

Recordable DVD Compatibility FAQ's

BACKGROUND

Access Video records to DVD-R discs – the most widely compatible of the various DVD recordable formats. We also use name-brand blank media that has been tested and shown to be among the highest in quality and compatibility. We do not use generic or B-grade discs and use only proven DVD recorder models like Pioneer's A-07 that have been shown to produce highly compatible discs.

Still, a small percentage of DVD players, mostly made before 2001, will not play recordable DVDs from Access Video or from any other source of recordable DVDs. This is because not all DVD players were designed to play the recordable DVD formats. The early models, and even some later models were designed to play the massed-produced "pressed" DVDs put out by the big movie studios.

As happened 10-15 years ago with the CD-R format, DVD-R's are becoming increasingly common and very few manufacturers are now manufacturing DVD players incapable of playing the DVD-R discs.

We are seeing signs of this already. It was not unusual to have customers call about compatibility issues in 2002-2003. In 2004, there were very few calls, and only one or two have been reported to Access Video in 2005.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q. Will DVD's provided by Access Video play in my DVD player?

A. There is better than a 95% chance that they will. Industry surveys vary, but generally estimate that over 95% of existing DVD players can play the type of disc (DVD-R) that Access Video provides. Many older players (made before 2001) and even some newer players are built primarily to play mass-produced "pressed" DVD's and are not properly calibrated or programmed to play the newer recordable formats. Sometimes consulting your manual or player specifications can help. Check to see if it is capable of playing DVD-R discs.

Q. Is incompatibility caused by the DVD or the DVD Player?

A. The fault is with the player. Properly recorded DVD-R discs, like the ones made by Access Video, meet all the specifications published by the DVD Forum, which is the organization responsible for setting DVD standards. Some manufacturers of players have chosen, for cost or marketing reasons, to focus their machine's capability only on playing "pressed" DVDs from the major movie studios. These players are not fully compliant with the published DVD standards. Fortunately, with the popularity of the DVD-R format increasing, very few, if any, player manufacturers are building non-compliant players anymore.

Q. Will incompatibility damage my DVD or DVD Player?

A. No. With the exception of some very rare player defects, incompatibility will not damage either the disc or the player.

Q. What are the symptoms of incompatibility with my DVD player?

A. Incompatibility can cause a player to fail to recognize the disc or to play it erratically. Pausing, skipping and "disc error" or "bad disc" messages are often symptoms of this problem.

It is sometimes difficult to discern a “bad disc” (e.g., one with a scratch or other defect) problem from a compatibility problem. For this reason, DVDs made by Access Video are verified bit-by-bit against the computer file or master DVD from which they were made. Thus, the likelihood of a defective disc making it through our quality check is extremely low.

Q. But my DVD player plays my rental DVDs just fine. Why not this one?

A. Rented DVDs are almost exclusively mass-produced “pressed” DVDs. They are different from the recordable DVDs produced by Access Video.

Q. Why does Access Video use recordable DVDs rather than “regular” DVDs?

A. Standard “pressed” DVDs are mass-produced on commercial presses in large quantities – an expensive process to set-up. A master mold or “stamper” must be made first from which DVDs are pressed. Making the stamper and setting up the presses to mass-produce DVDs takes time (usually two weeks) and is expensive. It only makes economic sense (currently) when making 1000 or more copies of a DVD. The method used by Access video is the only feasible method for making low quantities of DVDs.

Q. What should I do if my player does not play a DVD from Access Video?

A. All Access Video DVDs are carefully checked, so the most likely cause is a compatibility issue with the DVD player. This can be verified by trying the disc on another (preferably newer) player or returning the DVD to Access Video, where we will try to replicate the problem. It helps to record where, by time counter, on the disc the problem occurred if it is a skipping/pausing issue.

If compatibility turns out to be the problem, please remember that the projected shelf life of DVD-R media is 100 years. It is very likely that your DVD, and the memories it contains, will be around through many DVD players to come. As recorded DVDs become commonplace, DVD player manufacturers will pay more attention to ensuring adherence of their players to the DVD specification -- which includes the ability to play recordable DVD media. Therefore, even if your current DVD player has difficulty playing the disc, it is likely your future player will have no problem.

Some customers have chosen to return recently purchased DVD players and exchange them for players that properly play DVD recordable media. In many cases, a compatible player can be purchased for the same price or less than an incompatible player. If you are in the market to purchase a DVD player, it is wise to ensure the player is capable of playing recordable DVD media by checking its specifications or by actually playing a DVD-R disc in the store display model.