

TOP 10 CD DRIVES & DVD WRITERS

		CD drives	Interface type	Data buffer size	Average access time	Read/write/rewrite rate	Dimensions	Packet writing and burning software
	1 Asus CRW-5224A 0870 429 3220 www.scan.co.uk LAST MONTH 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £49 ex VAT • 2-year warranty • First review Feb 03 	EIDE	2MB	100ms	52x/52x/24x	149x197x42mm	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.						
	2 LG GCE 8520B 0870 607 5544 www.lge.co.uk NEW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £49 ex VAT • 2-year warranty • First review Apr 03 	EIDE	2MB	100ms	52x/52x/24x	149x185x41mm	Superlink, Nero Express
		The GCE 8520B combines high speeds with great value for money and a two-year warranty. LG has also incorporated the best in CD-RW burning technology so you get top results from your hardware. It's not as fast as Asus' CRW-5224A but it's definitely a worthy buy.						
	3 Asus CRW-4816A 0870 429 3220 www.asus.com LAST MONTH 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £46 ex VAT • 2-year warranty • First review Oct 02 	EIDE	2MB	100ms	48x/48x/16x	149x198x42mm	InCD, Ahead Nero 5.5
		Asus 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'd expect the CRW-4816A to be costly. At £46, though, it's one of the best deals around.						
	4 Teac CD-W540EK 020 8906 9111 www.microwarehouse.co.uk LAST MONTH 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £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 decent performance and quiet operation but is soundly beaten by the top three drives' faster burning rates. 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.						
	5 Cyber Drive CW078D 0239 269 7305 www.cyberdrive.de LAST MONTH 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £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 Asus.						

		DVD writers	Drive type	Interface type	CD-RW read/write/rewrite speeds	DVD read/write/rewrite speeds	Average access time	Burning software
	1 Sony DRU-500A 0870 243 0056 www.sonyisstorage.com LAST MONTH 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £212 ex VAT • 1-year warranty • First review Spr 03 	DVD-R/DVD+R/DVD-RW/DVD+RW/CD-RW	EIDE	32x/24x/10x	8x/4x/2.4x	200ms	Veritas RecordNow
		The DRU-500A is the closest thing we've seen to a perfect DVD writer. It's fast, cheap and, thanks to its all-format facilities, offers peace of mind that the drive won't be redundant in a few years time. Software is easy to use while Sony's external version, the DRX-500UL, is ideal if space inside your PC is tight.						
	2 Pioneer DVR-A05 01753 789 500 www.pioneer-eur.com LAST MONTH 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £207 ex VAT • 1-year warranty • First review Spr 03 	DVD-R/DVD-RW/CD-RW	EIDE	32x/16x/8x	12x/4x/2x	140ms	VOB Instant CD/DVD
		Cheap to buy and cheap to run, the DVR-A05 is a must for anyone wanting to burn a number of DVDs without spending hours waiting at a PC. The Pioneer is astonishingly fast and leaves the competition for dust. It's not a complete solution like Sony's all-format model but it's the next best thing.						
	3 Ricoh MP125A-DP 020 8261 4031 www.ricohmmc.com LAST MONTH 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £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 a place in our charts.						
	4 Philips DVDRW228 0800 896 324 www.philips.com/pcstuff LAST MONTH 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £199 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 faster 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.						
	5 Toshiba SDR-R5002 0800 169 4527 www.toshiba.co.uk LAST MONTH 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £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 SDR-R5002. It may lack the brute force of the DVD+R/+RW format, but its 16/10-speed CD-R/RW facilities are only beaten by the Sony. DVD playback is also better, offering 12-speed as standard.						

Buying advice: CD drives

It's no surprise that most modern PCs come with some sort of CD-R/RW drive. Combine the ability to copy 650MB-700MB of data with the low price of the discs and you have the ideal backup technology for this content-heavy age.

Writing to CD-R is fast, with recording rates on some drives reaching 52-speed.

The discs are cheap and can be read on virtually all PCs. The down side is that 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 data to a CD-RW disc an unlimited number of times.

Drives have to deal with a large amount of information at once, but sometimes the strain proves too much and the device makes 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 some sort of software bundle – opt for a well-known package like Ahead Software's Nero or Easy CD Creator.