

TOP 10 CD DRIVES AND DVD WRITERS

		CD drives	Interface type	Data buffer size	Average access time	Read/write/rewrite rate	Dimensions	Packet writing and burning software	
	1	Asus CRW-5224A 0870 429 3220 www.scan.co.uk LAST MONTH 1	• £49 ex VAT • 2-year warranty • First review Feb 03	EIDE	2MB	100ms	52x/52x/24x	149x197x42mm	InCD, Ahead Nero 5.5
			This is the first drive we've seen offering blistering read/write/rewrite rates of 52-/52-/24-speed. Asus' innovative CD-RW technology also optimises CD burning for high-speed quality output while ensuring burning errors are minimised. Throw in the two-year warranty and you have the cream of the crop.						
	2	Asus CRW-4816A 0870 429 3220 www.asus.com LAST MONTH 2	• £46 ex VAT • 2-year warranty • First review Oct 02	EIDE	2MB	100ms	48x/48x/16x	149x198x42mm	InCD, Ahead Nero 5.5
			Asus also makes the second-fastest drive available, with this 48-/48-/16-speed (read/write/rewrite) model. With buffer underrun protection, dynamic suspension to cut down vibrations, Mount Rainier support and fast performance you would expect it to be expensive. At £46, though, it is one of the best deals around.						
	3	Teac CD-W540EK 020 8906 9111 www.microwarehouse.co.uk LAST MONTH 3	• £45 ex VAT • 2-year warranty • First review Jul 02	EIDE	8MB	72ms	48x/40x/12x	146x192x42mm	InCD, Ahead Nero 5.5
			The CD-W540EK combines high performance and quiet operation but is soundly beaten by the top two's higher speeds. Fine Focus control keeps the laser positioned at high speed, while Intelligent Speed Control keeps the success rate high by determining the quickest writing speed without risking errors.						
	4	Cyber Drive CW078D 0239 269 7305 www.cyberdrive.de LAST MONTH 4	• £43 ex VAT • 2-year warranty • First review Oct 02	EIDE	2MB	100ms	48x/40x/16x	146x192x42mm	InCD, Ahead Nero 5.5
			The CW078D delivers performance on a budget. On paper it is a pretty nifty drive, though it couldn't match the Teac's technology. There's buffer underrun prevention, but it offers little else in the way of cutting-edge features. In testing, the Cyber Drive wasn't quite as fast as the well-heeled Asus.						
	5	LG GCE-8400B 0870 607 5544 www.lge.co.uk LAST MONTH 5	• £45 ex VAT • 2-year warranty • First review Jul 02	EIDE	2MB	100ms	40x/40x/12x	146x185x41mm	InCD, Ahead Nero 5.5
			The LG is a competent performer with moderate test results. But whereas the Teac can hold its own even when the competition upped the ante on write and rewrite speeds, the LG isn't as fortunate. Consequently, it is a bit overpriced and underspecified when compared to the Asus and Cyber Drive.						

		DVD writers	Drive type	Interface type	CD-RW read/write/rewrite speeds	DVD read/write/rewrite speeds	Average access time	Burning software	
	1	Sony DRU-500A 0800 2623 7669 www.sonyisstorage.com NEW	• £212 ex VAT • 1-year warranty • First review Spr 03	DVD-R/DVD+R/ DVD-RW/DVD+RW	EIDE	32x/24x/10x	8x/4x/2.4x	200ms	Veritas RecordNow
			The Sony DRU-500A isn't the perfect DVD writer but it's the closest thing we've seen. It's fast, cheap and won't be redundant in a couple of years time. The software is comprehensive and it's easy to use. Sony's external version, the DRX-500UL, is ideal if space inside your PC is tight.						
	2	Pioneer DVR-A05 01753 789 500 www.pioneer-eur.com NEW	• £207 ex VAT • 1-year warranty • First review Spr 03	DVD-R/DVD-RW/CD-RW	EIDE	32x/16x/8x	12x/4x/2x	140ms	VOB Instant CD/DVD
			Cheap to buy and cheap to run, the DVR-A05 is a must for anyone wanting to burn a number of DVDs without spending hours waiting at a PC – it's astonishingly fast and leaves the competition for dust. It's not a complete solution like Sony's all-format model but it's the next best thing.						
	3	Ricoh MP125A-DP 020 8261 4031 www.ricoh.co.uk LAST MONTH 1	• £170 ex VAT • 2-year warranty • First review Oct 02	DVD+R/DVD+RW/CD-RW	EIDE	32x/12x/10x	8x/2.4x/2.4x	140ms	Ahead Nero 5.5
			Combining DVD+RW with write-once DVD+R, this internal drive offers up to 2.4-speed write and rewrite facilities and discs are compatible with most standalone DVD players. It is a fast performer whose low price, good software bundle and solid performance secure it a place in our charts.						
	4	Philips DVDRW228 0800 896 324 www.philips.com/pcstuff LAST MONTH 2	• £249 inc VAT • 2-year warranty • First review Oct 02	DVD+R/DVD+RW/CD-RW	EIDE	32x/12x/10x	8x/2.5x/2.5x	140ms	Ahead Nero 5.5
			The Philips' 2.5-speed rating should place it ahead of the glut of 2.4-speed drives but, although it was the fastest in our tests, the actual speed advantage is minor. Philips also cuts down on errors with Thermo-Balanced Writing, which adapts the method of burning to match the media.						
	5	Toshiba SDR-R5002 0800 169 4527 www.toshiba.co.uk LAST MONTH 3	• £165 inc VAT • 1-year warranty • First review Mar 03	DVD-R/DVD-RW/CD-RW	EIDE	40x/16x/10x	12x/2x/1x	130ms	VOB Instant CD/DVD
			Toshiba opts for the cheaper but slower DVD-R/RW standard in the SD-R5002. It may lack the brute force of the DVD+R/+RW format, but its 16-/10-speed CD-R/RW facilities are the fastest in the chart. DVD playback is also better, offering 12-speed as standard.						

Buying advice: DVD writers

If you wish to add recordable DVD to your PC then you'll need to consider which format is the most suitable.

- DVD-R This write-once standard has a capacity of 4.7GB and offers the best compatibility with DVD-ROMs and consumer DVD players. It is recognised by

the DVD Forum, a consortium of companies that designed the original DVD standard, and it generally tends to be the cheapest format on the market.

- DVD-RW This is also recognised by the DVD Forum. Its 4.7GB discs are reusable up to 1,000 times, although they aren't as compatible as DVD-R discs.
- DVD-RAM The DVD-RAM format is rewritable, best suited to data use and

recognised by the DVD Forum. The discs are rewritable 100,000 times but are housed in a caddy so they aren't very compatible. Single-sided discs store 4.7GB while double-sided ones store 9.4GB.

- DVD+RW This format is rewritable but not endorsed by the Forum. Its 4.7GB discs offer 1,000 rewrites and good compatibility, while DVD+R is a write-once version of DVD+RW.