

TOP 10 POWER PCs

		Power PCs	Processor type	RAM	Motherboard	Monitor
			Processor speed	Hard disk capacity	USB ports	Dot pitch
						Maximum resolution@75Hz
1	 Evesham Axis 2700+ 0870 160 9500 www.evesham.com LAST MONTH 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £1,349 ex VAT • 2-year onsite, 1-year return-to-base warranty • First review Feb 03 	AMD Athlon XP 2200+ 2.12GHz	512MB DDR RAM 120GB	Asus A7N8X 8	19in LG F900P 0.24mm 1,600x1,200
			WorldBench 4		129	
2	 Best Price Poweroid 2201 0870 220 0444 www.poweroid.com LAST MONTH 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £1,399 ex VAT • 3-year onsite, 2-year return-to-base warranty • First review Feb 03 	Intel Pentium 4 2.8GHz	512MB DDR RAM 2 x 80GB	MSI 845E Max2 4	19in CTX PR960F 0.24mm 1,600x1,200
			WorldBench 4		117	
3	 Systemax Inspire 7352 0870 729 7364 www.systemaxpc.co.uk LAST MONTH 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £1,299 ex VAT • 3-year onsite warranty • First review Feb 03 	AMD Athlon XP 2600+ 2.13GHz	512MB DDR RAM 120GB	MSI MS-6712 6	19in CTX PR960F 0.24mm 1,600x1,200
			WorldBench 4		118	
4	 NetHighStreet Net AD 1200 0870 777 5252 www.nethighstreet.com LAST MONTH 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £1,285 ex VAT • 1-year onsite, 1-year return-to-base warranty • First review Feb 03 	Intel Pentium 4 2.53GHz	512MB DDR RAM 120GB	Gigabyte 8PE667 6	15in Samsung flat-panel 0.3mm 1,024x768
			WorldBench 4		116	
5	 Mesh Matrix XP 2700+ PPC 020 8208 4702 www.meshcomputers.com LAST MONTH 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £1,299 ex VAT • 3-year return-to-base warranty • First review Feb 03 	AMD Athlon XP 2700+ 2.17GHz	512MB DDR RAM 120GB	Asus A7N8X 6	17in NEC flat-panel 0.26mm 1,280x1,024
			WorldBench 4		127	
6	 Hi-Grade Ultis PV4 3GHz HT 020 8532 6100 www.higrade.com LAST MONTH 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £1,275 ex VAT • 3-year onsite warranty • First review Feb 03 	Intel Pentium 4 3.06GHz	512MB DDR RAM 160GB	Gigabyte P4 Titan 4	19in Mitsubishi Diamond Pro 920 0.24mm 1,600x1,200
			WorldBench 4		124	
7	 Dell Dimension 4550 0870 152 4689 www.dell.co.uk LAST MONTH 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £1,200 ex VAT • 1-year return-to-base warranty • First review Feb 03 	Intel Pentium 4 2.8GHz	512MB DDR RAM 120GB	Intel 6	17in Dell 1702 flat-panel 0.264mm 1,280x1,024
			WorldBench 4		127	
8	 Systemax Reliance 3017 0870 729 7364 www.systemaxpc.co.uk LAST MONTH 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £1,499 ex VAT • 3-year onsite warranty • First review Nov 02 	Intel Pentium 4 2.41GHz	512MB DDR RAM 2 x 80GB	MSI MS-6398E 5	19in CTX PR960F 0.24mm 1,600x1,200
			WorldBench 4		121	
9	 Hi-Grade Ultis PV4 2.8 PV10 020 8532 6100 www.higrade.com LAST MONTH 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £1,299 ex VAT • 1-year onsite, 2-year return-to-base warranty • First review Nov 02 	Intel Pentium 4 2.8GHz	512MB DDR RAM 80GB	MSI MS-6566E 6	19in LG Flatron 915FT Plus 0.24mm 1,600x1,200
			WorldBench 4		131	
10	 PC World Advent 3828 BTO 0870 546 4464 www.pcworld.co.uk LAST MONTH 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £1,200 ex VAT • 1-year onsite warranty • First review Feb 03 	AMD Athlon XP 2700+ 2.17GHz	512MB DDR RAM 80GB	Asus A7N8X 4	19in Philips 109B4 0.25mm 1,600x1,200
			WorldBench 4		121	

