

The 7 Best 40% Mechanical Keyboards (2022 Review)

Keyboards are of several sizes, shapes, and layouts. The most popular are the ones with a full-sized 100% layout where all the number keys and directional keys are present.

But there are the ones that come in a more compact form, making many things more manageable. Of all compact types of mechanical keyboards, the smallest one is the 40% keyboard layout.

We'll take you through what 40% of keyboards are made of and which ones you should spend your money on.

What is a 40% Mechanical Keyboard?

Unlike regular keyboards with 101 keys, a 40% mechanical keyboard is built with at most 50 keys. The most significant selling point of any 40% keyboard is its superior portability compared to all the other keyboard sizes.

They feature no navigation, function, number row, or punctuation keys. What makes them functional even without all the missing keys is how efficient they can be when you've gotten used to their nuances.

As the name implies, 40% of keyboards are usually 40% regular ones, making them super niche keyboards for specific purposes.

Keyboard enthusiasts or gamers who prioritize space and portability in their setup can easily find ways to get used to a 40% keyboard. In addition, 40% of keyboards are cheaper than full-size keyboards since more inexpensive materials are used overall to build them.

How Many Keys Are on a 40% Mechanical Keyboard?

It can be described as a keyboard with not more than 50 keys as opposed to the 101 keys in regular keyboards.

Things to Consider When Choosing a 40% Keyboard

Choosing a 40% keyboard just for its feel or the space it frees up on your desk is not enough. Before you splash your money on a 40% keyboard, consider these essential things;

Build Quality

Mechanical keyboards feature mechanical switches, unlike standard keyboards with rubber switches. So, each keystroke is registered by hitting the switch underneath each key. For a 40% keyboard, the compactness adds a significant advantage to the build quality.

There's a consistent and precise feel that comes with hitting each key. The bottom line is that mechanical keyboards generally offer more regarding building quality. From its stabilizers, switch, and keycaps, everything is borderline impressive.

Switches and Keycaps Type

The majority of 40% of keyboards are mechanical, so that they can feature all kinds of switch types available for mechanical keyboards. Whether you want to go all tactile, linear, or clicky, there are many incredible options.

Although quality with a high budget, Cherry MX switches offer the best value for any 40% keyboard out there. Others worth mentioning are Halo Clears, Halo Trues, Kaihua box whites. If you want switches that won't take too much to actuate, Cherry MX Reds are among the best because they are silent and fast.

Switch types boil down to preferences and even some companies allow customers to design custom keycaps at an additional cost.

Is a 40% Keyboard Right for You?

What matters is what brings you comfort while typing on a keyboard. Do you prefer the extra space a 40% keyboard will guarantee, or do you happen to value something compact that'll reduce wrist movement and let you focus on the keys instead?

If your answer is yes, a 40% keyboard is a worthwhile investment no matter which angle you tend to look at it from. They're fun to use, offer versatility, and, most importantly, more affordable than bigger-sized keyboards.

Getting used to a 40% keyboard isn't much of a big deal. It's super easy to master, and in no time, you'll find yourself typing furiously away with reckless abandon, just like on a regular 100% keyboard.

Layered Function Key

The lack of an FN- and PN-layer of a 40% keyboard might take some getting used to, but it's nothing a few hours of practice won't fix. The keyboard is perfect for you if dedicated arrow keys and the alphanumeric cluster on keyboards aren't your things.

Each key's programming functions come from each keyboard manufacturer so you never have to worry about dealing with customization.

Keycap Layout/Size

Being comfortable with a keyboard layout is very important when handling any keyboard size. However, sizes and layouts vary according to the manufacturing company. In most cases, they don't exceed 50 keys.

Standard letter keyboard sizes are measured in relation to a 1u key so the distance between each key pegged at 1.5u. 40%, on the other hand, feature a 12u width and 4u height.

