

USED BUSINESS LAPTOPS FOR NORMAL PEOPLE

The \$100 Laptop Secret

How to buy retired Dell, Lenovo, and HP business machines
— and make them useful again



A used business laptop can be a radio-room PC, Linux learner,
family Zoom box, grandma monitor, or personal project machine

Dave Andrus
K7DAA
May 28, 2026

How the whole thing started

I tried to buy a Raspberry Pi... and rediscovered laptops

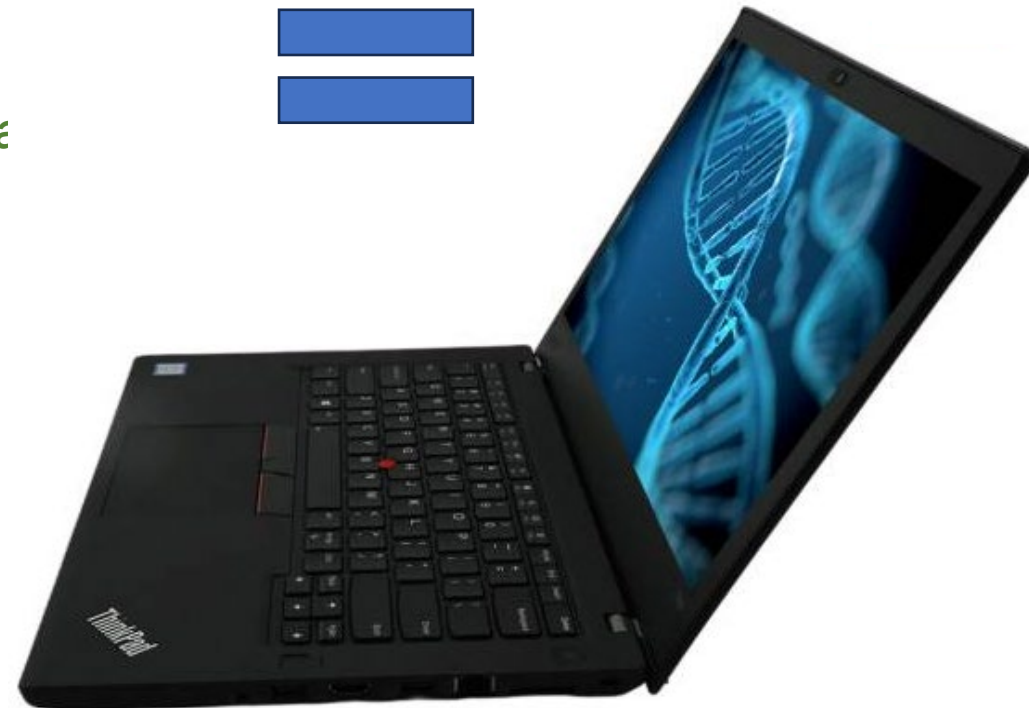
My problem: Raspberry Pi 5 boards are crazy pricey (3-4X) or out of stock

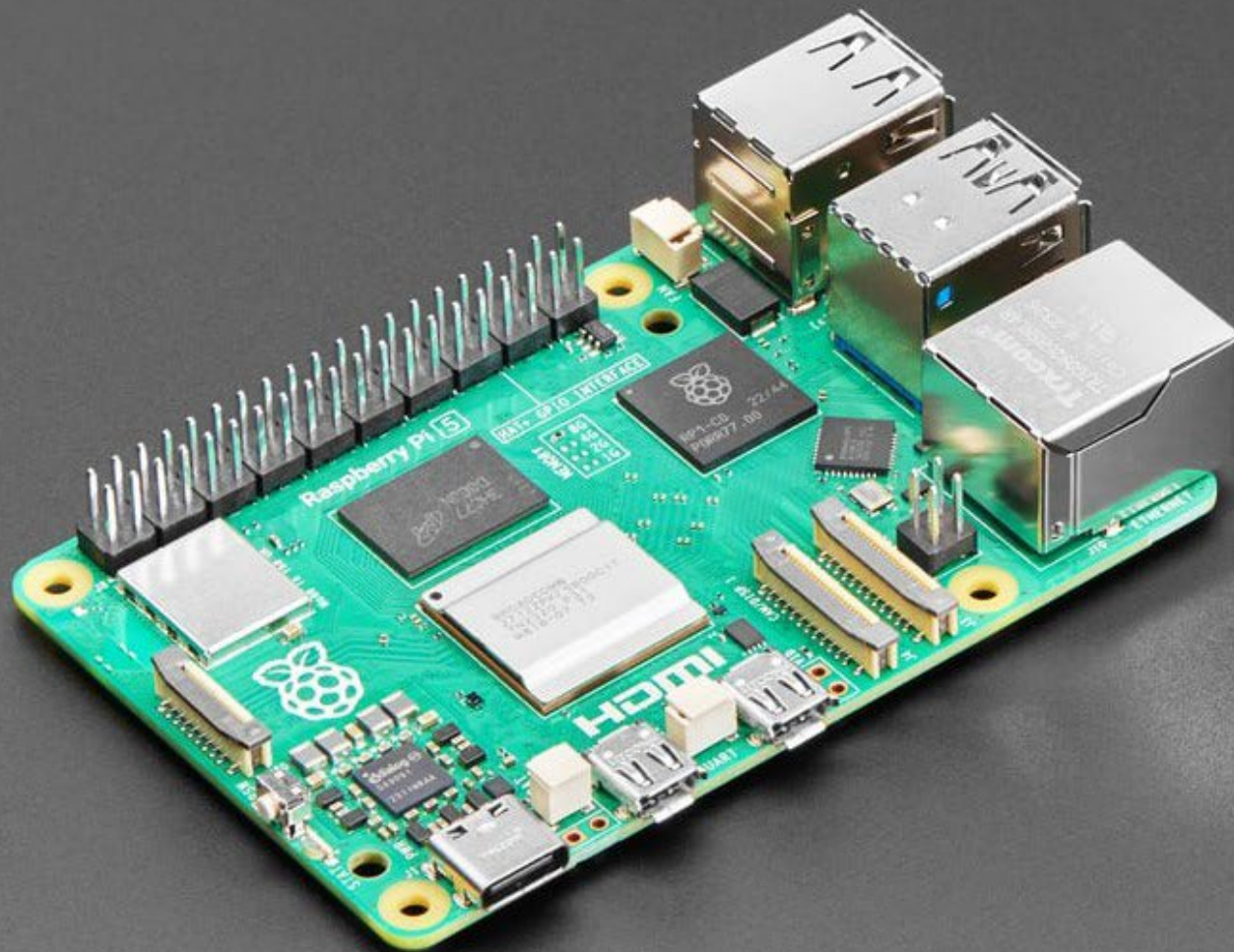
Then came the extras: monitor, keyboard, mouse, power, storage, case, cooling, cables.

The question: Why am I building a laptop out of parts?

(To be completely fair to the Pi, I would usually set it up with a monitor, etc, then run it “headless” after that)

A used laptop already has the extras built in





Raspberry Pi 5 - 16 GB RAM

Product ID: 6125

\$350.00

There are multiple versions of this item. Please select one from the options below:

1GB RAM	Out of stock
---------	--------------

2GB RAM	\$75.00
---------	---------

4GB RAM	\$130.00
---------	----------

8GB RAM	\$200.00
---------	----------

16GB RAM	Out of stock
----------	--------------

Out of stock

Please enter your details below and we will send you an email when this item is back in stock! You will only be emailed about this product.

Your Email

Notify Me

Add to Wishlist ▾

You bought this item. [View order details](#)



Have one to sell?

[Sell one like this](#)

[Sell something else](#)

[Share](#)

Dell Latitude 7490 14.1" (128GB SSD Intel Core i5-8350U 1.70GHz 4GB RAM) Laptop



Toys N Games Arcade (80849)

99.2% positive · [Seller's other items](#)

[Message](#)



US \$89.95 or Best Offer

Condition: **Used** ⓘ

"The PC is in perfect working order. Unit has been reset and is ready for use. Please see pictures"...

