

2C OR NOT 2C

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(1) At this point in our society's advancement, when it comes to computers, smaller is considered better. However, this generalization is not true of the Apple 2c and the Apple 2e personal computers, for the petite 2c cannot match the potentially powerful 2e. These two computers are strikingly similar in price and basic capability, but size and potential for expansion make the 2e far superior to the 2c.

(2) When someone considers purchasing a particular personal computer, price is usually the first item he examines. The basic price of the 2e computer is much less than the price of the 2c; however, after adding the cost of a display screen, a disk drive, a printer, and extra memory, the two differ by only fifty dollars or less. Not luxuries, these additions are in fact essential if the computer is to be of any use to the serious owner.

(3) With these basic components, the 2c and the 2e are identical systems. Both computer systems can run the same number and the same types of programs; they also have 128 kilo-bytes (K) of memory and display eighty columns of print on their screens. Both can handle modems of considerable speed and have an attachable joystick and/or "mouse." Thus far, the two systems are the same; but beyond these basics, the 2e surpasses the 2c.

(4) Before any peripheral device can be added, the computer needs an interface or interpreter to communicate with that device. With the 2e, the user may add whichever brand of interface he chooses--an option which allows the owner to increase the power and speed at which the computer operates the printer, disk-drive or other peripheral. The 2c, on the other hand, has predetermined interfaces, devices already built in which limit the computer's power. In other words, the buyer of the 2c is at the mercy of the producer: he may be stuck with the clumsiness of a "simple-minded" interface and will suffer the consequent lack of power.

(5) Furthermore, the 2c is physically limited in the number and type of devices that can be added. For example, the 2c can handle two disk-drives, but to upgrade it to handle three or more drives is impossible. These extra disk-drives possible for the 2e not only greatly expand the memory capacity of the computer but enable it to perform more complex functions and to execute more complex programs. Likewise, to add such things as a synthesizer or robot arm is possible only to

the 2e. Finally, only the 2e can add a hard disk that can hold five megabytes if such a large amount of space is desired. In short, the 2e can become more than just a personal computer, whereas the 2c will remain only a cute little home computer.

(6) To sum up, if the user desires a personal computer--one that will give ample space, visibility, and satisfactory service--the 2c is just that computer. However, if power, expandability and performance is what the user really wants, the Apple 2e will more than suffice: the user can transform the 2e into a system of his own design, with speed and efficiency that far surpass its smaller relative.