How screen displays work

Displays, often called **monitors** or **screens**, are the most-used output device on a computer.
They provide instant feedback by showing you text and graphic images as you work or play.

Most desktop displays use **Liquid Crystal Display** (**LCD**) or **Cathode Ray Tube** (**CRT**) technology, while nearly all portable computing devices, such as laptops, incorporate LCDs.
Because of their slimmer design and lower energy consumption, LCD monitors (also called **flat panel** or **flat screen** displays) are replacing CRTs.

Basic features

Resolution refers to the number of dots of colour, known as **pixels** (picture elements), contained in a display. It is expressed by identifying the number of pixels on the horizontal and vertical axes. A typical resolution is 1024×768.

Two measurements describe the size of your display: the **aspect ratio** and the **screen size**. Historically, computer displays, like most televisions, have had an aspect ratio of 4:3 – the width of the screen to the height is four to three. For widescreen LCD displays, the aspect ratio is 16:9, very useful for viewing DVD movies, playing games and displaying multiple windows side by side. High-definition TV also uses this format. The viewable screen size is measured diagonally, so a 19" screen measures 19" from the top left to the bottom right.

Inside the computer there is a **video adapter**, or graphics card, which processes images and sends signals to the monitor. CRT monitors use a **VGA**(**video graphics adapter**) cable, which converts digital signals into analogue signals.
LCD monitors use a **DVI** (**digital video interface**) connection.

Colour depth refers to the number of colours a monitor can display. This depends on the number of bits used to describe the colour of a single pixel. For example, an old VGA monitor with an 8-bit depth can generate 256 colours and a superVGA with a 24-bit depth can generate 16.7 million colours. Monitors with 32-

bit depth are used in digital video, animation and video games to get certain effects.

Display technologies

An **LCD** is made of two glass plates with a liquid crystal material between them. The crystals block the light in different quantities to create the image. **Active-matrix LCD**s use **TFT** (**thin film transistor**) technology, in which each pixel has its own switch. The amount of light the LCD monitor produces is called brightness, measured in cd/m^2 (candela per square meter).

A **CRT** monitor is similar to a traditional TV set. It contains millions of tiny red, green and blue phosphor dots that glow when struck by an electron beam that travels across the screen and create a visible image.

PCs can be connected to **video projectors**, which project the image onto a large screen. They are used for presentations and home theatre applications.

In a **plasma screen**, images are created by a plasma discharge which contains noble (non-harmful) gases. Plasma TVs allow for larger screens and wide viewing angles, making them ideal for movies.

Organic Light-Emitting Diode (**OLEDs**) are thin-film LED displays that don't require a backlight to function. The material emits light when stimulated by an electrical current, which is known as electroluminescence. They consume less energy, produce brighter colours and are flexible – i.e. they can be bent and rolled up when they aren't being used.