MOTHERBOARDS

FORM FACTOR The form factor sets the standard for a motherboard's dimensions, as well as the positioning of mounting holes and expansion slots; your case must support the form factor of the board you choose. Most of today's motherboards are laid out in the ATX form factor. Home theater buffs looking to build a living-room-friendly PC should consider a smaller MicroATX board. These boards use the general ATX design but include fewer I/O slots, allowing for a shorter board that can fit in a smaller case.

RAM SLOTS Most motherboards feature two to four memory slots. (Because of their size, MicroATX boards tend to offer fewer slots than their ATX counterparts.) Regardless of the board you choose, make sure it has enough slots to accommodate your needs. For optimum performance, look for boards that support faster DDR2 memory.

CPU SOCKET Your most important decision when buying a motherboard is the processor family you want your board to support. AMD's desktop processor, the Athlon 64, is compatible with socket numbers 754 and 939. The socket number simply corresponds to the number of pins found
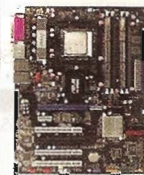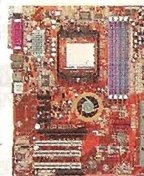
on the bottom of the processor. Sockets 478 and LGA775 support Intel Pentium 4 and Celeron processors, the only difference being that the LGA775 has the pins located on the motherboard CPU socket, as opposed to on the CPU.

STORAGE With Serial ATA (SATA) hard drives becoming increasingly popular, most new motherboards offer both IDE and SATA connectors. If you want to future-proof your system, make sure your board supports SATA drives.

PCI SLOTS Most ATX motherboards provide at least four PCI slots for expansion. While standard PCI remains the norm, faster PCI Express (PCIe) slots are now common on mainstream boards. PCIe slots differ according to the number of links, or lanes, they support. For instance, an x16 slot is wider than an x1 slot due to the x16 slot's higher bandwidth. (A single lane can transmit 2.5Gbps in each direction.) As a result, PCIe graphics cards employ x16, whereas an Ethernet card would be fine with x1. Any expansion cards you plan to use must be compatible with the specific slot types, of course.

—Matthew Murray, Associate Editor

Model	Price	Form Factor	CPU Socket	Core System Chipset	RAM Support	Drive Connectors	Graphics/ Audio	Expansion Slots	USB Ports/ Headers*	FireWire Ports/ Headers*	Find Out More
ABIT COMPUTER											
KV-85	$44.99	Micro-ATX	Socket 754	Via K8M800, VT8237R	Two DDR slots (2GB max.)	Two IDE, two SATA	Via UniChrome Pro/5.1	AGP 8x, three PCI	Four/two	None/none	www.abit-usa.com 510-623-0500
NF8-V2	$59.99	ATX	Socket 754	nVidia nForce3 250	Two DDR slots (2GB max.)	Two IDE, two SATA	None/5.1	AGP 8x, five PCI	Four/two	None/none	
GD8 Pro	$87.99	ATX	LGA775	Intel 915P/ICH6 Express	Four DDR2 slots (4GB max.)	One IDE, four SATA	None/7.1	One PCIe x16, three PCIe x1, two PCI	Four/two	None/none	
KN9 SLI	$112.99	ATX	Socket AM2	nVidia nForce 570 SLI MCP	Four DDR2 slots (8GB max.)	One IDE, six SATA	None/7.1	Two PCIe x16 (SLI), two PCIe x1, two PCI	Four/three	None/two	
AB9-Pro	$145.99	ATX	LGA775	Intel P965/ ICH8R	Four DDR2 slots (8GB max.)	One IDE, nine SATA	None/7.1	One PCIe x16 (SLI), two PCIe x1, two PCI	Four/three	None/two	
Fatal1ty AN9 32x	$158.99	ATX	Socket AM2	nForce 590 SLI	Four DDR2 slots (8GB max.)	One IDE, six SATA	None/7.1	Two PCIe x16 (SLI), two PCIe x1, one PCI	Four/three	None/two	
AW9D-Max	$209.99	ATX	LGA775	Intel 975X/ ICH7R Express	Four DDR2 slots (8GB max.)	One IDE, seven SATA	None/7.1	Two PCIe x16 (Cross-Fire), two PCIe x1, one PCI, one AudioMax	Four/two	None/two	
ASUSTEK COMPUTER											
P5S800-VM	$49.99	Micro-ATX	LGA775	SiS 661FX, 964	Two DDR slots (2GB max.)	Two IDE, two SATA	None/5.1	AGP 8x, three PCI	Four/two	None/none	usa.asus.com 502-995-0883
A8R32-MVP Deluxe	$169.99	ATX	Socket 939	ATI CrossFire Xpress 3200, ULi M1575	Four DDR slots (4GB max.)	Two IDE, six SATA	None/7.1	Two PCIe x16 (CrossFire), one PCIe x1, three PCI	Four/two	None/two	
Crosshair	$239.99	ATX	Socket AM2	nVidia nForce 590 SLI	Four DDR2 slots (8GB max.)	One IDE, six SATA	None/7.1	Two PCIe x16 (SLI), one PCIe x4, three PCI	Four/three	One/one	
P5W DH Deluxe	$249.99	ATX	LGA775	Intel 975X/ ICH7R Express	Four DDR2 slots (8GB max.)	Two IDE, six SATA	None/7.1	Two PCIe x16 (CrossFire), two PCIe x1, three PCI	Four/two	One/one	
Striker Extreme	$399.99	ATX	LGA775	nVidia nForce 680i SLI	Four DDR2 slots (8GB max.)	One IDE, six SATA	None/7.1	Three PCIe x16, one PCIe x1, two PCI	Four/three	One/one	
BIOSTAR USA											
P4TGE	$45.99	ATX	Socket 478	Intel 82845GE, ICH4	Two DDR slots (2GB max.)	Two IDE	Intel Extreme/5.1	AGP 4x, five PCI, one CNR	Six/none	None/none	www.biostar-usa.com 626-581-1055
P4M890-M7	$52.99	Micro-ATX	LGA775	Via PM890, VT8237R Plus	Two DDR2 slots (4GB max.)	Two IDE, two SATA	Via S3 Uni-Chrome/5.1	One PCIe x16, one PCIe x1, two PCI	Eight/none	None/none	
N4SLI-A9	$59.99	ATX	Socket 939	nVidia nForce4 SLI	Four DDR slots (4GB max.)	Two IDE, four SATA	None/7.1	Two PCIe x16, two PCIe x1, three PCI	Ten/none	None/none	