Benefits of 40% Mechanical Keyboards

If you rarely use a Numpad, probably due to gaming or other factors, a 40% mechanical keyboard is your best bet. The layout alone is designed, so you only have to deal with the keys you need.

Compactness

Its level of compactness is very impressive. A keyboard with a 40% is a very appropriate choice if you want more space on your desk because the 40% keyboard has a very compact size and will most likely increase the flexibility of your setup.

Smooth Typing

For typing, you can easily reach the keys of the 40% keyboard, improving your typing experience and making your work go very smoothly. The whole experience and feel are enough to brighten up your experience.

Exclusivity

Having a keyboard with a layout size of 40% will give you great exclusivity because a 40% keyboard is rarely owned. After all, this keyboard is quite rare in the market today.

Vortexgear Core 40%

Being expensive only makes the Vortexgear Core a better 40% mechanical keyboard than the keyboard in its price range. It offers a bit more in all categories and better build quality designed with Anodized CNC aluminum.

Durable PBT keycaps with thick and sturdy keys add comfort to your typing game and bump it up to another level. Featuring only 47 keys, the Vortex gear Core 40% has one of the best build quality you can see in a 40% mechanical keyboard.

If you're a fan of the reasonably loud click-clack sound mechanical keyboards emits, this is another reason why the Vortex gear Core 40% keyboard is for you. With Cherry MX Red switches underneath the keycaps, you can fire on typing and enjoy the sound it produces as your finger hits each key.

The Vortexgear Core weighs a staggering 997 grams which is a lot for 40% mechanical keyboards. Since you only have to place the keyboard on your desk while in use, the weight is only of any consequence when transporting it around.

A keyboard with ABS keycaps stands no chance against the Vortexgear Core 40%, which is another vital thing to note. One downside, however, is its lack of support for USB Type C. On the flip side, the micro USB featured on the keyboard works fine and can be removed when needed.

One aesthetically pleasing thing that makes the Vortexgear Core 40% such a great sell is how the LED lights glow in the gaps between the keys due to its thick PBT keycaps.

Pros

- Great build quality
- Reprogrammable keys and LED lights

Cons

- Weighs a lot
- No USB type-c

Qisan 40% Mechanical Gaming Keyboard

Compared to all the 40% mechanical keyboards on our list, the Qisan Magicforce 40% is one of the cheapest. It's the perfect budget 40% mechanical keyboard for your typing needs.

Most budget keyboards offer only the basics, and so does the Qisan Magicforce 40%. But there's a catch, its all-around quality seems reasonable enough. You got a 40% keyboard made of ABS plastic which feels quite solid.

It also features ABS keycaps which are nowhere near the sturdy PBT for quality mechanical keyboards but just good enough to cover your needs.

While Gateron Brown switches beneath the keycaps might be too silent for some people due to its responsive and fast feedback, you'll still enjoy typing on this keyboard.

Unfortunately, the Qisan Magicforce 40% only has a blue LED light which is still good enough considering the price you're getting the keyboard for. To look at the bright side of its limited LED feature, the keyboard's black color matches perfectly with the blue LED light.

There's a removable micro USB on the Qisan Magicforce 40%, which offers more flexibility when compared to a non-removable USB keyboard. Also, the keyboard is lightweight, so packing and transporting it around is relatively easy.

Pros

- Very affordable
- Lightweight

Cons

- Slippery and thin
- Limited RGB function
- No software to reprogram the keys or LED backlight

Drop Planck Keyboard

One fascinating thing about gaming peripherals is that some people are very comfortable with the default choice of colors and specs a company chooses when a gadget is released.

On the other hand, others see customization as the only way to own a gadget. These people take their time to customize everything down to the simplest things like the case color a keyboard will come in.

If you are among the category of people that see building your own 40% keyboard as what gives you joy, go straight to ordering the several parts of this Planck keyboard.

Even though you won't be getting either switches or keycaps when you order this keyboard, Planck still lets you choose everything else you'll practically be spending lots of time on.

