











TOP 10 CD DRIVES & DVD WRITERS

CD drives			Interface type	Average access time	Read/write/rewrite rate	Dimensions (wxdxh)	Internal/external	Weight	Packet writing and burning software	
			Data buffer size							
	1	MSI CR52-A2 0870 755 4747 www.scan.co.uk LAST MONTH 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• £30 ex VAT• 1-year warranty• First review May 03	EIDE 2MB	85ms	52x/52x/24x	148x194 x42mm	internal	0.9kg	Ahead Nero 5.5
Combining a low price with unbeatable features and good performance, MSI has the edge on the opposition. The CR52-A2 burned a 350MB CD-R in just under two minutes, while a CD-RW took three. The AWSS system, designed to cut out unnecessary vibrations, gives added protection from the dreaded buffer underrun.										
	2	Teac CD-W552E 020 8906 9111 www.microwarehouse.co.uk LAST MONTH 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• £55 ex VAT• 2-year warranty• First review Jun 03	EIDE 2MB	100ms	52x/52x/24x	149x198 x42mm	internal	1kg	Nero Express
The slightly pricey Teac took one minute 46 seconds to burn a CD-R and less than three mins to burn a CD-RW, making it the fastest CD writer we've seen in the Test Centre to date. The Intelligent Speed Control determines the highest writing speed available without risking errors, so you won't end up with an unusable disc.										
	3	Asus CRW-5224A 0870 429 3220 www.scan.co.uk LAST MONTH 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• £31 ex VAT• 2-year warranty• First review Feb 03	EIDE 2MB	100ms	52x/52x/24x	149x197 x42mm	internal	1kg	InCD, Ahead Nero 5.5
The Asus offers competitive write and rewrite rates a few seconds behind those of the Teac. Burning errors are kept at bay with Partial-CAV technology that writes the outer and inner parts of the disc at different optimal speeds. The limited Nero Express is bundled with a generous number of blank CD-R and CD-RWs.										
	4	Benq CRW 5224P 01442 301 000 www.benq.co.uk LAST MONTH 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• £39 ex VAT• 1-year warranty• First review Jul 03	EIDE 2MB	100ms	52x/52x/24x	146x198 x42mm	internal	1kg	Nero Express
It's one of the cheapest CD writers in our Top 10, but the Benq boasts similar specs to the other drives here. Burning a CD-RW took five and a half minutes and, although this isn't an absolute age, it still doesn't compare well with the opposition – the second-placed Teac did it in virtually half the time.										
	5	Asus CRW-5224A-U 0870 429 3220 www.scan.co.uk LAST MONTH 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• £65 ex VAT• 2-year warranty• First review Jul 03	USB 2.0 2MB	100ms	52x/52x/24x	156x226 x50mm	external	1.4kg	Nero Express
The external Asus CRW-5224A-U is restricted to fifth position due to its high price tag. It offers excellent performance, though – one minute 57 seconds to write a 350MB CD-R – and is easy to set up, connecting as it does to a USB 2.0 port. If you need an external model then you won't do much better than this one.										

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 best DVD writer on the market. Thanks to its all-format facilities, it offers peace of mind that the drive won't be redundant in a few years time. Writing speeds are very respectable. In our tests we burned over 3GB of data to a DVD+R disc at a rate of 3.2MBps and 3.1MBps to a DVD-R disc.									
	2	NEC ND-1100A 020 8752 3665 www.nec.co.uk NEW	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• £186 ex VAT• 2-year warranty• First review Aug 03	DVD+R/+RW	EIDE	40x/16x/10x	12x/4x/2.4x	140ms	Ahead Nero
The NEC is an affordable drive that boasts strong performance and a solid software bundle. But Sony's excellent DRU-500A, which costs an extra £26, is still the best deal as it supports both major formats. If you wish to gamble on DVD+R/+RW having the last word, though, this drive stands you in good stead.									
	3	HP dvd300e 0845 270 4142 www.hp.com LAST MONTH 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• £250 ex VAT• 1-year warranty• First review Jul 03	DVD+R, DVD+RW, CD-RW	USB 2.0, FireWire	40x/16x/10x	8x/4x/2.4x	125ms	Veritas RecordNow
The external dvd300e burned more than 3GB of data to a DVD+R disc at 5MBps, dropping to 3.2MBps on DVD+RW. This makes it one of the fastest writers we've seen and goes some way towards justifying the £250 price tag. HP's specially designed software is easy to use, making it ideal for the less technically minded.									
	4	Teac DV-W50EK 020 8906 9111 www.microwarehouse.co.uk LAST MONTH 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• £195 ex VAT• 2-year warranty• First review May 03	DVD-R, DVD-RW, CD-RW	EIDE	32x/16x/8x	12x/4x/2x	140ms	Nero Express
Teac is known more for quality than low prices, but the DV-W50EK is a snip at £195. It wrote our 3GB test DVD-R in 16 mins 47 secs – almost a minute faster than the next best drive. DVD-RWs were disappointing, requiring nearly 20 minutes. If DVD-RWs are your speciality then there's faster models in the chart.									
	5	Pioneer DVR-A05 01753 789 500 www.pioneer-eur.com LAST MONTH 4	<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
The DVR-A05 burned over 3GB of data to a DVD-R disc at a rate of 5MBps, dropping to 3.3MBps when burning the same data to a DVD-RW disc. However, these speedy rates have been achieved at the expense of the Pioneer's CD writing ability. The software isn't the simplest to use so it's not ideal for novices.									

Buying advice: DVD writers

If you wish to add recordable DVD to your PC then you'll need to consider which format is the most suitable.

- **DVD-R** This write-once standard has a capacity of 4.7GB 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 format on the market.

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

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** This format is rewritable but not endorsed by the Forum. Its 4.7GB discs offer 1,000 rewrites and good compatibility, while DVD+R is a write-once version of DVD+RW.