



MacBook Neo vs. MacBook Air Buyer's Guide: 40 Differences Compared

Summary

The MacBook Neo is Apple's new entry-level laptop, priced \$500 less than the MacBook Air. It offers a smaller display, less powerful A18 Pro chip, and fewer features like a backlit keyboard and haptic trackpad. The MacBook Air, with its M5 chip, larger display, and more advanced features, is better suited for users who need higher performance and more flexibility.

Hartley Charlton Wednesday March 4, 2026 9:17 AM PST



The [MacBook Neo](#) is now Apple's entry-level MacBook, undercutting the [MacBook Air](#) by \$500. To deliver such a dramatically lower price, the MacBook Neo has a significant number of tradeoffs. Here's everything that's different between the two devices.

Apple's introduction of the MacBook Neo expands the company's laptop lineup with a far more affordable entry point, sitting well below the MacBook Air in both price and capability. While the two machines share a similar size and lightweight design, they are aimed at very different types of users. The MacBook Neo focuses on delivering the essentials of the Mac experience at the lowest possible cost, while the MacBook Air offers significantly more performance, features, and flexibility.

Design

The MacBook Neo and the 13-inch MacBook Air have similar dimensions. The MacBook Air remains thinner, but the MacBook Neo has a slightly smaller overall footprint owing to its smaller display. Both machines weigh 2.7 pounds (1.23 kg).

	MacBook Neo	MacBook Air
Height	0.50 inch (1.27 cm)	0.44 inch (1.13 cm)
Width	11.71 inches (29.75 cm)	11.97 inches (30.41 cm)
Depth	8.12 inches (20.64 cm)	8.46 inches (21.5 cm)

There are still some notable design differences. The MacBook Neo does not have a backlit keyboard or a haptic trackpad, and only has [Touch ID](#) when configured with 512GB of storage for an extra \$100. They are also available in different selections of color options, with the MacBook Neo's color extending to the Magic Keyboard in a lighter shade.

MacBook Neo	MacBook Air
Available in Silver, Blush, Indigo, and	Available in Silver, Sky Blue, Midnight, and
Touch ID on 512GB models only	Touch ID
Magic Keyboard or Magic Keyboard with Touch ID	Backlit Magic Keyboard with Touch ID
Color-matched Magic Keyboard	Black Magic Keyboard
Mechanical Multi-Touch trackpad	Haptic Force Touch trackpad with pressure-sensing capabilities
	Display "notch"

Display

The MacBook Air's display is slightly larger and supports True Tone and P3 wide color. Both are Liquid Retina displays with 500 nits of brightness.

MacBook Neo	MacBook Air
13-inch Liquid Retina display	13.6-inch Liquid Retina display (15-inch model also available)
2408 by 1506 pixel resolution	2560 by 1664 pixel resolution
sRGB	Wide color (P3)
	True Tone technology
Thicker display borders	Slimmer display borders

Performance

The MacBook Neo is Apple's first Mac to contain an [iPhone](#) chip. The A18 Pro is still a capable chip, but the M5 is around 20% faster for single-core tasks and 80% faster for multi-core tasks. The M5 chip also has more than double the GPU throughput of the A18 Pro and features Neural Accelerators.

MacBook Neo	MacBook Air
Apple A18 Pro chip	Apple M5 chip
Made with TSMC's second-generation 3nm process (N3E)	Made with TSMC's third-generation 3nm process (N3P)
6-core CPU	10-core CPU
5-core GPU	8-core GPU
	Neural Accelerators
8GB unified memory	16GB, 24GB, or 32GB unified memory
60GB/s memory bandwidth	153GB/s memory bandwidth

Battery and Charging

The MacBook Air has up to two hours of extra battery life over the MacBook Neo, along with support for charging via [MagSafe 3](#) and fast charging.

MacBook Neo	MacBook Air
Integrated 36.5-watt-hour lithium-ion battery	Integrated 53.8-watt-hour lithium-polymer battery
16-hour battery life	18-hour battery life
	MagSafe 3 charging
	Fast-charge capable with 70W USB-C Power Adapter or higher
Comes with 20W USB-C Power	Comes with 40W Dynamic Power Adapter with

Cameras, Speakers, and Microphones

The MacBook Air has a superior array of camera and audio hardware, resulting in a slightly better experience with video calls, listening to music, and recording audio.

MacBook Neo	MacBook Air
1080p FaceTime HD camera	12MP Center Stage camera
	LED webcam indicator light
	Desk View support
Dual-speaker sound system	Four-speaker sound system
	Spatial Audio with dynamic head tracking when using supported AirPods

Dual-mic array with directional beamforming	Three-mic array with directional beamforming
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Connectivity

The MacBook Neo's connectivity is more limited than that of the MacBook Air. While both have two USB-C ports, the MacBook Air's are considerably more capable in terms of data transfer and external display support.

MacBook Neo	MacBook Air
Wi-Fi 6E connectivity	Wi-Fi 7 connectivity
One USB 3 (10 Gb/s) port and one USB 2 port (480 Mb/s)	Two Thunderbolt 4 ports (40 Gb/s)
Support for one 4K external display at 60Hz	Support for two 6K external displays up 60Hz or 4K at 144Hz
3.5mm headphone jack	3.5mm headphone jack with support for high-impedance headphones
	Magnetic MagSafe 3 charging port

Other Differences

The most significant difference between the MacBook Neo and the MacBook Air is price: The MacBook Air costs \$500 more. It is also much more configurable, with higher amounts of memory and storage available.

MacBook Neo	MacBook Air
	Ambient light sensor
256GB or 512GB storage	512GB, 1TB, 2TB, or 4TB storage
Starts at \$599	Starts at \$1,099

Which to Choose?

Choosing between the MacBook Neo and the MacBook Air primarily comes down to how demanding your needs are and how much you want to spend. The MacBook Neo is clearly positioned as Apple's most accessible notebook, delivering the core Mac experience at the lowest possible price. For users who primarily need a reliable computer for basic everyday tasks, the Neo provides enough performance. Its lower cost also makes it an appealing option for households purchasing multiple computers, such as for kids or family use.

For first-time Mac owners, the MacBook Neo is also likely to be the most sensible starting point. It offers the same software experience as Apple's more expensive laptops, allowing new users to explore the platform without a large financial commitment. In many cases, buyers moving from inexpensive Windows laptops or Chromebooks will find the Neo significantly faster and better built than devices in the same price range.

The MacBook Air, by contrast, is aimed at users who expect higher performance, greater longevity, and a more feature-rich, premium experience. Its more powerful M5 chip, memory options, larger display, and significantly more capable connectivity make it far better suited to multitasking, professional workloads, and creative applications. Users who regularly work with large files, run demanding software, connect multiple external displays, or want a machine that will remain comfortable to use for many years will benefit from choosing the Air.

In practical terms, the MacBook Neo is best viewed as a budget entry point into the Mac lineup, while the MacBook Air remains Apple's mainstream ultraportable for most people. Buyers who simply want a dependable Mac for everyday computing can save money with the Neo, but those who want stronger performance, better hardware features, and a laptop that will scale to more demanding tasks over time should consider spending the extra money on the MacBook Air.