



ATARI 400

TYPICAL PRICE: £150
STANDARD MEMORY: 16K
EXPANDABLE TO: Non-expandable
CONNECTS TO: Atari cassette, TV, monitor, Atari disk drive, printer, joystick.
ADVANTAGES: Low cost/Wide range of software.

DISADVANTAGES: Touch-pad keyboard/BASIC must be bought as an extra.

SUMMARY: Touch-pad keyboard and lack of built-in BASIC makes this machine best suited for games.



ATARI 800

TYPICAL PRICE: £300
STANDARD MEMORY: 48K
EXPANDABLE TO: Non-expandable
CONNECTS TO: Atari cassette, TV, monitor, Atari disk drive, printer, joystick.
ADVANTAGES: Typewriter-style keyboard/Wide choice of software/Interchanges software with Atari 400 model.

DISADVANTAGES: The BASIC is long-winded and difficult/Only works with Atari's own cassette or disk drives.

SUMMARY: Has a better keyboard than the cheaper 400 model, and is capable of running business as well as games software.



BBC MICRO

TYPICAL PRICE: A £299, B £399
STANDARD MEMORY: A 16K, B 32K
EXPANDABLE TO: 32K
CONNECTS TO: Cassette, TV, monitor, disk drive, Prestel, Econet to other BBC Micros, Ceefax, joysticks.
ADVANTAGES: Wide choice of software/Clear sound when amplified/Very versatile BASIC.

DISADVANTAGES: Limited colour capacity/Weak sound when not amplified/Manuals difficult to understand.

SUMMARY: This versatile machine can be easily upgraded to a powerful computing tool.



COLOUR GENIE

TYPICAL PRICE: £168
STANDARD MEMORY: 32K
EXPANDABLE TO: Non-expandable
CONNECTS TO: Cassette, TV, printer, monitor, hi-fi, joystick, plug-in cartridges.
ADVANTAGES: Typewriter-style keyboard/Clear sound.

DISADVANTAGES: Comparatively slow operation/Limited choice of software/Poor graphics.

SUMMARY: The cheapest colour computer with a typewriter-style keyboard, but needs an experienced user for its capabilities to be used to the full.

IAN MCKINNELL



JUPITER ACE

TYPICAL PRICE: £90
STANDARD MEMORY: 3K+16K
EXPANDABLE TO: 51K
CONNECTS TO: Cassette, TV, monitor.

ADVANTAGES: Includes 16K RAM pack.

DISADVANTAGES: Comes in thin plastic casing/FORTH is not the best language for the beginner/Unreliable keyboard.

SUMMARY: Good for those who wish to experiment with FORTH, and better value now that more software has become available.



LYNX

TYPICAL PRICE: £225
STANDARD MEMORY: 48K
EXPANDABLE TO: 192K
CONNECTS TO: Cassette, TV, monitor, printer, disk drive, joystick.

ADVANTAGES: Sharply defined screen display/Built-in machine code monitor/Typewriter-style keyboard.

DISADVANTAGES: Idiosyncratic BASIC/Memory can only be expanded by returning the machine to the manufacturer.

SUMMARY: A well-constructed machine with a keyboard that is pleasing to use.



NEW BRAIN

TYPICAL PRICE: £269
STANDARD MEMORY: 32K
EXPANDABLE TO: 2 Mbyte (2000K!)
CONNECTS TO: Cassette, TV, monitor, disk drive, printer, modem.

ADVANTAGES: BASIC has many features/Capacity for detailed text editing/Semi-portable.

DISADVANTAGES: Non-standard sockets easily damaged/Too complex for the beginner.

SUMMARY: This machine is widely expandable, and is a very competitive lap-held microcomputer. Includes RS232 port.



ORIC

TYPICAL PRICE: £130/169
STANDARD MEMORY: 16K/48K
EXPANDABLE TO: Non-expandable
CONNECTS TO: Cassette, TV, monitor, modem, micro disk drive.

ADVANTAGES: Typewriter-style keyboard/Four-colour printer available/Clear sound.

DISADVANTAGES: Has had reliability problems/Limited choice of software.

SUMMARY: A well-constructed computer that is a good choice for a beginner. The keys are long and narrow, but reliable and pleasing to use.