

Best Mini ITX Cases for 2017: Top 5 Round-up & Comparison

Those in the know have witnessed the massive expansion of the mini-ITX market over recent years. Small, space-saving and stylish, PC builders are more frequently turning to these specs when researching a new case. If you're careful in your research, it's possible to build an **incredibly powerful** rig capable of hardcore modern gaming without the big size. This article will guide you through the top 5 best mini-ITX cases for 2017 with careful comparison and feature analysis.

What is a mini-ITX case?

A mini-ITX is a case which will house a compact motherboard configuration designed to support low-cost computers in small spaces. These motherboards are tiny. By specification they must be 170mm x 170mm. That said, many high-end users have been able to make use of mini-ITX cases to create some solid gaming machines.

If you're researching your next machine and are considering a **compact, portable** size which can still push the limits then read on. Mini-ITX cases are small by nature. They can look fantastically stylish when complete but obviously lack space internally. You'll want to plan your build, map out your components and buy elements that will fit in the case (without excessive force!).

As the defining feature, size is important. When you choose to build a mini-ITX machine this will affect everything you purchase. The motherboard will need to be compliant and whilst you can buy boards much smaller than necessary for a mini-ITX (think nano-ITX, pico-ITX) your best option is a straight up mini-ITX board. This will allow for additional components such as multiple storage options, discrete (**small but powerful**) GPUs and more.

Whilst usually you won't be able to fit in a full GPU, there are plenty of incredibly powerful discrete GPUs available.

Best High End/Premium Case

[BitFenix Portal Black Window](#) – Unique, stylish, sleek.

Weight: 15.4 lbs

Dimensions: 18.4 x 19.1 x 11.5 inches

Key Features: Sharp design, 2 3.5" and 3 2.5" drive bays, sliding rail for easy build.

Best Use: Premium design for a powerful machine

Truly a unique case in design. Whilst managing to catch the eye, this case strikes a wonderful balance between mesmerizing looks and **functional design**. The rounded metallic case is smooth and sleek with a sharp leg support system (although these can be removed from the inside).

If you've ever played or even heard of the game Portal you'll see that the resemblance is uncanny. People remember Portal for the portals, the portal gun, and probably the companion cube. As well as

GLaDOS, the games psychotic omnipotent antagonist, of course. Thanks to GLaDOS, players are pitted against numerous foes, including an army of turrets. These turrets were clearly the inspiration for the case.

With dimensions of 18.4 x 19.1 x 11.5 inches the footprint is smaller than a midtower but still offers functional room. The bays internally will allow you to use a pair of 3.5 inch drives and up to 3 2.5 inch **drives**. You won't be able to fit 5.25 inch drives in here. The front I/O port comes complete with a handy 2 x USB 3.0 ports and an HD Mic & Headphone socket.

It's when you begin to work inside the case that you notice BitFenix have broken the trend again. From the outside you'll see there's no discernable way to access the internal components. No removable side panels. So how do we get at the thing? Simply remove a pair of thumbscrews from the bottom of the case and the answer is revealed. Once removed the entire rear of the case detaches displaying a **ball bearing sliding rail system**. The sliding rail means that all components are safely locked in place away from the walls.

The case features a small **window**, which is ripe for an LED set-up or an RGB GPU allowing the case to really come alive. When considering other components, it's worth noting that the maximum clearance for a CPU cooler fan is 125mm. You'll be thinking about space and size a lot when building a mini-ITX rig. The graphic card clearance will allow up to 300mm in length and the machine will require an SFX form factor power supply. BitFenix have confirmed that an ATX power supply would not be compatible.

The Portal has a manual worthy of reading alongside the usual assortment of screws and a motherboard speaker. There's also a pair of motherboard standoffs, motherboard standoff screwdriver adapter and a useful set of cable ties for those cable management requirements (you will need to at the top of your game with the limited space).

It should be **straightforward** to get started on your build, not least thanks to the sliding rail as everything is right there in front of you. When it comes to cable management and the compact space you can help yourself by opting for a modular power supply. The limited space also means less space for traditional downdraft fans. If you have the option to go for a compact tower cooler or AIO liquid cooler you'll be able to use your more powerful, hotter hardware inside.

Best for making your friends jealous

[NZXT Manta](#) – curvy, sizeable and neat.

Weight: 15.9 lbs

Dimensions: 11.6 x 18.5 x 19.4 inches

Key Features: Unique curved design, larger internally than most mini-ITX, huge tempered glass window, unique cable bar.

Best Use: Showing off your components to your envious friends.

