Hardware and Software Recommendations

CAD Tech Student Managers - 2026-07-02 - Hardware and Software Recommendations & Information

RIT COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN (CAD)

FALL 2026 - First Year and Transfer Resource Guide

Welcome to RIT's College of Art and Design!

This website offers you recommendations for laptops, software, and hardware and gives you a preview of some of the resources you will have access to when you get to campus. It's a centralized source of information that our college's tech team updates every year based on technology needs and questions we get from students and their families.

You are not required or expected to purchase a computer before you arrive to campus. The College has nearly 30 computer labs with PCs and Macs for you to use. With your student ID, you will have 24/7 access to all the undergraduate labs.

If you do want to purchase a computer before you get to campus, you will see a chart below that includes some suggested mid-range desktop and laptop options for both PC and Macs.

FOUNDATIONS

Many of our incoming students take Foundations classes in their first year (Drawing I, 2D Design or 3D Design). The supplies for these classes will be given out to students during their first week of classes; there is no need to purchase any extra supplies at the beginning of the semester.

COMPUTER LABS AND FACILITIES

All undergraduate labs are available to all CAD students via RIT card swipe, and are open 24/7.

- Learn about our wide variety of facilities throughout the College of Art and Design HERE.
- Reference detailed maps for each floor of the primary CAD buildings – Booth and Gannett – HERE.
- Look up more detailed information and lab schedules for our CAD-specific computer labs HERE.

WHAT COMPUTERS ARE RECOMMENDED FOR THE DEGREE PROGRAMS AT CAD?

Your specific needs for computer equipment will vary widely based on your program of study. The College of Art and Design suggests that you wait on making any purchases until **after** you arrive on campus and begin your

classes. Your instructors and program directors will share recommendations with you for hardware, software, and other equipment that is most relevant for your academic major, and you will have access to relevant technology/equipment through the College-managed computer labs and for checkout through the Equipment Cages.

Generally, we suggest no less than the following **minimum** benchmark desktops and laptops specifications for the Mac and PC platforms. While we suggest the versatility of a laptop for most majors, some programs may need a more robust solution offered in a desktop computer (consult with your Program Director as noted above). You can find the latest recommended models available through RIT's Campus Store listed here: https://campusstore.rit.edu/

Prices for memory and RAM have increased significantly in the last year, but we always recommend purchasing a computer with as much RAM and biggest harddrive that you can afford, depending on the needs of your major and the software you will primarily be using.

Mid-Range Mac Laptop:

14″ MacBook Pro (~$2699)
• M5 Pro 18-Core CPU
• 20Core GPU
• 24 GB Unified Memory
• 1 TB SSD Storage

Mid-Range PC Laptop:

14″ Dell XPS 14 (~$1899)
• Series 3 Intel Core Ultra 7 z- 16cores @ 4.8GHz
• 32 GB LPDDR5x
• 1 TB SSD
• Intel Arc Graphics

Mid-Range Mac Desktop:

iMac 24″ (~$2399)
• M4 10-Core CPU
• 10-Core GPU
• 4 Thunderbolt ports
• 24 GB Unified Memory
• 1 TB SSD

Mid-Range PC Desktop:

Dell Tower Plus Desktop (~$2530)
• Intel Core Ultra 5
• 32GB, DDR5, 5600MT/s
• 1TB SSD
• NVIDIA 5060 family of Graphics cards

• 24″ DelL Pro 24 Monitor – SE2425H (min size)

A Note about Recommendations:
*Computer specs above represent the recommended **minimum** hardware needs and are updated for the upcoming academic year as new equipment is announced. We update/freeze finalized computer recommendations for the Academic year by August 1. The specs above are updated as of July 1, 2026*

SOFTWARE

Our lab workstations have a wide array of software applications that you will use for your coursework at RIT. The Adobe Creative Cloud and Microsoft word included many of the most commonly used applications.

Adobe Creative Cloud

One purchase you can save on is buying your own license for the Adobe Creative Cloud suite. RIT is an Adobe Creative Campus, and as a student enrolled in the College of Art and Design, you have free access to Adobe Creative Cloud on your **personal device** upon your arrival at RIT and do not have to purchase or renew your own license! We are committed to providing the most creative and technologically advanced tools for digital media and literacy to our students.

Click here to learn how to access Adobe Creative Cloud on your personal device.

You also have access to Adobe Creative Cloud in all CAD computer labs.

PLEASE NOTE: The free student access to Adobe Creative Cloud on personal devices extends for the duration of your academic career at RIT while matriculated as a CAD student, and ends when a student graduates from RIT, transfers to another College at RIT, or in the event that they leave RIT early.

Other Academic Software and Discounts

As an RIT student, you are eligible for academic discounts on most computer hardware and software that you will need. We recommend shopping at RIT's Digital Den as well as online and at your local retailers to get the best prices. Please note, many education discounts require some proof of enrollment or student ID.

https://campusstore.rit.edu/

STUDENT INSURANCE

As an accompaniment to any equipment purchase, all students are strongly encouraged to acquire insurance for their personal gear and any gear they check out from the CAD rental facility known as the "Cage." To learn more about insurance programs, please visit:

www.collegestudentinsurance.com

For an instant quote, select "**New York**," "**Rochester Institute of Technology**," and "**$6,000**."
This is the advised amount for first year students.

SCHOOL EQUIPMENT GUIDES

Several CAD schools/programs have provided specific supply lists linked below. If you don't find your program listed, please look below for some recommendations that can help guide your hardware/software purchases for Fall.

School of Art (SOA)

Illustration, Medical Illustration, Studio Arts Exploration, Studio Arts (Ceramics, Glass, Metals and Jewelry Design, Painting, Printmaking, Sculpture and Expanded Forms)

School of Design (SOD)

3D Digital Design, Graphic Design, Industrial Design, Interior Design, New Media Design

School of Film and Animation (SOFA)

Animation, Production, Motion Picture Science

School of Photographic Arts and Sciences (SPAS)

Advertising Photography, Fine Art Photography, Photojournalism, Visual Media, Photographic Sciences

FURTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

To learn more about other hardware and software recommendations beyond basic needs, please take a look at our advanced hardware and software recommendations. Due to the nature of some of the offers and recommendations, access to this page requires RIT user login/authentication. Just follow the RIT log in prompts to get access to this page!

Attachments

- RIT-Student-Equipment-Insurance.pdf (350.84 KB)