About iMacs

In many ways, the iMac is the product that transformed the fortunes of Apple Computers and helped turn it into the world's most valuable technology company. The first iMac was introduced in 1998 and it was a major breakthrough in the world of personal computing. This was for two reasons: it was designed to be stylish rather than being just a functional beige box; and it combined the monitor and hard drive into one unit, as opposed to two separate ones.

Since its introduction, the iMac has gone through five major versions. Some of these involved a change of the processor which they use and some involved the physical design of the body of the iMac. But throughout this process, the principle of an all-in-one computer has remained.

The evolution of the iMac

The first appearance of the iMac, the iMac G3, was in 1998 with the brightly colored, all-in-one machines that made everyone in the computing world sit up and take notice. It was the first Mac computer to have a USB port, but not a floppy disk drive. The iMac was firmly aimed at the consumer computer market, rather than the professional market that was catered for with the Power Macintosh. However, a number of creative professionals, such as graphic designers and photographers, adopted the iMac, partly because of its eye-catching design.

The first iMacs came in a line of bright, translucent colors that were unique for the design of personal computers at the time:

iMac G4

The first major physical redesign of the iMac came in 2002 with the introduction of the iMac G4. This was more than a mere upgrade; it was another revolutionary design that quickly made its mark. It was still an all-in-one design, but the monitor and the hard drive were connected by an adjustable arm. The hard drive was contained within a white, dome-shaped base and the monitor, which was now LCD, could be moved and left in any position via the flexible arm. In contrast to the earlier models, the G4 came in white only and was the first Mac to use the OS X operating system that has now evolved into the current OS X Mountain Lion. The G4 iMac was discontinued in 2004, to be replaced by the G5 version.

Intel iMacs

The next redesign of the iMac was the G5. This was a more prosaic design, although still very stylish. The G5 had a PowerPC chip but in 2006 the processor for the iMac was changed to Intel processors. This continued across the range of Mac computers and the current iMacs are now powered by i5 or i7 Intel processors. The current iMacs also have a unibody aluminum body that is similar to other Apple products, such as the MacBook.

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Don't forget

The latest version of the iMac is the neatest yet in terms of input devices. They are all wireless so there are no more cables to clutter up your desk.

iMac Specifications

There are currently two models of the iMac available, with 21.5-inch and 27-inch displays. There are two slightly different versions for each model and their specifications are:

iMac 21.5-inch

- 21.5-inch (diagonal) LED-backlit glossy widescreen TFT display with support for millions of colors

- 1920 x 1080 pixels resolution

- 2.5GHz, or 2.7GHz, quad-core Intel Core i5 processor with 6MB on-chip shared L3 cache

- 4GB (two 2GB) of 1333MHz DDR3 memory

- 500GB, or 1TB, (7200 rpm) hard drive storage

- AMD Radeon HD 6750M, or 6770M, graphics processor with 512MB of GDDR5 memory

- Built-in stereo speakers

- Built-in FaceTime HD camera

- One Thunderbolt port

- Mini DisplayPort output with support for DVI, VGA, and dual-link DVI (adapters sold separately)

- One FireWire 800 port

- Four USB 2.0 ports

- SDXC card slot

- Slot-loading 8x SuperDrive with 4x double-layer burning (DVD±R DL/DVD±RW/CD-RW)

- 802.11n Wi-Fi wireless networking; 2 IEEE 802.11a/b/g compatible

- Bluetooth 2.1 + EDR (Enhanced Data Rate) wireless technology

- Wireless Keyboard

- Magic Mouse or Magic Trackpad

iMac 27-inch

- 27-inch (diagonal) LED-backlit glossy widescreen TFT display with support for millions of colors

- 2560 by 1440 pixels resolution

- 2.7GHz, or 3.1GHz, quad-core Intel Core i5 processor with 6MB on-chip shared L3 cache (upgradeable to an i7 processor)

- 4GB (two 2GB) of 1333MHz DDR3 memory

- 1TB (7200 rpm) hard drive storage

- AMD Radeon HD 6770M, or 6970M, graphics processor with 512MB, or 1GB, of GDDR5 memory

- Built-in stereo speakers

- Built-in FaceTime HD camera

- Two Thunderbolt ports

- Mini DisplayPort output with support for DVI, VGA, and dual-link DVI (adapters sold separately)

- One FireWire 800 port

- Four USB 2.0 ports

- SDXC card slot

- Slot-loading 8x SuperDrive with 4x double-layer burning (DVD±R DL/DVD±RW/CD-RW)

- 802.11n Wi-Fi wireless networking; 2 IEEE 802.11a/b/g compatible

- Bluetooth 2.1 + EDR (Enhanced Data Rate) wireless technology

- Wireless Keyboard

- Magic Mouse or Magic Trackpad

Hot tip

By default, a new iMac comes with a Magic Mouse. If you want a Magic Trackpad instead, you have to specify this.