[Read more](#)

Shipping, returns, and payments

Shipping: **Free** Standard Shipping. [See details](#)

Located in: Saint Louis, Missouri, United States

Delivery: Estimated between **Fri, May 29** and **Tue, Jun 2** to 84062 ⓘ

Returns: 30 days returns. Seller pays for return shipping. [See details](#)

Payments:



[See details](#)

PayPal CREDIT

Special financing available. [Learn more](#)

Shop with confidence

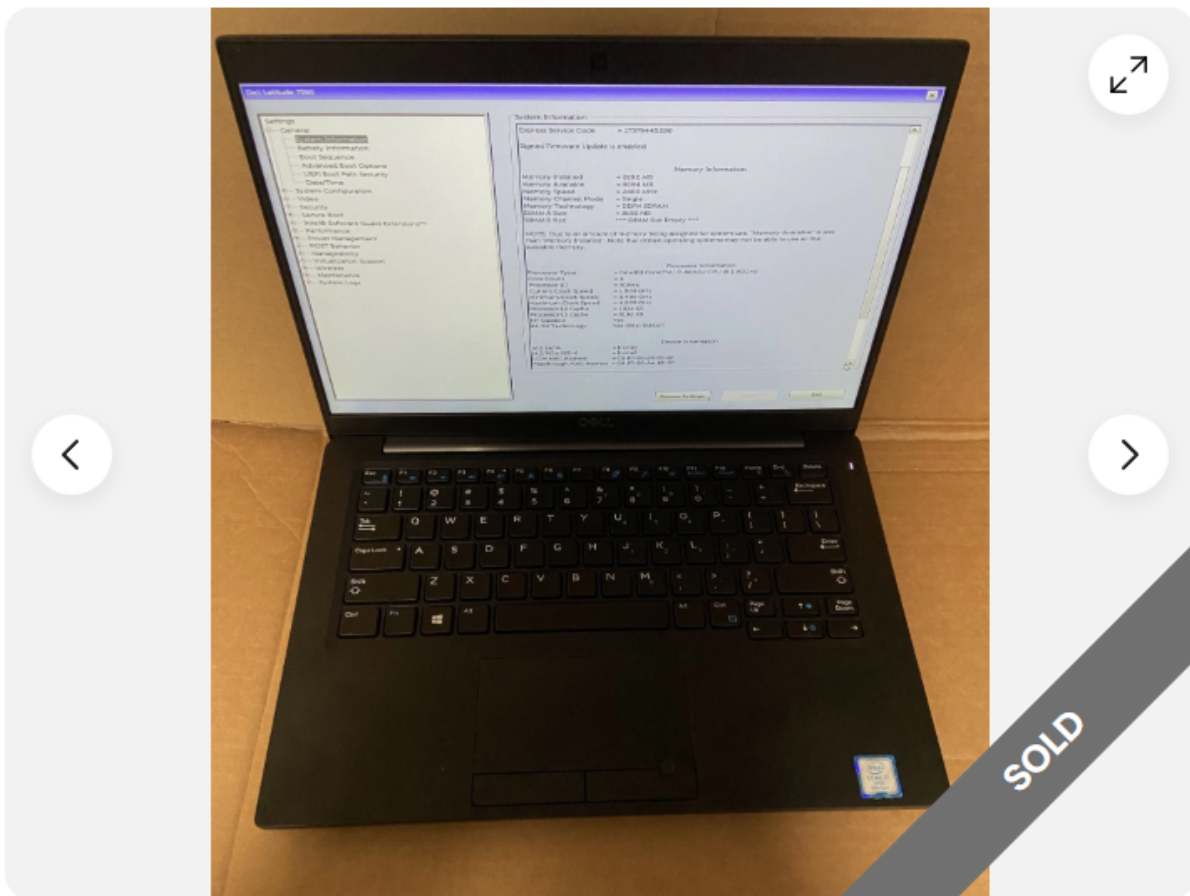
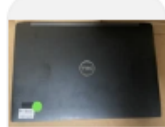
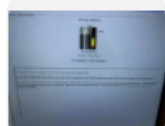
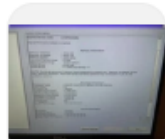


eBay Money Back Guarantee

Get the item you ordered or your money back. [Learn more](#)



You bought this item. [View order details](#)



Dell Latitude 7390 13" Laptop Intel Core i5-8650U 1.9GHz 8GB RAM No SSD



itworld4444 (160)

100% positive · [Seller's other items](#)

[Message](#)



US \$69.99

Condition: **Used** ⓘ

Shop with confidence



eBay Money Back Guarantee

Get the item you ordered or your money back. [Learn more](#)

Shipping, returns, and payments

Shipping: **US \$17.99** Standard Shipping. [See details](#)

Located in: South San Francisco, California, United States

Delivery: Estimated between **Sat, May 30** and **Wed, Jun 3** to 84062 ⓘ

Returns: 30 days returns. Buyer pays for return shipping. If you use an eBay shipping label, it will be deducted from your refund amount. [See details](#)

Payments:



[See details](#)

PayPal CREDIT

Have one to sell?

[Sell one like this](#)

[Sell something else](#)

[Share](#)



Buy for the job, not the spec sheet

Want an Everyday computer?

Newer model with screen, keyboard, battery, webcam, speakers, clean condition matter. Look for 2020-2024 models

Radio-room utility box?

Reliability, ports, SSD, Linux support, and low cost matter more than looks. Surprisingly good performance from 2017-2020 models

Experiment machine?

Cheap, repairable, and replaceable beats pretty. Try different operating systems, use for bench tests, etc. 2018 and earlier

Family Zoom / email box?

Simple setup and remote support matter more than fancy specs. 2018-2020 models are low-risk investments here

If it sits on a shelf, ugly can be a discount.



Business laptops age better than cheap consumer laptops

Corporate machines were expected to survive travel, docks, repairs, and years of support — then fleets get retired at once.

Stronger hinges and chassis

Magnesium or carbon reinforcement on many models.

Better keyboards and ports

Ethernet, USB-C, docks, and sturdier connectors.

Parts availability

Keyboards, batteries, chargers, and covers are easier to find.

Linux friendliness

Common enterprise hardware gets tested by many users.

Designed for IT service

RAM, SSD, battery, and ports may be easier to replace.

Refurbished supply

Fleet retirement creates bargains if you shop patiently.

The trick is not buying “old.” It is buying the right kind of old.



 Last purchased Jul 13, 2025

Style: Laptop | [View order](#)

Amazon



[Click to see full view](#)

 Ask Rufus

Does it have a fingerprint reader?

Can the RAM be upgraded?

Is this laptop good for video calls?

Why you might like this

[Compare with similar](#)

[Ask something else](#)



DELL LATITUDE 7420 i5 2.60GHz 16GB RAM 256GB SSD 14" Grade A (Renewed)

[Visit the Amazon Renewed Store](#)

4.0  (181) | [Search this page](#)

100+ bought in past month

\$279⁶⁰

Or \$93²¹ /mo (3 mo) at 0% APR. [Select from 3 plans](#)

Get a \$50 Amazon Gift Card instantly upon approval for the Mercury Visa Signature Card. [Learn more](#)

Available with free Prime shipping from [other sellers on Amazon](#).

Style: Laptop

Laptop

\$279.60
Refurbished

See 1 options
with no
featured offers

Brand	Dell
Model Name	Dell Latitude 7420 Laptop
Screen Size	14 inches
Color	Silver
Hard Disk Size	256 GB
CPU Model	Intel Core i5
Ram Memory	16 GB
See more	

About this item

- Efficient Business Laptop: Powered by 11th Gen Intel Core i5-1145G7 Quad-Core Processor (2.6GHz base, up to 4.4GHz Turbo Boost), ideal for office tasks and light multitasking.

Refurbished - Excellent

\$279⁶⁰

FREE delivery **Thursday, May 7**
to [Pleasant Grove 84062](#).
[Details](#)

Or fastest delivery **Tomorrow,
May 2**. Order within **8 hrs 20
mins**. [Details](#)

**Only 3 left in stock - order
soon.**

Quantity: 1

Add to cart

Buy Now

Shipper / Seller [Refurb Tech Deals](#)

Condition [Refurbished -
Excellent](#)

Returns [90-day
refund/replaceme
nt](#)

[See more](#)

Add a Protection Plan:

- ☐ 2-Year Protection Plan for
\$52.99
- ☐ 4-Year Protection Plan for
\$90.99
- ☐ Complete Protect: One plan
covers all eligible past and
future purchases (Best
Value) for \$16.99/month

Dell and Lenovo families are easier than the model numbers

The names change, but the roles stay fairly consistent. Learn the family, then judge the exact listing.

Dell	Lenovo	Role
Latitude 5xxx	ThinkPad L-series	Mainstream corporate
Latitude 7xxx	ThinkPad T-series	Premium business
Latitude 9xxx	ThinkPad X1 series	Executive ultraportable
Precision	ThinkPad P-series	Mobile workstation, larger screen



Dell numbering can feel like Scrabble tiles down a staircase.

THE PROCESSOR RULE

CPU generation is a target, not a religion

For most buyers, 8th Gen or newer is the easiest recommendation. For experimenters, a clean older business laptop with SSD + Linux can still be useful.

