











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	
	1 PC ADVISOR BEST BUY RECOMMENDED	Asus CRW-4816A 0870 429 3220 www.asus.com LAST MONTH 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• £58 ex VAT• 2-year warranty• First review Oct 02	EIDE	2MB	100ms	48x/48x/16x	149x198x42mm	InCD, Ahead Nero 5.5
Offering 48-/48-/16-speed (read/write/rewrite) facilities, the Asus is the fastest drive we've seen. With buffer underrun protection, dynamic suspension to cut down vibrations, Mount Rainier support and fast performance you would expect the Asus to be expensive. At £58, though, it is one of the best deals yet.									
	2 PC ADVISOR RECOMMENDED	Teac CD-W540EK 020 8906 9111 www.microwarehouse.co.uk LAST MONTH 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• £83 ex VAT• 2-year warranty• First review Jul 02	EIDE	8MB	72ms	48x/40x/12x	146x192x42mm	DirectCD, Roxio Easy CD Creator
The CD-W540EK combines high performance and quiet operation but its price tag denies it the top spot. Fine Focus control keeps the laser positioned at high speed, while Intelligent Speed Control keeps the success rate high by monitoring CDs to determine the quickest writing speed without risking errors.									
	3	Cyber Drive CW078D 01256 707 070 www.cyberdrive.de LAST MONTH 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• £70 ex VAT• 1-year warranty• First review Jun 02	EIDE	2MB	100ms	48x/40x/16x	146x192x42mm	InCD, Ahead Nero 5.5
The CW078D delivers performance on a budget. On paper it is the second fastest in the chart, 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.									
	4	LG GCE-8400B 0870 607 5544 www.lge.co.uk LAST MONTH 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• £51 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.									
	5	Cyber Drive CW058D 01256 707 070 www.cyberdrive.de LAST MONTH 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• £62 ex VAT• 1-year warranty• First review Jul 02	EIDE	2MB	100ms	48x/32x/12x	149x207x43mm	InCD, Ahead Nero 5.5
The CW058D is the cheapest drive, but its spec falls short rated at 48-/32-/12-speed (read/write/rewrite). In our tests the CW058D kept the other drives within sight without pushing up the error rate. It may appear to be a laggard on paper, but the Cyber Drive offers decent performance for a modest price.									

DVD writers		Drive type	Interface type	CD-RW read/write/rewrite speeds	DVD read/write/rewrite speeds	Average access time	Burning software		
	1 PC ADVISOR BEST BUY	Ricoh MP125A-DP 020 8261 4031 www.ricoh.co.uk LAST MONTH 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• £170 ex VAT• 2-year onsite swap 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.									
	2 PC ADVISOR RECOMMENDED	Philips DVDRW228 0800 896 324 www.philips.com/pcstuff LAST MONTH 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• £212 ex 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 the actual speed advantage is minor, although it was the fastest in our tests. Philips also cuts down on errors with Thermo-Balanced Writing, which adapts the method of burning to match the media.									
	3	Sony DRX-120L 0870 511 1999 www.sonyisstorage.com LAST MONTH 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• £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.									
	4	Pioneer DVR-A04 01753 789 500 www.pioneer-eur.com LAST MONTH 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• £275 ex VAT• 2-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 underspecified, but the software bundle is adequate, as is the modest price tag.									
	5	HP DVD200i 08705 474 747 www.hp.com/uk LAST MONTH 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• £340 ex VAT• 3-year warranty• First review Oct 02	DVD+R/DVD+RW/CD-RW	EIDE	32x/12x/10x	8x/2.4x/2.4x	125ms	HP RecordNow
The DVD200i has the specs to compete with the best, running from its 2.4-speed DVD+R/-RW facilities up to the 2MB buffer and error protection technology. But HP's software left it trailing behind the leaders, taking on average an extra minute to complete the tests.									

Buying advice: DVD writers

If you're thinking of adding recordable DVD to your system then you'll need to consider which format is the most suitable. DVD-R is a write-once standard with a 4.7GB capacity and offers the best compatibility with DVD-ROMs and consumer DVD players. It is recognised by the DVD Forum, a consortium of companies that designed

the original DVD standard, and it generally tends to be the cheapest.

DVD-RW is also recognised by the DVD Forum and its 4.7GB discs are reusable up to 1,000 times, although they aren't as compatible as DVD-R discs. DVD-RAM is rewritable, best suited to data use and also recognised by the DVD Forum. The discs are rewritable 100,000 times but are

housed in a caddy so they aren't very compatible. Single-sided discs store 4.7GB, while double-sided ones store 9.4GB.

DVD+RW is rewriteable and not endorsed by the DVD Forum. Its 4.7GB discs offer 1,000 rewrites and good compatibility. DVD+R is a write-once version of DVD+RW, though only newer drives can write to it.