

# How to Build a High-Quality AR-15 for Less Than \$650 (v2.6.2)

*(6.5 Grendel and 300 Blackout variants included, though they are over \$650)*

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This guide was created by Abe of [AbesGunCave.com](http://AbesGunCave.com)

**FYI:** If you buy after clicking most of the product links in this file I'll make a few bucks. It's not much, but it keeps the website going and I would appreciate your support. 😊

# Abe's 3 rules of AR-15 Building

**Rule #1. Save money on Non-essential parts.** To be frank, most of the parts on an AR-15 aren't very essential to its operation. I don't mean the gun would work without them. I do mean they don't matter too much when the gun is actually firing.

Your lower receiver and most of your lower parts kit (*except the hammer & trigger obviously*) actually does very little when the gun is firing. Similarly the Gas Block, gas tube, hand guard, and upper parts like the dust cover and forward assist have almost nothing to do with the operation of the weapon.

And that's good news because you don't have to spring for top-notch parts in those areas. Those parts you can buy less expensively because they don't matter too much.

**Rule #2. Don't Skimp on Essential Parts.** The Bolt Carrier Group (*BCG*) and Upper Receiver are absolutely the most important parts of the gun. I would make sure you get a high Quality BCG and Upper receiver.

Slightly less important are the charging handle, barrel, buffer tube, buffer weight, and buffer spring. These need to be of decent quality, but they aren't as important as the Upper Receiver or BCG. Don't skimp on these parts, but don't spend a fortune either.

**Rule #3 Junk is Expensive.** Cheap parts suck. On my first AR-15 build, the charging handle was so bad that after a dozen times charging the weapon, it locked up. The finish had started coming off and it would bind so badly you couldn't charge the weapon. I won't even start on what was wrong with the Upper Receiver.

Please learn from my experience. Junk is expensive, so don't ever buy junk.

**NOTE:** I have a [Complete Guide to building an AR-15](#) on my website. It goes into Exhaustive detail on how to select High-quality parts. It'll be useful if you want to change things from the parts lists below.

Happy building.

# Building a High Quality AR-15 for Under \$650: Parts List

To be clear, this list will help you build a high-quality, AR-15 for under \$650. **However, that price does NOT include sights or a scope because everyone wants something different.** I do have recommendations for Excellent, low cost options below the Parts List though.

## Misc Websites - \$110

[Gun-Tec Ultra Lightweight Thin \(Free-floated\) Handguard - MLOK](#) - \$80 (free S&H)

Most of Gun-Tec's stuff falls firmly in the "junk" category, but these rails are pretty darn good. This is the 10", which is the ideal length for a mid-length Gas system. This is a free floated hand guard, which is important for accuracy. If they are out of stock, you can also find it [here](#) or [here](#). (*The other sites do charge extra for S&H though*)

[DS Arms Mil-Spec Stock Hardware Kit](#) - \$30 + (low S&H)

DS Arms makes everything in-house, which keeps costs down and quality up. This is a good, solid buffer kit with the proper finish at an insanely low price. You can also find it [here](#) if Primary Arms is out of stock

## **Brownells - \$405 (plus S&H, excluding magazines)**

### **[Anderson Stripped Lower Receiver](#) - \$50 (plus your FFL's transfer fee)**

I recommend you get this at your local gun shop because after shipping and the transfer fee it'll probably be cheaper. But if you don't want to, then here's a good price on a good lower. You can also find them [here](#) or [here](#) if Brownells is out of stock. But again, you'll probably spend less getting them locally.

### **[Brownells M16 B-Tac Bolt Carrier Group](#) - \$100**

This has everything you should look for in a Bolt Carrier Group. It's HPT and MPI, shot-peened bolt, M16 profile, and proper materials used for everything. Plus it comes with a Nitride finish which is much better than Parkerizing. All of this at a great price is a big win.

