

TOP 10 FLAT-PANEL DISPLAYS & GRAPHICS CARDS

	Flat-panel displays	Screen size	Max resolution	Pixel pitch	Dimensions (wxdxh)	Weight	Digital connector	USB port
1	 Benq FP791 01442 301 000 www.watford.co.uk LAST MONTH 1	17in	1,024x768	0.264mm	451x192x443mm	7.5kg	yes	no
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £399 ex VAT • 3-year warranty • First review Jul 03 <p>The FP971 incorporates outstanding specs that leave the competition for dust. It looks great, offers sharp black text and displays a wonderful colour spectrum. If you use your PC as an entertainment system then this Benq screen is the perfect accompaniment thanks to its internal speakers and surround sound technology.</p>							
2	 CTX PV722E 01923 810 800 www.ctxeurope.com NEW	17in	1,280x1,024	0.264mm	438x166x447mm	7.5kg	yes	1
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £378 ex VAT • 3-year warranty • First review Aug 03 <p>The attractive and lightweight PV722E aims to push itself to the top of your shopping list by offering almost every feature and accessory under the sun. There are displays that offer superior colour palettes, but few can match the CTX's excellent text definition and tempting price tag. Ideal for office and home use.</p>							
3	 Samsung SyncMaster 172T 0800 521 652 www.samsungelectronics.com NEW	17in	1,280x1,024	0.264mm	385x216x400mm	4.7kg	yes	no
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £354 ex VAT • 3-year warranty • First review Aug 03 <p>The SyncMaster 172T combines a compact design, high-calibre image quality and low price. Its 4.7kg frame also requires little effort to move from one room to another. Specifications are practically identical to those of the Recommended CTX but the Samsung falls behind due to the lack of USB and pivot facilities.</p>							
4	 Sharp LL-T19D1 01923 434 647 www.sharp.co.uk NEW	19in	1,280x1,024	0.294mm	423x222x392mm	6.9kg	yes	no
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £476 ex VAT • 3-year warranty • First review Sept 03 <p>At this price level the 19in LL-T19D1 isn't big on extras. Although you miss out on features such as USB, integrated speakers and pivot support, you do get three inputs (one DVI and two RGB), so you can connect up to three PCs at once. It may not be as stylish as its rivals, but the Sharp is more durable than most.</p>							
5	 LG L1710B 0870 604 5544 www.lge.co.uk LAST MONTH 3	17in	1,280x1,024	0.264mm	370x223x421mm	6kg	yes	3
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £229 ex VAT • 3-year warranty • First review Jun 03 <p>Offering an actual viewing area only 0.5in smaller than the average 19in CRT, the L1710B draws onlookers thanks to its chic silver casing and high-calibre picture quality. The LG feels light and focused and is ideal for general Windows use. The colour scheme is rich and the L1710B can handle animation without any blurring.</p>							

	Graphics cards	Graphics processor	Installed RAM	Core/memory clock	Ramdac	8x AGP	Maximum resolution @ 75Hz	DirectX version	DVI
1	 PNY Verto GeForce FX 5900 Ultra 0870 333 1222 www.pny-europe.com/uk LAST MONTH 1	nVidia GeForce FX 5900 Ultra	256MB DDR	450/425MHz	400MHz	yes	2,048x1,536	9x	yes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £340 ex VAT • 5-year warranty • First review Aug 03 <p>The GeForce FX 5900 Ultra firmly dispels any rumours that the GeForce FX 5800 marked the beginning of the decline for nVidia. PNY's 256MB FX 5900 Ultra isn't the cheapest of cards, but its immense firepower and essential feature set will make it a star performer, whether playing today's or tomorrow's games.</p>								
2	 Gigabyte Maya II R9700 Pro 0870 429 3010 http://uk.giga-byte.com LAST MONTH 2	ATI Radeon 9700 Pro	128MB DDR	325/310MHz	400MHz	yes	1,920x1,440	9x	yes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £210 ex VAT • 3-year warranty • First review Dec 02 <p>For the most part the cheaper 9700 Pro keeps within sight of its faster rival, the FX 5900 Ultra, and still packs hardware worthy of tomorrow's games. ATI Radeon 9700 cards like the Gigabyte Maya won't be available for much longer, but hunt around and you could grab a winning product at a knockdown price.</p>								
3	 Sapphire Radeon 9700 Atlantis Pro 0870 220 0700 www.sapphiretech.com LAST MONTH 3	ATI Radeon 9700 Pro	128MB DDR	325/310MHz	400MHz	yes	1,920x1,440	9x	yes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £216 ex VAT • 1-year warranty • First review Dec 02 <p>The Sapphire makes an excellent choice for anyone wanting high-calibre performance without paying top whack. The key to the Radeon 9700 Pro's success is its DirectX 9.0 support – the programming interface used by almost all of the major games developers. Should the Maya sell out first then this is an excellent substitute.</p>								
4	 Gainward FX PowerPack Ultra/760 XP Golden Sample 0870 220 0700 www.gainward.de LAST MONTH 4	nVidia GeForce FX 5600 Ultra	128MB DDR	450/450MHz	400MHz	yes	2,048x1,536	9x	yes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £155 ex VAT • 3-year warranty • First review Aug 03 <p>The Ultra/760 represents a halfway house between the expensive firepower of the £200-plus cards and the uninspiring performance of the bargain-basement models. It outperforms any 5600 Ultra card on the market, while the inclusion of a FireWire expansion card and video-in/out facilities are another bonus.</p>								
5	 Gigabyte Radeon 9800 Pro GV-R98P128D 0870 429 3010 http://uk.giga-byte.com LAST MONTH 5	ATI Radeon 9800 Pro	128MB DDR	380/340MHz	400MHz	yes	2,048x1,536	9x	yes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £270 ex VAT • 3-year warranty • First review Sept 03 <p>The most obvious advance that the 9800 Pro chip makes over its third-placed predecessor is increased core and memory clock speeds. This card retains plenty of gaming power but, as it lacks either the top-line speed of the FX 5900 Ultra or the enticing price tag of the Radeon 9700 Pro, it's unlikely to be your first choice.</p>								

Buying advice: graphics cards

It's generally the graphics chip rather than the card itself that determines speed. Look for the nVidia GeForce FX 5900 Ultra or the ATI Radeon 9800 Pro for the highest frame rates. At the other end of the scale, the GeForce FX 5600 Ultra is a great bargain. Buying a sub-£100 card doesn't mean you can't enjoy the latest

games, you'll just have to play them at a lower resolution (around 1,024x768).

Memory is important. While average 3D performance is possible with 64MB, it must be DDR RAM rather than the slower SDR variety. For the works, you want at least 128MB of DDR RAM.

If you're paying £150 or more for a card, support for DirectX 9 and 8x AGP will keep your graphics up to date in the

coming months. Digital connectors are becoming increasingly common and, to ensure future compatibility, demand a DVI (digital visual interface) connector.

One attractive extra is dual-monitor support. This allows you to stretch your Windows desktop over two screens, which effectively doubles your workspace and means you won't need to keep flipping from one window to another.