CPU era	How to think about it	Dave’s advice
6th / 7th Gen	Older dual-core machines, still useful with Linux	Buy only if cheap and clean
8th Gen	Big jump to common quad-core U-series	Smart default target
10th Gen	Fine, but often not a huge leap	Don’t overpay
11th Gen	Better graphics and modern feel	Best balance for daily carry
12th / 13th Gen	Newer, faster, usually pricier	Nice, not required, price jump

Lenovo ThinkPad T14 Gen 6 (current)
Price: \$1,698.99



Dave's current sweet spots:

BUDGET / VALUE

~\$80--\$170

Dell Latitude 5490 / 5400
Dell Latitude 7390 / 7490
ThinkPad T480 / T480s

**8th Gen best when low cost
and repairability matter
more than looking new.**

BEST BALANCE

~\$120--\$300

Dell Latitude 5420 / 7420
ThinkPad T14 Gen 2
ThinkPad X13 Gen 2

**11th Gen machines feel
noticeably more modern,
especially graphics**

MODERN FEEL

~\$250--\$600

Dell Latitude 7430 / 7440
ThinkPad T14 Gen 3 / 4
ThinkPad X13 Gen 3

**12-14th Gen more premium
everyday carry laptops, if
budget allows then looks &
condition matter more**

- ✓ Shop patiently and treat every listing as its own case
 - ✓ Look for at least 1920 x 1080 displays
 - ✓ (Avoid ThinkPads with 1366 x 768 displays)
 - ✓ Remember how much these cost when new:

Today's \$500 used laptop started factory-fresh at \$1,400-2,800 3+ yrs ago!

Latitude 54xx and 74xx: two useful personalities

Latitude 54xx

Mainstream corporate. Often less glamorous, but many models have two SODIMM slots.

5490 / 5400 / 5410 / 5420 are strong radio-room utility candidates.

Great when ports, RAM upgrades, and cheap parts matter.

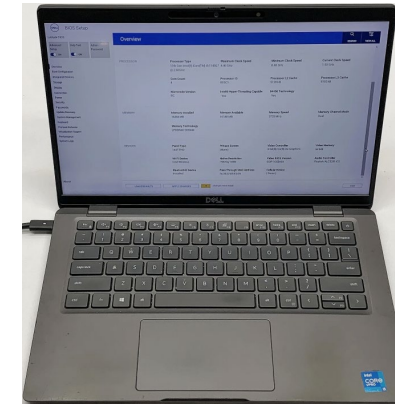


Latitude 74xx

Premium business. Thinner, nicer-feeling, often better screens and materials.

7390 / 7490 are budget sweet spots. 7420 is a best-balance candidate.

Watch later thin models: some have fixed or soldered RAM.



If the RAM is soldered, the amount you buy is the amount you are stuck with.

ThinkPads are conservative, repairable, and loved by Linux people

ThinkPads are not flashy, but the keyboards, parts ecosystem, and user community are real advantages. Be prepared to pay more for these than the Dell Latitudes!

Model	Why it matters
T480 / T480s	Legendary 8th Gen refurb sweet spot, but high price for old gear
T490 / T490s	Transition generation; shop exact configuration
T14 Gen 1	Good; AMD Ryzen versions especially interesting
T14 Gen 2	Excellent balance of age and performance with 11 Gen CPUs
X13 series	Smaller travel-friendly option
P-series	Workstation class; heavier, larger screens, often bargains later



ThinkPad buyers get a huge repair and enthusiast community to draw from

RAM is where cheap becomes expensive

Memory is easy to upgrade, but very expensive in 2026. Best bargain today is to buy RAM included with the computer. You can upgrade only if the laptop actually has socketed RAM. Many thinner models are permanently soldered (think “S” for slim/soldered RAM models)

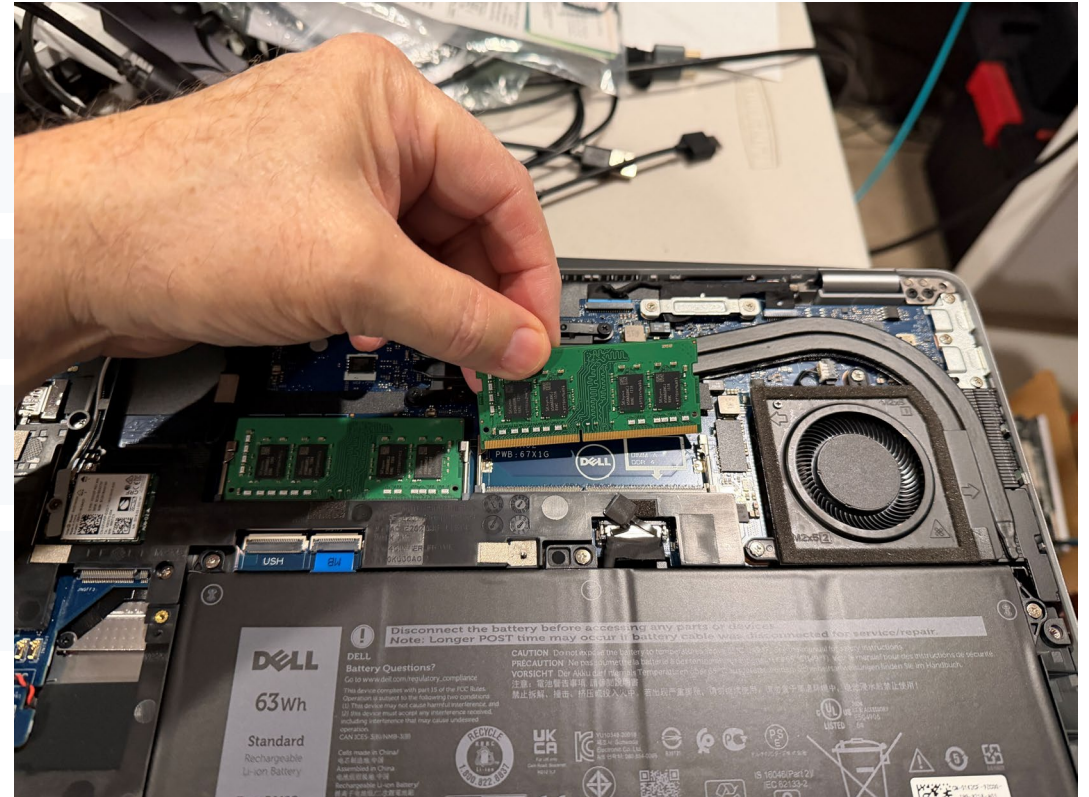
16 GB is the practical sweet spot for most people.

8 GB can work for light Linux tasks, but leaves less room

32 GB is nice for heavier multitasking, VMs, or SDR work

“No RAM” is OK only if the total price still wins

Soldered-down 4-8 GB?
Think hard before buying



UPGRADE TRAP #2

An SSD is the upgrade that makes old machines feel young

“No SSD” is not automatically bad, but it means you must budget for the drive and confirm the laptop accepts the type you buy.

256 GB

OK for Windows, Linux, web, email, logging, and basic shack use.

512 GB

More comfortable; a good target if prices are close.

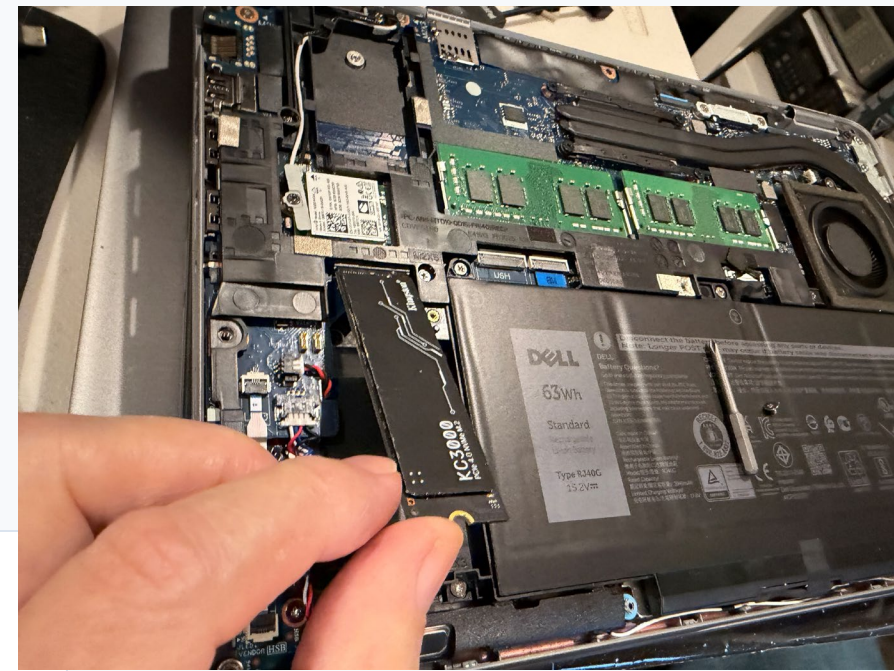
NVMe vs. SATA

M.2 is a shape; the laptop decides what interface works.

