

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.dabs.com NEW	17in	1,024x768	0.264mm	451x192x443mm	7.5kg	yes	no
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £495 ex VAT • 3-year warranty • First review Jul 03 	The FP791 incorporates outstanding specifications 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 the FP791 is the perfect accompaniment thanks to its internal speakers with surround sound technology.						
2	 NEC MultiSync LCD 1560VM 0870 120 1160 www.nec-mitsubishi.com NEW	15.1in	1,280x1,024	0.267mm	345x181x334mm	5.1kg	yes	no
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £239 ex VAT • 3-year warranty • First review Jul 03 	The NEC MultiSync strikes a good balance between performance and price – perfect for those working to a budget. Picture quality is excellent and doesn't diminish when viewing the display in a bright room. Our tests demonstrated no streaking and text definition was consistently sharp.						
3	 LG L1710B 0870 604 5544 www.lge.co.uk LAST MONTH 1	17in	1,280x1,024	0.264mm	370x223x421mm	6kg	yes	3
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £304 ex VAT • 3-year warranty • First review Jun 03 	Offering an actual viewing area only 0.5in smaller than the average 19in CRT, the L1710B draws onlookers thanks to its chic silver casing and high-calibre picture quality. The LG feels light and focused and is ideal for general Windows use. The colour scheme is rich and the L1710B can handle animation without any blurring.						
4	 AG Neovo X215 01884 232 060 www.paysan.co.uk NEW	15in	1,024x768	0.297mm	380x155x359mm	4.9kg	yes	no
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £299 ex VAT • 3-year warranty • First review Jul 03 	The X215 is simply the sexiest looking flat-panel we've reviewed. There are 15in displays out there with more specifications per pound but none that performs as well as the Neovo. Despite its lower specs, our DisplayMate tests demonstrated an impressive image display thanks to AG's proprietary LED technology.						
5	 Samsung SyncMaster 181T 0800 521 652 www.samsungelectronics.com LAST MONTH 2	18.1in	1,280x1,024	0.281mm	398x208x443mm	5.8kg	yes	no
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £475 ex VAT • 3-year warranty • First review Spring 03 	If you want one of the best 18.1in flat-panels on the market then Samsung's generous offering is hard to refuse. The SyncMaster 181T offers top image quality – we experienced no dead pixels – and is a bit of a looker to boot. Despite being a high-end corporate model, the 181T is also aggressively priced.						

	Graphics cards	Graphics processor	Installed RAM	DDR RAM	Ramdac	8x AGP	Maximum resolution @ 75Hz	DirectX version	DVI
1	 Gigabyte Maya II R9700 Pro 01908 362 700 www.giga-byte.com LAST MONTH 1	ATI Radeon 9700 Pro	128MB	yes	400MHz	yes	2,048x1,536	9x	yes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £225 ex VAT • 3-year warranty • First review Dec 02 	The R9700 Pro is crammed with technology that pushes frame rates and graphics quality to new levels. Its benchmark results are equally impressive. In our Comanche 4, Aquanox and Quake III tests, the 9700 established a clear lead at lower resolutions and destroyed its rivals at 1,600x1,200 and beyond.							
2	 Sapphire Radeon 9700 Atlantis Pro 08702 200 700 www.komplett.co.uk LAST MONTH 2	ATI Radeon 9700 Pro	128MB	yes	400MHz	yes	1,920x1,440	9x	yes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £213 ex VAT • 1-year warranty • First review Dec 02 	This 128MB version of the Radeon 9700 Pro trounced the GeForce4 Ti 4600, regularly achieving between 10 and 20fps (frames per second) more. The Sapphire is slightly slower than our Best Buy graphics card, software is sparse and the warranty covers just one-year support. However, it's also slightly cheaper.							
3	 MSI FX 5800 Ultra 0870 727 2100 www.msi.com.tw LAST MONTH 3	nVidia GeForce FX 5800 Ultra	128MB	yes	400MHz	yes	2,048x1,536	9x	yes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £325 ex VAT • 2-year warranty • First review Jun 03 	The 5800 Ultra features nVidia's next-generation 3D processor. Its FX Flow system is designed to keep the card cool, but it's very loud in operation. The FX chip uses the smaller 0.13 micron core and DDR2 RAM, so it's the fastest card in terms of frame rates – in our tests it effortlessly outpaced the ATI Radeon 9700 Pro.							
4	 ATI Radeon 9600 Pro www.atitech.com NEW	ATI Radeon 9600 Pro	128MB	yes	400MHz	yes	1,920x1,440	9x	yes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £110 ex VAT • 3-year warranty • First review Jul 03 	Costing around half the price of its more sophisticated siblings, the Radeon 9600 Pro is affordable but powerful enough to give an enjoyable playing experience – especially with the upcoming crop of DirectX 9.0 games. Add to that the quality of the visuals and you have an ideal card for the hardened gamer on a budget.							
5	 Sapphire Atlantis 9500 08702 200 700 www.komplett.com LAST MONTH 4	ATI Radeon 9500	128MB	yes	400MHz	yes	1,920x1,440	9x	yes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £102 ex VAT • 1-year warranty • First review Mar 03 	ATI's Radeon 9500 chip fits into the 'performance at a modest price' category. Although there's less in the way of brute force and graphics rendering facilities, most of the important features are still present – such as support for DirectX 9.0. The 9500 also scores high marks for overall image quality.							

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.