. Specifically, quick and light applications designed to work best in a laptop environment.

Chapter nine is the “wild and free” chapter, discussing all you need to know about taking your laptop computer on the road.

Chapter ten concentrates on the laptop's battery—how it works and how to prolong its life.

Chapter eleven is about peripherals, those devices you can attach to a laptop to extend its hardware reach.

Part four: Laptop communications

Chapter twelve is a general introduction to the terms and concepts behind computer communications. I've also provided information on selecting a modem and telecommunications software.

Chapter thirteen is about using a telecommunications package to take your laptop on-line. The MiniCom program that's included in the companion diskette to this book is used for the examples.

Chapter fourteen deals with the issue of laptop-desktop communications. Covered are the various methods of sending files back and forth between your laptop and desktop systems, plus the interesting area of remote communications.

Don't forget the deals

In the back of this book are various coupons from some of the many companies mentioned in this book. Use those coupons for discounts or deals on the products mentioned. Especially consider the PC-SIG offer and all the diskettes mentioned. It's one of the best ways to obtain useful and inexpensive laptop applications.

The companion diskette

This book comes with its own handy laptop diskette. On that diskette you'll find dozens of programs ideally suited for use on a laptop. Many of the programs are mentioned in this book, including the MiniCom communications package. Refer to appendix B for more information about the diskette.

The products mentioned

This book mentions a lot of products for a laptop computer, both hardware and software. Up front I'll tell you that more products are available than are mentioned in this book. It's a trade-off; I want to be informative, yet I don't want to mention a product whose manufacturer is suddenly out of business, or a product that disappears after a few months on the shelf.

The products highlighted here have staying power and a little history behind them. More hardware and software is definitely available, however, so keep an eye on your favorite magazines or dealers for more options. Keeping a list of hardware and software up to date in a book is a major hassle, so I've made every effort to assume that the companies mentioned here are all alive and well as this book goes to press.

One last word

I currently own two laptops, the NEC UltraLite and a DELL System 310 LT. I love them to death, and both serve a definite purpose in my business (and I'll be referring to them throughout the text).

Laptops is an interesting and fun new way to use a personal computer. It reminds me of the old days of being a computer pioneer. Being able to use a computer anywhere puts a real perspective on things, something you just don't get from sitting in front of some behemoth PC in an air-conditioned office. I hope you enjoy laptops as much as I do.

If you'd like to contact me to share information or to ask any questions, I can be reached at the following address:

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GEnie: d.gookin1
CompuServe: 73055,1405
USENET: crash.cts.com!dang

See you on the road!

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Part 1

Buying a laptop

Buying a laptop is similar to buying any other type of computer, with one important addition—You should first know if it's a laptop that you really need. To do so, you must understand what it is a laptop can do and then match that to your needs. After that, everything will fall into place. Simply follow the steps outlined here for buying a laptop, and soon you'll have a perfect match between what you need to do and a machine to do it for you.

1

CHAPTER

Do you need a laptop?

Technology has the benefit of making everything tiny. Clocks that once could only hang on buildings today require technology that can fit on a postage stamp. Radios that were once furniture can now rest snugly inside your ear. But nothing shows this shrinking technology better than the computer. Where once the power to run a computer occupied an entire city block, you can now carry the same power around in a device the size of a credit card.

The way the computer industry has taken advantage of shrinking technology is by offering smaller, lightweight computing units. They were originally limited editions of what desktop machines offered. But as technology has grown smaller, these portable computers, generally referred to as *laptops*, have come to compete toe-to-toe with their desktop brethren. Once a specific tool for a tiny audience, laptops are now a popular, economical, and often necessary type of computer. But do you need one?

This chapter covers the purpose behind laptop computers by letting you know what they can do. Chances are you've probably seen a laptop or two, and the question of "what can the little guy do that the big guy can't" (or vice-versa) has crossed your mind. This chapter will fill in that information, as well as touch on those key issues that might incline you to buy a laptop computer.

What makes a computer a laptop?

A *computer* is a thinking device. I like to call it a "mind tool." It calculates, processes words, stores and sorts data, entertains, and educates. Almost everyone who