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HP Compaq 6720s notebook

Does HP deliver at entry-level?

by Stephen Patrick published on 4 September 2008

HP has taken the notebook market by storm in recent years, so much so that it is now the world's number one seller of notebooks. It's managed this by offering machines at specific market segments. The latest is the HP Compaq 6720s, which has been designed for the entry-level market.

At just £330 (inc. VAT), this is a notebook clearly for those with basic needs. You won't be able to do anything too taxing, but as long as your needs are limited to word processing, editing photos and surfing the Internet, you'll be happy with what's on offer.

The design is rather simple, with a grey and black finish that looks decidedly basic. However, when you pick the machine up any idea of cost-cutting is banished. The casing is made from plastic but it's thick and tough and the whole machine feels solid in the hand.

The screen is a 15.4-inch Super-TFT panel that looks simply stunning. HP has designed this notebook so the screen folds back over the rear of the casing, which moves it a little more away from the eye for a more ergonomic feel. Graphics are typical for the price, using the Intel chipset. So, while it's fine for standard tasks and running DVDs, you won't be able to do anything too demanding and expect it to run.

The keyboard has good-sized keys and while we were expecting them to have a cheap feel, the action is satisfyingly impressive. Firmly affixed and with plenty of traction, this is as smooth a keyboard as you'd hope to find on a notebook at twice the price. The small touchpad and rubber mouse buttons are less impressive and let the overall feel down.

However, where this machine truly fails to impress is in the performance stakes. Powered by



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an Intel Celeron M 550 processor, which runs at 2GHz, and supported by 2048MB of memory you'll find sufficient power to run Windows Vista Basic Edition with ease. However, we found applications tended to load slowly and there is a sluggish feel to the performance that you simply don't find with more expensive notebooks. The basic specification is rounded out with the 160GB hard drive.

This lack of performance is also apparent in the battery life of the 6720s. Weighing 2.7kg, there is a fair degree of portability about this machine. Sadly, we managed to get less than 3 hours from the battery, so you won't want to carry it around with you regularly.

As the screen covers the back of the 6720s when open, HP has been forced to push the ports onto the front and sides. That said, extra features are kept to a minimum. You'll find a DVD rewriter, three USB ports, ExpressCard, Ethernet and modem ports. There is also a SD slot located on the front of the chassis.

VERDICT

We like the HP Compaq 6720s. Sure, it's not a machine that will meet your needs for years, as you'll no doubt soon outgrow the rather basic specification. However, the screen and keyboard are great and the overall feel is one of excellent value for money. If your needs are basic, this is a good notebook for the price.

At a glance

What is it?

Budget notebook

Good

Great price, good keyboard, solid design

Bad

Low spec, poor battery life

Verdict

A great notebook for the price, as long as your needs are reasonably basic

Price £330

Our score

8/10

Your score

?/10