

Big might not be the best

Don't just blindly go for the bigger hard disk drive, pay fair attention to the price, the interface and the performance

Modern desktop hard drives offer multi-gigabyte capacities at a reasonable cost—the per-mega-byte cost is as low as a rupee. However, when calculating the size of the drive you need, opt on the side of excess—the bigger the drive, the lesser you pay per megabyte.

Out of the two types of interfaces—IDE (Integrated Drive Electronics) and SCSI (Small Computer System Interface)—the IDE drives are more popular for mainstream upgrades. You can connect up to four IDE devices to any present-day PC motherboard, without having to spend extra on a controller card.

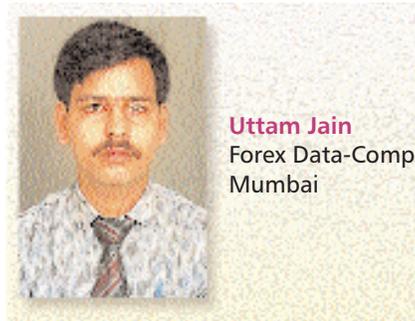
Connecting a SCSI drive to your PC requires a SCSI controller card or built-in system support for SCSI. However, a SCSI drive allows for the least head-movement, and would be suitable for multiple and simultaneous data request environments such as network servers or multithreaded applications (or Windows NT). SCSI also offers the highest per-drive capacities without IDE's BIOS limitations. The IDE hard disk drives can be as big as 16.8 GB and some SCSI drives can be as high as 47 GB.

Some criteria that you should consider while buying a hard disk drive are:



Paresh Shah
P H Trading,
Mumbai

“Computer users would benefit if they use legal software, and as a result enjoy corruption-free, virus-free and crash-free computing.”



Uttam Jain
Forex Data-Comp,
Mumbai

“HP Desk Jet 695 is a good printer for the SOHO market. It gives a very impressive performance in colour”

Transfer Rates: The burst rate refers to how fast a drive can transfer data between its buffer and the interface to the system. However, the average sustained transfer rate from the drive platter through the buffer to the interface is the most important number.

Cache Size: Most desktop drives offer between 128K and 256K, though drives intended for network use or sustained video streaming have more cache to ensure uninterrupted data flow. Once the cache is full, data flow relies on how fast the drive can pass data back and forth to the platters.

Access Time: Don't let Seek time impress you—it only tells you how fast the drive head can get to the right track. Access time, which equals Seek time + Latency (the time it takes to rotate the disk to the right place on the track) tells you how fast the head can reach the data it is looking for.

Rotational Speed: Faster rates generally improve performance. Typical desktop drives range between 4,500 rpm and 5,400 rpm. High-end drives spin at 7,200 rpm or even faster.

Finally, remember that size does matter, since you are going to be using the drive for a stretch of time, plan.

INSIDE INFORMATION

Ink Cartridges

Counterfeit Epson cartridges have flooded the market recently. Because of these many people have began using Rotring cartridges that are compatible with the Epson printers and costs about 60 percent of that of original.

Graphics card

If you are planning to buy a graphics card that promises much power and does not cost a bomb, Intel i740 is the answer to your prayers. At a low cost of Rs 3,500 it is better than all the other low-end graphics cards.

Soundcard

The soundcard from Yamaha costs about Rs 650 and offers performance not significantly different from the Creative SoundBlaster series.

Second-hand PCs

If you plan to use the computer just for surfing the Net, for word processing jobs or maintaining accounts, follow the second-hand computer market. Entry-level computers offered today are way too powerful for these jobs and also, buying a new computer will set you back by about Rs 30,000 (depending upon the configuration) whereas a second-hand Pentium 200 MMX will cost you about Rs 15,000.

Assembled PCs

...The South-East Asian Companies are likely to provide the MNCs and local assemblers stiff competition in the PC market. As prices fall, consumers will have the choice of buying the PC from the assemblers, from an MNC or purchasing a branded White box machine which would be nothing but an assembled computer sold by one company.