NZXT created mystery during the build-up to launching this case, and rightly so. It's a curvy framed, large windowed beautiful case which stands up to NZXT's aim to "**bend the rules.**" It is on the larger side of the mini-ITX cases. When paired next to a midtower the Manta doesn't seem that small. However, NZXT state that this was their aim whilst still tailoring the case to ITX.

The elegant design is aimed at enthusiasts. The **swooping panels** almost seem to blend seamlessly into each other with the faint NZXT logo nestled at the front. The top of the case continues the curved theme with two curved indentations, alongside the power button, audio jacks and 2 USB 3.0 ports. The power light gleams across the front in a slimline strike.

Around the whole case there are multiple air flow panels. The top ones are almost hidden to the user thanks to the curved top. With the rear exhausts and side panels, there are plenty of options to allow the internal cooling fans the necessary goods to work with. **Dual 120mm fans** are included at the front as standard. The mesh frame is deep enough to allow fans to be mounted outside of the frame if you need the extra push.

The side panels include one solid and one windowed panel. The window is big. In fact, NZXT are proud to say that this is the largest window on an ITX case so far. This makes sense given that the Manta is one of the largest ITX cases on the market. Those side panels aren't just curved to look pretty. They're designed to **maximize your cable management space** whilst also keeping the footprint to a minimum.

One quick note on the window, it is not as resilient to scratches and use marks as the rest of the case. So it is recommended that you keep the protective film on the window until the build is finished.

The larger sized ITX means that an ATX power supply can be used with this case. It even has its own separate enclosed power supply chamber at the bottom of the case. There's nothing within the chamber that will limit compatibility and a dust filter will help you keep the case clear.

Within the main part of the case you'll find a **unique cable bar** on the side of the motherboard which has two functions. It not only strengthens the overall frame but will allow a neat and practical solution to cable management. In the bottom tray you'll also find a small square cutout to the power supply chamber, meaning an easy access for PCI cables from your GPU.

There are **dual SSD brackets** which are held in place with single thumbscrews. There's enough space behind the front fans to allow a radiator to be installed if you wish. You'll need to slide these in behind the cable bar so be aware when using unusual shaped SSDs.

A 3.5" drive is installed behind the SSD brackets and is only accessible with the SSDs taken out, so plan your build carefully. Whilst this isn't ideal it means that the 3.5" drive sits outside of the case behind one of the curved panels saving space inside the case. On this side you'll also see the **fan hub with 8 headers** which is a welcome addition seeing as most ITX motherboards only have 2 fan headers.

With removable sides, top and front this case is easy to work with and is much like working with an ATX case. The small cramped build conditions you usually associate with building an ITX aren't so here.

Best Budget Option

[Cooler Master Elite 130](#) – Affordable, great capacity, full GPU.

Weight: 7 lbs

Dimensions: 9.4 x 15.7 x 8.2 inches

Key Features: Two USB 3.0 and 1 2.0 slots, optical drive can house other drives as standard, can comfortably house up to 12 inch long GPU.

Best Use: Budget builders who want a full GPU with minimal space.

Coming in at under \$50 this is a **budget option** that still packs a punch. It's a case which will allow you to build a small system without compromising. The case has a small footprint with only 240mm W, 398mm D and 207mm H allowing a space efficient small form factor system.

The side panels are both ventilated but unfortunately don't come with a dust filter as standard. This can be combatted through the purchase of some universal filters. If you shop around you can get some affordable magnetic filters for less than the price of a fast food meal. The top of the case has a power supply vent that thankfully does have an **integrated mesh**. There's also a power supply bracket which is a brilliant addition for those planning on using a longer power supply.

The front of the case comes with the usual two USB 3.0 slots, audio jacks and has an optical drive slot. In addition, this case has a USB 2.0 slot which is no longer standard on most cases, useful if you need back compatibility. The plastic/brushed aluminum front panel is removable and has a **dust filter built in**. The 120mm fan intake is there as standard but when building your system, it is recommended to swap this out for something more powerful.

Once you remove the outer panels (in one single piece) you'll still have a sturdy and robust case structure to work with. When working with mini-ITX you'll always be thinking about cooling. The front 120mm is set up for intake. There's a single side 80mm fan which is set for intake but could be flipped for exhaust. Or if you need the room it can be removed altogether. The left bracket, meant for drives, could support a 120mm fan if you need an extra boost.