Missing drive

Add the SSD, bracket, screw, and time to the real cost.

For many people, SSD + enough RAM matters more than chasing the newest CPU.



Treat batteries like tires on a used car

A used laptop battery is a consumable. Replacement may be easy, but it can change the real cost of the bargain. Add \$25-50 plus your time to the equation

Good signs: battery health shown, charger included, returns accepted.

Weak signs: “battery not guaranteed,” “untested,” or no charger.

Swollen battery: stop. That is a safety issue, not a bargain.



A weak battery is annoying. A swollen battery is unsafe and unacceptable

Danger words that should slow you down

These words do not always mean “walk away,” but they do mean “do the math and know the risk.”

No RAM

No SSD / no drive

No battery

No charger

BIOS locked

For parts

Untested

Cracked screen / bad hinges



A cheap price is only meaningful after you know what is missing.

A safer eBay listing has layers of protection

Not the cheapest possible deal — a lower-risk deal. Look for several green flags together, not just one.

Established seller with strong feedback and many sales.

30-day returns, bonus if seller pays return shipping.

eBay Refurbished or seller warranty when available.

Clear specs: CPU, RAM, SSD, OS, screen size.

Photos show condition of screen, keyboard, lid, sides, and charger.

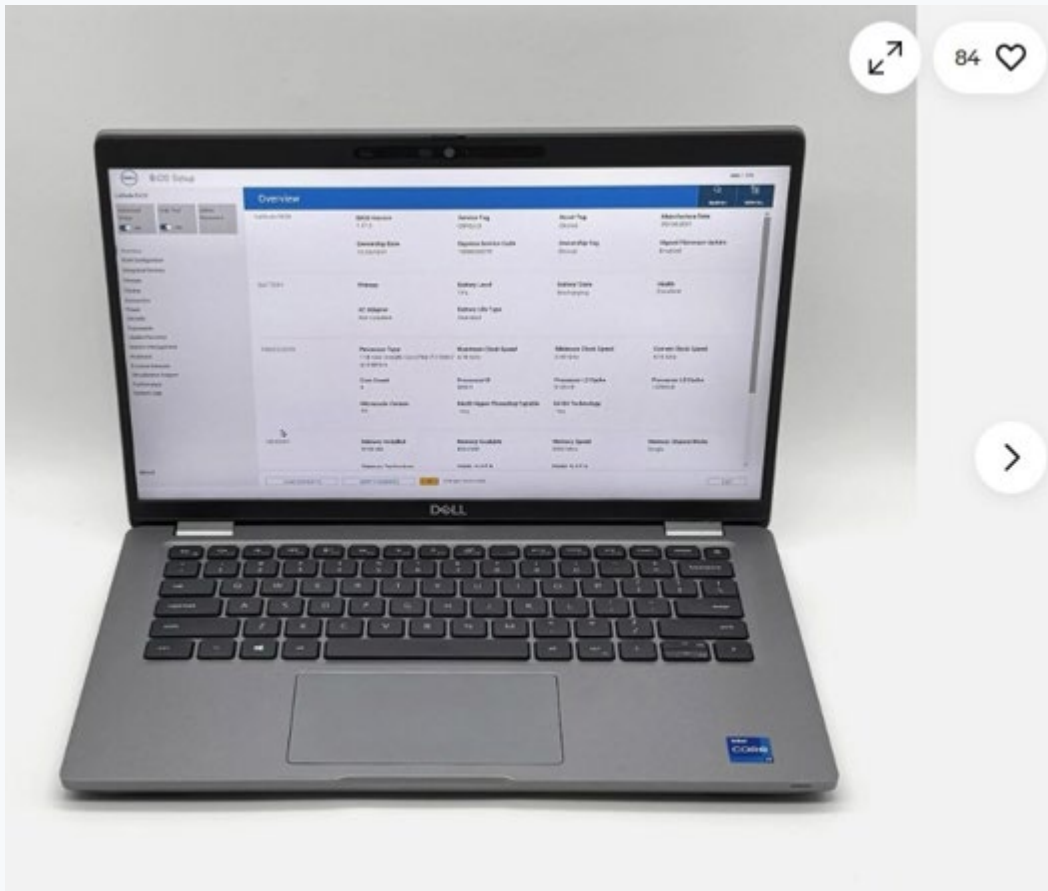
Free or reasonable shipping; avoid surprises.



The listing is the product. Read it like a contract.

Read the photos like evidence

Good sellers show the machine from enough angles that you can judge condition before it ships.



Screen powered on

Keyboard and trackpad visible

Lid, corners, hinges, and ports shown

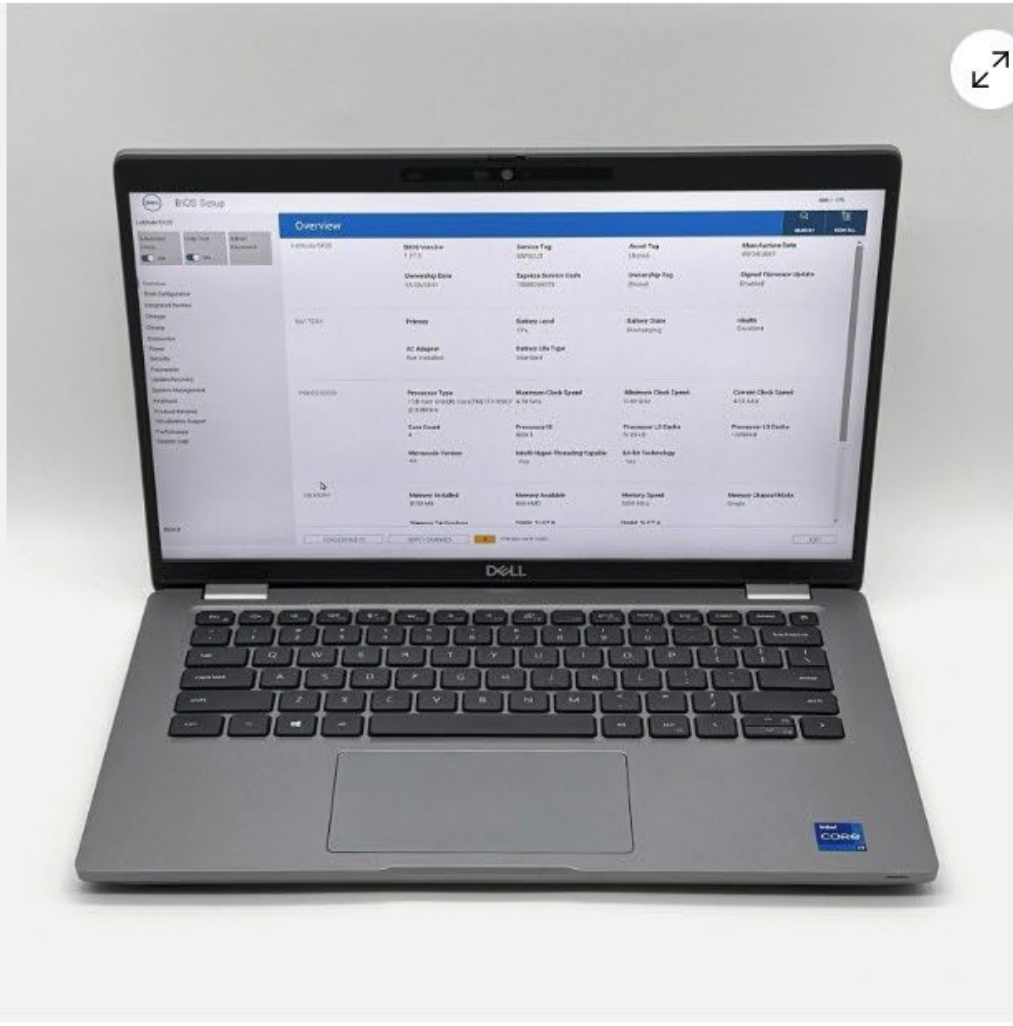
Charger included or clearly disclosed

Damage photographed, not hidden

If the photos dodge the obvious questions, so should you.

 The listing below has been updated by the seller, but you can see the [item you purchased](#).

SAVE UP TO **5%** [See all eligible items and terms](#) ▶



84 



Have one to sell?

[Sell one like this](#)

[Sell something else](#)

 [Share](#)

Dell Latitude 5420 14" | i7-1165G7 2.8GHz | No RAM/SSD | Excellent Batt | Win COA



DANA-S Wireless (6908)

99.7% positive · [Seller's other items](#)

[Message](#)



US \$118.74

Was US \$124.99 (5% off)  [Price details](#)

as low as \$40.51/mo with **Klarna**. [Learn more](#)

Condition: **Used** 

"Tested and working. In good/fair condition with some cosmetic wear, including some paint chipping on "... [Read more](#)

Ended: Jun 11, 2026 23:16:36 PDT

Quantity:

1

Out of Stock · 29 sold

[Add to Watchlist](#)



Shipping, returns, and payments

Shipping: **US \$14.99** Economy Shipping. [See details](#)

Located in: Ann Arbor, Michigan, United States

Delivery:

Estimated between **Tue, May 26** and **Fri, May 29** to 84062  

You bought this item.



