

Why are



so expensive?

Keycap Designers

Anyone can be a keycap designer! But making it happen is a lot more complicated than the average person knows.

You'll have to choose your colors, font, and designs, which is fairly straightforward. And then, you will typically work with a vendor and a manufacturer, which is where it gets complex.

Designer	Creates the design and gathers information for the interest check.
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Vendor	Helps host the group buy and handles logistics with the manufacturer.
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Manufacturer	Physically produces the keycap sets.
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Production

Most keycap designers want their keycaps to feel and look good. So they'll want to work with a manufacturer who produces high quality keycaps with **ABS** or **PBT plastic**.

ABS plastic: Typically yields better colors and precision, but the plastic shines faster after repeated use.

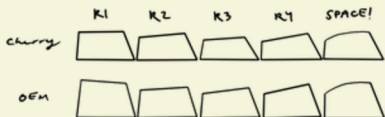
PBT plastic: A good quality plastic and will shine slower than ABS.

Designers may also want their keycaps to be made through either a **dye sublimation** or **double-shot process**, which looks way better than mass produced laser etching or printing.

Color matching is also important and often involves a lengthy process of sending and approving proofs.

Kits

The mechanical keyboard hobby has *variety*, particularly different layouts and customizable keymaps. Keycaps are shaped for specific rows, so unless the set is uniform *profile*, swapping keys between rows can look weird. This is where optional kits are considered!



Keycap profiles refer to the shape of the keys. There are many kinds of profiles that you can look up!

Group buys might have a selection of kits for people who need more variety or want more designs. Some common kits you might see are base, alphas, modifiers, better compatibility with 40% or ortho-linear keyboards, different sized spacebars, and novelties for fun designs.

Doing the Research

Designers will need to gather Interest Check (IC) information from people who might want to buy the set.

Manufacturers will only fulfill orders that hit the Minimum Order Quantity (MOQ) of about 250 to 500 base kit units depending on the manufacturer, so the designer needs to get people interested!

The IC will give numbers for how many people are interested in getting the base kit and other optional kits.

IC doesn't always ensure that the full MOQ will be fulfilled, hence why Vendors can help back up the group buy and sell those extras at a markup.

Group Buys

Once IC is done, the set will go into group buy (GB) phase, where an MOQ is required for the set to go through. Vendors may help with this by purchasing extra sets.

However, it's totally possible for a group buy to get cancelled if sales are too low and the vendor decides to not back it!

GBs actually only sell a few hundred sets, which plays into the FOMO and causing used sets to cost more than they should.



Want a design made a long time ago? Good luck! You might get lucky if there is a rerun of the GB, or you can try to find it secondhand.

So why are keycaps expensive?

Designer keycaps are *art*; it's not a mass produced product. There are many factors that go into making a designer set that make them expensive:

- **Design time:** Designers spend *months* tweaking colors, legends, kitting, renders, and getting community feedback.
- **Custom molds and quality materials:** Fun designs and legends may require custom molds, and ABS/PBT plastic takes time.
- **Economy of scale:** Only a few hundred people might buy a set, so prices stay high because production runs are small.
- **Risk:** Vendors and designers are taking financial risks, especially if the set doesn't sell out.
- **Markup:** Vendors might sell extras at a markup, and limited designs may be sold at a high price.

K E Y

C A P S

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