

Should you buy the MacBook Air now or wait?

Summary

The M5 MacBook Air, released in March 2026, is a good buy due to its new chip, long lifecycle, and current deals. However, those with recent M2, M3, or M4 models, or those needing more power, should wait. Refurbished options are also available for those seeking savings.

Thinking about buying a MacBook Air? Here's whether you should buy now or wait, the best prices today, expected future upgrades, M5 vs M4 value, and the smartest ways to save.

By [Karen Haslam](#) Managing Editor, Macworld MAY 8, 2026 8:54 am PDT



Image: Foundry

As of May 2026, it's an excellent time to buy a MacBook Air. Apple refreshed the lineup in March 2026 with the new M5 chip, meaning the current models are at the very start of their lifecycle.

Another update to the MacBook Air is not expected until 2027, so buyers can purchase now without worrying about an imminent refresh.

There are also broader market reasons not to delay. Rising component costs – particularly for RAM and storage driven

by growing AI demand – could push prices higher on future Mac models. Buying sooner may help avoid those increases.

That said, whether you should buy now depends on your current device, budget, and what features matter most to you.

Buy a MacBook Air now if...

- **You're upgrading from an Intel Mac:** Apple's transition away from Intel is accelerating, and support is shrinking.
- **You need a lightweight laptop:** The 13-inch MacBook Air weighs just 2.7 pounds, making it ideal for travel, commuting, and working between locations.
- **You're buying your first Mac:** The MacBook Air is a user-friendly entry point to macOS.

- **You need to:** You're replacing a broken or unreliable device.
- **You're a student:** The MacBook Air is one of the [best student laptops](#) thanks to its silent fanless design, long battery life, and portability.
- **You find a good deal:** If you find the M5 MacBook Air for under \$999 / £999 grab it. As of May 2026, Amazon is selling the M5 MacBook Air for [\\$949](#) and Amazon U.K. has it for [£988.97](#).

Don't buy a MacBook Air now if...

- **You already own an M2, M3, or M4 MacBook Air:** The M5 improvements are meaningful but not transformative for recent Apple Silicon owners.
- **You need power:** Creative professionals should consider buying a MacBook Pro instead. The Air's fanless design is excellent for silence and portability, but sustained workloads like 4K video exports or 3D rendering can cause thermal throttling.
- **You want a major redesign:** OLED displays, ProMotion (120Hz), and thinner chassis redesigns are rumored for 2027.
- **You're highly price-sensitive:** It would be wise to wait for larger seasonal discounts if you can.
- **You're interested in refurbished pricing:** [Apple Refurbished](#) discounts are typically around 15%, however, the M5 models probably won't appear until late 2026.

What's the best MacBook Air deal right now?

Current third-party discounts are already unusually good for a recently launched MacBook Air. However, many retailers are aggressively clearing remaining inventory, and some 15-inch M4 configurations are currently cheaper than the newer 13-inch M5, just note that there is half as much storage in the older model.

Best deal on a new MacBook Air: 13-inch MacBook Air, M5

[Get the 13-inch MacBook Air M5 for \\$949 at Amazon](#)

[Get the 13-inch MacBook Air M5 for £988.97 at Amazon U.K.](#)

Best bargain: 15-inch MacBook Air, M4 (Clearance)

[Get the 15-inch MacBook Air M4 for \\$999 at Amazon](#)

[Get the 15-inch MacBook Air M4 for £949 at Amazon U.K.](#)

Best MacBook Air prices right now



Get a good deal on a MacBook Air
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The M5 Air has already hit record-low pricing at major retailers including Amazon and Walmart, which is unusual this soon after launch. Retail discounts bringing the M5 MacBook Air down to around \$949/£989 represent some of the best pricing we’ve seen so far.

Note that when the M5 MacBook Air launched in March 2026 it had a higher starting price than the previous generation, but Apple doubled the base storage to 512GB and increased RAM to 16GB. Compared to equivalent M4 configurations, the pricing is effectively

better value because you are getting twice as much storage.

