Top 10 Power PCs

Power PCs	Price & warranty	Processor type / Processor speed	RAM / Hard disk capacity	Motherboard / USB ports	Monitor / Dot pitch / Maximum resolution@75Hz	WorldBench 4
1 BEST BUY Multivision Ionix Pro ZS — 0870 066 0882 — www.multivision.co.uk — Last month 1	• £1,432 inc VAT • 3-year onsite, 3-year RTB, labour-only warranty • First review Oct 03	AMD Athlon XP 3200+ / 2.2GHz	512MB DDR RAM / 240GB	MSI K7N2 Delta ILSR / 6	19in Mitsubishi Diamond Pro 930SB / 0.24mm / 1,600x1,200	138
2 RECOMMENDED Mesh Matrix Xtreme 3200+ — 0870 046 4747 — www.meshcomputers.com — Last month 2	• £1,644 inc VAT • 3-year onsite warranty • First review Oct 03	AMD Athlon XP 3200+ / 2.2GHz	512MB DDR RAM / 160GB	Asus A7NX Deluxe / 6	18in NEC 1860NX flat-panel / 0.281mm / 1,024x768	137
3 RECOMMENDED Evesham Axis 3200 Revolution — 0870 160 9500 — www.evesham.com — Last month 3	• £1,526 inc VAT • 2-year onsite, 3-year RTB warranty • First review Oct 03	AMD Athlon XP 3200+ / 2.2GHz	1GB DDR RAM / 160GB	MSI MS-6729 / 4	19in ViewSonic G90f+b / 0.25mm / 1,600x1,200	134
4 RECOMMENDED Carrera SSC Extreme FX — 0870 066 0682 — www.carrera.co.uk — Last month 4	• £1,599 inc VAT • 3-year onsite, 2-year RTB warranty • First review Sep 03	Intel Pentium P4 / 3.2GHz	1GB DDR RAM / 200GB	Intel P4 D875 / 10	18in Sharp LL-H1813 flat-panel / 0.28mm / 1,024x768	140
5 Best Price Poweroid.com 2014 — 0870 220 0444 — www.poweroid.com — Last month 5	• £1,609 inc VAT • 2-year RTB parts & labour, 3-year RTB labour-only warranty • First review Oct 03	AMD Athlon XP 3200+ / 2.2GHz	512MB DDR RAM / 240GB	MSI K7N2 Delta ILSR / 8	17in LG 1710B / 0.264mm / 1,280x1,024	135
6 Dell Dimension 8300 — 0870 907 5693 — www.dell.co.uk — Last month 6	• £1,526 inc VAT • 3-year onsite warranty • First review Sep 03	Intel Pentium P4 / 3GHz	512MB DDR RAM / 120GB	Intel 875P / 8	18in Dell UltraSharp 1800FP / 0.285mm / 1,280x1,024	126
7 Mesh Matrix 3000+ Xtra — 0870 046 4747 — www.meshcomputers.com — Last month 7	• £1,410 inc VAT • 3-year onsite warranty • First review Jul 03	AMD Athlon XP 3000+ / 2.17GHz	512MB DDR RAM / 160GB	Asus A7N8X / 6	19in Mitsubishi Diamond Plus 93SB / 0.25mm / 1,600x1,200	136
8 Carrera SSC Focus Extreme 3.0PA — 0870 066 0682 — www.carrera.co.uk — Last month 8	• £1,410 inc VAT • 3-year onsite, 2-year RTB warranty • First review Jul 03	AMD Athlon XP 3000+ / 2.17GHz	512MB DDR RAM / 180GB	Asus A7N8X / 6	19in Mitsubishi Diamond Pro 930SB / 0.24mm / 1,600x1,200	132
9 Mesh Matrix 3000+ RD98 — 0870 046 4747 — www.meshcomputers.com — Last month 9	• £1,526 inc VAT • 3-year onsite warranty • First review Jun 03	AMD Athlon XP 3000+ / 2.17GHz	512MB DDR RAM / 200GB	Asus A7N8X / 6	19in Mitsubishi Diamond Pro 930SB / 0.24mm / 1,600x1,200	133
10 MicroLand Addons Power PC — 0870 443 0399 — www.microland.co.uk — Last month 10	• £1,410 inc VAT • 3-year RTB, 3-year labour-only warranty • First review Jul 03	AMD Athlon XP 3000+ / 2.17GHz	1GB DDR RAM / 160GB	MSI K7N2 Delta / 6	19in Mitsubishi Diamond Plus 93SB / 0.25mm / 1,600x1,200	133

The Ionix Pro offers a combination of great components, value for money and an extensive warranty

Buying advice

Power PCs

If you are buying a new system and have a budget of more than £1,410 then the Power PC chart is the place to look. The price constraints of the Budget and Superbudget charts mean that compromises have to be made. In this chart, however, there is no price limit. Manufacturers can put in whatever components they like – regardless of cost. We're still judging by value for money, but with no upper price ceiling.