After all the customization, the finished product is so satisfying that you'll find typing on the keyboard enjoyable. Besides, you can easily transport the keyboard around since it's lightweight.

For all the customizable options you get, there are no LED lights included in the keyboard, and it's costly once you add up all the required parts to build it up.

If you're among the first category of people and customization isn't really your thing, the Planck EZ is a more viable option. It has LED backlights, and everything, including the keycaps and switches, is prebuilt.

Pros

- Aesthetically pleasing
- Lots of available customization options

Cons

- A little expensive, especially with all the parts considered
- No LED lights
- Difficult to buy a complete Planck 40% Keyboard

Redragon K585 DITI Wireless

If you're specifically in the market for a gaming 40% mechanical keyboard, the Redragon K585 DITI Wireless is your best bet. You know you're getting a one-handed gaming machine tailor-made from the keyboard design for the thrills and excitement gaming affords.

All 42 Redragon K585 DITI Wireless keys feature MX Blue switches with ABS keycaps. However, it might seem like not much, but it is still enough to get you through your gaming sessions without problems.

The Redragon K585 DITI 40% Wireless keyboard sports RGB backlighting under all of its keys, seven customizable macro buttons, a wrist rest, and a USB connector that provides seamless wireless connectivity.

The good part is that the Redragon K585 DITI is very affordable with the clicky, satisfying audible sound mechanical keyboards emit. Just know that the whole vibe of this keyboard will further impact your gameplay and transcend it to a new level.

Additionally, there's a 3000mAh battery that can offer 15-20 hours of game time without interruption. And with 10 hours of fast charging using the detachable USB-C cable that comes with the keyboard, you get your money's worth for long-lasting durability.

Pros

- Programmable macro keys
- Detachable wrist-rest support
- Excellent ergonomic design

Cons

- Expensive
- The layout might need adjusting time

YMDK

Another keyboard is on the list for users that pay great attention to customizing every little detail of their keyboard. YMDK can be described as a 40% keyboard kit with all the necessary tools to bring out the keyboard enthusiast.

What to expect from YMDK is a case and a frame that you still get to customize. Still, the bottom line is every other accessory that makes up a mechanical keyboard will be chosen according to your preferences.

There are three basic case color combinations with their different shades of colors. You have the option of an aluminum case that can come in multiple color combinations. Black cases come in black, navy, or coffee shade, and the silver case can come in gold, rose, and silver.

Everything other detail like keycaps, choice of switches, and stabilizers is yours to make. Meaning you'll have to spend money on them separately.

You'll take longer to assemble the YMDK and mold it in the shape you want, but the simple truth is it'll be time well spent since every decision down to the choice of keycaps was made by you.

Keyboards like the YMDK guarantee control over what you want and how you want, which is an essential tool for an excellent typing experience. Another noteworthy thing to consider is that YMDK offers assembly service if you prefer to buy the switches and keycaps and assemble them.

Pros

- Almost always available
- Full customization options

Cons

- Might take a month or two to receive since they ship from China

CHARAN SK61 Mechanical Gaming Keyboard

If you are a big fan of keyboards with a retro vibe, the CHARAN SK61 40% gaming mechanical keyboard is a must-have for your setup. You know you're laying your hands on a sturdy keyboard featuring a Gateron optical red switch with PBT plastic Keycaps.

With more than 16.8 million lights available plus a software that grants you full customization of the RGB backlight, you enjoy lighting effects while playing game or typing. It also come in an ergonomic design so you don't feel fatigue from long term use.

Another quality perk it parades is its waterproof, corrosion-proof, dustproof, abilities due to its IPX6 board.

Three layers programmable mode are available on the CHARAN SK61 so F1, F2, and F3 buttons can be adjusted to suit your preference. This CHARAN SK61 keyboard is compatible with Windows, Mac, and Android operating systems.

You get a USB Type C cable for connectivity and a keycaps puller in the box the keyboard comes in so you can replace the switches yourself if you want.