Storage space is always at a premium in a mini-ITX case. The optical drive case can incorporate 3.5" drives and 2.5" drives, in case optical drives aren't your thing. There are rubber grommets for mounting and securing holes to keep the drives in place. It could secure a single mechanical drive in the same place too, plus there's a **hidden SSD slot** on the bottom of the drive case. There's more drive capacity to the sides and at the bottom of the case to add up to great all-round storage solutions.

During your build, you'll need to plan carefully. Whilst the power supply bracket is a welcome addition it sits above the motherboard so you'll need to install that first. When mounting the motherboard some users have reported issues with some holes not having any thread to screw in the standoffs. You can combat this by screwing straight into the motherboard but it is unfortunate.

There isn't much in the way of cable management with this case. There are some cable tie loops at the bottom of the case but for the most part you'll need to manage them yourself. Cable ties and forethought should keep them away from the intakes.

GPU compatibility isn't an issue for most cards as 12 inches are easily accommodated. Gaming potential is definitely on the cards. The only potential pitfall is the limited CPU cooler size (limited to 3 inches) due to the power supply placement. Once a powerful GPU is installed you'll have a great machine on hands that could act brilliantly as a Steam box. Bear in mind that the optical drive is riveted in place, so you can't move that for taller cards.

This is a quality little case with no PSU or GPU restrictions, straight forward assembly and great drive capability whilst using an optical drive. All this and for **under \$50**, even with the dust filter issues, it's difficult to argue against.

Best For Overclocking

[Corsair Obsidian 250D](#) – Sizeable, dust-protected and cool.

Weight: 9.7 lbs

Dimensions: 10.9 x 13.8 x 11.4 inches

Key Features: Built in dust protection, serious cooling capability for overclockers, removable optical drive for full GPUs.

Best Use: Overclockers who need top cooling but still want a small case.

This is Corsair's answer to the call for smaller and smaller ITX cases. The smallest in the Obsidian range, the 250D is a great looking mini-ITX case. This case is in a typical cube design and features a modern **brushed aluminum** front panel. Be wary when peeling the protective film- peel in the direct of the grain otherwise gunk and glue will get stuck ruining a perfectly great panel.

The clinical looking front includes the power button, two audio jacks and two USB 3.0 ports. The two sides are separated by a 5.25" drive bay. Behind this panel (removable through a push to release mechanism) is the dust filter and a **sizeable 140mm** intake, with mounts for 120mm and 200mm fans included.

Whilst the 250D is small (it is an ITX case after all), it can accomodate ATX power supplies, 240mm radiators and some longer length GPUs. Around the externals there is plenty of ventilation in the panels to allow decent airflow. The bottom of the case includes a removable dust filter for regular maintenance, **incredibly convenient** rather than digging around. When it comes to the GPU space, there is a full 12 inches of clearance meaning that you'll be able to use those larger cards.

The hidden drive cage at the bottom of the case has space for a couple of 3.5" drives and a couple of 2.5" drives too. Note that the drive caddies aren't swappable, which would have been a great feature, but this isn't the end of the world. The drives are quite close together when fitted, you'll need to work carefully but the SATA cables will **fit neatly** when you're done.

If you are a hard-core **overclocker**, you will be using components that pump out serious heat. You will be pleased to see the side radiator mount. It comes with a 120mm fan as standard. There's about 5cm of clearance for you to work with; Corsair seem to have made sure that their own brand series fit.

The motherboard tray has an incredibly handy large hole meaning that **installation is simple** and pretty much any size bracket can fit. This is from a brand who takes cooling seriously and Corsair have been considerate to watercooling here. Especially those coolers that require some sort of bracket to be installed behind the CPU socket.

If you're working with the full GPUs you might need some extra room. The 250D comes with an optical drive cage but this is **removable** to allow taller ATX GPUs that extra space. Be wary though, some of the structural integrity is lost when the cage is removed making the case feel a bit more unstable.

This is a **space efficient** case with room for ATX power supplies, full GPUs and even 240mm radiators. This is welcome to users who still want those overclocked benchmarks whilst also having a compact case. It is straight forward to assemble thanks to simple removable panels and additional removable cages. The full dustproofing is a bonus and means you won't need to regularly clean up.

For your consideration

[Morex T3410](#) – Completely fanless and compact.

Weight: 4 lbs

Dimensions: 2.52 x 9.17 x 8.17 inches

Key Features: Lightweight, compact footprint, built in PSU, fanless by design.

Best Use: Small in size and affordable.

To round up our selection of mini-ITX cases we come to the T3410 from Morex. An unusual case in the mini-ITX field, this one is the smallest of the selection we've reviewed above. At 233mm x 207.5mm x 64mm this case is going to be tight on space internally.

