2.4 Video Card

The video card in your gaming computer – in a word – must be absolutely top-notch stuff. If you're going to play 3D games, then make sure the graphics horsepower in your computer are up to snuff. I usually try to spend more on the graphics card if I have the budget.

The graphics card processes all graphics-related work (especially 3D) and delivers the resultant output to a connected monitor. You'll typically see that video card improvements move along at breakneck speeds - a new generation of video cards often replaces the old every 3-6 months.

Figure 4: A picture of a typical desktop video card package

It is important that the GPU (Graphics Processing Unit) on your card supports the following at a minimum:

- Ample graphics memory, at least 256 MB
- DirectX 10.0
- PCI Express x16

Recommended Video Card: XFX HD-545X-ZHF2 Radeon HD 5450 1GB 64-bit DDR3 Video Card

With 1 GB of GDDR3 graphics memory, this $69.99 card will knock your socks off. It supports a PCI Express 2.1 x16 interface, DirectX 11, HDTV and S-Video output. The maximum resolution is a whopping 2560 x 1600. This card will probably be able to handle anything you throw at it for a solid couple of years.