* = Expressed as number of rear panel ports/number of header connectors. Note: A header may support multiple ports.

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Model	Price	Form Factor	CPU Socket	Core System Chipset	RAM Support	Drive Connectors	Graphics/ Audio	Expansion Slots	USB Ports/ Headers*	FireWire Ports/ Headers*	Find Out More
BIOSTAR USA											
Force4 AM2	$79.99	ATX	Socket AM2	nVidia nForce4	Four DDR2 slots (4GB max.)	Two IDE, four SATA	None/5.1	One PCIe x16, two PCIe x1, four PCI	Ten/none	None/none	www.biostar-usa.com 626-581-1055
NF4 4X-A7 Combo VGA	$149.99	ATX	Socket 754	nVidia nForce4 4x	Two DDR slots (2GB max.)	Two IDE, two SATA	nVidia GeForce PCX 5750/5.1	One PCIe x16, two PCIe x1, four PCI	Ten/none	None/none	
DFI											
865PE-TAG	$74.99	ATX	LGA775	Intel 82865PE/ICH5	Four DDR slots (4GB max.)	Two IDE, two SATA	None/5.1	AGP 8x, five PCI	Four/none	None/none	us.dfi.com.tw 510-274-8000
Infinity nF Ultrall-M2	$89.99	ATX	Socket AM2	nVidia nForce4 Ultra	Four DDR2 slots (4GB max.)	Two IDE, four SATA	None/7.1	Two PCIe x16 (SLI), one PCIe x1, three PCIe x1, two PCI	Four/three	One/one	
Infinity 975X/G	$164.99	ATX	LGA775	Intel 975X/ICH7R Express	Four DDR2 slots (8GB max.)	One IDE, four SATA	None/7.1	Two PCIe x16 (SLI), one PCIe x4, one PCIe x1, two PCI	Four/two	One/one	
LANParty UT ICFX3200-T2R/G	$299.99	ATX	LGA775	ATI RD600, SB600	Four DDR2 slots (8GB max.)	One IDE, eight SATA	None/7.1	Three PCIe x16, three PCI	Six/two	One/one	
ELITEGROUP COMPUTER SYSTEMS											
K8T890-A	$53.99	ATX	Socket 939	Via K8T890, VT8237	Two DDR slots (2GB max.)	Two IDE, two SATA	None/5.1	AGP 8x, one PCIe x16, two PCIe x1, two PCI	Four/two	None/none	www.ecsusa.com 510-226-7333
RS485M-M	$57.99	Micro-ATX	Socket AM2	ATI RS485, SB460	Two DDR2 slots (16GB max.)	One IDE, four SATA	ATI Radeon X300/5.1	One PCIe x16, one PCIe x1, two PCI	Four/two	None/none	
PF88	$69.99	ATX	LGA775	SiS 656, 965	Two DDR2 slots (4GB max.)	One IDE, four SATA	None/7.1	One PCIe x16, one PCIe x1, three PCI, one EliteBus	Four/two	One/one	
945G-M3	$89.99	Micro-ATX	LGA775	Intel 945G/ICH7	Two DDR2 slots (2GB max.)	One IDE, four SATA	Intel GMA950/7.1	One PCIe x16, one PCIe x1, two PCI	Four/two	One/one	
KN1 SLI Extreme	$105.99	ATX	Socket 939	nVidia nForce4 SLI	Four DDR slots (4GB max.)	Two IDE, four SATA	None/7.1	Two PCIe x16 (SLI), one PCIe x1, three PCI	Four/three	None/two	
PN2-SLI2+	$249.99	ATX	LGA775	nVidia nForce 680iSLI	Four DDR2 slots (8GB max.)	One IDE, six SATA	None/7.1	Three PCIe x16 (SLI), two PCI x1, two PCI	Six/two	One/one	
EPOX COMPUTER											
EP-9U1697 GLI	$67.99	ATX	Socket 939	ULi M1697	Four DDR slots (4GB max.)	Two IDE, four SATA	None/5.1	Two PCIe x16, one PCIe x1, three PCI	Four/four	None/none	www.epox.com 714-680-0898
