

Scientists Try To Solve DVD Compatibility Problems



May 6 — As more and more people get rid of their VCRs and turn to DVD players, a new problem is on the rise. *7 On Your Side's* Michael Finney explains.

The problem is compatibility. Recordable DVDs sometimes don't play on some machines, but scientists are searching for solutions.

Have you ever burned a DVD at the office and gotten home, only to find it won't play in your DVD player or computer? Digital media experts say it's not rare to get a rejection when playing recorded disks.

Terry O'Kelly, Memorex: "They would get some sort of error message, or incompatible format. In some cases, they will say the disk is dirty or there's something wrong with the disk."

Or, you'll see dropout or the disk might freeze. What's causing the problem?

Oliver Slattery, physicist: "Well many of the older DVD players in particular, and poor quality DVD disks. When the data is recorded onto them, they tend to have problems."

In a recent study, researchers tested 14 different models of DVD drives. Each one was tested with more than 50 brands and types of recordable discs.

Slattery: "We found unfortunately that no one device was able to read all the media, and no one piece of media was readable in all devices."

So, physicists came up with suggested data and quality standards.

Slattery: "The idea is to present this information to the industry so that they can have a benchmark, and therefore the whole industry will reach that goal of much higher compatibility."

Newer DVD drives will have a significantly higher rate of compatibility because new technology can sometimes correct problems from a poor quality disc. But experts say if you are experiencing problems now...

Slattery: "There are a lot of frequently asked questions and answers that are put on the websites of the disc manufacturers as well as the hardware manufacturers. Consumers can go there with a particular problem, look through the questions, and you can find the answer there."

The next phase of testing will involve the newest products on the market - what people are able to buy right now. Early results show many having little or no problem.