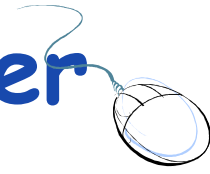


CompuChild Chatter



March 2010

Does It Matter?

Lately, I've had some inquiries about whether it matters if children learn to use PCs, which most families have, or Macs, which some schools and families prefer. I've also had questions regarding laptops vs. desktops. So, I'd like to offer my own perspective on both these issues.

CompuChild
Technology Education

☞ **PC vs. Mac or Ubuntu:** With few exceptions, the skills we learn in class are the skills any user needs regardless of the type of computer they have. They just may not look the same. For example, shutting a computer down properly works the same way regardless of the type of computer, but on a PC we start with the Start Button, on a Mac we start with the blue Apple in the upper left corner on the Finder menu, and on an Ubuntu machine we start with the Power Button in the upper right corner. They may have a different appearance, but they all perform the same function. The same is true of so many other operations we perform on a computer. In CompuChild class, we use PCs because that's the most commonly used type of computer, but we talk about the fact that things don't always look the same on other computers when we're doing the same task.

Please call 401.935.1802 or email me (robin@compuchild-ri.com) any time. Visit online at www.compuchild-ri.com.



Finally, there are many software applications that are available for multiple platforms and run pretty much the same way on all, but there are other programs that are only available for one type of platform. My view about whether to use a PC or Mac or Ubuntu computer is this: make the decision based on what you want to do with the computer, and your budget. There are still some applications and tasks which are best performed on a specific type of computer, but that has been changing a lot in recent years as applications become available for multiple types of computers. If the task you need to do most is one that is best accomplished with a program that's only available for one type of computer, or there is an industry standard for your job, then you are more likely to invest in that kind of computer, but for many people, it doesn't matter.

☞ **Laptop vs. Desktop:** This is a question that comes up more often as the price of laptops drops and they become more affordable at home. We don't use laptops in CompuChild class for the simple reason that it's very difficult for everyone in the class to see the monitor clearly. Laptop monitors are made so that only the person seated directly in front can see the screen clearly. If we were to use a laptop computer for class, we'd also have to use an additional monitor, keyboard, and pointing device (our trackball or a mouse) to ensure that everyone can see and participate. While that's still lighter to carry around, the configuration isn't what children typically see at home. My own personal opinion is that, for the moment, CompuChild class is a better learning environment if we're using a desktop -that's a standard set-up that children see and understand, even if they use a laptop with Mom and Dad. But the skills they learn in CompuChild class are the same skills they use whether it's a desktop or a laptop.

☞ **Netbook vs. Laptop:** most netbooks are not intended to replace a laptop or desktop with regard to functionality. Netbooks are intended to allow portable access to email and browsing, but not to perform the full range of tasks that can be performed on "regular" computers which have more memory, storage capability, and CD/DVD drives for software installation and creating back-ups. And finally, the cost of a netbook is often very close the cost of a laptop.

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