

# 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	
	<b>1</b>	<b>Asus CRW-5224A</b> 0870 429 3220 www.scan.co.uk LAST MONTH 1	• £49 ex VAT • 2-year warranty • First review Feb 03	EIDE	2MB	100ms	52x/52x/24x	149x198x42mm	InCD, Ahead Nero 5.5
			This is the first drive we've seen offering blistering read/write/rewrite rates of 52-/52-/24-speed. Asus' innovative CD-RW technology also optimises CD burning for high-speed quality output while ensuring burning errors are minimised. Throw in the two-year warranty and you have the cream of the crop.						
	<b>2</b>	<b>Asus CRW-4816A</b> 0870 429 3220 www.asus.com LAST MONTH 2	• £46 ex VAT • 2-year warranty • First review Oct 02	EIDE	2MB	100ms	48x/48x/16x	149x198x42mm	InCD, Ahead Nero 5.5
			Asus also makes the second-fastest drive available, with this 48-/48-/16-speed (read/write/rewrite) model. With buffer underrun protection, dynamic suspension to cut down vibrations, Mount Rainier support and fast performance you would expect it to be expensive. At £46, though, it is one of the best deals around.						
	<b>3</b>	<b>Teac CD-W540EK</b> 020 8906 9111 www.microwarehouse.co.uk LAST MONTH 3	• £45 ex VAT • 2-year warranty • First review Jul 02	EIDE	8MB	72ms	48x/40x/12x	146x192x42mm	InCD, Ahead Nero 5.5
			The CD-W540EK combines high performance and quiet operation but is soundly beaten by the top two's higher speeds. Fine Focus control keeps the laser positioned at high speed, while Intelligent Speed Control keeps the success rate high by determining the quickest writing speed without risking errors.						
	<b>4</b>	<b>Cyber Drive CW078D</b> 0239 269 7305 www.cyberdrive.de LAST MONTH 4	• £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 a pretty nifty drive, 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.						
	<b>5</b>	<b>LG GCE-8400B</b> 0870 607 5544 www.lge.co.uk LAST MONTH 5	• £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.						

		DVD writers	Drive type	Interface type	CD-RW read/write/rewrite speeds	DVD read/write/rewrite speeds	Average access time	Burning software	
	<b>1</b>	<b>Ricoh MP125A-DP</b> 020 8261 4031 www.ricoh.co.uk LAST MONTH 1	• £170 ex VAT • 2-year 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.						
	<b>2</b>	<b>Philips DVDRW228</b> 0800 896 324 www.philips.com/pcstuff LAST MONTH 2	• £249 inc 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.						
	<b>3</b>	<b>Toshiba SDR-R5002</b> 0800 169 4527 www.toshiba.co.uk NEW	• £165 inc VAT • 1-year warranty • First review Mar 03	DVD-R/DVD-RW/CD-RW	EIDE	40x/16x/10x	12x/2x/1x	130ms	VOB Instant CD/DVD
			Toshiba opts for the cheaper but slower DVD-R/-RW standard in the SD-R5002. It may lack the brute force of the DVD+R/+RW format, but its 16-/10-speed CD-R/RW facilities are the fastest in the chart. DVD playback is also better, offering 12-speed as standard.						
	<b>4</b>	<b>Sony DRX-120L</b> 00800 2623 7669 www.sonyisstorage.com LAST MONTH 3	• £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.						
	<b>5</b>	<b>Pioneer DVR-A04</b> 01753 789 500 www.pioneer-eur.com LAST MONTH 4	• £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.						

## 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 52-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 24-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.