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THE \$1,000 GAMING / PRODUCTIVITY PC BUILD

RECOMMENDED
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The \$1,000 Gaming/Productivity Computer Build

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By Ari Altman Published March 29, 2014 Updated April 9, 2014

This is the ideal all-around system for just about anyone. It gives you plenty of performance without breaking the bank, while offering lots of room to grow over time. Plus, you can equip it for productivity, gaming, or both - just follow our tips!

We continue to recommend the sleek Cooler Master micro ATX case shown to the right, as it can pack in plenty of power while taking up less space at your desk than a typical ATX case. Also on the list is a fast Intel quad-core CPU and the option to equip the system with a midrange gaming video card. If you're looking for something a bit higher-end, though, check out our \$1,500 build, which offers more bells and whistles packed into a much larger ATX case. On the flip side, if you just need an office PC, look at our \$500 build.



Top 7 Laptops On Sale

Page 1: This Month's \$1,000 Build

Page 2: The \$1,000 Build Archive

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Pricing and availability for midrange components change constantly. We use Amazon's real-time pricing engine so you always see the most up-to-date prices available. Links to Amazon UK and Amazon Canada are also provided for each component category, with substitutions (marked with an *) based on availability. For special short-term discounts from various vendors, feel free to check out our Hot Deals Blog, and for advice on a new monitor to go with your system, browse our recently-updated Monitor Buyer's Guide. To support this site, please using our links if you decide to purchase any of the products we list.

If you'd like to see how this build's components and prices have changed over time, flip to the \$1,000 Build Archive page. And if you need help assembling your system, check out our detailed Builder's Guide, or post a question in our new User Forum - we'll be sure to answer!



The April 2014 Build

Motherboard:

Processor:

Intel Core i5-4670K

This chip's fast quad-core design will make quick work of just about any tast you can throw at it, and it's unlocked for overclocking, meaning you'll have the opportunity to let it stretch its legs down the road (but don't forget to add an aftermarket cooler, like the Cooler Master Hyper 212 Plus, if you go down the road have the cooler with the sething the cooler will be sething the cooler will

The Guru's Tip: If you're using this system for productivity, the 4670K's built-in HD4600 video will be more

Gigabyte GA-Z87MX-D3H

Updated: This Gigabyte board packs in tons of features, despite its compact micro ATX dimensions. These include HDMI, DisplayPort, 6-channel analog outputs, optical digital audio, four USB 3.0 ports and two USB 2.0 ports. It even supports two video cards running at PCIe 3.0 x8 speed (note that you'll need at least a 650W power supply for that, though!).

The Guru's Tip: While this is a compact mATX motherboard, it will

amazon



Intel Core i5-4670K...

\$209.99 **Prime**Shop now

Amazon UK Amazon Canada than sufficient - no need to buy a video

Sapphire Radeon R9 270X OC 2GB

Updated: Quick mid-month switch to

of the R9 270, which we previously

difference being a 125MHz higher core clock on the 270X, plus a second PCle

overclocks. This Sapphire 270X model offers a great dual-fan cooling system,

factory overclock to 1070MHz, up from the standard 1050MHz.

The Guru's Tip: If you need a video

card solely for accelerating Adobe

applications, we suggest the less

recommended. Both are excellent

midrange cards, with the main

power connector to allow higher

very compact dimensions, and a

pick up the Sapphire Radeon R9 270X, as it's now within a few dollars



work just fine in any ATX case.



Gigabyte Z87 LGA 1150 2... \$123.99 **Prime**

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Memory:

Crucial Ballistix Sport 2x4GB





Crucial Ballistix Sport 8GB Kit... \$66.50

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Amazon UK

Amazon UK Amazon Canada With RAM prices coming off their highest point in two years, we're lucky to find Crucial's 8GB Ballistix Sport kit available at a reasonable price. Note that buying two separate 4GB sticks may be cheaper - both options are

available from the link provided.

The Guru's Tip: There are three main features you should look for in any memory product: (1) voltage - it should be 1.5V or below to be within spec; (2) frequency - DDR3-1600 is a good baseline to start with on the price-performance curve; and (3) timings - watch out for timings higher than 9-9-9-24 in memory products in this price range.

Video Card:

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Sapphire Radeon R9... \$207.40

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expensive GeForce GTX 650

Samsung 840 Evo 120GB

The Samsung 840 Evo provides the

The Samsung 840 Evo provides the very best performance in its class, leveraging less expensive TLC memory chips and Samsung's highly-optimized firmware. Note that TLC chips have a slightly lower lifespan than the MLC memory used in other solid-state drives. If you know you will be writing a lot of data to the drive, which is what puts stress on the memory, we instead recommend the Samsung 840 Pro. Either way, you get Samsung's sterling reputation for reliability. Don't forget to check out our SSD Guide to make sure you get the most out of it!

Hard Drive:

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Western Digital Blue 1TB

We see no reason to change course here - the Western Digital Blue 1TB is a great drive at a great price, offering 7200RPM rotational speeds and quiet operation. No wonder it's the most popular hard drive sold on Amazon! Western Digital also happens to have one of the best reputations for reliability among hard drive manufacturers.

amazon

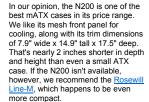
Solid-State Drive:



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Cooler Master N200 mATX



The Guru's Tip: If you're interested in using an ATX case, check out the slideshow of our recommended \$60-\$120 cases in the right-hand column of this page. All the parts we recommend in this guide will work with any of those cases.

Power Supply:

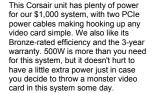




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ly: Corsair CX500



The Guru's Tip: For a neater case, also consider the Corsair CX500M, which has removable cables. We use it in one of our test systems and really like it. If it's within \$10 of the price of the CX500, we think it's a good buy even though the performance is the same.

Operating System:

Microsoft Windows 8.1

With the recent update to Windows 8.1, we're no longer recommending Windows 7, but feel free to use it if you are more comfortable with it. Windows 8.1 has plenty of fine-tuning under the hood to go with its somewhat novel user interface. If you'd like a Windows 7-style start menu and desktop, however, just install the \$5 Start8 app, or download the shareware app Classic Shell.

Case:

amazon

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Optical Drive:

LG 24x DVD Burner

Not much to say here, other than it's cheap, it works, and you'll probably be glad you have it. Sure makes installing the OS easier!

The Guru's Tip: The motherboard selected for this build only includes two SATA data cables. To run a DVD burner along with an SSD and a hard drive, you'll need one extra cable.





Total Cost: \$1,007 (as of April 9, 2014)

(10) Operating System: Windows 8.1 (\$99)

- (1) Processor: Intel Core i5-4670K (\$230) (1) Processor: mtel Core Is-46/UK (\$230)
 (2) Motherboard: Gigabyte GA-Z87MX-D3H (\$124)
 (3) Video Card: Sapphire Radeon R9 270X OC 2GB (\$207)
 (4) Memory: Crucial Ballistix Sport 8GB (\$76)
 (5) Solid-State Drive: Samsung 840 Evo 120GB (\$90)
 (6) Hard Drive: Western Digital Blue 1TB (\$60)
 (7) Case: Cooler Master N200 (\$50)
 (8) Power Supply: Corsair CX500 (\$50)
 (9) Optical Drive: LG 24x DVD Burner (\$21)
 (10) Operating System: Wingdows 8.1 (\$90)

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