

THE \$1,000 GAMING / PRODUCTIVITY PC BUILD

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The \$1,000 Gaming/Productivity Computer Build

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By Ari Altman
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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.



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!

Page 1: This Month's \$1,000 Build
 Page 2: [The \\$1,000 Build Archive](#)

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The April 2014 Build

| Processor: | Intel Core i5-4670K | Motherboard: | Gigabyte GA-Z87MX-D3H |
|------------|---|--------------|---|
| | <p>This chip's fast quad-core design will make quick work of just about any task 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 this path).</p> <p><i>The Guru's Tip:</i> If you're using this system for productivity, the 4670K's built-in HD4600 video will be more</p> | | <p><i>Updated:</i> 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!).</p> <p><i>The Guru's Tip:</i> While this is a compact mATX motherboard, it will</p> |

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Intel Core i5-4670K...

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than sufficient - no need to buy a video card!

amazon



Gigabyte Z87 LGA 1150 2...

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work just fine in any ATX case.

Video Card:

Sapphire Radeon R9 270X OC 2GB

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Sapphire Radeon R9...

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Updated: Quick mid-month switch to pick up the Sapphire Radeon R9 270X, as it's now within a few dollars of the [R9 270](#), which we previously recommended. Both are excellent midrange cards, with the main difference being a 125MHz higher core clock on the 270X, plus a second PCIe power connector to allow higher overlocks. This Sapphire 270X model offers a great dual-fan cooling system, very compact dimensions, and a 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 expensive [GeForce GTX 650](#).

Memory:

Crucial Ballistix Sport 2x4GB

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Crucial Ballistix Sport 8GB Kit...

\$66.50

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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.

Solid-State Drive:

Samsung 840 Evo 120GB

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Samsung Electronics 840...

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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:

Western Digital Blue 1TB

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WD Blue 1 TB Desktop Hard...

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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.

Case:

Cooler Master N200 mATX

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Cooler Master N200 - Mini...

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In our opinion, the N200 is one of the best mATX cases in its price range. We like its mesh front panel for cooling, along with its trim dimensions of 7.9" wide x 14.9" tall x 17.5" deep. That's nearly 2 inches shorter in depth and height than even a small ATX case. If the N200 isn't available, however, we recommend the [Rosewill Line-M](#), which happens to be even more compact.

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:

Corsair CX500

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Corsair Builder Series CX 500...

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This Corsair unit has plenty of power for our \$1,000 system, with two PCIe power cables making hooking up any video card simple. We also like its Bronze-rated efficiency and the 3-year warranty. 500W is more than you need for this system, but it doesn't hurt to have a little extra power just in case you decide to throw a monster video card in this system some day.

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.

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](#).

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](#).



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Windows 8.1
System Builder...
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Total Cost: \$1,007 (as of April 9, 2014)

- (1) Processor: [Intel Core i5-4670K](#) (\$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: [Windows 8.1](#) (\$99)

Go to the [\\$1,000 Build Archive](#)

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