• **Processor** We get a few rare glimpses of Intel's Pentium 4 but AMD's new Athlons make economic sense for manufacturers. That said, you won't be disappointed with any P4 chip running at 3GHz or higher – just avoid lower speeds. We've been getting phenomenal scores from AMD's new Barton core Athlon processors. Despite being up to 1GHz slower than some of Intel's offerings, they perform really well.

• **Memory** You should settle for no less than 512MB, although some PCs are now coming with 1GB. Ensure that you're getting the quicker DDR RAM rather than

Graphics card maker / Graphics chip / Graphics card memory	Sound card / Speakers / Subwoofer	DVD drive speed / CD-RW read/ write/rewrite rate	Operating system, software and extras	Comments
ATI / ATI Radeon 9800 Pro / 128MB	Creative Audigy2 ZS Platinum / 6 x Creative Inspire 6700 / yes	16x/4x/4x/2x/2.4x (DVD-ROM/-R/+R/-RW/+RW) / 40x/16x/10x (CD-ROM/-RW)	Windows XP Home, Ability Office XP	The Ionix Pro ZS offers a combination of great components, value for money and an extensive warranty. It also hosts a couple of knockout features – Creative's brand-new Audigy2 ZS sound card and a Serial ATA interface, which produces the fastest possible way to transfer data to the hard drive.
ATI / ATI Radeon 9800 Pro / 128MB	Creative Audigy2 ZS / 6 x Creative Inspire 6700 / yes	16x/4x/4x/2x/2.4x (DVD-ROM/-R/+R/-RW/+RW) / 52x/52x/24x (CD-ROM/-RW)	Windows XP Home, Microsoft Works Suite 2003 Pinnacle Studio 8.0 SE	With the best software bundle and commitment to sterling performance, the Matrix Xtreme 3200+ takes second place. It might be one of the more expensive models, but you certainly get your money's worth. Like the Best Buy Ionix, this is the only other PC to come with Creative's Audigy2 ZS sound card.
ATI / ATI Radeon 9800 SE All-In-Wonder / 128MB	M-Audio Revolution / 7 x Videologic ZXR-750 / yes	16x/4x/4x/2x/4x (DVD-ROM/-R/+R/-RW/+RW) / 32x/24x/16x (CD-ROM/-RW)	Windows XP Home, Ability Office, Pinnacle Studio 8.0	Aesthetically the Revolution won't be to everyone's taste but this system has a superb balance of specifications and features, great value for money and is topped off with a generous warranty. Picture quality is sharp and audio is awesome thanks to Via's high-quality audio 7.1 channel chipset.
nVidia / nVidia GeForce FX 5800 Ultra / 256MB	Creative Audigy2 / 6 x Creative Inspire 6700 / yes	16x (DVD-ROM) / 52x/52x/24x (CD-ROM/-RW)	Windows XP Home, Ability Office	The Extreme FX is expensive but if you're after the most powerful system money can buy then look no further than this sleek black PC. There's no DVD writer and software is limited, but the fastest CD-RW drive on the market, along with 10 USB and three FireWire ports, make up for this.
ATI / ATI Radeon 9800 Pro / 256MB	nForce onboard / 6 x Creative Inspire 6700 / yes	16x/4x/4x/2x/2.4x (DVD-ROM/-R/+R/-RW/+RW) / 52x/52x/24x (CD-ROM/-RW)	Windows XP Home Ability Office	With its powerful processor and generous memory it's no surprise the 2014 scored 135 in WorldBench 4. This is assisted by a Serial ATA interface on two vast 120GB hard drives. The 256MB ATI Radeon 9800 Pro graphics card provides high-quality visuals and the 17in LG flat-panel display is a good addition.
ATI / ATI Radeon 9800 / 128MB	Creative Audigy2 / 5 x Altec Lansing ADA 995 / yes	16x/4x/2.4x (DVD-ROM/+R/+RW) / 40x/16x/10x (CD-ROM/-RW)	Windows XP Home, Microsoft Works 7.0	The Dell may be the slowest in the chart, but it's a beautifully conceived system with one of the best 18in flat-panel displays on the market – the UltraSharp 1800FP. While we'd like to see a multiformat DVD writer, Dell compensates with good documentation, decent software and a three-year onsite warranty.
ATI / ATI Radeon 9700 Pro All-In-Wonder / 128MB	Creative Audigy2 Platinum / 6 x Creative Inspire 6700 / yes	12x/4x/2.4x (DVD-ROM/-R/-RW) / 40x/32x/10x (CD-ROM/-RW)	Windows XP Home, Microsoft Works Suite 2003, Pinnacle Studio 8.0 SE	Our ex-Best Buy hangs on and, with its speedy performance score, proves that older systems can still impress. Its graphics card and monitor aren't the top models available, but still produce excellent results. Top-notch visual quality is also matched by decent audio, producing heart-stopping sound.
Gainward / nVidia GeForce FX 5800 Ultra / 128MB	nForce onboard / 6 x Creative Inspire 6700 / yes	16x/2.4x/2.4x (DVD-ROM/-R/-RW) / 40x/16x/10x (CD-ROM/-RW)	Windows XP Home, Carrera Training CD games bundle	The Focus Extreme is designed as a gaming machine but has now been surpassed by the fourth-placed Carrera PC, which boasts the same graphics chip but a higher overall specification. That said, it still has some great hardware such as the brilliant Diamond Pro 930SB monitor and Inspire 6700 speakers.
ATI / ATI Radeon 9800 Pro / 128MB	Creative Audigy2 / 6 x Creative Inspire 6700 / yes	16x/4x/2 (DVD-ROM/-R) / 2.4x/2.4x (DVD-ROM+RW) / 48x/48x/24x (CD-ROM/-RW)	Windows XP Home, Microsoft Works Suite 2003 Pinnacle Studio 8.0 SE	Despite its ageing specs, the Mesh still offers an excellent Audigy2 sound card, Inspire 6700 speaker system, virtually flawless monitor and a first-class clutch of drives. Not only is a 200GB Maxtor hard drive and 48/24-speed CD-R/RW included, but there's also a superb multiformat Sony DVD writer.
ATI / ATI Radeon 9800 Pro / 128MB	Creative Audigy2 / 6 x Creative Inspire 6700 / yes	16x (DVD-ROM) / 52x/52x/24x (CD-ROM/-RW)	Windows XP Home, games bundle, spare CD-ROMs	The MicroLand comes without a DVD burner, but the upside is that the money saved by omitting the burner has been spent bolstering the rest of the PC. It combines a first-rate sound system, fantastic video and a healthy 1GB of PC3200 (DDR400) RAM, culminating in a respectable 133 points in WorldBench 4.

