

The following is a description of possible hardware solutions for use with your EHR. Please ask your EHR vendor to provide a list of hardware that is necessary for their specific product.

Tablet PCs

There are two main types of tablet PCs: a convertible tablet PC, which is a tablet with no attached keyboard (although one can be added) and a slate PC, which is basically a laptop computer with a screen that can swivel and fold onto the keyboard to create the tablet.



(convertible tablet)



(slate tablet)

Advantages	Disadvantages
Portable and lightweight, typically 3 to 4 lbs., can be used in various places to access your EHR software	Writing with a stylus can be difficult
Powerful as a PC but doesn't require a keyboard. Information is added by writing on the screen with a digital pen or stylus, much like using a paper chart	Longer learning curve in adapting to a new way of using a computer
Tablet PCs have integrated dictation capability with voice recognition software that transcribes directly into the patient record	Handwriting recognition dictionaries have not yet fully integrated medical terminology and acronyms requiring more correction
Handwriting recognition software developed for tablet PCs is excellent even for very poor handwriting	Screens are easily scratched and can become unusable without screen protectors which can be purchased for an additional cost

Desktop PCs

A desktop computer usually has a standard configuration consisting of a CPU (the brain), monitor, keyboard and a mouse. It is stationary, meaning that it is in one location and can't be moved from room to room. A desktop computer can work as part of a network, linked to other computers or as a stand alone.



(desktop pc)

Advantages	Disadvantages
Desktops are low cost and available from a wide variety of vendors	Because it's stationary, you would need to buy a desktop PC for each room in which you need access to your EHR software
Because desktops are standardized, it is relatively easy and inexpensive to find spare parts and support or to replace a machine	Desktops take up more space than a laptop or tablet PC.
Desktops have the ability to run practically any software your practice may need	You must purchase additional equipment to take full advantage of voice recognition and or handwriting recognition programs
Additional devices such as microphones, speakers and headsets are readily available at low cost	

Laptop PCs

A laptop computer is a fully functioning computer that is small enough to be portable. Laptops can take advantage of wireless as well as traditional networks. A laptop can easily serve as a desktop machine and can connect via a docking station to a larger monitor and a standard keyboard.



(laptop pc)

Advantages	Disadvantages
A laptop is small and portable and can easily be turned to allow patients to view information on the screen	Although laptops are portable, they can be heavy to carry, typically weighing 5 to 8 lbs
Laptops are less obtrusive during patient interviews	Repairs and maintenance tend to be more expensive because laptops use non-standard or proprietary parts. You may have to send a laptop off-site for diagnosis and repair
Most laptops have a fairly long battery life and/or an A/C adaptor	
Laptops use standard PC inputs such as keyboard and mouse or touchpad	

Handheld (PDA)

A PDA is a Personal Data Assistant that is small enough to be portable. PDAs can take advantage of wireless as well as traditional networks. Some Vendors have the ability to download software onto the PDA to allow patient information to be synchronized with your other systems.



(PDA)

Advantages	Disadvantages
Very small and portable	Writing with a stylus can be difficult
PDAs are less obtrusive during patient interviews	Very few vendors have ability to interface with PDAs
Large reference materials and tools easily stored and accessed	Easy to misplace/lose
Expandable memory	No real time updates with patient files

Scanners

Scanners are available in two types sheet-fed and flatbed. Although some sheet-fed scanners are usually able to accommodate insurance cards, a flatbed scanner might be advisable as it can also scan driver's licenses or other small documents. OCR (optical character recognition) software has the ability to translate typewritten text that has been scanned into text that can be edited either within your EHR or in Microsoft Word.



(Sheet-fed Scanner)



(Flatbed Scanner)

Category	Daily Volume
Workgroup	1,000 pages
Departmental	3,000 to 6,000
Low Volume Production	Up to 8,000
High Volume Production	Up to 100,000 per day