If they are out of stock, [this BCG](#) is similar quality but more expensive. You can also upgrade to a [Nickel Boron BCG](#), but it's a lot more expensive and only a little better.

### **[Brownells B-TAC Nitrided 5.56 Barrel](#) - \$106**

These are excellent budget barrels and seem to be quite accurate for the (*very low*) price. They are mid-length and have a 1:7 twist so they can handle the heavier 5.56 bullets just fine. To top it off, they are Nitride treated for amazing corrosion resistance and long barrel life.

If they are out of stock, you can also get [this barrel](#). It's a few bucks less, but doesn't have the nitride finish. **Make sure you get a Carbine Length Gas Tube if you go with the alternate barrel.**

### **[DS Arms Stripped Upper Receiver](#) - \$61**

DS Arms makes everything in-house to keep costs down but quality up. It obviously works because this is a high quality product for cheap. You'll need an [upper parts kit \(\\$18\)](#) to complete it. Alternatively, you can get an [Aero Precision Assembled Upper Receiver](#) for \$100 if you don't want to install the parts kit. (*Its equal quality, but costs more since the parts are already installed.*)

## Brownells (*Continued*)

### [Magpul MOE Mil-Spec Carbine Stock](#) - \$38

This stock is probably the best bang for your buck that you can buy, and much better than the cheap, wobbly ones that come on low end AR15s. It's not fancy, but it's tough, durable, and at a price your wallet won't complain about. There are a ton of colors to choose from too, so at least one of the colors should always be in stock.

### [YHM Low Profile Gas Block](#) - \$20

Yankee Hill Machine isn't one of the better known brands. But everything I've seen from them has been very good quality. Some of their prices are high, but not on this little guy. If it's out of stock, [this one](#) will work (*I prefer the YHM one when possible*).

### [Brownells Nitride Mid-Length Gas Tube](#) - \$10

Gas tubes are universally basically the same. This one is basic other than the wear and corrosion resistant Nitride finish. If they are out of stock, you can get one of [these](#) gas tubes instead. It costs a little more and it's not nitride finished, but it'll work perfectly.

### [Brownells Crush Washer](#) - \$2

This is needed to properly attach the flash hider to the barrel. Like Gas tubes, AR-15 crush washers are all basically the same. If you are building a 5.56 rifle, get the 1/2". If you are building a 300 Blackout or 6.5 Grendel, get the 5/8". Out of stock alternatives for the 223/5.56 are [here](#), alternative for the 300 Blackout and 6.5 Grendel are [here](#).

### [Magpul Gen 2 PMAGS \(Magazines\)](#) - \$13, (*If don't already have magazines*)

These are some of the best, cheapest and most common magazines for AR-15 rifles. You can also get the [Gen3 PMAGs](#), but unless you are using something other than an AR-15, they won't provide any advantage. (*The Gen 3 PMAG's design was altered slightly to work better with non-AR-15 designs*) I have PMAGs in my ~\$2400 AR-15 if that tells you my opinion of them.

## Joe Bob Outfitters - \$98 (free S&H on orders over \$90)

### [Rock River Arms A2 Flashhider](#) - \$7

Rock River Arms makes very high quality AR-15 parts, and this is no exception. This is identical to the standard muzzle device on the United States Military rifles. Out of stock alternative can be found [here](#).

**NOTE: This part is NOT NEEDED for a 300 Blackout or 6.5 Grendel variant.** (*They require a different thread*)

### [Gas Tube Roll Pin](#) - \$1.50

Nothing fancy here. This pin is used to attach the Gas tube to the Gas block. Out of stock alternative can be found [here](#).

### [Muzzle Shim Kit](#) - \$4.50

This is an OPTIONAL item, but I recommend it. It is used to properly "time" the flashhider to ensure it's rotated to the correct position when installed. You might not need it. However it's only \$4.50 so I think it's better to have it and not need it, then need it and not have it. Out of stock alternative can be found [here](#).

