Before you go out and Purchase a Computer

Do your Research. Gather input and advice from various sources: family, friends, co-workers, computer stores, technicians, websites, and magazine articles. This way you'll have many points of view to make a good decision from.

What are you buying a computer for?
Email, Internet, Work Related Tasks, Games? This will help you choose the correct type.

How much to spend?
Come up with a general budget for what you wish to spend on a computer and any accessories.

Computer Brands
If you buy a name brand system you run a better chance of getting good customer support, service and warranties.

Buy Online or from a Store?
There will always be deals. If you go online you can customize your order, take advantage of possibly free shipping, free upgrades but you'll need to wait for the computer to be shipped to you. If you go to a store you can walk out with a system immediately. At the store you will not be able to do too much customizing and items are typically not "bundled" the monitor and the computer are typically sold separately.

Laptop vs. Desktop Models
Laptop models are portable, and if you travel a lot and need to bring your computer along, this is the obvious choice. Desktops have larger screens (although you can use a larger screen with a laptop model) and are easily expandable. Laptops are generally regarded as companion computers to desktops, but they are sophisticated enough to be your primary computer.

All in One Desktop Computers
Good for those without much desk space. The All-in-ones have the monitor and the cpu case combined together as opposed to a regular desktop computer that has the cpu connected by cable to a separate monitor. This eliminates a lot of clutter caused by the cables.

However, a regular Desktop computer may have a few advantages over the all-in-one PCs. Today, most all-in-one PCs feature notebook designed components. This helps make the all-in-one smaller but it takes away some of the overall performance of the system.
Due to the smaller size there may be fewer components and less power.

Another issue that all-in-one computers have is their upgradeability. While most desktop computer cases can be easily opened to install replacements or upgrades, all-in-one systems tend to hamper access to their components due to their small nature. This typically confines the system to memory upgrades.

The one advantage an All-in-one computer has over a notebook computer is price. Because the all-in-one does not need to be transportable, the components do not have to be designed for movement like a laptop. This helps reduce the cost of building an all-in-one over a comparable notebook computer system.

Processor Speed (CPU)
This is the most important part of the computer. The brain what drives speed and performance.
AMD or Intel? Name brands both fairly comparable but Intel may have a slight edge
These listed below are in order of which one provides faster speed, performance and multitasking: i7 Core, Core i5, Core i3. Core i3 processors are perfect for everyday applications and are a huge step up from Pentium® processors. This one is a very budget type: Celeron Intel®

Hard Disk Drive
This is where all your data and programs are stored. The larger the capacity of the hard drive the more it can store. Standard industry is now 500 Gigabytes (GB). If you're planning on storing a lot of data and graphics then buy a large capacity hard drive.

RAM

This is the memory, which allows the computer to multi-task and prevents it from continuously slowing down or freezing. Most computers nowadays come with at least 4 gigs of RAM. Often there will be a good deal that will give you 6gigs or more.

Monitor
The most common sizes are 19 and 20 inches.Most are widescreen, which are designed to fit widescreen movies better without the black bars, but give you less screen area per inch over a non-widescreen display. Those who plan to edit photos or videos may want to pay attention to differences in color, viewing angle, contrast, and brightness. You can often obtain a discount on an LCD monitor by buying it bundled with a new computer. There are also now the "touch screens" available which are becoming popular.

Keyboard & Mouse
The keyboard and mouse are very personal. Some people love the ergonomic keyboards and some keyboards have a different click than others. Keep in mind that on most laptops the keyboards are very flat and hard to use for extended periods of time. Some keyboards now come with back lighting because most keyboards are black…and hard to see the keys especially at night.

DVD Burners
Most new computers come equipped with DVD burners – some ultrabooks do not. Netbooks do not.

Sound Cards/Speakers
Basic speakers can cost approx. $30.00 to add to your system. If you want better sound quality, make sure you upgrade and include a subwoofer.

Warranties/Support
Most new computers come with a one year warranty. Many offer extended service agreements which, lengthen the warranty. Whether or not you purchase an extended service plan is up to you. Find out what is covered and weigh the price of the warranty against the price of potential repairs. When you buy a brand name you'll most likely have access to 24-hr customer support. With a used computer you may not have the luxury of these options. Also if your computer incurs a virus this is typically considered a user issue not a hardware issue. Therefore on standard warranties this is NOT covered.

Virus Protection
Many popular types available. Also free ones such as: AVG, AVAST, Microsoft Security Essentials (now called Windows Defender in Windows 8)