SDRAM and look for DDR333 or even DDR400 RAM for the best results.

• **Storage** It's unbelievable that 120GB is now considered a small amount of storage space but look at our chart and you'll see most manufacturers opting for 160GB. Even better now is the Serial ATA interface for rapid data transfer rates set to make Ultra ATA obsolete.

Have backup covered with at least a 40/32/10-speed (read/write/rewrite) CD-RW drive, although look for higher end 48/48/24-speed or 52/52/24-speed drives. DVD writers are common now but there are several competing DVD writing standards. To ensure your drive doesn't become redundant, look for a multiformat model.

• **Monitor** Choose a 19in screen that offers a resolution of 1,600x1,200 and a dot pitch of 0.25mm or less. Flat-panel displays are increasingly common but can vary wildly in quality – look for a 17in or 18in screen that can support a resolution of 1,280x1,024.

• **Graphics card** The ATI Radeon 9700 and 9800 Pro cards are faring well at the moment, although nVidia's GeForce FX 5800 also offers excellent performance – if you don't mind the loud cooling system. The newer FX 5900 also performs well. Look for no less than 128MB of dedicated RAM, especially if gaming is important to you.

• **Sound card and speakers** Creative's Audigy2 offers top-quality audio and adds an extra FireWire port to the PC. However the new Audigy2 ZS touts 7.1 channel speaker support as does M-Audio's Revolution. Any of these cards are an essential purchase and should be backed up by excellent speakers – at least 5.1 channel and, if you can get Videologic's ZXR 750 setup, true 7.1 channel support.