

My Grandpappy's Advice on DVD's

My grandpappy always use to say, "Never leave your scrap wood and DVD's outside because they might rot." Well, okay, it's possible that he may not have mentioned the DVD's. But it's true that you shouldn't leave untreated wood outside because it will rot, but what about DVD's? They can rot as well, not necessarily by leaving them outside, but they are just as vulnerable to rotting. The June 22, 2004 issue of PC Magazine reported a possibility that 10% of all DVD discs may suffer from a phenomenon called DVD rot that may render a disk un-usable. Later studies found that although DVD rot is a real phenomenon, the majority of DVD rot cases can actually be blamed on poor handling of the discs.

Although DVD and CD discs look a lot alike DVD discs are actually much more fragile. CD discs use a single layer of data that is then covered with an aluminum reflective coating. A beam from a CD player is reflected off the disc and "reads" data by detecting changes in the laser beam as it scans across the pitted surface of the CD. Mass produced DVD's work in a similar manner except for the fact that they have two layers of information. The bottom layer is coated with a semi-reflective material like gold. This allows the laser to shine through the gold layer so that it can read the top layer, which is coated in a fully reflective coating such as Aluminum. These two layers are bonded together between plastic layers, which help protect the individual layers. Unfortunately this leaves the discs vulnerable to flexing such as when they are removed from their case.

All this geek talk brings me to the real reason for this article, caring for your DVD discs. Improper storage is a major reason DVD disks fail. First try to store your disks upright. Many cases do not fully support the disc and after year of storage you may find the edges sagging. Choosing the correct case is also important. Never use a CD case to store a DVD. Only store DVD's in cases that are specifically designed for them. Most DVD cases use a special locking hub designed to hold the disc securely. To release the disc, simply push down on the center hub and the DVD will pop free from the case. If you use a CD case you may find yourself pulling at the edges of the disc, which puts stress on the DVD layers and may cause "delamination", which will make it harder for your player to read the disc. And what ever you do, avoid storing your disks in paper or cardboard holders. These materials can leave tiny scratches in the surface of the disc.

When cleaning your discs try to use deionized water and a soft cloth. Rubbing alcohol can be used for tougher spots. Be sure to rinse the disk afterwards and always dry the disks to avoid staining the surface. If your disk is scratched there are many scratch removal kits on the market to make your disk readable; however, in a pinch, a little white toothpaste and a soft cloth will do the trick. When using a soft cloth on your disks be sure to wipe in a radial motion from inside to outside.

In case you were needing to store your DVD's for long periods of time try to keep your disks in a temperature-controlled environment that can keep the disks between 55 and 75 degrees with in a humidity level ranging from 20 to 50%. If you need any other advice or need a computer related question answered simply call Thomas or Roger at Computer Depot; 947-0749 or e-mail Thomas as computerdepotonline@att.net. One last note; please resend any e-mail sent between May 31 and June 4. It seems my e-mail server was not working properly. Like my grandpappy always said, "Don't take any wooden nickels and remember that even a computer guy can have computer problems!"