Displays:
Fast, Bright, and Wide

High-end displays get brighter, while wide screens get cheaper and display faster.

The future looks bright for the display market in 2006. Exactly how bright depends on how much you’re willing to spend. If you don’t mind forking over $7000, you can pick up a SpectraView LCD2180WG, NEC’s first LED-backlit monitor, with incredible contrast, brightness, and color capabilities. If that’s a zero or so more than you want to spend, however, fear not: Cheaper wide screens and faster displays are on tap as well.

When the display industry reached its tipping point toward LCDs in 2003—the year liquid-crystal displays first outsold models with cathode-ray tubes—the prevailing argument for buying a flat screen was that it saved desktop space. But because of how LCD monitors display color, they lack the brightness of CRTs; so at the behest of users, companies are scrambling to boost the brightness of new displays. “People really liked the high-end CRTs because of their color brightness and color purity,” says Rhoda Alexander, director of monitor research at iSuppli.

Besides providing increased brightness, LED-backlit LCDs will give users truer color representation on their screens. This is because LEDs can generate a richer color spectrum, thanks to the quality of the backlighting. “Current LCDs can show only 70 percent of the color standards,” says Bob O’Donnell, an analyst with IDC. “With LED you can surpass the standard and get to the high-definition color levels.” This means that when you take a digital camera picture, your LED-backlit monitor will display the same colors that were in your original shot, not a facsimile missing 30 percent of the color spectrum. According to iSuppli’s Alexander, the difference can be striking: LED-backlit LCDs have “a significant wow factor,” he says.

Don’t expect the nosebleed prices of LCD-backlit LCDs to drop significantly in 2006, however. Pricing typically decreases only with competition, and in a nascent market you won’t see a host of aggressive new competitors pushing prices south. “There are also a lot of research and development costs that need to get recouped,” Alexander points out. “Maybe in 2007 we’ll see some significant price drops here.” For buyers who are still on budgets, wide-screen monitors hold more immediate promise. Wide screens will finally make a big splash in the desktop computer market in 2006, and if you work with spreadsheets quite a bit, those displays will make it easier to view lots of columns at once. Many vendors claim that it’s possible to view two Word documents side by side with a wide-screen display, but according to iSuppli’s Alexander you’ll need at least a 23- or 24-inch wide screen for that to work well.

Wide-screen buyers will be glad to know that monitor response time, which affects how fluidly a fast-moving object appears on your display, will improve significantly. In 2004, response times of 25 milliseconds were common. Now you’re more likely to find a 12ms or even 8ms model. Those numbers will continue to drop in 2006. You’ll notice the change most when viewing movies or playing games. Motion should be smoother, with less ghosting.

**PRICE CHECK**

**WATCH FOR FALLING WIDE-SCREEN PRICES**

The wide-screen TV or monitor you’ve been coveting should get much more affordable next year. Here are market research firm iSuppli’s projections of the dropping prices.

![Graph showing the dropping prices of wide-screen TVs and monitors over time.](https://via.placeholder.com/150)

Data on 40 to 44-inch LCD TVs provided by market research firm Display Search.