

TOP 10 FLAT-PANEL DISPLAYS & GRAPHICS CARDS

	Flat-panel displays	Screen size	Max resolution	Pixel pitch	Dimensions (wxdxh)	Weight	Digital connector	USB port
1	 Benq FP791 01442 301 000 www.watford.co.uk LAST MONTH 1	17in	1,024x768	0.264mm	451x192x443mm	7.5kg	yes	no
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £469 inc VAT • 3-year warranty • First review Jul 03 	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.						
2	 CTX PV722E 01923 810 800 www.ctxeurope.com LAST MONTH 2	17in	1,280x1,024	0.264mm	438x166x447mm	7.5kg	yes	1
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £429 inc VAT • 3-year warranty • First review Aug 03 	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.						
3	 Samsung SyncMaster 172T 0800 521 652 www.samsungelectronics.com LAST MONTH 3	17in	1,280x1,024	0.264mm	385x216x400mm	4.7kg	yes	no
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £416 inc VAT • 3-year warranty • First review Aug 03 	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.						
4	 Eizo FlexScan L695 01483 719 500 www.eizo.co.uk NEW	18.1in	1,280x1,024	0.2805mm	399x203x504mm	7.6kg	yes	no
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £786 inc VAT • 3-year warranty • First review Oct 03 	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 its ActiveRotation technology and ActiveShot which allows you to hook up the display to two PCs.						
5	 Sharp LL-T19D1 01923 434 647 www.sharp.co.uk LAST MONTH 4	19in	1,280x1,024	0.294mm	423x222x392mm	6.9kg	yes	no
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £559 inc VAT • 3-year warranty • First review Sept 03 	Considering the 19in 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 up 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
1	 PNY Verto GeForce FX 5900 Ultra 0870 333 1222 www.pny-europe.com/uk LAST MONTH 1	nVidia GeForce FX 5900 Ultra	256MB DDR	450/425MHz	400MHz	yes	2,048x1,536	9x	yes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £400 inc VAT • 5-year warranty • First review Aug 03 	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.							
2	 Sapphire Radeon 9700 Atlantis Pro 0870 220 0700 www.sapphiretech.com LAST MONTH 3	ATI Radeon 9800 Pro	128MB DDR	380/700MHz	400MHz	yes	2,048x1,536	9x	yes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £210 inc VAT • 1-year warranty • First review Dec 02 	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.							
3	 Gainward FX PowerPack Ultra/760 XP Golden Sample 0870 220 0700 www.gainward.de LAST MONTH 4	ATI Radeon 9700 Pro	128MB DDR	325/310MHz	400MHz	yes	1,920x1,440	9x	yes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £182 inc VAT • 3-year warranty • First review Aug 03 	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.							
4	 Gigabyte Radeon 9800 Pro GV-R98P128D 0870 429 3010 http://uk.giga-byte.com LAST MONTH 5	nVidia GeForce FX 5600 Ultra	128MB DDR	450/450MHz	400MHz	yes	2,048x1,536	9x	yes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £317 inc VAT • 3-year warranty • First review Sept 03 	The most obvious advance that the 9800 Pro chip makes over its second-placed predecessor is increased core and memory clock speeds. This card retains plenty of gaming power but, as it lacks either 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.							
5	 Sapphire Radeon 9800 Atlantis Pro 0870 220 0700 www.sapphiretech.com RE-ENTRY	ATI Radeon 9800 Pro	128MB DDR	380/340MHz	400MHz	yes	2,048x1,536	9x	yes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £317 inc VAT • 1-year warranty • First review Sept 03 	In the Radeon 9800 Pro ATI has tidied up a few features – it's improved the memory optimisation and added the Smoothvision anti-aliasing technology to version 2.1. Even so, it isn't as impressive as the FX 5900 Ultra – this chip decisively beat its opponent by running visually pleasing anti-aliasing without a drop in frame rates.							

Buying advice: flat-panel displays

Expect to pay around £250-£300 ex VAT for a 15in flat-panel as opposed to around £450 for a 17in display. Bear in mind that the actual screen size is about an inch more than on CRT (cathode ray tube) monitors because the image extends right to the edge of the screen. If you purchase a model with a DVI (digital visual

interface) connector it will ensure future compatibility with graphics cards.

Buying a flat-panel with a built-in USB hub will make it easier to connect peripherals such as printers, scanners and digital cameras.

Watch out for dead pixels. Many flat-panels (particularly older or budget models) that conform to IS13406-2 class 2 or 3 standard have a few defective pixels.

On an entirely black background these will show up as white or coloured spots. Only a class 1 category display is guaranteed free of dead pixels.

Where strong audio quality isn't a must, built-in speakers will give you adequate sound while keeping desk clutter to a minimum. Some flat-panel displays also have pivot support, allowing the screen to rotate 90 degrees.