

Best Buy monitor

The cheapest places to shop for our Best Buys

MP3 PLAYERS

MP3 players are a convenient way to play your music while on the move. They're small and light, and you don't have to carry CDs or tapes around. You simply transfer music files, which you've downloaded from the web or copied from your CD collection, from your computer onto the player.

All our Best Buys have reasonable sound quality, though a good CD player will still be better. Upgrading to a good set of headphones can often improve the quality.

Solid-state players are so called because they use computer chips for storage rather than a moving hard disk. Hard-disk players usually weigh more than solid-state players, but they can also store more songs. The iPod Mini can store around 1,000 songs on its hard-disk, compared with about 60 songs on the solid-state Sony Net Walkman or Creative Nomad Muvo TX.

Last test: Nov 04

HARD DISK



APPLE IPOD 20GB OR 40GB
£219 (20GB), £299 (40GB), both widely available

Still the best. There's a choice of two capacities, offering storage for 5,000 or 10,000 songs. Sound quality is excellent, and it's a delight to use.

SCORE 86%

APPLE IPOD MINI (4GB)
£179, widely available

The 'mini' offers the same sound quality, ease of use and good looks, but less storage space. It's light (a shade over 100g) and comes in five hip colours. Like the bigger iPods, it has loads of accessories.

SCORE 74%

iAUDIO M3 20GB
£221 from www.dabs.com

Sophisticated styling and plenty of features, including an FM radio, make the iAudio a good alternative to the iPod. Its metal case feels solid and it's easy to use too.

SCORE 69%

ARCHOS AV320
£399 from John Lewis

This player can play video as well as music. You can record video straight onto it or you can transfer it from computer. It's expensive, though – only buy it now if you have to be cutting edge.

SCORE 63%

SOLID STATE



SONY NET WALKMAN 256MB
£280 from Miller Brothers

Battery life is terrific, but sound quality is only OK. And, unusually, you can't improve it much with better headphones.

SCORE 64%

CREATIVE NOMAD MUVO TX 256MB
£80 from John Lewis

This dinky little solid-state player has a two-piece design. To transfer music, pull out the silver part and plug it into your computer – no need for cables.

SCORE 61%

WHICH? EXTRA

Our Which? Extra website is exclusive to Which? members. It has 35 buying guides on key areas. Prices and stockists are updated monthly. On it you'll find:

- full test results for 14 hard-disk and solid-state MP3 players that are currently available, including information on where to buy them
- MP3 player features fully explained, including storage capacity and types of storage, battery life, connecting your MP3 player to your computer, downloading music from the internet, and MP3 and the law.



Which? Extra also has an archive containing more than three years' worth of information (that's 700 reports). It includes a fast, easy-to-use search facility. www.which.co.uk/whichextra