ENDED

Dell Precision 7560 Workstation Laptop 15.6", i7-11850H, 32GB, 512GB, RTX A2000



htam86 (5440)

99.7% positive · Seller's other items

Message


US \$523.00

No Interest if paid in full in 6 mo on \$149+ with [PayPal Credit](#)*

Condition: **Used** ⓘ

"ID#24790- This product is in "Very Good condition", may have signs of use/surface marks."

Shipping, returns, and payments

Shipping: **Free 2-4 day delivery**

Get it between Thu, May 14 and Sat, May 16 to 84062.

[See details](#)

Located in: Salt Lake City, Utah, United States

Returns: 14 days returns. Buyer pays for return shipping. If you use an eBay shipping label, it will be deducted from your refund amount. [See details](#)

Payments:

Klarna

PayPal

venmo

G Pay

VISA

MasterCard

DISCOVER



Have one to sell?

[Sell one like this](#)
[Sell something else](#)
[Share](#)

The cheapest listing is not always the best deal

Cheapest possible

Missing parts, weak battery, no returns, vague photos, unknown seller.

Sometimes worth it for experimenters who can repair and absorb risk.

Lower risk

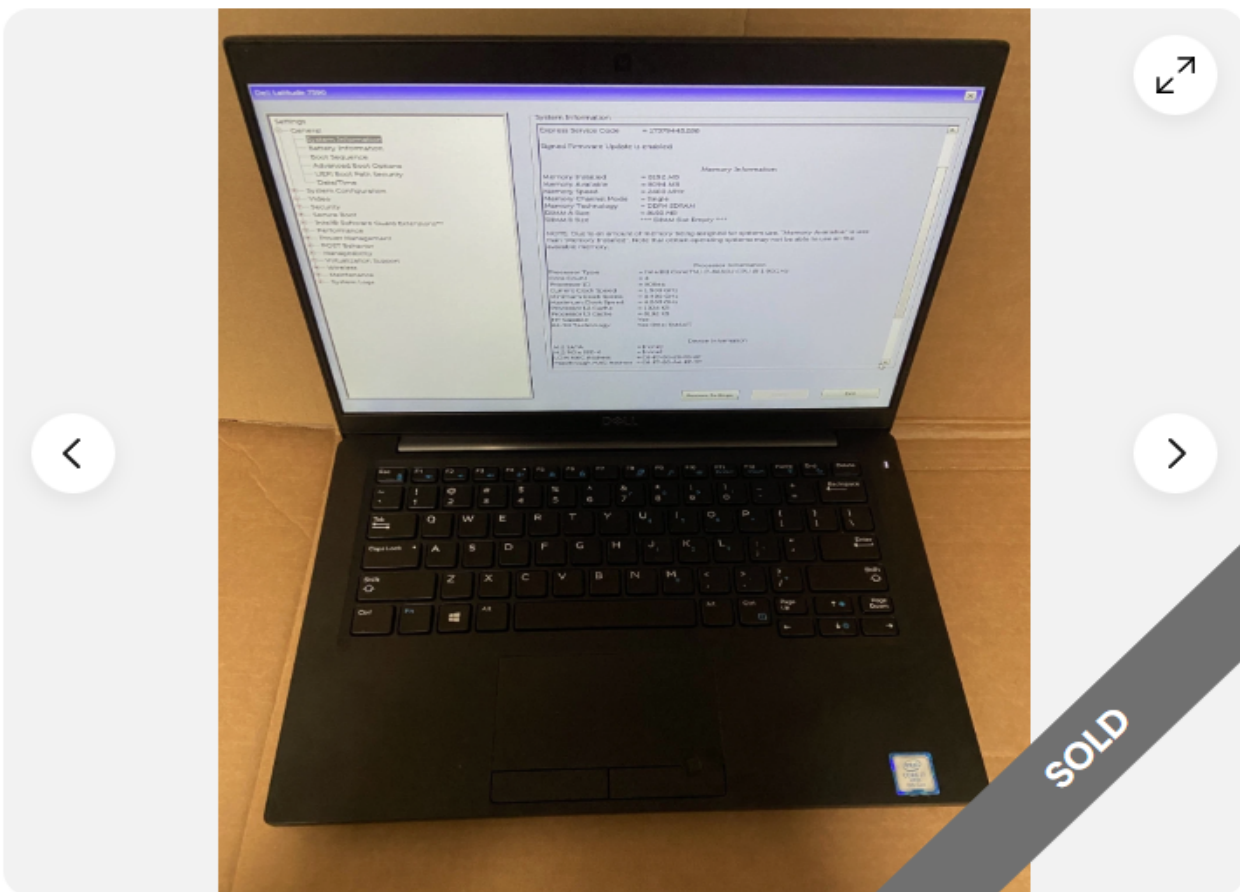
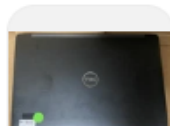
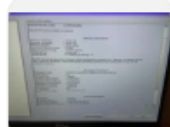
Clear specs, good seller, photos, returns, warranty, charger included.

Often better for normal people who simply want a working computer.



Paying a little more can be cheaper than buying the same lesson twice.

You bought this item. [View order details](#)



Have one to sell?

[Sell one like this](#)

[Sell something else](#)

[Share](#)

Dell Latitude 7390 13" Laptop Intel Core i5-8650U 1.9GHz 8GB RAM No SSD



itworld4444 (158)

100% positive · [Seller's other items](#)

[Message](#)



US \$69.99

Condition: **Used** ⓘ

Shipping, returns, and payments

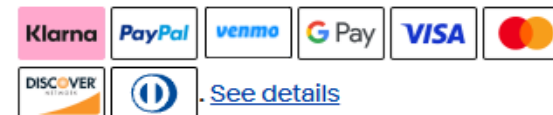
Shipping: **US \$17.99** Standard Shipping. [See details](#)

Located in: South San Francisco, California, United States

Delivery: Estimated between **Thu, May 28** and **Mon, Jun 1** to 84062 ⓘ

Returns: 30 days returns. Buyer pays for return shipping. If you use an eBay shipping label, it will be deducted from your refund amount. [See details](#)

Payments:



PayPal CREDIT

Special financing available. [Learn more](#)

Shop with confidence



eBay Money Back Guarantee

Get the item you ordered or your money back. [Learn more](#)



System Information

Express Service Code = 17379445286

Signed Firmware Update is enabled

Memory Information

Memory Installed = 8192 MB
Memory Available = 8094 MB
Memory Speed = 2400 MHz
Memory Channel Mode = Single
Memory Technology = DDR4 SDRAM
DIMM A Size = 8192 MB
DIMM B Size *** DIMM Slot Empty ***

NOTE: Due to an amount of memory being assigned for system use, "Memory Available" is less than "Memory Installed". Note that certain operating systems may not be able to use all the available memory.

Processor Information

Processor Type = Intel(R) Core(TM) i7-8650U CPU @ 1.90GHz
Core Count = 4
Processor ID = 806ea
Current Clock Speed = 1.900 GHz
Minimum Clock Speed = 0.400 GHz
Maximum Clock Speed = 4.200 GHz
Processor L2 Cache = 1024 KB
Processor L3 Cache = 8192 KB
HT Capable Yes
64-Bit Technology Yes (Intel EM64T)

Device Information

M.2 SATA = (none)
M.2 PCIe SSD-0 = (none)
LOM MAC Address = C8-F7-50-29-F6-2F
Passthrough MAC Address = C8-F7-50-AA-EF-7C

Restore Settings

Apply

Exit

FIRST 24 HOURS

After it arrives, verify the basics while returns still apply

Do not wait three weeks to discover the ad was wrong. Check the machine immediately.

CPU, RAM, and SSD match the listing.

BIOS is not password locked.

Charger works and charges normally.

Screen, keyboard, trackpad, Wi-Fi, and ports work.

Battery health is acceptable for the job.

No liquid damage or swollen battery signs.



Returns are useful only if you inspect before the return window closes.

PRACTICAL USES

A cheap laptop can be a radio-room appliance

This is where scratches, age, and weak battery may matter less than ports, reliability, and not tying up your main computer.

