



Understanding Flat Panel Monitors

When selecting a flat panel monitor, **price** is important, but should not be the only consideration. In today's marketplace, the prices are falling, yet the following attributes should be considered:

- 1. Screen Size:** The measurement is the actual diagonal size. Measure from top left to bottom right on your screen. A 19" LCD has a 19" diagonal viewing area. This is different than the days of the big CRTs. The advantage beyond screen size is that the flat panel takes less room on the desk, giving back work space.
- 2. Resolution:** The better monitors have a higher resolution, usually 1280 x 1024 or greater.
- 3. Contrast Ratio:** This addresses the issue of image sharpness, how it looks on the screen. For word processing and number crunching 700:1 should be your minimum for a 17"; 1000:1 for a 19" LCD monitor.
- 4. Angle View:** The better LCD monitors will have a greater angle of view. 140 degrees should be the minimum for both horizontal and vertical. The larger the number the easier it is to view the image. The angle refers to viewing from the right or left and is more important if you have two or more people looking at one monitor—perhaps in training.
- 5. Refresh Rate:** The smaller the number the better. The refresh rate should be 12 ms or less. This is not really critical any more because most all monitors are now really fast.
- 6. Wattage:** CRTs will use 100 to 120 watts, based on their tube size. LCDs will use between 30 and 50 watts, which is significantly less direct energy use. CRTs also produce more heat, which requires indirect support of air conditioning to maintain a comfortable work environment. There is a potential savings for both direct and indirect energy costs, creating a financial incentive for replacement of CRTs with LCDs.
- 7. Warranty:** A three year warranty is the industry standard for flat panel monitors. Read the fine print carefully. You can also help preserve your computer equipment by using surge protectors.
- 8. Price:** Once the other variables are selected, shop for your best price.

Footnote: *Flat panel monitors work best with Windows XP, Windows Vista, and Windows 7 operating systems. While they will also work with earlier operating systems, they may require adjustment. Within Windows XP, there is an application called ClearType that will help fine tune the sharpness of flat panel monitors, when necessary. It will not make up for a significant shortfall in resolution, but will help.*

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