A Guide for Selecting Equipment for Remote Work and Instruction

David Raco - 2025-03-17 - Comments (0) - Hardware

This article will help you select quality equipment for work from home and remote instruction. You have broad leeway to purchase whatever equipment that you need, but the IT Department wants to ensure that you get equipment that (1) we support and (2) we know to work well with our online services and products.

Please contact your Computing Coordinator for help with making a final selection.

What technology will I need to work from home, teach remotely, or take a class remotely?

The answer depends on what your exact role at the university is, but here are some general recommendations:

Everyone (faculty, staff, and students)

- **Modern Computing Device** - You will need a modern computing device to work on such as a laptop computer, a desktop computer, a Chromebook, or a tablet. If the device you are using is less than 6 years old, you should be fine. Devices older than 6 years might have compatibility or performance issues, but you are encouraged to test them out and consult your Computing Coordinator if you have problems. We have provided some recommendations for computing equipment below.

- **Camera and Microphone** - If your computing devices does not have a built-in camera and/or microphone, you will probably want to acquire an external version of those devices that connects to your computing device via USB. We have provided recommendations below.

- **Headset or Earbuds** - We recommend that you use a headset or earbuds when participating in remote meetings or classroom settings. Headsets and earbuds cut down on feedback in the meeting by preventing what you hear from getting picked up by your own microphone.

- **Reliable Internet Connection** - If you do not have a reliable Internet connection at home, SOU is partnering with three other regional schools that participate in the Southern Oregon Higher Education Consortium (SOHEC) to provide you with additional access points around the area. The member schools, SOU (Ashland and Medford), Rogue Community College (Medford), OIT (Klamath Falls, Wilsonville) and Klamath Community College (Klamath Falls). More information here: https://it.sou.edu/sou-student/.

    - Please visit the IT website to explore options. This information is subject to change. We will try to keep it up to date. The best bet will be to check the providers in your area for discounts or fee waivers.

Faculty

- **Drawing and whiteboard solution** - As an instructor, you may want to be able to share natural writing and drawings with your students. You can always record yourself drawing on a physical whiteboard if that works for you, but there are digital options available to you as well. Zoom supports digital whiteboards, Google Jamboard is another digital whiteboard solution that we have, and you can also use regular screen sharing in Zoom or Google Meet to stream your favorite drawing program to your

students that way.

    - Depending on your computing device, you may benefit from acquiring a dedicated drawing device instead of using your mouse (on a computer) or your finger (on a device with a touch screen) for drawing. We have provided recommendations below.

    - If you want to draw on what you see on your screen to share with your students in real time or in a recording, use Zoom's annotation features.

- **Inking solution for grading papers** - Many instructors prefer to write on student papers while grading. If you want to do something similar for digital papers, you should encourage your students to submit their assignments to you as Microsoft Word documents. Students have access to Microsoft Office 365 for free, and so do you for use on your personal devices. (If you need the latest version of Microsoft Office installed on your SOU-issued computer, contact your Computing Coordinator. Inking works best in Microsoft Office Professional 2019, which is the latest version that we have available.) You should follow these instructions for digital inking on Microsoft Word, Excel, and PowerPoint documents. You should instruct your students to reference this knowledgebase article if they have trouble seeing your ink markups when you return their assignments to them.

- **Moodle** - If you have not already set up your course in Moodle, please contact Center for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning.

Students

- **Microsoft Office for home use -** Follow along with this KB article that will show you how you can get Office 365 on all of your devices. Contact the IT Helpdesk if you need help.

- **Personal computer problems -** Please complete the Student Technology Needs Survey and visit https://inside.sou.edu/it/i-t-student-faq.html for more information.

Hardware Guide



Desktop and Laptop Computers

Employees

If you are a SOU employee, the Information Technology department is in charge of supplying you with a computer to do your work. If you have a SOU-managed laptop, you should be using that as your remote work computer. If you only have a SOU-manage desktop, then in some situations we are permitting employees to take that desktop computer home with them. Contact your Computing Coordinator for details.

If you are considering using a personal computer to do work from home, here are a few guidelines to help you determine whether your personal computer is ready for work.

Hardware Recommendations

If your device was new in 2015 or later, it should be adequate for general office work such as using web browsers, Microsoft Office, and Zoom. Below is our recommended minimum system requirements for a good experience.

- **Processor** - At least a dual-core processor (Intel or AMD) with a clock speed above 2.0 GHz. A quad-core processor would be even better.
- **Memory** - At least 4 GB of RAM. 8 GB of RAM would be even better, especially for remote presentations and meetings.
- **Disk Storage** - Enough to store any recordings you might have to store on your device. Consult your Computing Coordinator for guidance.

Students

If you are a student, you are responsible for providing your own personal computing device, but SOU has limited resources available to help you if you find that your system does not meet the minimum recommendations below. Learn more at https://it.sou.edu/sou-student/it-student-faq/.

Hardware Recommendations

If your device was new in 2015 or later, it should be adequate for general student work such as using web browsers, Microsoft Office, and Zoom. Below is our recommended minimum system requirements for a good experience.

- **Processor** - At least a dual-core processor (Intel or AMD) with a clock speed above 2.0 GHz. A quad-core processor would be even better.
- **Memory** - At least 8 GB of RAM. You may be able to get by with 4.
- **Disk Storage** - Enough to store any recordings you might have to store on the device. Call the IT Helpdesk at 541-552-6900 if you need help with this.



Tablets with a Screen (iPad, Android tablet, etc.)

Faculty may want to use a computing tablet with a screen (iPad, Android tablet, etc) to facilitate drawing for remote and recorded lectures. It is the closest you can get to the feeling of drawing on paper or a physical whiteboard. The IT Department does not recommend any specific brand of tablet, but please consider the following before you make a purchase or try to repurpose an older tablet.

