

## Can You Believe - A Good Computer for \$200?

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Remember when a good computer cost about two thousand dollars? Well, you can now purchase a new computer one tenth of that. And the \$200 computers that are becoming available at that price are ultimately more powerful than those expensive computer of old.

Wow! A good computer for \$200?? How is that possible now? Well, not only have hardware prices tumbled, but Microsoft is coming to the aid of the average computer buyer. They are trying very hard to compete with the current sales of Chromebooks, which have recently picked up in popularity.

Microsoft is helping computer manufacturers and purchasers by lowering, and in some cases, eliminating, the cost of the Windows operating system. This is being done to combat Chromebooks which have recently picked up in popularity. Chromebooks are laptops that run on the free Google Chrome operating system rather than on the Windows operating system. Many of them are selling in the \$200 range.

So Microsoft is offering Windows 8.1 with its Bing search engine as the OS for these cheaper PCs. Although this is a special version of the operating system, the only change is that Bing is the default search engine in Internet Explorer. Other than that it is the same as the latest version of Windows 8.1.

Microsoft is trying to stem the tide of defections from Windows and to bolster the use of its Bing search engine and OneDrive cloud storage. In some cases a limited subscription to Microsoft's Office 365 subscription service may be included to entice people to continue paying that yearly subscription fee and to use Microsoft's cloud storage.

Hewlett-Packard, Dell and Lenovo are all announcing these Windows 8.1 with Bing laptops for around \$200. Rumors are that a 7" or 8" HP Stream laptop may be available for the holiday season selling at closer to \$100. Although the manufacturer will determine the type of device this cheaper OS will be used on, it is expected that most will be laptops rather than tablets or desktops.

Most of the Windows laptops that are currently offered under this program have 1366 x 768 pixel resolution screens, good hard drive storage, either Intel or AMD processors, and HDMI ports. You may not want to use them for extensive video edition or CAD programs, but they should be adequate for email, Web surfing, basic computing and, light gaming.

One drawback of many of these laptops is poor battery life. Although most have a battery life of about four hours, this is only half of what some high-end laptops offer. Also, if you purchase one, try to get one with 4GB of memory rather than 2 GB.

The prices on these computer may or may not be permanent, but they are sure to keep the prices moving in the right direction for consumers.