











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-4816A 0870 429 3220 www.asus.com LAST MONTH 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £49 ex VAT • 2-year warranty • First review Oct 02 	EIDE	2MB	100ms	48x/48x/16x	149x198x42mm	InCD, Ahead Nero 5.5
Offering 48-/48-/16-speed (read/write/rewrite) facilities, the Asus is the fastest drive we've seen. With buffer underrun protection, dynamic suspension to cut down vibrations, Mount Rainier support and fast performance you would expect it to be expensive. At £49, though, it is one of the best deals around.								
	2 Teac CD-W540EK 020 8906 9111 www.microwarehouse.co.uk LAST MONTH 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £83 ex VAT • 2-year warranty • First review Jul 02 	EIDE	8MB	72ms	48x/40x/12x	146x192x42mm	DirectCD, Roxio Easy CD Creator
The CD-W540EK combines high performance and quiet operation but its price tag denies it the top spot. Fine Focus control keeps the laser positioned at high speed, while Intelligent Speed Control keeps the success rate high by monitoring CDs to determine the quickest writing speed without risking errors.								
	3 Cyber Drive CW078D 0239 269 7305 www.cyberdrive.de LAST MONTH 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £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 the second fastest in the chart, 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.								
	4 LG GCE-8400B 0870 607 5544 www.lge.co.uk LAST MONTH 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £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.								
	5 La Cie FireWire 40x12x48 020 7872 8000 www.lacie.co.uk RE-ENTRY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £109 ex VAT • 2-year warranty • First review Sep 02 	FireWire	2MB	130ms	48x/40x/12x	275x200x59mm	InCD, Ahead Nero 5.5
With its hefty 2.27kg frame, you're not going to want to carry the pricey La Cie around for long periods of time. Nonetheless, it's easy to connect and disconnect thanks to its high-speed FireWire interface. Speed was also good, with 350MB of data recorded in two minutes 21 seconds.								

		DVD writers	Drive type	Interface type	CD-RW read/write/rewrite speeds	DVD read/write/rewrite speeds	Average access time	Burning software
	1 Ricoh MP125A-DP 020 8261 4031 www.ricoh.co.uk LAST MONTH 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £170 ex VAT • 2-year onsite swap 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 the Best Buy award.								
	2 Philips DVDRW228 0800 896 324 www.philips.com/pcstuff LAST MONTH 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £249 ex 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.								
	3 Sony DRX-120L 0800 2623 7669 www.sonyisstorage.com LAST MONTH 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £347 ex VAT • 1-year warranty • First review Oct 02 	DVD+R/DVD+RW/CD-RW	external FireWire	32x/12x/10x	8x/2.4x/2.4x	140ms	Recorder Gold
The DRX-120L is an external FireWire drive, so you'll need a matching port on your PC to use it. However, it comes with all the cabling you need and is easy to set up. Performance is strong and the price is reasonable for an external drive.								
	4 Pioneer DVR-A04 01753 789 500 www.pioneer-eur.com LAST MONTH 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £275 ex VAT • 1-year warranty • First review Oct 02 	DVD-R/DVD-RW/CD-RW	EIDE	24x/8x/4x	6x/2x/1x	200ms	VOB Instant CD/DVD
Pioneer sticks to the traditional DVD-R/-RW standard, which is its downfall. This choice leaves it struggling to a meagre dual- and single-speed. The 8-/4-speed CD-R/RW facilities are similarly sluggish, but the software bundle is adequate, as is the modest price tag.								
	5 HP DVD200i 08705 474 747 www.hp.com/uk LAST MONTH 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £340 ex VAT • 1-year warranty • First review Oct 02 	DVD+R/DVD+RW/CD-RW	EIDE	32x/12x/10x	8x/2.4x/2.4x	125ms	HP RecordNow
The DVD200i has the specs to compete with the best, running from its 2.4-speed DVD+R/-RW facilities up to the 2MB buffer and error protection technology. But HP's software left it trailing behind the leaders, taking on average an extra minute to complete the tests.								

Buying advice: CD drives

It's no surprise that most PCs come with some sort of CD-R/RW drive. Combine the ability to copy 650MB-700MB with the low price of CDs and you have the ideal backup technology for our content-heavy times.

Writing to CD-R is fast, with recording rates going up to 40- to 48-speed. The

discs are also cheap and can be read on virtually all PCs. However you can only write data to a CD-R once, so you won't be able to erase and start again.

Rewritable rates are lower (about 16- to 20-speed), the media will cost you twice as much and you'll experience more problems with incompatible discs. Theoretically, though, you can write on a CD-RW an unlimited number of times.

Drives have to deal with a large amount of data at once, but sometimes the strain will prove too much and the device will make errors while writing CDs. Look for a large data buffer (at least 2MB) and you'll keep these errors at bay.

CD-R/RW drives should come with a software bundle. Opt for a well-known package like Ahead Software's Nero or Easy CD Creator.