

## DVD Formats Explained

When [DVD](#) technology first appeared in households, users were simply popping DVD discs into their DVD players to watch movies - an option to the then-conventional VCR. But just as compact disc technology evolved so that users could record and erase and re-record data onto compact discs, the same is now true of DVDs. But with so many different formats -- DVD+R, DVD+RW, DVD-RAM, DVD-R, DVD-RW, DVD-ROM -- how do users know which DVD format is compatible with their existing systems, and why are there so many different formats for DVDs? The following information sheds some light on DVD's different flavors, the differences between them and the incompatibility issues that the differing technologies have sprouted.

The crucial difference among the standards is based on which manufacturers adhere to which standards. Similar to the old VHS/Beta tape wars when VCRs first hit the markets, different manufacturers support different standards.

### DVD+R and DVD+RW

DVD+R and DVD+RW formats are supported by Philips, Sony, Hewlett-Packard, Dell, Ricoh, Yamaha and others.

DVD+R is a recordable DVD format similar to [CD-R](#). A DVD+R can only record data once and then the data becomes permanent on the disc. The disc can not be recorded onto a second time.

DVD+RW is a re-recordable format similar to [CD-RW](#). The data on a DVD+RW disc can be erased and recorded over numerous times without damaging the medium.

DVDs created by a +R/+RW device can be read by most commercial DVD-ROM players.

### DVD-R, DVD-RW and DVD-RAM

These formats are supported by Panasonic, Toshiba, Apple Computer, Hitachi, NEC, Pioneer, Samsung and Sharp. These formats are also supported by the DVD Forum.

DVD-R is a recordable DVD format similar to CD-R and DVD+R. A DVD-R can only record data once and then the data becomes permanent on the disc. The disc can not be recorded onto a second time. There also are two additional standards for DVD-R disks: DVD-RG for general use, and DVD-RA for authoring, which is used for mastering DVD video or data and is not typically available to the general public.

DVD-RW is a re-recordable format similar to CD-RW or DVD+RW. The data on a DVD-RW disc can be erased and recorded over numerous times without damaging the medium.

DVDs created by a -R/-RW device can be read by most commercial DVD-ROM players.

DVD-RAM discs can be recorded and erased repeatedly but are only compatible with devices manufactured by the companies that support the DVD-RAM format. DVD-RAM discs are typically housed in cartridges.

### DVD-ROM

DVD-ROM was the first DVD standard to hit the market and is a read-only format. The video or game content is burned onto the DVD once and the DVD will run on any DVD-ROM-equipped device.

For more information, see:

[DVD FAQ](#)

[SmallBusinessComputing.com's Buyer's Guide for DVD Writers](#)  
[DVD Forum](#)

\*\*\*\*\*