



CONSUMER CORNER



Tips To Make Buying Technology Compute

(NAPSA)—Buying high-tech shouldn't be high stress. Yet most consumers say they are overwhelmed when looking for new high-tech gadgets, photo printers, DVD players and PCs.

Many consumers say they do not understand certain product features, or that they are put off by pricing and the large number of retail stores and technology brands they have to choose from.

The following tips can help ensure you get the most out of your money. They come from HP, the world's largest technology company.

• **Figure Out What You Need:** Are you always on the go and need to stay organized? Is the family looking for the latest gadget to stay entertained? Or do you need a smart and fast PC to manage your home business? These are questions consumers should ask before considering a technology purchase. Try evaluating your daily needs and writing a technology "wish list" so you and your family will be sure to get what you need.

• **Educate Yourself:** Keep your eyes open for news and reviews relating to new consumer technology. Check out the business section of the paper, talk with other technology owners, go to the newsstand and look at publications that provide hands-on reviews of technologies, such as PC Magazine and CNET.com. Fre-

quently, technology companies will feature award-winning products on their own Web sites. Favorable reviews and industry awards are a sign that a product out-performs the competition, offers cutting-edge innovation and has the editor's "seal of approval."

• **Window Shop Online:** Many technology companies and consumer electronic retailers offer extensive information on the products they offer online—including "product specs," which allow you to compare products based on specific components. HP, for example, offers in-depth product information at hpshopping.com. The site lets people learn about technology and even customize their own products based on their needs.

• **When in Doubt, Ask:** Retailers and technology manufacturers are prepared to assist in your buying decision. Customer support lines like HP's (800-752-0900) provide trained representatives ready to help people select the product that is right for them. If you contact a company, explain what you'd like to use your technology for and they can most likely help point you in the right direction.

• **Take a Technology "Test Drive":** When faced with a variety of technology options, go to the nearest retailer and try the technology for yourself. Many retailers have products on display, so go ahead and take a spin.

Advice from the Experts

Try following these tips when purchasing technology:

- **PCs:** Make sure the PC not only has the technology you want, but that it's also upgradeable so your PC can grow with your future needs.
- **Digital Cameras:** Be sure the camera has all the features you want, like removable memory, video and zoom lens. If you want portrait-quality photos, remember that higher megapixels result in clearer, crisper images.
- **Notebook Computers:** Notebooks now have the latest in wireless technology. New HP notebooks with Wi-Fi capability let you sip coffee and surf the Net at a Wi-Fi-enabled Starbucks and countless other locations worldwide.
- **Home Entertainment:** Look for the right combination of features. For example, the HP Media Center PC lets you view DVDs, listen to music and share and manage digital photos. It even lets you watch, record and play back TV programs with a remote control.
- **Printers:** The right printer lets you print photo-quality pictures, create professional-style presentations and more. Today's printers also include "smart" features that remember your preferences, making it easier to personalize projects.