

# Everything you need to get started with your new Netbook

-Brian Yuhnke

After a lurking interest for the past year, I finally broke down and purchased a Netbook. It was one of those right time right price type of situations and now a few weeks later, I'm confident I made the right decision. One thing that has surprised me as I have been setting it up has been the lack of resources out there. These aren't your normal laptops and there are some things that should be considered. So I figured I'd document my experiences to help those that may be in the same boat I was in.

First off, we really need to think about what the netbook is. I won't get into technical details and history, there are plenty of resources out there and you can start at the [wikipedia entry](#). But I do want to point out a few things. Repeat after me: "A netbook is not built for running processor intensive applications." I have heard from so many who purchased one only to complain about how slow it is. It's very efficient and can be a speedy little workhorse but don't expect it to run Photoshop or Outlook like your quadcore desktop does. A netbook, is great for surfing the web, checking email, sending instant messages, [lifecasting](#), creating a quick audio podcast and listening to music.

## The netbook I purchased was an [Asus Eee PC 901](#). It came with the following:

**Processor** - [Intel Atom Processor](#) - Now a standard in most netbooks. If shopping, make sure it has the Atom processor.

**Memory** - 1gb DDR2. I wouldn't go less than 1gb especially if you have Windows XP though I've read that 2gb isn't necessary. I can't vouch for all netbooks but adding memory to the Asus is a very easy process.

**Operating System** - Windows XP. I have years of experience with XP so this is very comfortable for me. Many netbooks come with a version of Linux optimized for the netbook/web experience. Linux does run a bit faster and I would have been okay with it. Some manufacturers such as Dell also give you the option of having it installed with Microsoft Vista. This is a BAD IDEA and will slow down your computer considerably!!

**Storage** - 12gb Solid State Drive (SSD) - This is different than a traditional hard drive. They involve less moving parts increasing the potential for less failure and they can be accessed much faster meaning better performance. Currently netbooks can be purchased with SSD or with traditional hard drives. The traditional drives will be much larger in capacity. Unless you plan on storing your entire music collection and every photo you ever took, I'd advise on the smaller but faster SSD.

**SD Card Slot** - This is a great feature and is found on most netbooks. You can use this to move items from other devices that take an SD card such as a digital camera or pick yourself up a 32gb SD card and double your computer's storage.

**Battery** - 6 cell = 6 - 8 hrs life. 4 cell batteries are common and lighter but they will give you 3hrs maybe 4. With my 6cell the computer still only clocks in at a feathery 2.4lbs! Most of these netbooks will allow for battery upgrades.

**Webcam** - Integrated 1.3 mega-pixel webcam. I love this feature for video chat, quick snapshots etc. I wouldn't have bought it if there were no webcam.

**Screen** - 8.9-inch wide TFT LCD with a 1024 x 600-pixel resolution - this is the average screen size for most netbooks. I wouldn't go smaller.

**Bluetooth** - this is a great feature for tethering your mobile phone to access the Internet and transferring data. It also allows you to connect your Bluetooth headset for using applications such as [Skype](#). It wouldn't have bothered me if the computer didn't have it.

## Software/Applications

I had a pretty good idea of what software I was going to install when I got my Netbook. I had done the research and found apps that would optimize my experience without taxing my processor or hogging

a bunch of storage space. I also set up many web based apps that eliminate the need for any installation on your computer. I utilize these "cloud" based apps when I can. They allow your data to be stored on their sites with your account as opposed to your computer. This is great because not only are you not using up storage space but your info can be accessed on any other computer. Below is a list of the top 5 installed and cloud based applications that I am using.

1. Anti Virus - [AVG Free Edition](#) - This is the perfect free Anti Virus software for netbooks. Lightweight, completely proficient and free! There is a good chance that if your netbook came with antivirus software, it will be a trial edition and will expire within a few months requiring payment to continue. I would suggest uninstalling it and install AVG free Edition.
2. Web Browser - The first thing I did when I brought home my Netbook was to install Google Chrome. When you purchase a netbook, it will come installed with Internet Explorer or Mozilla Firefox. Both are sufficient for web browsing. But the fast running, processor saving Chrome was made for these machines. With the idea that people are going to the web more for their productivity, Google optimized the web experience.
3. Office Suite - There's a good chance that your newly purchased netbook is going to have some sort of office suite. My Asus Eee 901 came preinstalled with Microsoft Works and Star Office. Either of those will be sufficient for most document, spreadsheet and presentation editing though I prefer to use [Google's Docs, Spreadsheets and Presentation](#). This service is 100% webbased and free. It allows me to do the same the other applications do with out using up storage space on my netbook for the application install. Instead I go to the website login and create or edit my work. I can then edit these documents from any browser on any computer. If you'd rather have something on your machine, Open Office is also a great free option.
4. Instant Messaging - Instead of installing Yahoo messenger, Msn Live Messenger, AIM and so on. [Download Pidgin](#). It's a lightweight free application that will connect to all of your instant messaging services. With 16+ services available through the opensource application, I'm sure your chat addiction will be covered.
5. Media - Audio and Video files can take up a lot of space. iTunes is a resource hog so I would think twice before installing it. Make sure you plan well for your media management. Personally I don't have much of a desire to use my netbook for stored media consumption so the default media player that came with the machine is fine. I will be watching video and listening to music via the web with sites like [Pandora](#), [Finetune](#), [YouTube](#), [Vimeo](#) and [Hulu](#). I can even watch movies from my Netflix account using Internet Explorer!

## Accessories

You could accessorize your new Netbook till the day you die. These are my top 3.

1. SD card - For an affordable price you can quickly double your storage space.
2. Netbook bag - My netbook came with a comfy sleeve and along with my daily messenger bag it's a cakewalk to haul around. But there are some days I want a smaller bag when I'm carrying just my netbook. At the time of writing this bags specifically for notebooks were scarce though case logic has a nice one. I found a cool daybag called the [PR by Mountain Hardwear](#). It fits my Asus perfectly and has some extra space for any other items I may tag along.
3. Mini Mouse - The touchpad is usable but I'm so much more accustomed to a mouse. Most times when I'm accessing my netbook, I have no problem navigating with the pad but on those extended excursions it is nice to have a mouse. You can easily find a mini optical mouse for under ten bucks. Pick one up and throw it in your bag. You'll be glad you did.

So there you have it. I've been flying high for a good month with this setup and am loving it. Unfortunately there doesn't seem to be many resources out there yet so please let me know of things you have done to optimize your netbook. I hope you find this info beneficial.

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