

Essential College Technology

Contributed by Seth Hadenfeldt
Wednesday, 11 February 2009

This college generation is the most technologically privileged group to ever exist. We have all sorts of toys, gadgets, devices, and trinkets that allow us to be constantly connected with everything in our life (school, work, social life, family, entertainment, news, etc.). So what are the hot items out there that are going to make your existence and experience more satisfying?

Smart Phones

Cell phones, more specifically, smart phones, are definitely one of the most essential pieces of technology you should be toting around; I know I can't imagine life without my Blackberry. It's perfect for keeping in touch on every level. Personally, I get my updates from Facebook, can browse the internet and answer any random thought that pops into my head, listen to music, check weather, read the New York Times (which is sent to my e-mail), and keep memos which I can refer to later. For my business life, I need a constant access to e-mail and the phone offers me that function and conveniently separates my multiple e-mail addresses so I know which account it is coming from. The easy-to-use calendar function on smart phones also lets me keep track of appointments and important events. It also shows them on my home screen for easy viewing. For school, I like to look topics up during class so it looks like I know what's going on, keep track of assignment dates without carrying an agenda, and, when needed, record the professor so I can listen later for study purposes.

Smart phones might seem very expensive, and it's true that they are going to be more than your average phone. But, they are better than your average phone and you get so much for bang for your buck. I used to pay \$60 to \$70 a month for my plan with an old, crummy phone and standard plan. But, the upgrade to a Blackberry only cost me \$80 for the phone and I only pay \$30 more a month than I used to, and I get so much more. Also, keep an eye out for special promotions and deals that companies might be running and be sure to take advantage of those.

Laptops

If you don't have a computer while you're in college, then you are definitely at a disadvantage. But with this category you will definitely want a laptop. You can easily take it with you, which is perhaps the biggest benefit. Take it with you when you go home during break, type notes in class (use Microsoft OneNote...it's amazing!) or use the internet to look up in-class topics, bring it with you when you go to the library or student union, etc. Don't forget that you can cut textbook costs by purchasing many books online nowadays. You can really increase your productivity by having your laptop.

Since most come standard with 3GB of RAM (memory), above 100GB of hard drive, and powerful processors, you will have plenty of muscle. So why not have some fun with it? While you might hear some groans from your parents and the standard, "We bought that for schoolwork, not playtime," there's no reason you need to give in to that idea. Maintain a massive library of music, watch/download/make movies, store photos of your good times, and maybe play a game or two. There's no reason the machine that helps you get your work done can't be used for enjoyment as well.

Check out Amazon.com for deals on laptops.

iPods

There are obviously tons of MP3 players and options out there, but let's be honest—the iPod is the reigning emperor of music playing devices. If you don't have one by now, then you are definitely behind (even my grandma has one!). For college students, they are great because you can listen to them while getting to class which can make that trip seem a little less bothersome. While you're in class, you can even record notes. Apple came out with a recorder extension that hooks into the headphone jack so you can easily record your professors for later playback. iPods are also useful for relaxing, running or working out, and anything else you can think of when music comes in handy.

Digital Cameras/Camcorders

These are supposed to be the best four years of your life right? Well, with all of the partying, school, and work, you might not remember all your classy moments. If you have your digital camera or camcorder, you can document your entire journey. Cameras and camcorders are not very expensive anymore and are very easy to use.

We videotaped my buddy's 21st birthday and now we can watch the movie and laugh at the various shenanigans from that night. These pictures or videos are something you will not only look at the day after, but years later when you want to relive your youthful college years. Don't forget that you can post your pictures to MySpace or Facebook to share with others. Just make sure you don't post something that will get you in trouble or make you look irresponsible to potential

employers.
Televisions

Nice, flat-panel televisions are relatively cheap compared to what they were just a couple of years ago. You can now get a 40 to 42-inch Plasma or LCD television for under \$1000. This is a great buy and it's always nice to sit back at the end of the day and watch your favorite shows on your big screen TV. True, this item is not exactly essential, but it really helps me relax and gain some composure at the end of the day.

Game Systems

A gaming system like an Xbox 360 or Wii might not seem like something you really need in college. But like the television, this is an item which can really help you relax and unwind either alone or with your friends; just be careful not to get addicted and out of control with your gaming time. All of my friends and I play Halo together a few times a week and the Wii gaming system really opens up gaming to girls, so it's definitely a more social and co-ed environment now. If you can spend the money on a gaming system, then I highly recommend it.