The CHARAN SK61 40% gaming mechanical keyboard works well with Windows, Android, and Mac OS.

Pros

- Programmable F1, F2, F3 buttons
- RGB backlight
- USB Type C
- Waterproof

Cons

- Buggy software

DIERYA DK61E Mechanical Gaming Keyboard

Although a 60% keyboard, the DIERYA DK61 makes the cut not because of its compact shape, lack of arrow keys, number pad, and function row keys. Not even because of its ability to save you space perfectly, just like a 40% keyboard would.

What makes the DIERYA DK61 such an excellent option for you is how its functionality cysts across all important perks of a top-quality keyboard. To top it all off, it ships in an IPX4-certified circuit board, making it a waterproof mechanical keyboard.

You'll find yourself staring at an ergonomically designed keyboard when you unbox the DIERYA DK61. The design reduces any fatigue your body might incur from prolonged use.

You've got double hot injected PBT keycaps to your aid for ardent gamers that find shiny, greasy keyboards annoying.

Coupled with hot-swappable Gateron optical switches that DIERYA claims to support 50 million times presses, you know durability is guaranteed. Besides, you can easily swap the switches without desoldering or buying a new keyboard.

The DIERYA DK61 is not only a gamers dream come true with all its excellent features, but DIERYA also ensured every category of keyboard enthusiasts was considered when designing this keyboard.

Since the DIERYA DK61 is waterproof, you can bring drinks and food around while playing, gaming, or working without the fear of spilling your drink and damaging the keyboard. Waterproof also means you can quickly clean the board when you spill a drink on the keyboard.

In addition, there are five pre-programmed RGB lighting modes on the DIERYA DK61 with software that allows you to tweak the colors as you wish. For connectivity, you've got a USB-C cable.

The five pre-programmed RGB lighting modes include:

RGB

Cycling spectrum

Full green

Windmill

Glorious waterfall

Pros

- Ergonomic design
- Excellent build quality
- Fully programmable keys
- Highly customizable
- Affordable

Cons

- Available in wired mode only

Benefits of 40% Mechanical Keyboards

To be candid, everyone in the market for 40% keyboard knows what they want and portability is top of that list. However, some people still question why anyone would want a 40% keyboard for gaming, home, or office use.

The following are a few reasons why owning one isn't such a bad idea;

Portability

This is the most significant benefit of owning a 40% keyboard. The lack of size makes compactness, lighter weight, and essential critical placement easy to achieve. You can easily transport your keyboard from place to place and have the same typing experience everywhere you go.

Size

If you're big on minimalism or just like having extra space on your desk to keep away clutter, finding the right 40% mechanical keyboard for your setup is essential. A 40% keyboard is guaranteed to eliminate the extra space in regular-sized keyboards.

So you're not missing out on anything you'll otherwise find in a 100% keyboard. Besides, you'll be able to move your mouse around without stretching.

Faster Typing

The compactness of a 40% keyboard makes it very easy for your finger to cover all its keys. That alone can improve your typing significantly since you don't have to go far to hit any key.

Final Thoughts

Getting used to a 40% keyboard requires no special skill or ability. You'll get your typing speed up with little practice, just like on a regular 100% keyboard.

The Qisan Magicforce 40% is the best overall on our list because it has good build quality, has the right features for gaming and regular typing work, and is affordable.

But if you don't mind shelling out a few extra dollars, the Vortexgear Core 40% has all the qualities of a high-end mechanical gaming keyboard.

For keyboard enthusiasts who want to build their 40% keyboard from scratch, you might want to decide between a Drop Planck or YMDK keyboard as they are easier to customize.

Getting value for your money when searching for any product is essential. Take note of the important things we mentioned in our review of these keyboards, and adopt the one that'll maximize your preference and budget.

40% keyboards have a longer learning curve, but if you're looking to optimize your space and willing to spend time configuring your input layout, you won't have a problem adapting.