If you are building a 300 Blackout or 6.5 Grendel, [use this larger shim kit](#) instead.

### [Rock River Arms Lower Parts Kit](#) - \$62

Again, Rock River makes excellent stuff. This is the best Lower parts kit I've ever worked with, and it's only a couple bucks more than the ultra cheap ones (*which are also ultra crappy*)

OR

### [Rock River Arms Lower Parts Kit Without Hammer/Trigger](#) - \$40 (*Plus trigger*)

This kit comes without the Hammer and Trigger so you can buy a (*better*) aftermarket Trigger. I have an article on the [Best AR-15 Triggers for Any Use or Budget](#). You can use that article to help you decide which trigger you would like.

## Joe Bob Outfitters (*Continued*)

### [Spike's tactical Forged Charging Handle](#) - \$23

This is a basic charging handle, except for the fact that it's forged. Forging produces stronger parts than most other manufacturing methods.

## Sights & Optics

I have Three articles on my website to help you pick out your sights and/or optic.

- [The Best Back Up Iron Sights \(BUIS\) for Your AR-15](#) (*most of them work perfectly for a primary sight*)
- [The Best AR-15 Scopes for any Budget](#)
- [The Best Red Dot Sights for any Budget](#)

## 6.5 Grendel Variant

This will certainly NOT be under \$650, but it will be a very good 6.5 Grendel rifle for a great price. The parts list is the same as above except the barrel, bolt, magazines, muzzle device, and crush washer.

### [Brownells 6.5 Grendel Barrel](#) - \$316

It's rare that very good and very cheap are found in the same product. The [Brownells 6.5 Grendel barrels](#) are made by Saturn and have a [reputation for excellent accuracy](#). They are also the improved Grendell II chamber and come with a matched bolt. Best of all is the price: At just over 300 bucks, they're an absolute steal.

(NOTE: If you get the 24" barrel, be sure to get a [Rifle Length gas tube](#) instead of mid-length. I would only get a 24" on a gun that's only for benchrest. If you ever plan to carry it, I would get the 18".)

**NOTE 2:** I would buy the complete bolt carrier group in the 5.56 parts list, then simply swap in the Grendel bolt. To get just the bolt carrier, firing pin, cam pin, and cotter pin, you'd be spending just as much as a complete Bolt Carrier Group, only this way you'll have a spare 5.56 bolt. (*Never a bad thing*)

### [A2 Style Flashider](#) - \$22

This is exactly like the 5.56 version, but will have a bigger hole to allow the bigger bullet and the proper thread to screw onto the barrel. [There are other/better options though](#) (*link to search*)

### [5/8 Crush washer](#) - \$2

The .30 caliber Muzzle (*which the 6.5 Grendel uses*) require a larger thread size than the 5.56. This is simply a standard Crush washer for the larger 5/8 threads.

### [E-Lander 6.5 Grendel Magazines](#) - \$18-20 (*depending on capacity*)

There are other mags that work, but the reviews on these are fantastic. They're a little heavier because they're made of steel, but they're also built like a tank.



## 300 Blackout Variant

The best thing about 300 Blackout is that the only thing you need to change vs a 5.56 rifle is the barrel, muzzle device and Crush washer. Even the magazines are the same.

### [300 Blackout Barrel](#) - \$106

This is almost exactly the same as the Barrel for the 5.56 version, only in 300 Blackout. It's a good solid barrel with a nitride finish at a great price. Also, make sure you get the [Carbine length gas tube](#) (*Instead of a Mid-Length Gas tube*).

### [A2 Style Flashider](#) - \$22

This is exactly like the 5.56 version, but will a bigger hole to allow the bigger bullet and proper thread to screw onto the barrel.

### [5/8 Crush washer](#) - \$2

The .30 caliber muzzle devices use a larger thread size than the 5.56. This is simply a standard Crush washer for the larger 5/8 threads.