

Top 10 Flat-panel displays & Graphics cards

			Flat-panel displays	Screen size	Native resolution	Pixel pitch	Dimensions (wxdxh)	Weight	Digital connector	USB port		
PC ADVISOR RECOMMENDED	BEST BUY		Benq FP791 01442 301 000 www.watford.co.uk Last month 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £449 inc VAT • 3-year warranty • First review Jul 03 	17in	1,280x1,024	0.264mm	451x192x443mm	75kg	yes	no	
		The FP791 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.										
			CTX PV722E 01923 810 800 www.ctxeurope.com Last month 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £419 inc VAT • 3-year warranty • First review Aug 03 	17in	1,280x1,024	0.264mm	438x166x447mm	75kg	yes	yes	
		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.										
			Samsung SyncMaster 172T 0800 521 652 www.samsungelectronics.com Last month 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £416 inc VAT • 3-year warranty • First review Aug 03 	17in	1,280x1,024	0.264mm	385x216x400mm	4.7kg	yes	no	
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.												
	Eizo FlexScan L695 01483 719 500 www.eizo.co.uk Last month 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £786 inc VAT • 5-year warranty • First review Oct 03 	18.1in	1,280x1,024	0.2805mm	399x203x504mm	7.6kg	yes	yes			
At £786 the FlexScan is expensive. But if price isn't a factor the L695 will repay you with outstanding image quality, top performance and some great extras including advanced pivot facilities. Thanks to Eizo's ActiveRotation and ActiveShot technology you can also hook up the FlexScan to two PCs.												
	Sharp LL-T19D1 01923 434 647 www.sharp.co.uk Last month 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £559 inc VAT • 3-year warranty • First review Sep 03 	19in	1,280x1,024	0.294mm	423x222x392mm	6.9kg	yes	no			
Considering the Sharp's price tag, it is short on extras. You miss out on features such as USB, integrated speakers and pivot support, although you do get three inputs (one DVI and two RGB) so you can connect to three PCs at once. It may not be as stylish as its rivals, but the LL-T19D1 is more durable than most.												

			Graphics cards	Graphics processor	Installed RAM	Core/memory clock	Ramdac	8x AGP	Maximum resolution @75Hz	DirectX version	DVI	
PC ADVISOR RECOMMENDED	BEST BUY		PNY Verto GeForce FX 5900 Ultra 0870 333 1222 www.pny-europe.com/uk Last month 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £450 inc VAT • 5-year warranty • First review Aug 03 	nVidia GeForce FX 5900 Ultra	256MB DDR	450/425MHz	400MHz	yes	2,048x1,536	9x	yes
		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.										
			Sapphire Radeon 9700 Atlantis Pro 0870 220 0700 www.sapphiretech.com Last month 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £210 inc VAT • 1-year warranty • First review Dec 02 	ATI Radeon 9700 Pro	128MB DDR	325/310MHz	400MHz	yes	1,920x1,440	9x	yes
		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 – and its 128bit floating-point colour.										
			Gainward FX PowerPack Ultra/760 XP Golden Sample 0870 220 0700 www.gainward.de Last month 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £182 inc VAT • 3-year warranty • First review Aug 03 	nVidia GeForce FX 5600 Ultra	128MB DDR	450/450MHz	400MHz	yes	2,048x1,536	9x	yes
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.												
	Gigabyte Radeon 9800 Pro GV-R98P128D 0870 429 3010 www.gigabyte.com.tw Last month 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £313 inc VAT • 1-year warranty • First review Sep 03 	ATI Radeon 9800 Pro	128MB DDR	380/340MHz	400MHz	yes	2,048x1,536	9x	yes		
The most obvious advance that the 9800 Pro chip makes over its second-placed predecessor is increased core and memory clock speeds. This card has plenty of gaming power but, as it lacks 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.												
	Sapphire Radeon 9800 Atlantis Pro 0870 220 0700 www.sapphiretech.com Last month 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £317 inc VAT • 1-year warranty • First review Sep 03 	ATI Radeon 9800 Pro	128MB DDR	380/340MHz	400MHz	yes	2,048x1,536	9x	yes		
In the Radeon 9800 Pro ATI has tidied up a few features. It's improved the memory optimisation and upped the Smoothvision anti-aliasing to version 2.1. Even so, it isn't as impressive as the FX 5900 Ultra – this chip decisively beat the Radeon 9800 by running visually pleasing anti-aliasing with no drop in frame rates.												

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 to look out for 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.