Am I ready for Blu-ray discs?

PC and notebook drives and burners with blue lasers offer many advantages over conventional DVD drives. Home cinema lovers appreciate the excellent high definition image and sound quality of Blu-ray discs, photographers and home video fans get considerably more memory capacity for the enlargement of their archives, and graphic artists and design studios can quickly and simply store and archive their designs on one single disc.

If you want to utilise the advantages of Blu-ray discs to the full, however, you need the right equipment. Not every PC or TV set has the necessary technology to deliver the extraordinary audio-visual experience that next generation optical storage media offer. Here's a check list of the things that you should consider before you purchase or install a Blu-ray drive:

Does my PC or notebook have the necessary components?

It's absolutely essential that your system meets the following requirements before you install a Blu-ray drive:

Operating system

Windows XP with Service Pack 2 or Windows Vista

CPU

Dual core systems are basically adequate for Blu-ray disc drives. If your PC has a single processor (e.g. Intel Pentium 4), it should have a tact rate of at least 3.2 Ghz or be an AMD Athlon 64 FX games model, or an Intel Pentium EE Edition.

Main memory

At least 1 GB RAM

Graphics card

nVidiaGeForce:	7600 GT and higher
AMD/ATI:	X1600 and higher

Your graphics card should have at least 256 MB graphics memory and support HDCP. Contact the manufacturer directly if you aren't sure whether your graphics card supports the HDCP copier management system. You should also check on your graphics card manufacturer's homepage whether you also have a driver version which supports Blu-ray discs (AMD/ATI Catalyst 6.7 and higher or nVidia ForceWare 93.71), and download the latest driver if necessary.

Can my normal DVD drive also play Blu-ray discs?

No, it can't. However, our Blu-ray disc drives are fully downwardly compatible, which means you can use them to play all standard DVD and CD formats.

Can my display or projector play back high-resolution content?

Your output device (plasma/LCD TV, display or projector) should specify that it is "HD ready", which indicates that it can play back Blu-ray discs, i.e. minimum native resolution of the display is at least 720 physical lines, and be capable of playing back 720p (1,280 x 720 dots in full-screen mode) and 1080i (1,920 x 1,080 with 50 Hz interlaced, i.e. in half-screen mode/ PAL) formats. An "HD ready" device must also be compatible with the HDCP copier management system. This means that, among other things, it has to at least have either a DVI interface with HDCP or an HDMI interface. Contact the manufacturer directly if you aren't sure whether your display supports HDCP.

Anyone who wants to exploit the excellent image quality of Blu-ray discs to the full should opt for a "Full HD" device with a resolution of 1920 × 1080 lines in full-screen mode (1080p). The display or projector should also be capable of not just playing back image repetition rates of 50 and 60 Hz (progressive and interlaced), but also 24 Hz.

If your display has neither an HDMI nor a DVI input, you can play back your Blu-ray discs analogue via a D-sub/VGA connection - although the image quality will obviously not be as good.

Note: This Sony NEC Optiarc guide is designed to help you to identify the requirements for playing high-definition movies a computer system. The guide is made as a reference only and is prepared in good faith on the basis of data or information reasonably available. Sony NEC Optiarc does not guarantee its accuracy.