



Review: ColorVision Spyder and SpyderPro

Stick a Spyder on your screen for dead-on color accuracy.



By [Robert Heron](#)

You spring for the pimp camera, printer, and pricey editing software to ensure your snapshots look hot. Have you ever stopped to consider how the color accuracy of your computer monitor fits in the chain?

Most people rarely move beyond the auto button when they want to fine-tune their display's color. Although some software titles help photo enthusiasts manually adjust a display's image to perfection, a piece of hardware called Spyder automates these color adjustments with impressive results.

Along came a Spyder

Essentially a USB-based "7-filter, emissive colorimeter" for CRT and LCD monitors, the puck-shaped Spyder from ColorVision uses an electronic eye to measure the color levels of a display. Combined with included software-generated test colors and your computer, the Spyder creates a custom color profile optimized for your display hardware.

ColorVision's Spyder and SpyderPro make great solutions to getting the most out of your computer monitor. As far as hardware is concerned, the Spydery are the same. It's the bundled software that differentiates the two.

SpyderPro

The \$249 pro model's software, dubbed "OptiCAL," includes advanced calibration features. It works well in multi-display environments or for those who want to extract the best image quality possible from their hardware. OptiCAL's advanced tools include RGB pre-calibration, RGB response curve analysis, and custom target support for creating specific monitor definitions. We experienced excellent results with OptiCAL's default calibration, and the additional tools allowed us to explore display characteristics in great detail.

For English speakers: What you see on your monitor (as far as colors are concerned) is what you get.

Spyder

Digital photographers who want accurate color depiction without hassle should look at the PhotoCAL software that comes bundled with the \$169 Spyder. PhotoCAL is optimized for the two most common color temperature standards used in print production. However, a typical user may find the results of the Spyder's calibration a bit warm, with slightly reddish whites.

For those wanting to optimize for higher color temperatures such as 9,300K, the SpyderPro, with its OptiCAL software, makes the better choice. But PhotoCAL's menu system and clearly labeled options make it easier to use.

Hands-on color tweaking

The Spyder device includes specific attachments for calibrating LCD or CRT monitors.

For CRT calibration, affix the Spyder to the display's surface using three suction cups. Since CRT tubes come curved or flat, the corresponding Spyder attachment has a soft, flexible rubber cup that also prevents stray light from entering the meter.

The LCD attachment incorporates a honeycomb light channel that extends far enough from the Spyder eye's surface to prevent suction cups from hitting the surface of the LCD. A removable counterweight prevents the Spyder from sliding off the panel.

Bottom line

Regardless of display type, we found the Spyder's hardware and software a powerful combination for automating display calibration. With the hardware for the Spyder and SpyderPro being equal, we found ourselves favoring the pro model's OptiCAL software for its pre-calibration tools and its support for a wide variety of color temperatures.

Pros: Great results; Mac and PC compatible

Cons: None

Company: [ColorVision](#)

Price: Spyder \$169; SpyderPro \$249

Available: Now

Specs: USB-based, seven-filter emissive colorimeter; Mac and PC support

- SpyderPro
- Spyder

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