

But All My Friends Have One...

Kids love laptops. They're cute, they're trendy, all their friends have one and they're about the worst investment a parent could make. They are quite a bit more expensive than an equivalent desktop. They are really expensive to get fixed if they ever break and they are really easy to steal.

I used to work in the computer store at Texas Tech and I can't tell you how many times some college kid came to me almost in tears with a dead laptop under their arm. "Please Mister, you just gotta fix it. My term paper is in there." would be the way the conversation started. After a little more conversation I would find out that he or she had been studying late at night and about 3:00 a.m. they reached across the desk to get their notebook and accidentally knocked over a cup of coffee or a coke onto the keyboard. When you do this to a desktop computer, you simply replace a \$10 keyboard. Spill a drink into the keyboard of a \$1000 laptop and you've just killed a \$1000 laptop.

Then there was the cracked screen in the shape of a footprint. That was a \$1000 oops... Then there was the insurance affidavits I always had to sign after the laptop was reported stolen because "junior" set it down for just a minute while he dug around for his student ID or some cash. I don't think most of those insurance companies paid up on stolen laptops because generally they weren't stolen out of a secure dorm room or somewhere that a thief would actually have to break into to steal it.

At any rate, when your high school or college age kid comes to you begging for a laptop tell them "Frank the computer guy in the newspaper said you don't need one". I really hate to ruin their chances of getting one, but in the long run they really are better off without one - unless you really just have money to throw away. They are much better off with a good desktop unit that can be upgraded fairly inexpensively when the need arises.