

Sheet1

Tape Backup Drives

The tape backup drives that met the requirements for the PC/Computing 200 are external models that conform to the QIC 150 standard and use tapes that match 3M's DC6150 and DC6250 formats for storage of 150MB and 250MB of uncompressed data, respectively. If the drive required an interface card and a SCSI version was available, we tested and priced the SCSI version (with the exception of the Legacy drive).

Product

Colorado QFA700
Colorado Memory Systems
800 S. Taft Ave.
Loveland, CO 80537
(800) 346-9881
(303) 669-6500
Price: \$1,890

Panther Tape Backup
Tandberg Data
2649 Townsgate Rd., Suite 600
Westlake Village, CA 93161
(800) 258-8285
(805) 495-8384
Price: \$1,795

Irwin 7251QE
Irwin Distribution
Division of Maynard Electronics
36 Skyline Dr.
Lake Mary, FL 32746
(800) 821-8782
(407) 263-3500
Price: \$1,895

Wangtek E5150SPK
Wangtek
41 Moreland Rd.
Simi Valley, CA 93065
(800) 992-9916
Price: \$2,199

Legacy 150 x2
Legacy Storage Systems
200 Butterfield Dr., Unit B
Ashland, MA 01721
(508) 881-6442
Price: \$1,499

Identica IDT-250
Prima Storage Solutions
3350 Scott Blvd., Building 7
Santa Clara, CA 95054
(800) 288-8273
(408) 727-2600
Price: \$1,649.

Tecmar QT-250
Tecmar
6225 Cochran Rd.
Solon, OH 44139
(800) 422-2587
(216) 349-0600
Price: \$2,390

Sigen ST250
Sigen Equipment Corp.
479 Macara Ave., Suite 803
Sunnyvale, CA 94086
(408) 737-3904
Price: \$1,795

Optima Diskovery 250
Optima Technology Corp.
17526 Von Karman
Irvine, CA 92714
(714) 476-0515
Price: \$1,795

Tallgrass FS500e
Tallgrass Technologies
11100 W. 82nd St.
Lenexa, KS 66214
(800) 825-4727
(913) 492-6002
Price: \$1,795

MaynStream 250Q
Maynard Electronics
36 Skyline Dr.
Lake Mary, FL 32746
(800) 821-8782
(407) 263-3500
Price: \$2,195

Evaluation	Score
<p>Stellar backup speeds and the largest potential capacity of any drive in its class (700MB with Colorado's own extended DC 525 tape) mark this outstanding QIC-02 drive. This doesn't excuse the Colorado QFA700's only average restore speeds or the unreliable technical support we encountered, but the QFA700 still impressed us with fast formatting, no-jumper installation, and comprehensive software.</p>	94.10
<p>Like a sports car, the Panther drive is noisy, but its blazing performance makes up for the discomfort. Its backup speeds run a close third to the MaynStream and Colorado drives, and its restore speeds are peerless. Easy installation is another plus anybody prepared to open a PC should have no problem. Industry-standard Sytos Plus software provides the interface, along with an estimated 2-to-1 compression ratio.</p>	92.30
<p>Irwin's 7251QE drive affords excellent backup and restore speeds, two levels of data compression (for a total of 500MB, or even more from an industry-standard extended DC6250 tape), and an easy installation routine. Irwin's EZ Tape software comes in DOS and Windows versions and offers handy archive librarian features. Except for a QIC-02 interface card that runs slightly hot, the hardware and software inspire confidence.</p>	87
<p>With speeds among the highest of the drives we reviewed, Wangtek's E5150 family of drives, available with either a QIC-02 or SCSI interface, is clearly on target. They ship with industry-standard Sytos Plus software, come with thorough (if not first-rate) documentation, and pose no hardware installation problems. During our testing, the company provided excellent support.</p>	86.90
<p>The Legacy 150 x2's slim, stylish appearance isn't mere camouflage: Though it's the cheapest drive we tested, it was still a front-runner in performance. Backup speeds were respectable, restore speeds zippy, and data integrity good. Other pluses include the industry-standard Sytos Plus software and availability of either a QIC-02 or SCSI interface. The drawbacks? The drive's documentation was skimpy, and hardware installation could have been easier.</p>	85.10

The Identica IDT-250 sped through backups and respectably performed restoreseven the parallel model we tested held its own against the SCSI-interface devices in this roundup. The parallel model (a SCSI version is also available) is a snap to installall you need worry about is Sytos Plus software and driversbut the documentation still assumed too much of the installers. 83.30

With an array of indicator lights that covers almost every drive function from showing the track number being accessed to indicating whether the drive is reading, writing, or rewindingthe SCSI Tecmar QT-250 always keeps you informed. Though its speeds and price are nothing special, the Tecmar drive's low-maintenance operation pays off in spades. The QTOS software is thorough and easy-to-use, and provides excellent help and the best error-diagnostic messages in the group. 82

Sigen's drive comes with one interface option, and it's the most convenient of allit plugs into your parallel port. Like the Identica, the other parallel drive in this category, the Sigen ST250 is reasonably priced and reasonably fast. Although a hair slower than the Identica and more expensive, it's free of the restore quirks that beset Prima's drive. The Sytos software provides data compression that should squeeze 500MB of information onto a 250MB tape. 80.80

The wide, thin Optima Diskovery 250 comes complete with SCSI interface, Sytos Plus software, and nice touches such as detachable rubber feet so you can set the drive either upright or flat. In addition, the Optima has fast backup and restore speeds, a low price, and 2-to-1 software-based data compression. A few quirks spoiled an otherwise good showing: Hardware installation was troublesome, and the software couldn't restore from a write-protected tape. 78.70

Topflight restore speeds and well-designed software characterize Tallgrass's FS500 line of backup drives. The File Secure software included with the QIC-02 drive provides better troubleshooting than Sytos as well as the usual data-compression and verification features. Installing the drive proved painlessno jumper adjustments requiredand operation was reliable, despite a few false starts on file restoration. 78.70

The MaynStream 250Q's backup speeds are superb faster than the other drives in this roundup by a wide margin. And the company offers toll-free tech support for more than 11 hours daily, though the thorough documentation and intuitive MaynStream software for this QIC-02 drive make the need for external support unlikely. (Optional 24-hour on-call support is available for those who can afford itor who can't afford not to have it.) On the downside, the drive lacks data compression, and restore speeds were unimpressive. 76.50