EP-5LDA+GLI	$89.99	ATX	LGA775	Intel 945P/ICH7R	Four DDR2 slots (4GB max.)	One IDE, four SATA	None/7.1	One PCIe x16/x4, one PCIe x1, three PCI	Four/four	Two/none	
EP-MF570SLI	$139.99	ATX	Socket AM2	nVidia nForce 570	Four DDR2 slots (16GB max.)	Two IDE, eight SATA	None/7.1	Two PCIe x16 (SLI), two PCIe x1, three PCI	Four/six	None/none	
GIGABYTE TECHNOLOGY											
GA-M59SLI-S5	$179.99	ATX	Socket AM2	nVidia nForce 590 SLI	Four DDR2 slots (16GB max.)	One IDE, eight SATA	None/7.1	Two PCIe x16 (SLI), one PCI x8, two PCIe x1, two PCI	Four/three	One/two	www.gigabyte-usa.com 626-854-9338
GA-965P-DQ6	$215.99	ATX	LGA775	Intel P965 Express/ICH8R	Four DDR2 slots (8GB max.)	One IDE, eight SATA	None/7.1	Two PCIe x16, three PCIe x1, two PCI	Four/three	One/two	
INTEL											
Desktop Board D102GGC2	$76.99	Micro-ATX	LGA775	ATI Radeon Xpress 200	Two DDR2 slots (2GB max.)	Two IDE, four SATA	ATI Radeon X300/5.1	One PCIe x16, one PCIe x1, two PCI	Eight/none	None/none	www.intel.com 800-538-3373
Desktop Board D945PLRN	$105.99	ATX	LGA775	Intel 945PL Express	Two DDR2 slots (2GB max.)	One IDE, four SATA	None/5.1	One PCIe x16, two PCIe x1, four PCI	Eight/none	None/none	
Desktop Board D925XHY	$142.99	ATX	LGA775	Intel 925X Express	Four DDR2 slots (4GB max.)	One IDE, four SATA	None/7.1	One PCIe x16, two PCIe x1, four PCI	Eight/none	One/three	
Desktop Board D955XBK	$199.99	ATX	LGA775	Intel 955X Express	Four DDR2 slots (8GB max.)	One IDE, four SATA	None/7.1	One PCIe x16, one PCI x16/x4, one PCIe x1, three PCI	Eight/none	None/none	
Desktop Board D975XBX2	$259.99	ATX	LGA775	Intel 975X Express	Four DDR2 slots (8GB max.)	One IDE, four SATA	None/7.1	Three PCIe x16 (Cross-Fire), two PCI	Eight/none	None/none	
MSI COMPUTER											
865GM3-V	$45.99	Micro-ATX	LGA775	Intel Springdale 865G/ICH5	Two DDR slots (2GB max.)	Two IDE, two SATA	Intel Extreme Graphics 2/5.1	AGP 8x, two PCI	Four/four	None/none	www.msicomputer.com 626-913-0828
K9N SLI Platinum	$145.99	ATX	Socket AM2	nVidia nForce 570 SLI	Four DDR slots (8GB max.)	One IDE, six SATA	None/7.1	One PCIe x16 (SLI), one PCIe x16/x8, two PCIe x1, three PCI	Ten/none	Two/none	
945GT Speedster-A4R	$159.99	Micro-ATX	Socket 478	Intel 945GT/ICH7R	Two DDR2 slots (4GB max.)	One IDE, four SATA	None/7.1	One PCIe x16, one PCIe x4, two PCI	Four/four	One/none	
975X Platinum V.2	$189.99	ATX	LGA775	Intel 975X/ICH7DH	Four DDR2 slots (8GB max.)	One IDE, four SATA	None/7.1	Two PCIe x16, two PCIe x1, two PCI	Four/four	One/one	
K8N Master2-FAR	$249.99	ATX	Socket 940	nVidia nForce4 Pro	Six DDR2 slots (12GB max.)	Two IDE, two SATA	None/7.1	One PCIe x16 (SLI), one PCIe x16/x1, one PCIe x4, one PCI x1	Four/three	Three/none	

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