Buying advice: Power PCs

In the last few months, AMD and Intel have both brought out several new chips at ever faster speeds. The 3.06GHz Pentium 4 is the latest offering from Intel, but the HT (hyperthreading) technology it uses won't be worth having until software is designed to work with it. The sixth-place Hi-Grade Ultis PV4 is the only system in the chart to use this chip and, with scant software to support HT, it performed better with the feature turned off.

Bearing this in mind, you may be better off choosing a 2.5, 2.6 or 2.8GHz P4.

AMD recently bolstered its range with the Athlon XP 2700+ and 2800+, but anything over an XP 2200+ is fine in the Power PC category. The advantage to the quick-paced CPU update process is that 'older' chips drop in price as they are superseded by faster models, yet they still produce good performance.

Expect 512MB of RAM in a Power system, and remember to make sure it is the faster DDR (double data rate) RAM, rather than SDRAM. Rambus is seldom used these days, although you will see it in some systems. Performance-wise, though, it isn't an awful lot different to

DDR RAM. Remember also to look for DDR333 RAM (the fastest version of DDR RAM), although DDR400 is slowly entering the Power PC market and it should prove to be an even better bet in the future.

In terms of storage, an 80GB hard drive is about the minimum size you should expect in the Power PC category, though many systems have much more than this. For speedy access to your information, a system with two hard drives is preferable. Have backup covered with a 40-/32-/10-speed (read/write/rewrite) CD-RW drive. DVD rewriters are becoming

