



Getting those Electronic Gadgets and Equipment



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What are Electronic Items?

Only ten years ago, the possibility of having cell phones with cameras would seem like something out of the Star Trek series. However, with tremendous advances in technology, this has now become a reality, being one of the many Electronic Items now available to consumers. Electronic Items refer to machines used to process and relay information whether in voice, data or visual form and are used for some of the following purposes:

- Entertainment
- Security
- Business
- Education

Some of the categories, into which these items may be grouped are: Photography, Home Video and Audio, Portable Electronics, Car Electronics, Communication, and Data Processors. Of course, there may be some overlap across categories as a result of the multi-functional capabilities of most devices.

Photography

This would include items such as Digital Cameras and Camcorders. When shopping for this purpose be sure to check for:

- √ Size and Weight. Remember, most of the time, you will have to lift them.
- √ Picture Quality. The



device's ability to translate data in order to accurately represent the recorded image

- √ Liquid Crystal Display (LCD) Panel to review pictures and to adjust the device's settings
- √ Zoom capability. This is important in order to capture as much detail when taking pictures at a distance
- √ Watermark Ability. With this function, you are able to add date, time, text or sound to your pictures.
- √ Battery Usage. Colour displays and zoom motors can quickly drain batteries. For best results, use metal hydride rechargeable batteries.

Home Video and Audio

This category of Electronic Items comprises your Plasma TVs, DVD Players, VCRs, DVD-VCR Combos, Digital Video Recorders and Satellite Receivers. When purchasing these items be sure to pay special attention to:

- √ Ease of Use
- √ Clarity of picture and sound produced
- √ Locations in the home where equipment will be set up to determine wiring needs and



suitability based on acoustics and lighting

- √ Installation Costs
- √ Compatibility of items which will be interconnected/connected
- √ Outlets for Interconnectivity
- √ Energy efficiency

Portable Audio and Video Electronics

Electronic items falling within this category include for example, your Car CD Players, and

Portable CD, DVD and MP3 Players. Some useful features to look



for are:

- √ Skip Protection and Shock Resistance capabilities: This refers to a built in memory buffer to ensure continuous music, skip free. With the exception of MP3 Players, Portable Players using Compact Discs tend to have moving parts which cause music to break down or skip. As such, this feature is particularly necessary where there is physical activity such as jogging or driving on bumpy roads
- √ Size
- √ Convenience

- √ Error Correction: Scratched, smudged and defective discs produce errors when being read by its players laser. The ability of the player to cope with these errors allows for smooth, continuous play. Take a scratched disc to the store and see how the players handle it.

- √ Adapters

Data Processors

Ask about:

- √ Processor and Memory. These will affect the overall speed of your system
- √ Modems for your Internet connection
- √ Hard Drive Capacity to store programmes and data when your device is turned off
- √ Software Programmes including Anti-virus protection

Smaller devices such as Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs) and other Palm or Handheld Computers are quite useful for organising your personal information as well as storing and exchanging word-processing documents and spread sheets with a Personal Computer.

Capabilities such as colour displays and multimedia functions tend to drain PDAs' rechargeable batteries which are most times difficult or impossible to replace. Look for those with expansion slots for adding Memory.

Mobile Communication

If you are planning to purchase a mobile phone make sure to :

- √ Choose a brand and model you like. You do not want to have to change your phone shortly after purchase just because you no longer like the design.
- √ Beware of the Battery life which varies among models
- √ Read the Radiation ratings. It is yet to be proven whether radio frequencies from cell phones are harmless.
- √ Pay attention to Price. Do not overspend on a more expensive model which does not have much useful additional features
- √ Check out the Accessories. These may increase the overall cost of your phone. However, if they are optional and you do not need them, do not buy them!

- √ Find out about the Functions. Apart from the basic, if functions such as Voice Dialing, Infra Red, Games etc., are important to you, find out if they are available on the phone you plan on purchasing. Also find out whether these features are not only available on your phone, but are also activated by the Service Provider.



- √ Check how easy it is to use the features
- √ Compare Capacity for Messages and Phone Numbers
- √ Ask about the Service Provider's Policy for Warranties and Guarantees

When you have selected your phone, make sure to check out rates for: peak and off peak times, calls to other Mobile Service Providers, and make a budget on how much you would like to spend each month.



Electronics Buying Check List

Create a Budget. Decide exactly how much you want to spend. This will help you tremendously in narrowing your choice.

Identify your needs. Figure out what use will be made of your purchase and whether it is actually suited for the purpose for which it is being bought.

Buy according to your needs. If not, you run the risk of spending money to acquire features which you may never use.

Shop around and compare features and prices. Check the internet. Compare what prices various models are sold for both locally and overseas to see if you are paying too much for vendors' mark-up.

Ask around. Find out from your friends and family what problems they may be having with certain models or brands and which ones they consider to provide value for money.

Don't forget the Accessories. Make sure to get the necessary cables and adapters and ensure that Controls are fully compatible with their corresponding equipment and are able to execute all the functions.

After Sales Service. One good indication of what this will be, is how well sales persons respond to your questions and concerns. Note whether they have the patience and the time to answer your questions. Additionally, as with all purchases, pay special attention to warranties and guarantees and make sure to get a proper Receipt.



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