

Top 10 CD drives & DVD writers

			CD drives							
			Interface type	Average access time	Read/write/rewrite rate	Dimensions (wxdxh)	Internal/external	Weight	Packet writing and burning software	
			Data buffer size							
BEST BUY		MSI CR52-A2 0870 755 4747 www.scan.co.uk Last month 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £35 inc VAT • 1-year warranty • First review May 03 	EIDE	85ms	52x/52x/24x	148x194x42mm	internal	0.9kg	InCD, Ahead Nero 5.5
				2MB						
Combining a low price with unbeatable features and good performance, MSI has the edge on the opposition. The CR52-A2 burned a 350MB CD-R in just under two minutes, while a CD-RW took three. The AWSS system, designed to cut out unnecessary vibrations, gives added protection from the dreaded buffer underrun.										
RECOMMENDED		Teac CD-W552E 020 8906 9111 www.microwarehouse.co.uk Last month 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £47 inc VAT • 2-year warranty • First review Jun 03 	EIDE	100ms	52x/52x/24x	149x198x42mm	internal	1kg	InCD, Nero Express
				2MB						
The Teac took one minute 46 seconds to burn a CD-R and less than three mins to burn a CD-RW, making it the fastest CD writer we've seen in the Test Centre to date. The Intelligent Speed Control determines the highest writing speed available without risking errors, so you won't end up with an unusable disc.										
3		Asus CRW-5224A 0870 443 0880 www.overclockers.co.uk Last month 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £34 inc VAT • 2-year warranty • First review Feb 03 	ATAPI/EIDE	100ms	52x/52x/24x	149x197x42mm	internal	1kg	InCD, Ahead Nero 5.5
				2MB						
The Asus offers competitive write and rewrite rates a few seconds behind those of the Teac. Burning errors are kept at bay with Partial-CAV technology that writes the outer and inner parts of the disc at different optimal speeds. The limited Nero Express is bundled with a generous number of blank CD-R and CD-RWs.										
4		Benq CRW 5224P 01442 301 000 www.benq.co.uk Last month 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £40 inc VAT • 2-year carry in warranty • First review Jul 03 	EIDE	100ms	52x/52x/24x	146x198x42mm	internal	1kg	InCD, Nero Express
				2MB						
It's one of the cheapest CD writers in our Top 10, but the Benq boasts similar specs to the other drives here. Burning a CD-RW took five and a half minutes and, although this isn't an absolute age, it still doesn't compare well with the opposition – the second-placed Teac did it in virtually half the time.										
5		Asus CRW-5224A-U 0870 429 3220 www.scan.co.uk Last month 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £71 inc VAT • 2-year warranty • First review Jul 03 	USB 2.0	100ms	52x/52x/24x	156x226x50mm	external	1.4kg	InCD, Nero Express
				2MB						
The external Asus is restricted to fifth position due to its high price tag. It offers excellent performance, though – one minute 57 seconds to write a 350MB CD-R – and is easy to set up, connecting as it does to a USB 2.0 port. If you need an external model then you won't do much better than this one.										

			DVD writers							
			Drive type	Interface type	CD-RW read/write/rewrite speeds	DVD read/write/rewrite speeds	Average access time	Burning software includes		
BEST BUY		LG Super Multi DVD Writer Plus GSA-4040B 0870 607 5544 www.lge.co.uk Last month 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £130 inc VAT • 2-year warranty • First review Oct 03 	DVD+R/+RW/-R/-RW/RAM	EIDE	32x/24x/16x	12x/4x/2.4x (+RW), 2x(-RW)	150ms	B's Record Gold	
The LG isn't the fastest on the market despite having quad-speed DVD+R/R facilities – it copied our 3GB test files in 17 minutes 34 seconds. However, the ease-of-use afforded by DVD-RAM makes the LG a top choice for those who value flexibility and seamless recording above speed.										
RECOMMENDED		Sony DRU-510A 0870 243 0056 www.sony-cp.com New	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £200 inc VAT • 1-year warranty • First review Nov 03 	DVD+R/+RW/-R/-RW	EIDE	32x/24x/16x	12x/4x/4x 2x(-RW)	200ms	Sonic MyDVD Cyberlink Power DVD	
The speedy DRU-510A is capable of writing 3GB test files to a DVD+RW in just 16 minutes 31 seconds, while the bundled Veritas titles offer a host of facilities from data backup to advanced video editing. Excellent performance combined with a low price tag creates a first-class drive that'll take some beating.										
3		Plextor PX-504UF 0870 429 3010 www.plextor.com New	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £265 inc VAT • 2-year warranty • First review Nov 03 	DVD+R/+RW	USB 2.0, FireWire	40x/16x/10x	12x/4x/2.4x	140ms	Ahead Nero Pinnacle Studio	
If all you want is a fast DVD writer, the Recommended Sony should be your first port of call. But if you're after an external drive to use on several PCs then the Plextor is ideal. It can connect to either a USB 2.0 or FireWire interface, so it's extremely easy to install, and writing times are adequate.										
4		NEC ND-1100A 020 8752 3665 www.nec.co.uk Last month 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £219 inc VAT • 2-year warranty • First review Aug 03 	DVD+R/+RW	EIDE	40x/16x/10x	12x/4x/2.4x	140ms	Ahead Nero	
The NEC is an affordable drive that boasts strong performance and a solid software bundle. We were able to copy our 3GB test files to a DVD+R in an impressive 16 minutes 11 seconds. If you wish to gamble on DVD+R/+RW having the last word, the NEC ND-1100A stands you in good stead.										
5		Iomega Dual DVD 020 7365 0527 www.iomega.co.uk New	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £215 inc VAT • 2-year warranty • First review Nov 03 	DVD+R/+RW/-R/-RW	EIDE	40x/16x/10x	12x/4x/2.4x (+RW) 2x(-RW)	230ms	Iomega HotBurn Pro, Sonic MyDVD	
Marred by disappointing burning software, the Iomega fails to compete with its rivals and is slower than both the Sony and Plextor models. Good backup facilities are provided though and the inclusion of Sonic MyDVD is partial compensation. With a lower price tag the Dual DVD would have charted better.										

Buying advice

CD drives

There are two types of media format: CD-R and CD-RW. Writing to CD-R discs is faster, but the down side is that you can only write to them once. CD-RW discs, which allow repeated recording, are more expensive but offer better value for money.

Data buffers, which tend to be around 2MB, protect against errors in

the writing process. A 2MB buffer is the absolute minimum you should look for when purchasing a drive. In terms of software, Ahead's Nero packages are currently the best available and are ideal for beginners. Easy CD Creator is another good program for novices. Most drive manufacturers usually bundle a few blank CD-R discs and, if you're lucky, perhaps a blank CD-RW too.

If you're not confident about opening up your PC and fitting an

internal drive, you simply have no space for another drive in your tower unit or you want to share the drive between more than one PC, you're better off with an external model. This will connect to your PC via a USB 1.1, USB 2.0 or FireWire connection.

However, for saving space and money, internal units are better. Installing this type of drive isn't a difficult procedure and most decent models will come with a step-by-step installation guide.