U.S. MacBook Air Deals

Configuration	Retailer	Deal Price	Lowest Ever	List Price
13-inch MacBook Air M5 (512GB)	Amazon	\$949	\$949 (April 2026)	\$1,099
15-inch MacBook Air M5 (512GB)	Amazon	\$1,149	\$949 (April 2026)	\$1,299
13-inch MacBook Air M4 (256GB) CLEARANCE	Amazon	\$899	\$738.04 (Nov 2025)	\$999
15-inch MacBook Air M4 (256GB) CLEARANCE	Amazon	\$999	\$949 (Dec 2025)	\$1,199

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13-inch MacBook Air M5 (512GB)	Amazon	£988.97	£988.97 (May 2026)	£1,099
15-inch MacBook Air M5 (512GB)	Amazon	£1,168.97	£1,168.97 (May 2026)	£1,299
13-inch MacBook Air M4 (256GB) CLEARANCE	Amazon	£799	£789.60 (Jan 2026)	£999

15-inch MacBook Air M4 (256GB) CLEARANCE	Amazon	£949	£949 (May 2026)	£1,199
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See our round up of [MacBook Air deals](#) for more.

Should you wait for Prime Day or Black Friday to buy a MacBook Air?



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If you are looking for discounts on new hardware, third-party resellers frequently offer deals throughout the year. Retailers such as Best Buy, Walmart, B&H Photo, and Costco frequently discount current and previous-generation Apple products. You may also see clearance deals after Apple launches new products as resellers clear out old stock.

Historically, prices may drop slightly further during:

- Amazon Prime Day (July)

- Black Friday / Cyber Monday (November)
- October Prime Deal Days

Black Friday remains the strongest overall shopping period for MacBooks and Apple products do sell for less during major sales events, but:

- The biggest discounts often apply to older or clearance models
- Stock can be limited
- Popular configurations sell out quickly
- Savings may only be \$50–\$100 lower than today’s discounts.

If you need a laptop now, waiting probably isn’t necessary.

Is buying a refurbished MacBook Air smarter?

[Buying a refurbished MacBook](#) can be an excellent option – especially if you want to save money without sacrificing quality.

[Apple Certified Refurbished](#) Macs are usually around 15% cheaper than brand-new models and often visually indistinguishable from new products.

Apple refurbished products include:

- 1-year warranty

- Optional AppleCare
- Full testing and inspection
- New battery and outer shell when required

There are some risks of buying refurbished to consider, including:

- Stock availability is inconsistent
- Desired colors/specs may not appear
- Third-party refurbishers vary significantly in quality
- Sometimes clearance sales on brand-new older models are actually cheaper

For most buyers, Apple Certified Refurbished is the [safest refurbished option](#).

Best refurbished MacBook Air deal right now

Apple is selling a 15-inch MacBook Air with M3, on its Certified Refurbished store in the U.S. Note that this deal is for the M3 chip from March 2024.

[Get the 15-inch MacBook Air M3 for \\$889 at Apple Refurbished](#)

Do you need to upgrade your current Mac?

You should upgrade immediately if your Mac is running on an Intel chip. If you still use an Intel-based Mac, upgrading is becoming increasingly urgent especially as Apple has confirmed that future versions of macOS will not support Intel.

Intel Macs also:

- Offer far worse battery life
- Run hotter and louder than Apple Silicon models
- Lack modern features, such as Apple Intelligence
- Lack support from developers

The most attractive reason to update is that a moving from Intel to Apple Silicon will feel like a generational leap rather than a normal upgrade.

See [How long Macs & MacBooks last: Lifespan, support & when to upgrade](#) for more information.

Who should buy MacBook Air?

The MacBook Air is widely considered the best laptop for the majority of users due to its balance of portability, battery life, and performance. In our [review of the MacBook Air M5](#) we said it delivers fantastic performance and is a winning formula that works just right for most users.