All new tablet purchases require a license for our remote management suite called Hexnode. A license for Hexnode costs $2.70/month for the lifetime of the tablet, billed to your PDA account or your department. Your Computing Coordinator will help you install it on your new tablet.



Apple iPads

Identify your iPad's model. If it appears on this list of obsolete Apple products, don't use it. You should then check to see what the latest version of iOS is for your iPad. You should update to the latest version of iOS that is available for your iPad after you identify which version of iOS is installed on your device. Make sure that the latest version of iOS that is available for your iPad can run the apps that you might want to use on the iPad. Below is a list of common iPad productivity apps and what they require.

- **Zoom for iPad**
- **Google Meet for iPad**
- **Google Chat for iPad**
- **Microsoft Office 365 apps for iPad**
- **Notability for iPad**
- **Google Drive for iPad**
- **Office Lens for iPad**

If you want to purchase a new iPad, you might find good deals on Amazon.com and through SOU's Apple for Education store. Be aware that new iPads do NOT come with the Apple Pencil needed to write on them. That is a separate purchase that you will need to make. The IT Department does not recommend or discourage any particular model of iPad, but check with your Computing Coordinator before you make a purchase



Android tablets

There are many different models of Android tablet out there from many different manufacturers. Before putting an older Android tablet to use for remote work, you should check and update your version of Android on your tablet to the latest version available for your device. Make sure that the latest version of Android that is available for your tablet can run the apps that you might want to use. Below is a list of common Android productivity apps and what they require.

- **Zoom for Android**
- **Google Meet for Android**
- **Google Chat for Android**
- **Microsoft Office 365 apps for Android**
- **Squid for Android**
- **Google Drive for Android**
- **Office Lens for Android**

If you need help with updating your particular Android tablet, consult this list of support websites for various Android tablet manufacturers.

If you want to purchase a new Android tablet, you can get good deals on Amazon.com. The IT Department does not recommend or discourage any particular brand, but check with your Computing Coordinator before you make a purchase, especially if you want to purchase a stylus or pen to go with the tablet. Many Android tablets use capacitive pens, but some may require an active pen that will only work with that tablet.



Drawing Tablets

This type of tablet connects to another computing device, such as a laptop computer or a desktop computer, to

enable drawing with a paired stylus or pen device. Popular brands include Wacom and Huion. The IT Department does not recommend or discourage any particular brand, but check with your Computing Coordinator before you make a purchase. We want to ensure that you get something that will work well for your needs and will connect to your computer.



Webcams

You will need a webcam if you want others to be able to see you during remote presentations, remote meetings, and recordings. The IT Department recommends webcams made by Logitech and Microsoft because they are reliable and broadly compatible with Macintosh and Windows computers. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, webcams are currently in short supply, so don't be surprised if many online retailers are out of stock.

Most webcams connect to your computer over USB Type A. Make sure your computer has a USB Type A port to accept the connection, or else use an appropriate adapter. You can reference this guide if you are unsure what to look for. Most USB webcams are NOT designed to connect to iPads or Android tablets. Even if your tablet has a USB port, the tablet will probably not know how to talk to the webcam. Instead, use your tablet's integrated camera.

Most webcams feature an integrated microphone. Check your particular webcam for this feature because if your webcam has a microphone, you don't need to purchase a microphone separately.

You may want to consider purchasing a tripod or a mount for your webcam if you find that placing it on top of your computer screen or a surface is inadequate for your use case. Just be sure to get something that is compatible with your model of webcam.





Microphones

You will need a microphone if you want others to be able to hear you during remote presentations, remote meetings, and recordings. Most webcams feature an integrated microphone, and so do many headsets. **We recommend that you "double up" whenever possible by getting your microphone through your webcam or your headset.**

If you need a standalone USB microphone, you can search Amazon. The IT Department has used microphones made by Blue before, and they tend to work well. Make sure your computer has a USB Type A port to accept the connection, or else use an appropriate adapter. You can reference this guide if you are unsure what to look for. Most USB microphones are NOT designed to connect to iPads or Android tablets. Even if your tablet has a USB port, the tablet will probably not know how to talk to the microphone. Instead, use your tablet's integrated microphone.

You may want to consider purchasing a mount for your microphone and a plosive screen (aka pop filters). A mount enables you to position your microphone comfortably, and a plosive screen can help improve your audio quality by taking the edge off of certain spoken sounds.

You should consult your Computing Coordinator if you think you need a USB microphone and accessories.



Headsets / Earbuds

Headsets (and earbuds) enable you to safely participate in remote presentations and remote meetings without generating audio feedback, which results from your microphone picking up the sounds coming from your device speakers. Some remote meeting apps, especially for tablets, handle feedback in software so that you don't have to worry about using a headset, but if you find that feedback is ruining your experience, you should switch to a headset as an easy fix.

Many computer headsets come with an integrated microphone. Headset microphones are convenient and tend to produce high-quality audio. Ask your Computing Coordinator for guidance.

The IT Department recommends headsets by Microsoft and Logitech because they are reliable and broadly compatible with Macintosh and Windows computers. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, headsets may be in short supply, so don't be surprised if many online retailers are out of stock.

Many headsets connect to your computer over USB Type A, and the ones that don't will likely connect to the 3.5mm audio jack (also known as the headphone jack). Make sure your computer has a USB Type A port and/or a 3.5mm audio jack to accept the connection, or else use an appropriate adapter. You can reference this guide if you are unsure what to look for. Most USB headsets are NOT designed to connect to iPads or Android tablets. Even if your tablet has a USB port, the tablet will probably not know how to talk to the headset. Instead, you should use ear buds, headphones that use a 3.5mm audio jack, or wireless headsets for connecting to tablets.