Graphics card maker	Sound card	DVD drive speed	Operating system, software and extras	Comments
Graphics chip	Speakers	CD-RW read/write/rewrite rate		
Graphics card memory	Subwoofer			
ATI	Creative Audigy	16x	Windows XP	Evesham takes the Best Buy with a combination of performance, quality components and a decent warranty – all at a reasonable price. Its WorldBench 4 score was only two points short of the current record and its graphics were equally fast. There's a DVD-RW to make backing up easy and even the onboard sound is good.
ATI Radeon 9700 Pro	5 x Videologic ZXR-500	40x/40x/10x	Lotus SmartSuite 9.7	
128MB	yes			
nVidia	Creative Audigy	16x	Windows XP Home,	The Poweroid's 2.8GHz Pentium 4 processor only achieved a WorldBench 4 score of 117 – that's 12 points behind the Best Buy Axis. Had it scored higher it might have grabbed first place. However, there's an excellent Audigy sound card, a DVD+RW drive and two capacious 80GB hard drives so it's a system to consider.
nVidia GeForce4 Ti 4600	5 x Creative Inspire 5.1	40x/32x/10x	Microsoft Works Suite 2002	
128MB	yes			
ATI	Creative Audigy	16x	Windows XP Home,	The Systemax combines ATI's Radeon 9700 Pro graphics card with the 19in CTX PR960F to produce a gaming and graphics dream. If you're looking to use your PC to create a home cinema then you'll be pleased with the audio setup. These impressive specifications and good price win it a deserved Recommended award.
ATI Radeon 9700 Pro	5 x Creative Inspire 5.1	48x/40x/12x	Lotus SmartSuite 9.7	
128MB	yes			
ATI	Creative Audigy	16x	Windows XP Home,	The NetHighStreet may be an attractive system but its processor is slightly old and slow, which shows in its WorldBench 4 score of 116. But with a strong component line-up, including a space-saving flat-panel and a decent price, it's a good deal and takes the last Recommended award.
ATI Radeon 9700 Pro	5 x Videologic ZXR-500	48x/40x/12x	Ability Office	
128MB	yes			
Sapphire	Creative Soundblaster Live 5.1	16x	Windows XP Home,	Combined with an Asus motherboard and nVidia chipset, the Mesh Matrix's Athlon XP 2700+ chip achieved a strong WorldBench 4 score of 127. The 17in NEC 1700V flat-panel is an impressive display but doesn't make the best use of the graphics card so hardcore gamers might be better off considering another system.
ATI Radeon 9700 Pro	2 x Labtec LCS-2632	40x/16x/10x	Microsoft Works Suite 2002	
128MB	yes			
MSI	Creative Audigy	16x	Windows XP Home	The only PC in the chart to sport Intel's latest processor, the 3.06GHz P4, the Hi-Grade still didn't manage to set WorldBench 4 on fire. It scored 124, but only when the HT (hyperthreading) technology was turned off. It has a strong specification, though, including a 2.4-speed write/rewrite DVD+RW drive.
nVidia GeForce Ti 4600	5 x Creative Inspire 5.1	48x/40x/12x		
128MB	yes			
MSI	Creative Audigy	16x	Windows XP Home,	If the Power PC chart was judged on looks alone the Dell Dimension 4550 would certainly have been a runaway winner. Performance-wise it's not too bad either. However, at a sizeable £1,449 and with a mere one-year return-to-base warranty, it's far from the best deal available.
nVidia GeForce Ti 4600	5 x Creative Inspire 5.1	40x/16x/10x	multimedia bundle	
128MB	yes			
ATI	Creative Audigy	16x	Windows XP Home,	What won this system a Best Buy in the past was a combination of the generous amount of storage space – two 80GB hard drives – a three-year onsite warranty and one of the best monitors in the chart, the CTX PR960F. All this is priced at £1,249 ex VAT, which represents good value for money.
ATI Radeon 9700	5 x Creative Inspire 5.1	48x/48x/12x	Pinnacle Studio 7.0	
128MB	yes			
nVidia	Creative Audigy	16x	Windows XP Home,	While the Hi-Grade is the fastest in the chart with a WorldBench 4 score of 131 and one of the cheapest at £1,200, it can't quite compete in terms of all-round specification. The hard drive isn't as generous as some of the other contenders' disks, and though the warranty is three years long, only the first year is onsite cover.
nVidia GeForce4 Ti 4600	5 x Creative Inspire 5.1	40x/32x/10x	Star Office 5.2	
128MB	yes			
MSI	Creative Audigy	16x	Windows XP Home	With a WorldBench 4 score of 121, this system is fairly speedy and the results of the graphics and video encoding tests were reasonable as well. However, the 80GB hard disk is small compared to drives in other chart systems, the monitor isn't that good and the one-year onsite warranty seems mean.
nVidia GeForce Ti 4600	5 x Creative Inspire 5.1	48x/40x/12x		
128MB	yes			

available, too, but this is likely to push up the overall cost of the system.

At this price point you should be opting for a 19in screen that offers a resolution of 1,600x1,200 and a dot pitch of 0.25mm or less. Flat-panel displays are becoming more and more common as well but can vary in quality – look for one that can support a resolution of at least 1,280x1,024.

To keep your monitor on its toes you want an agile graphics card to go with it and the ATI Radeon 9700 is just about top card of choice at the moment, though nVidia's GeForce4 Ti 4600 also offers

strong performance. Look for at least 64MB of RAM, with 128MB being even better.

Depending on what you use your PC for, audio performance may be just as important to you as graphics, so don't forget to be picky here as well. Some PCs are still fitted with the SoundBlaster 5.1 Live, but the best bet for decent surround sound is Creative's Audigy. The Audigy 2 is just becoming available and will handle DVD audio as well as CD audio.

↓ The Best Buy Evesham Axis 2700+ offers a lightning fast WorldBench 4 score, great specification and generous warranty

