

The Dell E6500 Product Review

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The Dell E6500 is a well built laptop with a square, black case and a black, brushed-metal finish on the lid. Subtle blue LEDs above the keyboard display the status of the hard disk, power and internal devices such as WiFi and Bluetooth. There are direct short-cut buttons for controlling the volume, rather than Function key combinations. A switch on the side controls both WiFi and Bluetooth, and there's a button to launch Dell's wireless networking manager.

A full-size keyboard takes up most of the width of the case, with two speakers at the sides. The keys are a comfortable size and have a standard layout, but the keyboard flexes under heavy typing and feels unstable. The touch pad is too small for a laptop of this size, and the buttons are located far from the edge of the base, where you expect them to be, so your thumb often hits the case rather than a button.

The E6500 also has a pointing stick, which is really sensitive and uses a some sort of concave design. The corresponding mouse buttons are placed right above the touch pad, so the heel of your thumb is likely to brush the touch pad, causing the mouse pointer to move around.

Excellent performance was found on this laptop, thanks to the new 2.53GHz Intel Core 2 Duo P9500 processor and 4GB of RAM. The E6500 can use all this memory to full effect. It also includes a professional Nvidia Quadro graphics card, with drivers optimised for 3D modelling applications, rather than gaming. Battery life is well above average at just over four hours. However, at 2.7kg, it's rather heavy to carry around.

The Screen is 15.4in and is bright and the colors are distinct, with deep blacks. Unsurprisingly for a business laptop, the E6500's screen has a matt finish that cuts down on reflections. As part of the power-saving options, there's a sensor that can adjust the display's brightness to ambient lighting.

With a host of security features, such as fingerprint and smart card readers, and hard disk encryption options, the E6500 will appeal to businesses concerned about data theft. Multiple peripheral options are catered for by the inclusion of PC Card and ExpressCard slots.

However, this particular configuration will appeal only to those who need the performance, as the graphics card and processor are too much for basic office applications. If you like the look of the E6500 but don't need this much power, it's well worth using Dell's online configurator to get the specifications best suited to your needs.

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