











TOP 10 FLAT-PANEL DISPLAYS & GRAPHICS CARDS

		Flat-panel displays	Screen size	Max resolution	Pixel pitch	Dimensions (wxdxh)	Weight	Digital connector	USB Port	
1		Samsung SyncMaster 181T 0800 521 652 www.samsungelectronics.com LAST MONTH 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• £475 ex VAT• 3-year warranty• First review Spring 03	18.1in	1,280x1,024	0.281mm	398x208x443mm	5.8kg	yes	no
				If you want one of the best 18.1in flat-panels on the market then Samsung's generous offering is hard to refuse. The SyncMaster 181T manages to combine top image quality with style at an amazing price that undercuts most of the competition, deservedly winning itself a Best Buy award in the process.						
2		Fujitsu-Siemens 5100FA 0800 004 003 www.fujitsu-siemens.com LAST MONTH 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• £899 ex VAT• 3-year warranty• First review Feb 03	20in	1,600x1,200	0.255mm	482x200x458mm	9.2kg	yes	no
				The 5100FA may be expensive, but it's the best 20in flat-panel on the market. The Fujitsu-Siemens shines with high-quality output and, due to its top-notch specs, it's possible to use the display in a bright room. The 170-degree viewing angle also means that several people can watch the screen at the same time.						
3		Sharp LL-T1620H 01923 434 647 www.sharp.co.uk LAST MONTH 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• £314 ex VAT• 3-year warranty• First review Mar 03	16in	1,280x1,024	0.248mm	352x185x370mm	5.3kg	yes	no
				Sporting a 16in diagonal viewing area, the Sharp is a great budget model that performs well on text and graphics but isn't so impressive as a home entertainment display. The LL-T1620H's integrated speakers will also be a lifesaver if you're short on desk space. One for the office rather than the living room.						
4		NEC MultiSync LCD1760NX 0870 120 1160 www.nec-mitsubishi.com NEW	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• £389 ex VAT• 3-year warranty• First review May 03	17in	1,280x1,024	0.264mm	374x205x454mm	6.8kg	yes	no
				The MultiSync is good value in light of its 17in screen size and spec list, although the 160-degree viewing angle is a problem. Unless you're standing directly in front of the screen, picture quality degrades quickly. However, there are tools for adjusting image quality so this bright screen can display detailed pictures and sharp text.						
5		CTX S530 01923 810 800 www.ctxeurope.com LAST MONTH 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• £235 ex VAT• 3-year warranty• First review Jan 03	15in	1,024x768	0.297mm	372x171x355mm	3.7g	no	no
				Buying a low-end flat-panel doesn't have to mean putting up with below-par performance. CTX knows what to cut out and what to leave in when producing a value-for-money screen, and the S530 belies its specifications to offer a silky-smooth picture guaranteed to remain untainted by dead pixels for 101 days.						

		Graphics cards	Graphics processor	Installed RAM	DDR RAM	Ramdac	8x AGP	Maximum resolution @ 75Hz	DirectX version	DVI	
1		Gigabyte Maya II R9700 Pro 01908 362 700 www.giga-byte.com LAST MONTH 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• £246 ex VAT• 3-year warranty• First review Dec 02	ATI Radeon 9700 Pro	128MB	yes	400MHz	yes	1,920x1,440	9x	yes
				The R9700 Pro is crammed with technology that pushes frame rates and graphics quality to new levels. Its benchmark results are equally impressive. In our Comanche 4, Aquanox and Quake III tests, the 9700 established a clear lead at lower resolutions and destroyed its rivals at 1,600x1,200 and beyond.							
2		Sapphire Radeon 9700 Atlantis Pro 08702 200 700 www.savastore.com LAST MONTH 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• £213 ex VAT• 1-year warranty• First review Dec 02	ATI Radeon 9700 Pro	128MB	yes	400MHz	yes	1,920x1,440	9x	yes
				This 128MB version of the Radeon 9700 Pro trounced the GeForce4 Ti 4600, regularly achieving between 10 and 20fps (frames per second) more. The Sapphire is slightly slower than our Best Buy graphics card, software is sparse and the warranty is just one-year. However, it's also cheaper.							
3		Sapphire Atlantis 9500 08702 200 700 www.savastore.com LAST MONTH 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• £115 ex VAT• 1-year warranty• First review Mar 03	ATI Radeon 9500	128MB	yes	400MHz	yes	1,920x1,440	9x	yes
				ATI's Radeon 9500 chip fits into the 'performance at a modest price' category. Although there's less in the way of brute force and graphics rendering facilities, most of the important features are still present – such as support for DirectX 9.0. The 9500 also scores high marks for overall image quality.							
4		Abit Siluro GF4 Ti 4200 8X Otes 01438 226 333 www.abit.com.tw LAST MONTH 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• £120 ex VAT• 1-year warranty• First review Mar 03	nVidia GeForce Ti 4200	128MB	yes	350MHz	yes	2,048x1,536	8x	yes
				The Abit Siluro features a revised Ti 4200 chip with 8x AGP support and an innovative heat pipe cooling system that helps keep the card from overheating, although you do lose a PCI slot in the process. The Ti 4200 8X Otes is an improvement, but it's playing catchup to the newer Radeon 9500 chip.							
5		AOpen Aeolus Ti 4200 S-DV128 0800 138 5196 www.aopen.nl LAST MONTH 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• £125 ex VAT• 2-year warranty• First review Dec 02	nVidia GeForce4 Ti 4200	128MB	yes	350MHz	no	2,048x1,536	8x	yes
				The AOpen Aeolus unlocks the full potential of the GeForce4 Ti 4200. Performance is boosted by 128MB of DDR RAM. At lower resolutions it comes close to the Ti 4600 and doesn't tail off when detail is increased. Its older technology will date it, but it's still a great budget card.							

Buying advice: flat-panel displays

Expect to pay around £250-£300 ex VAT for a 15in flat-panel as opposed to around £450 for a 17in display. Bear in mind that the actual screen size is about an inch more than on CRT (cathode ray tube) monitors because the image extends right to the edge of the screen. If you purchase a model with a DVI (digital visual

interface) connector it will ensure future compatibility with graphics cards. Buying a flat-panel with a built-in USB hub will make it easier to connect peripherals such as printers, scanners and digital cameras.

Watch out for dead pixels. Many flat-panels (particularly older or budget models) that conform to IS13406-2 class 2 or 3 standard have a few defective pixels. On an entirely black background these will

show up as white or coloured spots. Only a class 1 category display (such as the fifth-placed CTX S530) is guaranteed free of dead pixels – and that's just for 101 days.

Where strong audio quality isn't a must, built-in speakers will give you adequate sound while keeping desk clutter to a minimum. Some flat-panel displays also have pivot support, allowing the screen to rotate 90 degrees.