KMQ BUILDS

2026 Raspberry Pi Buying Cheat Sheet

What to Buy & What to Skip — a one-page guide for kids and parents

Prices checked Oct 27, 2026. Pi prices went UP in 2026 because computer memory got expensive — older guides that say "$130 all-in" are out of date. Prices below are estimates; check before you buy.

THE EASY WAY — BUY ONE BOX

CanaKit Raspberry Pi 5 Starter Kit PRO (8GB, 128GB) — about $260. Board + case with fan + power supply + 128GB card with Raspberry Pi OS + cables. Open it, plug it in, done.

WHAT TO BUY (if you buy parts separately)

Raspberry Pi 5 (8GB) — the board	The current board. Fast enough for every project on this site. 4GB saves ~$20 but feels cramped; 16GB is overkill.	**~$175–200**
Official 27W USB-C power supply	A phone charger is NOT enough. Weak power = random crashes and corrupted cards.	**~$12**
microSD card, 128GB — Samsung EVO Select or SanDisk Extreme	64GB minimum, 128GB is comfortable. Buy a real brand, not a mystery card.	**~$12–18**
Case with a fan or heatsink	The Pi 5 runs hot. Cooling stops it slowing itself down when you can't see why.	**~$15–20**
micro-HDMI to HDMI cable	The Pi 5 uses micro-HDMI, not regular HDMI. Your old cable won't fit.	**~$8**

Parts add up to about $225–255 — roughly the kit price, with more hassle. Buy the kit.

WHAT TO SKIP

- ✗ **The 2GB Pi 5.** Too little memory for more than one small job. The saving isn't worth it.
- ✗ **A phone charger for power.** Not enough power. Random reboots that look like your code is broken — it's the power.
- ✗ **Cheap no-name SD cards.** Slow, often fake, they corrupt and die. Stick to Samsung or SanDisk.
- ✗ **"Ultimate" kits with 200 pieces.** You'll use the board, power, case, and card. The rest gathers dust.
- ✗ **A Pi 4 at near-Pi-5 prices.** Only a deal if it's $30+ cheaper than the Pi 5.
- ✗ **Old Pi 4 case or power supply for a Pi 5.** They don't fit. Budget for new ones if you're upgrading.

Tight budget? A Pi 4 (4GB) starter kit for about $90–110 is still great for Pi-hole, media players, and servers — just don't pay Pi 5 money for it.

FIRST SETUP — 15 MINUTES

1. Download Raspberry Pi Imager (free) from raspberrypi.com.
2. Pick your Pi 5 and Raspberry Pi OS (64-bit). In the gear menu, set your Wi-Fi and a username first — then you don't need a spare keyboard or monitor.
3. Write the card, put it in the Pi, plug in power. It boots and joins your Wi-Fi.

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