Always-on Winlink, VARA HF/FM, JS8Call, GridTracker

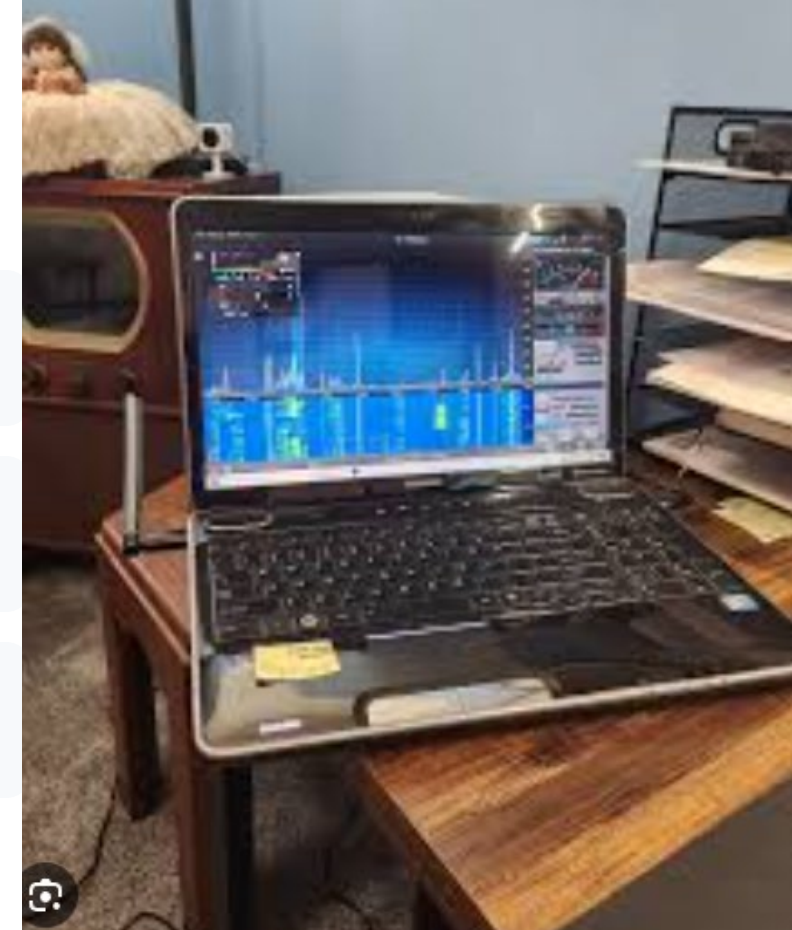
APRS, packet, logging, radio programming, firmware updates

SDR receiver, NOAA satellite reception, repeater audio stream

Field-Day logging machine you are not afraid to use

Linux learning box, Docker playground, Proxmox test node

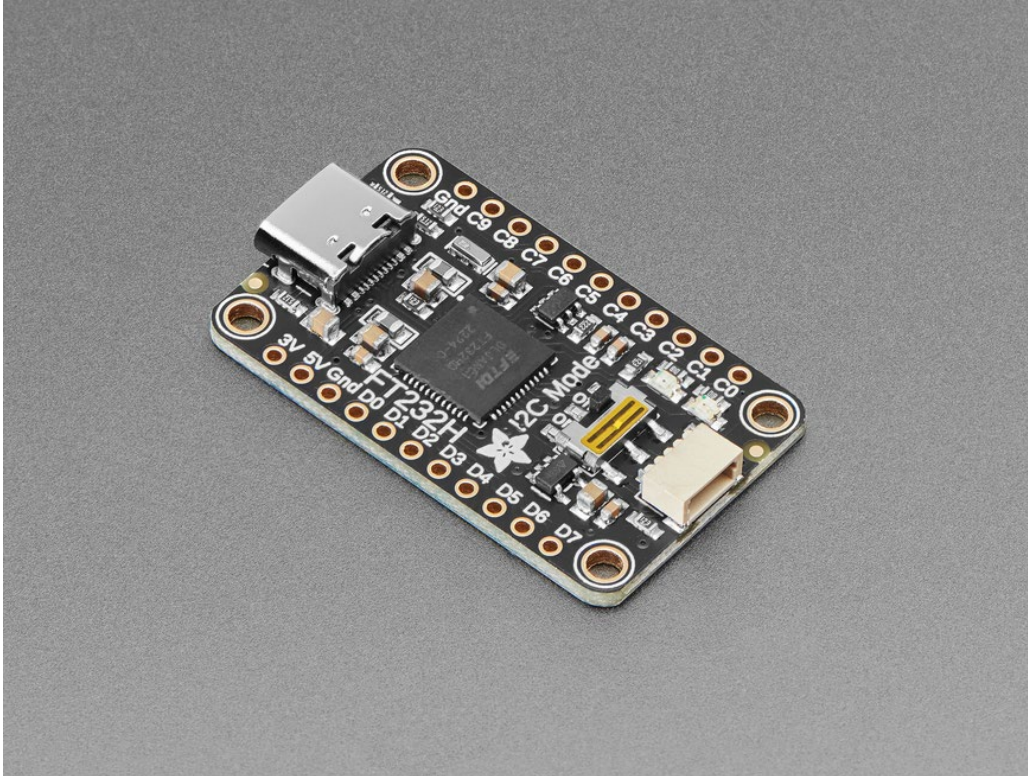
Camera monitor, home dashboard, family bulletin board



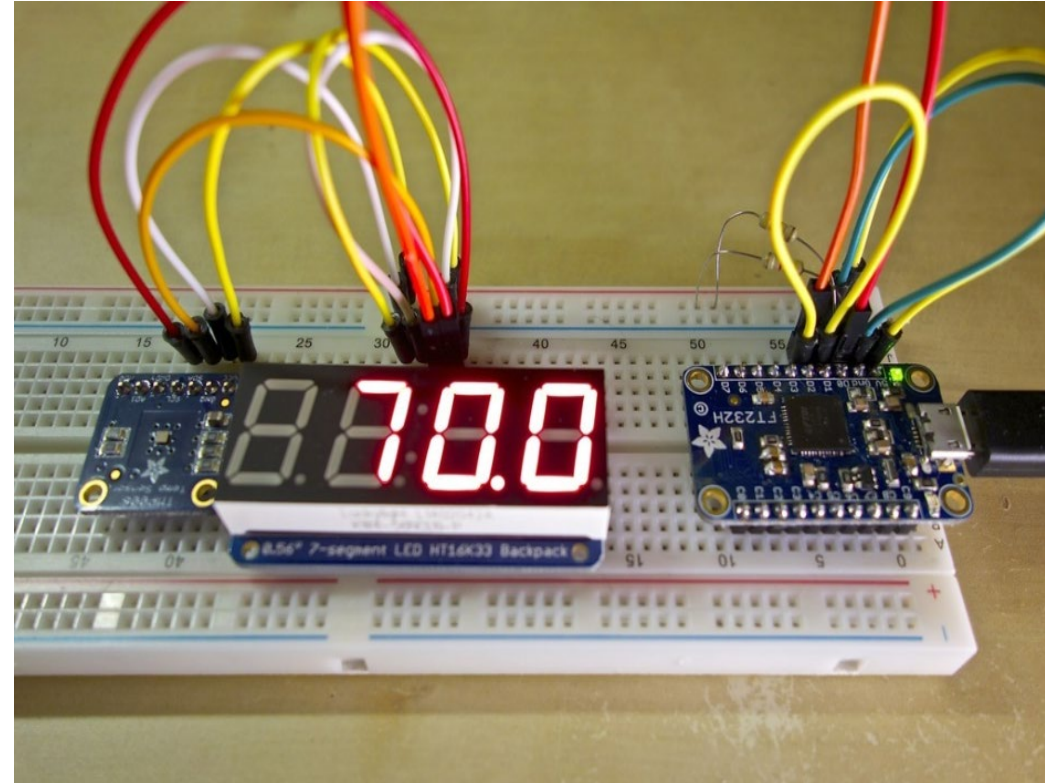
Give the computer one job first; expand after it proves itself.

But what about GPIO?

A laptop does not fully replace a Pi, Arduino, or ESP32 — but a USB adapter board can cover many experiments.



FT-232H gives USB-connected I²C, SPI, and GPIO-style experimentation. Cost \$15.00



Good enough for many sensors, displays, and bench projects. Works well with Python or C

Laptop + FT-232H can be a practical middle ground for radio-room tinkering.

A Pi is wonderful for certain things — but the complete setup changes the math, especially now at \$200-300 for a Pi5 with 8 or 16GB

Raspberry Pi Route

Board price very high now

Add power, storage, case, cooling, monitor, keyboard, mouse, cables.

Still the right answer for tiny, low-power, embedded projects

Idle power = 3-6 watts

Used Laptop Route

Screen, keyboard, pointing device, Wi-Fi, battery, SSD, case all included

Often cheaper as a complete general-purpose computer

Not tiny — but very convenient

Some laptops draw only 6-10 W at idle
Almost equal to the Raspberry Pi

Laptop battery gives you built-in UPS

The claim is not “never buy a Pi.” The claim is “do the complete-system math.”

