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## Building a Better Mouse

What do you get with a \$75 mouse? All those zippy functions. We take a look at four of the newfangled mice

by [Stephen H. Wildstrom](#)

Why would anyone spend upward of \$75 for a computer mouse when you can get a perfectly adequate one for \$15? The answer is customization. Logitech ([LOGI](#)) and Microsoft ([MSFT](#)) are betting plenty of people out there will spend the extra money and time to configure their cordless, rechargeable mice to gain a bit more control.

In the old days of mechanical mice, I hated to pay for fancy upgrades. No matter how good a mouse was, its delicate roller-ball sensors would fall victim to crumbs, coffee spills, and other gunk on my desk in a matter of months. Today, all but the cheapest mice use a light source (invisible infrared light in the latest "laser" mice) and a miniature camera to sense motion, and they are practically indestructible.

I tested four of these newfangled mice, two designed for desktops, two for portable use. All the advanced models share one useful feature: You can customize the button functions to work differently, depending on whether you are reading a document on the Web, editing a spreadsheet, or engaged in some other task.

### SEARCH AND ZOOM CONTROLS

Of the four mice I tested, the most interesting is the Logitech MX Revolution, which sells for about \$90. I was won over by the control wheel, which can either scroll slowly through a document one click at a time or fly through pages in freewheel mode. It switches automatically between the two styles by sensing what you're doing—a boon when you're working with long documents, such as large spreadsheets.

Two other handy features are the search and zoom controls. A rocker switch on the left side lets you zoom in and out on any application that supports the feature, such as Microsoft Word and Mozilla Firefox. Pressing the search button with a word or phrase highlighted launches a search for the selected text; otherwise it simply opens up a search page. But Logitech undercut this feature by making Yahoo! ([YHOO](#)) and Google ([GOOG](#)) the only search choices.

The VX Revolution (around \$65), the little brother of the MX, is meant for laptop use. It has the same basic features as its sibling, although the scroll wheel has to be switched between click and freewheel modes, and it uses a single AA cell instead of a rechargeable battery. The wireless receiver, which plugs into a USB slot on your notebook, stashes away inside the mouse and pops out with the push of a button.

### MANY OPTIONS

Microsoft's newest entry in the deluxe mouse field, the Wireless Laser Mouse 8000, is more conventional. Its strongest

feature, a carryover from the last generation of Microsoft mice, is a button that pops up a "magnifying glass," which enlarges the portion of the screen that it covers. Unlike the Logitech zoom feature, the magnifier works with any program. And it is ambidextrous, while the Logitech mice are designed for right-hand use.

The Laser Mouse 8000 uses Bluetooth wireless, so it should work with Bluetooth-equipped laptops without requiring the USB receiver. But the setup is harder than it should be. And this is the first mouse I've seen in some time from either Microsoft or Logitech that doesn't work with Macs ([AAPL](#)).

For the ultimate in portability, there's the MoGo Mouse (about \$70), a clever Bluetooth device that hides inside a notebook's PC Card slot and recharges itself while tucked in its nest. When you take it out and lift a prop that raises the back end about a half inch, the mouse becomes surprisingly comfortable to use. The one drawback is that the MoGo won't fit in the smaller PCEXPRESS slots found in the newest notebooks; the company says an Express version is in the works.

There are all sorts of other aftermarket mice available, including models optimized for game playing. And for many folks, the basic \$15 corded optical mouse with two buttons and a scroll wheel will do just fine. The only thing I'd avoid are the few mechanical mice still left on the market. The crumbs will get you every time.

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