Laptop Docking: Hub vs Docking Station Cheat Sheet

The 30-Second Rule

One external monitor + a few USB devices + travel = portable hub (like the Anker 7-in-1). Two or more monitors + Ethernet + a permanent desk = full docking station.

Port-Count Rules of Thumb

Count what you plug in daily: monitor (1 HDMI/DP), keyboard/mouse (1-2 USB), external drive (1 USB), cards (SD/microSD), charger (1 PD). If that fits in 7 ports, a hub wins on price and portability.

Need dual 4K monitors, wired Ethernet, or 100W+ charging? That is docking-station territory — budget $150-300, not $20.

Wattage Rules of Thumb

Ultrabooks (Air, XPS 13, ThinkPad X1): 65W is plenty; 85W pass-through has headroom.

15-16 inch performance laptops: check the original brick. If it says 100W+, a hub may not fully keep up under load — dock at the desk, charge direct on the road.