Safe first-buy formula

- Dell Latitude or Lenovo ThinkPad
- 8th Gen or newer Core i5 or i7 target
- 16 GB RAM if possible
- 256–512 GB SSD
- Working battery and charger
- 30-day returns
- Good seller reputation
- No BIOS lock, no “for parts” surprises



If you are not comfortable opening it, do not buy one missing RAM, SSD, battery, or charger.

Older does not mean useless: Even a 10+ year-old unit has more to give

Dave's old Roku-issued **Dell Latitude 7480** is a proof point: an older business laptop can still feel slick with a Linux desktop. This is a Core i7-6600 from 2016 running **Zorin Linux 18**: This is my vote for the most Windows-like, but there are hundreds of other very good ones: **Mint**, **Fedora**, or **Ubuntu**. All are free!



Good for web, email, logging, radio programming, and Linux learning.

Not ideal for heavy video editing or giant browser-tab piles.

Price and job matter more than model-year pride.

Target 8th Gen or better when buying for others; but don't throw away a useful older Linux box

Linux: scary name, simple idea

For this audience, Linux should feel like a practical desktop, not a command-line punishment.

Looks familiar

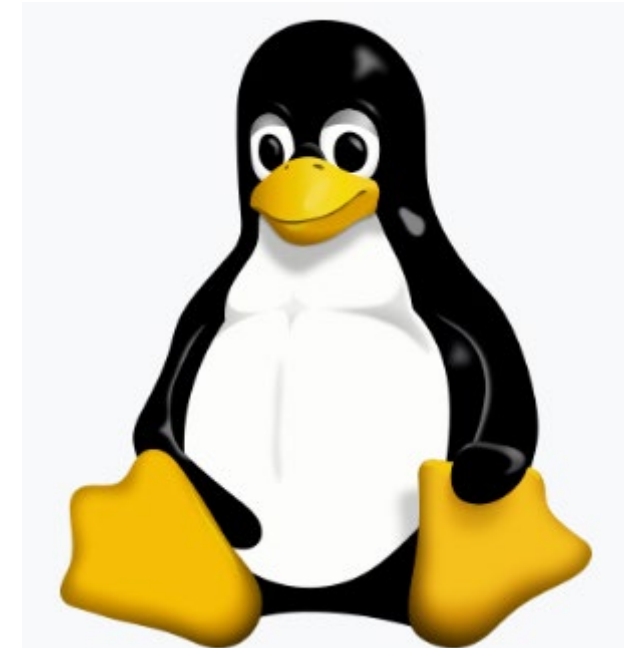
Browser, files, Wi-Fi, sound, updates, and settings.

Runs lighter

Older hardware can feel faster without Windows overhead.

Pick one job

Logging, radio programming, FT8, Zoom, or project station.



Tux the Linux Mascot

You do not have to become a Linux guru to use a Linux laptop.

Linux can be a ready-to-use ham radio desktop

FT8 / weak signal

WSJT-X, JTDX

Radio programming

CHIRP

LoTW uploads

TrustedQSL

SDR receiving

Gqrx, CubicSDR, SDR++

Digital modes

Fldigi, Flrig

Logging

CQRLog, KLog, Cloudlog in a browser

APRS / packet

Dire Wolf, Xastir, YAAC

Satellites / tracking

Gpredict, GridTracker, Hamlib tools

Pick one task first. You do not need to master everything.



Make your laptop a NAS with a \$100 external USB-C box of drives



CenMate 4-Bay 10Gbps
HDD Enclosure with Fan
from Amazon

NAS =
Network
Attached
Storage

Bonus round: HP ProDesk and EliteDesk mini/SFF boxes

Sometimes you do not need a laptop. A small desktop can be a great always-on radio-room or home-server box. Generally 10-20% faster laptop with similar CPU

Mini PCs

Tiny, quiet, low power, easy to hide near a router or radio bench.



SFF desktops

More ports, easier service, roomier cooling, can add GPU, often very cheap.



**Look for 7th/8th-gen or newer Core i5/i7 units, SSDs, RAM, and power adapters included.
SFF only needs power cord, mini needs laptop-style external power supply**

HP Prodesk or Elitedesk Mini and SFF PCs with Core i5-8500 CPU



My HP Prodesk SFF with Jellyfin and an SSD

Try it yourself—live 24/7 now:

<https://jellyfin.daveandrus.net>

Login: hamfun

Password: hamfunnight



Need help or have questions? Email me:
question@k7daa.com

BOTTOM LINE

The cheapest useful computer may already have a screen, keyboard, battery, and SSD



A retired business laptop comes with a built-in UPS, monitor, keyboard, webcam, battery, case, and useable CPU power — for about the same practical money as a Raspberry Pi. The Pi wins in size, laptop wins everywhere else

Buy for
the job

Read the
listing

Check RAM / SSD
/ battery

Use Linux
when it fits

Q&A / live listing walk-through

Dell Latitude 54xx: boring, useful, upgrade-friendly

Model	Year	CPU	RAM	Dave note
5480	2017	7th Gen	2 SODIMM	Cheap Linux machine; very serviceable
5490	2018	8th Gen	2 SODIMM	One of the best cheap buys today
5400	2019	8th Gen	2 SODIMM	Modern enough for Linux or light Windows use
5410	2020	10th Gen	2 SODIMM	Good thermals and mature USB-C
5420	2021	11th Gen	2 SODIMM	Big CPU and graphics jump with Iris Xe

54xx lesson: less glamorous can mean cheaper and easier to upgrade.

Dell Latitude 74xx: nicer carry machines, more caveats

Model	Year	CPU	Dave note	Watch out
7480	2017	7th Gen	Solid Linux PC if cheap	Dual-core ages faster
7490	2018	8th Gen	Refurb value sweet spot	Battery condition
7400	2019	8th Gen	Premium chassis, good battery life	Exact config matters
7420	2021	11th Gen	Nicest “modern enough” Latitude	Check RAM situation
7430/7440	2022–23	12th/13th Gen	Genuinely modern feel	Price rises quickly

Premium thin models are where soldered RAM becomes a bigger risk.

ThinkPad shortlist: T-series and X-series

Model	Year	CPU	Dave note	Typical role
T480 / T480s	2018	8th Gen	Legendary refurb sweet spot	Budget / value
T490 / T490s	2019	8th / 10th Gen	Transition generation	Shop carefully
T14 Gen 1	2020	10th / Ryzen 4000	Ryzen versions desirable	Good value
T14 Gen 2	2021	11th / Ryzen 5000	Excellent balance	Best balance
X13 Gen 2/3	2021–22	11th/12th/Ryzen	Great smaller machine	Everyday computer

ThinkPad lesson: conservative styling, great community, strong Linux reputation.

RAM: compatibility beats bragging rights

DDR4 SODIMM

Common in many bargain business laptops. Match the laptop's supported type.

DDR5 / LPDDR

Newer machines may use DDR5 or soldered LPDDR. Check before buying.

Speed ratings

The laptop decides the actual speed. Do not overpay for fast RAM in an old laptop.

Used RAM

Can be a bargain from a reputable seller, especially for experiment machines.



Rule: buy compatible, reputable RAM — not the highest number on the listing.

SSD: check the shape and the interface

NVMe M.2

Fast and common in modern business laptops. Usually the target.

SATA M.2

Same gumstick shape can be a different interface on older systems.

2.5-inch SATA

Some older laptops use a rectangular drive and may need a caddy.

Drive missing

Budget for drive, screw, bracket, and install time before calling it cheap.



Rule: “M.2” alone does not prove the SSD will work.

Battery health: check it before the return window closes

Windows

Open Command Prompt
and run:
`powercfg /batteryreport`

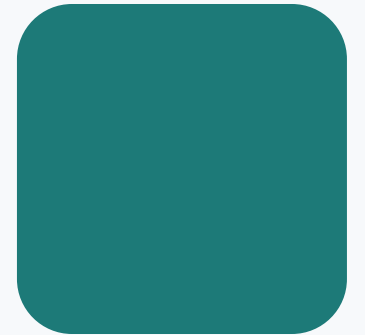
Then open the generated
HTML report.

Linux

Use Settings → Power,
Power Statistics, or the
desktop's battery panel.

BIOS

Many business laptops
show health, cycles, and
battery status in setup.



Original capacity versus full-charge capacity tells the useful story.