The MacBook Air is specifically recommended for the following groups:

- General Students: It is the primary choice for those focused on writing, research, and productivity apps like Microsoft Office or Google Workspace.
- Mobile Users and Travelers: Its lightweight design – under 3 pounds for the 13-inch model – makes it ideal for people constantly moving between classes, libraries, or cafes.
- Office and Everyday Users: It is perfect for casual browsing, streaming, and standard office tasks.
- Light Creatives: The 15-inch model is a strong fit for students or hobbyists engaged in light design, photo editing, or short video projects where professional-level sustained power isn't required.

For more advice about which Mac to buy read [Best Mac 2026: Every Apple Mac and MacBook compared](#) and [Which MacBook is best](#).

Who shouldn't buy MacBook Air

While the MacBook Air is the right Mac for most students and general users, it is not the ideal choice for everyone. Certain professionals, high-end creatives, and budget-constrained buyers may find it unsuitable due to its thermal design, display limitations, and port selection.

The most significant technical limitation of the MacBook Air is its fanless design that means it may throttle performance during long, intensive tasks like 4K video editing to keep temperatures optimal. If you have a demanding professional workload, perform sustained tasks like long video exports or 3D rendering, the MacBook Pro is the better choice. Note that a major upgrade for the MacBook Pro is expected in late 2026 or early 2027, potentially featuring OLED touchscreen displays and a slimmer design.

The Air is unsuitable for those who regularly perform:

- Long video exports or 3D rendering: Performance can dip during sustained heavy workloads to maintain optimal temperatures.
- Large-scale software development: Compiling massive codebases is better handled by the MacBook Pro's active cooling.
- AAA Gaming: While the M5 chip features enhanced ray-tracing, the lack of a fan causes performance to drop after approximately 10 minutes of intensive play.

What about the MacBook Neo?

Some of the traditional customers for the MacBook Air may want to consider the MacBook Neo that Apple introduced in March 2026. Starting at \$599/£599 it lowered the starting price of a Mac laptop considerably.

Because of its lower-cost, it may appeal to:

- Casual users
- Students on tight budgets
- Buyers replacing Chromebooks or older Windows laptops

However, it includes compromises compared to the Air, including:

- Lower performance
- Fewer premium features
- Base models lack Touch ID and keyboard backlighting

For most users who can afford it, the MacBook Air remains the better long-term investment, but the Neo is certainly worth considering if you are looking for a low budget option.

Which are the best retailers to buy a Mac from?

Aside from Apple ([View the MacBook Air in the Apple Store](#) and [View the MacBook Air in the Apple Store U.K.](#)). There are a number of third-party reseller that frequently discount the MacBook Air.

When shopping at a reseller our advice is to always verify:

- Processor generation
- RAM amount
- SSD size
- Whether the model is Intel or Apple Silicon

Don't make the mistake of paying for a previous generation Mac without comparing it to the specs of the current model.

Best for Lowest Prices

- [Amazon](#)
- [B&H Photo](#)
- [Walmart](#)
- [Best Buy](#)

Best for U.K. Buyers

- [Amazon](#)
- [KRCS](#)
- [John Lewis](#)

- [Currys](#)
- [Laptops Direct](#)

Verdict

The MacBook Air M5 is currently one of the easiest laptops to recommend. Apple addressed many long-standing complaints by increasing the base RAM and storage, while maintaining the Air's excellent portability and battery life.

For most buyers:

- Now is a safe time to buy
- Discounts are already strong
- Another refresh is unlikely until 2027

Waiting mainly makes sense if:

- You already own a recent Apple Silicon Air
- You want OLED or redesign changes
- You're holding out for major seasonal discounts
- You want refurbished pricing on an M5 model

Author: [Karen Haslam](#), Managing Editor, Macworld

Karen has worked on both sides of the Apple divide, clocking up a number of years at Apple's PR agency prior to joining Macworld more than two decades ago. Karen's career highlights include interviewing Apple's Steve Wozniak and discussing Steve Jobs' legacy on the BBC. Having edited the U.K. print and online editions of Macworld for many years, more recently her focus has been on SEO and evergreen content as well as product recommendations and buying advice.