One thing that marks the case as different to the others in our list is the inclusion of a **power supply** as standard. The internal DC-DC power supply outputs 60W (80W Max) of power and is paired with a 60W AC-DC Adapter. Whilst this is a nice idea from Morex, users have reported that the power supply isn't as useful as ones you might buy separately. Plus, when building a system, you're likely to have already researched your power supply rendering this useless.

In fact, some consumers reported that the PSU was already malfunctioning or completely dead out of the box. This is not ideal when building your new rig. I would recommend testing if you order this case. But there are better options out there.

There's having a mind to airflow and including lots of ventilation and holes but dust protection must also feature, especially in a small case. Unfortunately, the T3410 just has the holes without adequate dust protection. This means your valuable components are at risk of dust and debris building up quite quickly.

The T3410 makes the claim to be **completely fanless** in design and conception. What this means is that because it is a case-only the chassis itself doesn't come with a fan. There is a chance that your motherboard's CPU fan won't be compatible (due to space available), so be wary. Morex recommend contacting them direct if you have any compatibility concerns prior to purchase.

The case itself is made from **steel** meaning that modifications to the case are going to require some heavy-duty tools. When it comes to install wifi/Bluetooth antennas there's one antenna breakout on the rear of the case near the power input jack. You'll be able to install an antenna here if your components allow. As this position isn't above the motherboard you will need to wire the connecting antenna.

Overall this case has its flaws making it the last choice when considering the others available in the range. The **power supply** coming as standard doesn't seem to cut the mustard and the lack of dust protection means it falls short.

Product Buying Guide

So what are the key features you'll be searching for when buying a mini-ITX?

You'll need to consider the following:

- **Footprint** – how much space can you case take up on the floor or desk?

- **Drive capacity** – how many drives can the case house?
- **Style** – Are you after a stylized case or happy with a standard format?
- **Cooling** – Different cases have different cooling capabilities. Are you overclocking? How much will you need?
- **GPU** – Can you cope with a discrete GPU or do you need a full-sized GPU?
- **Ease of build** – How simple is it to build your system?

With that in mind let's break down each of these features.

Footprint

The cases we reviewed above vary massively in footprint. Some have a typical tower shaped footprint and are just smaller than a mid-tower. Others have unusual rounded footprints. Some are cubes. Which do you require? **Is the system for a specific space or can you be flexible?** These are questions that you need to ask yourself as you begin to design your rig.

Drive capacity

Different cases have **different capacity**. Most will be able to house at least 1 3.5" drive and 1 2.5" drive. Some can house multiple drives. Will you need to use an optical drive or could you do away with it? If so you could reclaim space for further mechanical or SSDs.

Note that not all mini-ITX cases have optical drives.

Style

Some of these cases are seriously stylish. They are designed with the modern user who not only wants performance but also wants a PC that makes a statement. Take the Portal or the Manta. These aren't just cases, they are also design pieces. **Is this something that you consider important?** Is the machine going to be visible and a centerpiece to show off to your friends or is it going to be tucked away?

Cooling

This is an especially important factor when it comes to mini-ITX cases. The **smaller spaces** means less airflow. Less airflow means less cooling which means hotter components. Therefore, cooling must be taken seriously. Can you rely on standard fans? Will you need additional water cooling or radiators? If so you'll need to make sure the case you pick can accommodate the extra room that the fans will require.

GPU

GPU are available in **discrete sizes** designed to fit into mini-ITX cases without a moment's thought. But if you're looking to push your machine to reach the greatest benchmarks you'll likely be working with a standard sized GPU (or bigger!). Therefore, judge the space inside, some cases have tighter spaces than others. Even those that appear spacious from pictures can be unforgiving to larger GPUs.

Ease of Build

Are you used to working in the **tighter spaces** that the mini-ITX cases force you into? If so this might not be an issue, you might even be excited by the challenge! Some cases have ease of build features designed right into them. Take the slide tray with the BitFenix case for instance. Is the build a major consideration for you?

Who says size doesn't matter?

So, there you have it. Our top choices for this exciting range of smaller mini-ITX cases. There's lots to consider when building these little whirlwind PCs. But if you go through the process and carry out your research, you'll be rewarded with a **powerful, compact and hardworking** rig.

Yes, mini-ITX cases require more patience to build. It's not recommended to embark on one as a first build. The rewards are far greater though, as is the sense of accomplishment from building a compact, fun machine. **Mighty doesn't have to be big anymore.**