Dell Latitude 54xx Series By Year

Model	Year	CPU Generation	RAM Situation	Notes	eBay Price Range \$
Dell Latitude 5480	2017	Intel 7th Gen (2 cores)	2 <u>SODIMM</u> slots	Excellent cheap Linux machine; very serviceable	80-160
Dell Latitude 5490	2018	Intel 8th Gen	2 <u>SODIMM</u> slots	One of the best buys today—major CPU upgrade	80-150
Dell Latitude 5400	2019	Intel 8th Gen	2 <u>SODIMM</u> slots	Modern enough for Windows 11/Linux daily use	80-150
Dell Latitude 5410	2020	Intel 10th Gen	2 <u>SODIMM</u> slots	Better thermals and USB-C maturity	80-160
Dell Latitude 5420	2021	Intel 11th Gen	2 <u>SODIMM</u> slots	Big CPU & graphics jump with Iris Xe	120-250
Dell Latitude 5421	2021	Intel 11th Gen H-series	2 <u>SODIMM</u> slots	More powerful but hotter/heavier	115-350

Dell Latitude 74xx Series By Year

Model	Approx Year	CPU Generation	USB-C Charging?	CPU Rating	Notes	Avg eBay Price \$	
Dell Latitude 7370	2016	Intel 6th Gen Core	Yes	+	Thin premium model, <u>fanless configs</u> existed	70-100	
Dell Latitude 7380	2017	Intel 7th Gen Core	Partial/optional	+	Traditional successor line before quad-core jump	90-130	
Dell Latitude 7480	2017	Intel 7th Gen Core	Partial/optional	+	Solid build, dual-core CPU ages poorly but good Linux PC	90-130	
Dell Latitude 7390	2018	Intel 8th Gen Core	Yes	++	Big leap: quad-core U-series <u>CPUs</u>	80-160	
Dell Latitude 7490	2018	Intel 8th Gen Core	Yes	++	One of the sweet spots for refurb value	90-170	
Dell Latitude 7300	2019	Intel 8th Gen Core	Yes	++	Dell renumbering era begins	90-160	
Dell Latitude 7400	2019	Intel 8th Gen Core	Yes	++	Premium chassis, better battery life	100-160	
Dell Latitude 7310	2020	Intel 10th Gen Core	Yes	++	Slight CPU bump, still mostly incremental	100-210	
Dell Latitude 7410	2020	Intel 10th Gen Core	Yes	++	Good thermals/build, but not hugely faster than 8th Gen	120-240	
Dell Latitude 7320	2021	Intel 11th Gen Core	Yes	+++	Major <u>iGPU</u> improvement with Iris Xe	120-270	
Dell Latitude 7420	2021	Intel 11th Gen Core	Yes	+++	One of the nicest “modern enough” Latitudes	150-250	
Dell Latitude 7330	2022	Intel 12th Gen Core	Yes	+++	Hybrid P/E-core architecture arrives	220-320	
Dell Latitude 7430	2022	Intel 12th Gen Core	Yes	+++	Strong performance jump over 10th/11th Gen	250-350	
Dell Latitude 7340	2023	Intel 13th Gen Core	Yes	+++	Refined 12th Gen platform	320-540	
Dell Latitude 7440	2023	Intel 13th Gen Core	Yes	+++	Excellent enterprise refurb candidate	370-520	
					General 74xx notes:		
					Black or charcoal body as compared to the 54xx series silver or gray color.		
					More premium feel and options than 54xx models, sometimes better, brighter screens		
					Some models, especially later ones, have fixed RAM. Avoid 4-8 GB on these		
					Generally thinner than 54xx by small amount		
					Next step above Latitude 74xx is Dell Precision, a more workstation heavier type		
					<u>Precisions</u> often weigh 7+ pounds, have NVIDIA <u>GPUs</u> , larger screens 15-16 inches		

Lenovo Thinkpad Series By Year

Model	Approx. Year	CPU Generation	USB-C Charging?	CPU Rating	Notes	Avg eBay Price \$
ThinkPad T470	2017	Intel 7th Gen Core	Partial/Yes	+	Last era with bridge battery options	80-160
ThinkPad X270	2017	Intel 7th Gen Core	Partial/Yes	+	Small, rugged, but only dual-core CPUs	80-180
ThinkPad T480	2018	Intel 8th Gen Core	Yes	++	Legendary refurb sweet spot	190-300
ThinkPad T480s	2018	Intel 8th Gen Core	Yes	++	Slimmer/lighter premium version	180-260
ThinkPad T580	2018	Intel 8 th Gen Core	Yes	++	*15.6 inch display version of T480	150-300
ThinkPad X280	2018	Intel 8th Gen Core	Yes	++	Compact travel machine	170-220
ThinkPad T490	2019	Intel 8th Gen / 10th Gen	Yes	++	Transition generation	195-245
ThinkPad T490s	2019	Intel 8th Gen / 10th Gen	Yes	++	Premium thin-and-light	160-225
ThinkPad X390	2019	Intel 8th Gen / 10th Gen	Yes	++	Compact ultrabook-style	150-270
ThinkPad T14 Gen 1	2020	Intel 10th Gen or Ryzen 4000	Yes	++ / +++	Ryzen versions are especially desirable	180-280
ThinkPad X13 Gen 1	2020	Intel 10th Gen or Ryzen 4000	Yes	++ / +++	Successor naming replaces X390	200-280
ThinkPad T14 Gen 2	2021	Intel 11th Gen or Ryzen 5000	Yes	+++	Excellent balance of age/performance	200-300
ThinkPad T14s Gen 2	2021	Intel 11th Gen or Ryzen 5000	Yes	+++	Very refined ultraportable	190-320
ThinkPad X13 Gen 2	2021	Intel 11th Gen or Ryzen 5000	Yes	+++	Great travel machine	200-320
ThinkPad T14 Gen 3	2022	Intel 12th Gen or Ryzen 6000	Yes	+++	Major CPU jump	280-370
ThinkPad T16 Gen 1	2022	Intel 12th Gen or Ryzen 6000	Yes	+++	Bigger-screen alternative	360-600
ThinkPad X13 Gen 3	2022	Intel 12th Gen or Ryzen 6000	Yes	+++	Very modern-feeling	270-380
ThinkPad T14 Gen 4	2023	Intel 13th Gen or Ryzen 7000	Yes	+++	Current refurb darling	300-360
ThinkPad T16 Gen 2	2023	Intel 13th Gen or Ryzen 7000	Yes	+++	Strong desktop replacement-lite	600-1000

A few “Dave-style practical observations” for used Dell Latitude Laptops

- **8th Gen Intel (7390/7490 era)** was the watershed moment.
Going from 7th-gen dual-core to 8th-gen quad-core made these machines age *far* more gracefully than Dell probably wanted. A 7490 with dual-channel RAM still feels surprisingly competent in 2026.
- **11th Gen (7420)** is where Intel’s integrated graphics stopped feeling embarrassing.
Iris Xe is a *huge* jump over UHD 620 for Linux desktop smoothness, retro gaming, video acceleration, and general snappiness.
- **10th Gen** is kind of the awkward middle child.
Better than 8th Gen, yes — but often not enough better to justify the price delta on the used market.
- **USB-C charging:**
By the 7390/7490 generation, USB-C Power Delivery charging became effectively mainstream on these systems, even when Thunderbolt was optional.
- **Your current “sweet spot”** for bargain hunting:
 - Budget/value: 7390 / 7490
 - Best balance: 7420
 - “Feels genuinely modern”: 7430 / 7440
- And yes... Dell’s numbering reset absolutely *does* feel like somebody dumped Scrabble tiles down a staircase and called it a product strategy. They do not follow in numerical order—that would’ve been too easy!

Dell	Lenovo	Role
Latitude 5xxx	<u>ThinkPad L-series</u>	Mainstream corporate
Latitude 7xxx	<u>ThinkPad T-series</u>	Premium business
Latitude 9xxx	<u>ThinkPad X1 series</u>	Executive ultraportable
Precision	<u>ThinkPad P-series</u>	Mobile workstation

A Comparison of Dell and Lenovo Business-class Laptops If you like...	Lenovo equivalent
Dell Latitude 7490	<u>ThinkPad T480</u>
Dell Latitude 7420	<u>ThinkPad T14 Gen 2</u>
Dell Precision 7560	<u>ThinkPad P15 Gen 2</u>

Dell Latitude	<u>ThinkPad T-series</u>
Slightly sleeker styling	More conservative/utilitarian
Often easier parts sourcing in US	Huge enthusiast/repair community
Generally excellent docks	Legendary keyboards
Good Linux compatibility	Often exceptional Linux compatibility
Dell BIOS/tools fairly polished	Lenovo BIOS usually extremely configurable

Dell Precision	<u>ThinkPad P-series</u>
Often slightly more modern industrial design	More “engineer tool” feel
Excellent thermals on larger models	Often more upgrade-friendly
Common in CAD/engineering firms	Common in Linux/ <u>dev</u> /engineering shops
<u>RTX A-series options</u>	Same
Similar pricing new	Similar refurb bargains later