

## DEALERS AND VENDORS HAVE A FAIR IDEA OF HOW COMPUTER-ILLITERATE THEIR BUYER IS AND MANY ARE TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THIS FACT

# beware

**B**efore you buy your PC, do your homework. Find out the brands that are available and the products that are new in the market. Read the reviews of the components from computer magazines (such as CHIP) and arm yourself with enough knowledge to ensure that you buy the right stuff.

You may most likely be cheated by someone who tries to palm off tampered components (motherboard, processor etc) that are inside the computer and are very difficult to check for fraudulence.

Keep your eyes peeled and exercise extreme caution if you do not want to be burdened with a fraudulent product in your lap.

### MOTHERBOARD

The quality of components and the Bus on the motherboard affect the data transfer rate and processing speed of the board. No hard and fast rules ensure that your motherboard is genuine, however, these are a few things you could check:

**1Packaging:** The motherboard is delivered in a cardboard box that carries the name of the manufacturer, make and model number. Note them down. After opening the box, check if the motherboard is packed in a sealed anti-static bag and is accompanied by a user manual, driver CD or floppy, and probably a warranty card.

**1Awards:** Check for the awards (NSTL, FCC, CE) or an ISO rating won by the motherboard. These should be printed on the box.

**1Slots:** Once the motherboard is out of the anti-static packaging, check if the last ISA slot has two stickers—one with a serial number and a bar code, and the other with details such as test code and batch number.

**1Autodetection:** Once the operating system has been loaded and your machine boots up, the make and model of your motherboard will be displayed just below the name of the BIOS. Compare these with the details you noted down from the box. This auto-detection of the motherboard by the BIOS is absolutely foolproof.

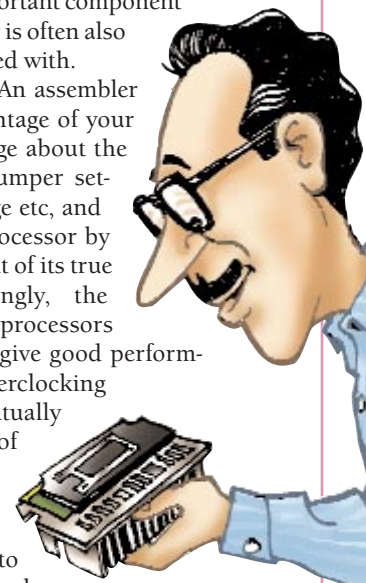


### PROCESSOR

The most important component of your computer is often also the most tampered with.

**1Overclocking:** An assembler could take advantage of your lack of knowledge about the processor, the jumper settings, core voltage etc, and overclock the processor by almost 50 percent of its true speed. Surprisingly, the tampered-with processors can continue to give good performance, but overclocking would eventually reduce the life of the processor.

**1Seal:** Pay attention to the seal. Look carefully to ensure that the dealer has not modified the original seal by replacing it or covering it with another. There are less chances of being cheated if you insist on a processor that is sealed in a protective blister pack with the manufacturer's hologram.



## PERIPHERALS

Peripherals are not easy to tamper with and you rarely come across a fraudulent piece. However, you can reduce your chances of being cheated by opting for a complete multimedia kit (CD-ROM drive, soundcard and speakers).

1 If you are buying just the CD-ROM drive and the speakers, make sure they belong to a well-known brand.

1 Look for the silver sticker on the bottom of the drive for the serial number.

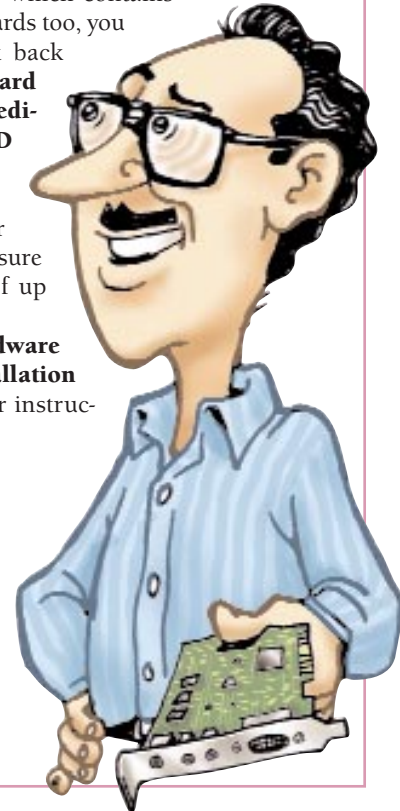
1 Do not buy devices that are not sealed or have signs of previous use or damage including pen marks, dents, loose connection points or dust and grime in the nooks and crevices.



## ADDITIONAL CARDS

1 Apart from the TV Tuner card—that is not much in demand today—you are likely to find duplicate graphics, sound and LAN add-on cards in the market. If your dealer hands you a card bundled with a driver CD, which contains drivers for other cards too, you can hand it right back to him. **Every card comes with a dedicated driver CD** and if you are getting one with drivers for other cards, you can be sure that there's a goof up somewhere.

1 **Never buy hardware without the installation manual** and other instruction notes.



## HARD DISK DRIVE

It is very easy for vendors to pass off fraudulent or even repaired disk drives as new pieces. To make matters worse, even running a performance test or benchmark does not help you in differentiating a used HDD from a new one.

1 Buy only HDD that are packed in anti-static bags.

1 Look for dents or other signs of damage on the surface of the HDD. Examine the body of the drive for the silver sticker that details the serial number, model, batch number, firmware number, configuration etc. This sticker should be in a good condition. It should not be peeling off from any side.

1 **Ensure that there are no other stickers over the original one**, apart from perhaps 'Fragile' or 'Handle with Care' stickers. In case you notice an irregularity here, there is a strong possibility that the HDD is probably a used or repaired piece.



### BUYER'S TIP

Eye all those fancy discounts with suspicion! By offering you multiple driver disks or other freebies, the dealer could be luring you into buying a fraudulent