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## Consumer Decision Making Contest

### *1999-2000 Study Guide*

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#### CD PLAYER

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Snap, crackle and an occasional pop was the sound one might hear while listening to albums on the stereo. Then CDs arrived in the early '80's and offered music listeners almost flawless sound quality. A seemingly endless variety of lights and buttons appear on nearly every CD player on the market. But what do all those lights and buttons do, and do you really need all of them on your player?

#### Description

Unlike the needle on a record player, a CD player does not actually touch the disk. Instead it reads microscopic pits and craters on the disk which are pieces of digital information. The disk rotates in the player and a laser reads the information on the disk and in turn produces the sounds.

#### Types

Single-Players are component sized models designed to be used as part of a stereo system. They play one CD at a time but still allow for programming of specific tracks on a CD. These players range in price from about \$90 - \$200.

Carousel Changers allow for multiple CDs to be inserted at once. Disks are dropped into circular indentations on a tray. Carousel changers enable several hours of music to be selected and specific tracks to be programmed from each CD. The carousel tends to be a more reliable changer than the magazine changer. The price range for players with carousel changes is \$170-\$290.

Magazine Changers also allow for multiple CDs to be inserted at one time. Disks are slipped into a removable cartridge. The cartridge is more convenient for storage purposes. However, some find it more difficult to slide the CDs into the magazine slots than into the carousel. The repair rate for magazine changers is almost twice that of carousel changers. These players range in price from \$170 - \$290.

Portable: The new portable CD players are not much larger than the CDs they contain. The portable players can run off of batteries or the tape player in a car with a special adapter. Portable CD players are susceptible to vibrations so activities such as jogging may cause the CD to skip. Many "boom boxes" or portable stereos now have a CD player as a feature. Portable CD players range in price from \$120 - \$200.

#### What to Think About

The digital sound quality is fairly consistent from machine to machine. Most of the difference in price comes from the type of

player and the various features available. Features, price and reliability should be your guide to determine what type of CD player to buy. The type and number of features you want will be a function of what kind of music listener you are. Serious listeners who tape and have a large CD collection may want to spend the extra money for the convenience that some features offer. More casual listeners may merely want a player that allows them to simply listen to their CDs.

#### Things to ask yourself before purchasing are

1. Cost:           How much do I want to spend? Is this an item in which I want to make a serious investment in?
2. Taping:       Do I frequently make tapes to listen to? Does the player I am considering have additional features which will make taping easier?
3. Listening:      Do I listen to a CD straight through or do I like to select certain tracks to listen to? Would I use a remote control to select tracks while I am listening or would I want to be able to program selections? Would I benefit from having a CD player that can remember the selections I choose from each CD from time to time?
4. Portability:   Will my CD player be a part of a stereo system? Would I prefer a portable player or "boom box" with a CD player?

#### Features

CD players may have some or all of the following features:

Remote Control - enables you to scan selections while you are listening. Useful when listening so you can skip selections or listen to one over again without having to get up to manually operate the player.

Headphones jack - enables you to listen without disturbing others. Headphones allow you to listen without having the CD player hooked up to speakers

Music Sampling - plays a few sections from each track so you can choose which to listen to or tape. This feature is nice if you are unfamiliar with a CD or haven't listened to it in a while.

Favorite track selection - actually remembers which selections you choose on a particular disk. This is convenient for skipping certain tracks each time the CD is played.

Auto-edit - matches the tracks being taped to the amount of room available on a tape. This is a nice feature if you make a lot of tapes. It saves you from having to add up the time of the songs and the amount of tape available.

Numeric Keypad - allows you to enter the number of the track you wish to listen to rather than the up/down select button available on many players. Essentially this is a time-saver and convenience feature.

There are many more "high tech" features available than are described here. Those not wanting to spend a lot of money who don't mind changing CDs and skipping tracks each time they listen to a CD, can still get value for the money. The main differences

among many players are the features available. Serious music buffs may want to do some in depth research to determine which features they want.

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References:

"CD Players," *Consumer Reports*, March 1993, pp. 168-175.

"CD Players," *Consumer Reports*, March 1994, pp. 186-189.

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