



Flash Drives

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SanDisk Cruzer Contour

REVIEW DATE: 03.21.08

Editor's Rating: ●●●●○

Discuss Total posts: 6

Buy It Here: \$43.00 - \$60.00



By Eric Griffith

The SanDisk Cruzer Contour (\$69.99 list) provides an almost perfect mix of good looks, price, and performance in a USB flash drive. That it comes with useful extras is gravy. The 4GB model is priced at a pretty standard \$69.99 list and can be found for much less (around \$47 on Amazon, for example). The Contour also comes in higher capacities: 8GB is \$99 and 16GB is \$199.

The Contour's stainless steel casing makes it heavier than most USB drives, but gives it an agreeably solid feel. And the drive is on the big side, at 73 by 18.5 by 9.5 millimeters, which can make it difficult to fit into USB ports in tight spaces. All the drive's room is needed to accommodate a sliding design that hides the USB plug behind a flip-up metal shield, protecting it from dust or worse when not in use—no cap required. Unfortunately, the slider for extending or hiding the plug is not particularly intuitive. SanDisk took the precaution of including extra printed directions in the package to help first-timers. (Kudos to SanDisk for not using blister-pack packaging, by the way.)

SLIDESHOW (9)



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It's also worth mentioning to neat freaks that the Contour's top is a magnet for fingerprints. SanDisk used the now-ubiquitous gloss black (so-called "piano black") on the top, just where you have to put your thumb to slide it. Prepare for the occasional wipe-down.

Two kinds of extras can come with a USB drive: a case, chain, or clip to hold the drive, and software on the drive. SanDisk doesn't scrimp on either. It's the only drive in this group that comes with a padded carrying case, complete with a clip for a keychain. It's a tight case, requiring a toothpaste tube-type squeeze to get the drive back out.

Inside are several software applications, accessible using the U3 platform. Under Windows Vista, the Contour appears as if it is two drives, each with its own drive letter. One is labeled "Removable Disk" for the flash storage, and a second, labeled "U3 System," shows up as a CD-ROM. When you plug in the Contour, Windows Vista brings up two AutoPlay dialogs, one for each.

When you activate U3, a button appears on the desktop, providing instant access to the apps on the Contour. Applications include a version of HP PhotoSmart for cataloging digital images, Avast! Antivirus, SanDisk's own CruzerSync for synchronizing files between the flash drive and hard drive, SignupShield password manager, Skype, and games like Sudoku. Some may consider these apps shovelware, but unwanted programs are easy to delete (and, unlike the typical uninstall, don't leave crud in the Windows Registry). The U3 Software Central download area on the Web offers other software to run from the Contour (or any U3-capable drive). Most of these apps are free. U3 can also secure the drive, password protecting all contents.

Performance-wise, Cruzer Contour is at the top of the pack for sequential write times at 16.9 megabytes in our tests, and is no slouch at read times (25.7 MBps). Its random read/write times are more than enough to support Vista ReadyBoost.

The combination of reasonable price, high speed, lifetime warranty, and worthwhile extras make crowning the SanDisk Cruzer Contour as our Editors' Choice in USB flash drives a no-brainer.

Compare the SanDisk Cruzer Contour's features and performance with other flash drives.

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