

## Plantronics RIG 500E Headphones Review

### Terms:

[Featured In the News](#) [1] [Gaming](#) [2] [2016](#) [3]

### Published Date and Time:

3/4/16

Legit Reviews

[http://www.legitreviews.com/plantronics-rig-500e-headphones-review\\_178276/5](http://www.legitreviews.com/plantronics-rig-500e-headphones-review_178276/5) [4]

### News Organization:

Legit Reviews

Plantronics is one of the oldest and most well-known headset manufacturers around. They have been making top quality audio solutions since the 1960's, longer than many of us has been alive! Where many companies are diversifying into other markets, Plantronics has stood firmly in the audio market. Their product line includes both wired and wireless solutions for the enterprise, mobile users, and anybody else that wants high quality audio headsets. For computer users, they have a wide range of solutions, and for gamers, that breaks down into console and PC gamers. The Plantronics PC Gaming line includes the [GameCom](#) [5] and [RIG](#) [6] line which debuted in 2013. After a couple different models of the RIG headset, they have released three models of their latest headset, the RIG 500.

The Plantronics RIG 500E is their high-end model, it incorporates everything from the RIG 500 and RIG 500HD, being the high-end model, it includes the highest price tag, with a MSRP of \$149.99, however the RIG 500E with part number 203802-01 can easily be found for [\\$109.99](#) [7] with free shipping and a 1 year warranty. The difference between the three models of this headset is that the RIG 500 includes the isolating ear cup design with the 3.5mm connection, while the RIG 500HD includes the USB Dolby 7.1 connector. The RIG 500E provides the best of both worlds, and provides you with both the 3.5mm and USB Dolby 7.1 connectors, and an additional ear cup model, which allows you to decide which design is better for the situation.

If you are looking at the Plantronics RIG 500E headset at a retailer, the packaging provides a wide range of information, allowing you to know exactly what you are purchasing. The back of the box you are able to get a good feel of the modular design of the headset, however Plantronics doesn't mention the upgradability of the headset, which we will take a look at later. While we are taking a look at the Plantronics RIG 500E, the lower end models use the exact same hardware, so if the RIG 500E has too many features for you, you can consider one of the lower end models with less features.



### Plantronics RIG 500E Features:

- Flexible Frame
- Lasting Comfort
- Earcup Options
- Performance Audio

- Noise-Canceling MIC
- Easy Connections
- Customizable

### Plantronics RIG 500E Specifications:

- Microphone
  - MIC Freq Response: 100Hz – 10kHz
  - MIC Pick Up Pattern: Uni-directional
  - MIC Sensitivity: -45dBV/Pa
  - MIC Signal to Noise: >42dB
- Connection
  - Type: USB and 3.5mm
- Audio
  - HP Coupling: Over-Ear
  - HP Drivers: Dynamic 40mm
  - HP Freq Response: 20Hz – 20kHz
  - HP Impedance: 32ohms
  - HP Max Input Power: 40mW
  - HP Sensitivity: 110dB SPL/V (Vented Earcups) / 113dB SPL/V (Isolating Earcups)
- Physical
  - Weight: 200g

Most of the components for the RIG 500E are secured to a molded plastic tray. Plantronics has opted to use a pair of velcro straps to secure the band to the tray, these are easily removed and reused. The additional accessories (cables and mic) are included in a little cardboard box below the headset.

Let's remove the RIG 500E from its packaging and take a closer look at the individual components.

### Closer Look at Plantronics RIG 500E

With everything removed from the packaging, we can see what Plantronics has included with the RIG 500E. The individual components include a single headband, boom mic, a support band, 3.5mm connector, USB Dolby 7.1 adapter and two pair of ear cups.



The headband itself is made out of a light weight unbreakable plastic. At CES, we were given the opportunity to bend and flex it out of shape, every time it went right back into its shape. The headband is pretty basic, there are three slots on each side to install the ear cups, and a larger slot to install the headband padded support.

With the RIG 500E, both sets of earcups are included. The first set is the isolating cups, which are closed to provide the most passive noise reduction, while the second set is the open / vented cups, which allows for more external sound to be heard. With the other models of the RIG 500, only the isolating cups are provided, the vented cups are available as an added accessory though. Other than that, both of the cups include the same 40mm drivers, 3.5mm connection, and microphone connector. The RIG 500E also provides two different padded covers, one pleather and one fabric. They are swappable, your preference will determine the best one for you. Typically, the pleather padded covers will provide better noise isolation, while the fabric covered ones are typically a little more comfortable for long periods.

The headband support is slightly padded for comfort, and has some expansion capability. The headband support will come close to making this a one size fits all solution, however if it doesn't, the ear cups can be moved to a different slot to make it fit properly.

Like the other components of the RIG 500E, the microphone is removable. There isn't much to the microphone, a 3.5mm connection to the ear cups, leading to a bit of hard and shiny plastic that shows the model number, ending in a semi-flexible rubber microphone. I say the end is semi-flexible as you can only bend it a little bit towards or away from your mouth. Any vertical movement will be done by swinging the microphone up, if you happen to need to swing or bend it down, you're out of luck.



With the RIG 500E both available connections are provided. The higher end models include the USB 7.1 connector, while the base model includes a standard 3.5mm plug which would make this compatible with millions of other devices. The Dolby 7.1 controller is pretty basic, there is a single button that activates/deactivates the Dolby 7.1 audio stream; a tiny white LED is embedded below the button to tell you when it is activated.

Building the RIG 500E headset is a very simple task. There is only one place to install the support band, which slides into place. The earcups are probably the most difficult, as you need to determine the best position for them. Here Plantronics has provided three options, allowing you to choose the most comfortable, which is especially important as there is no other vertical adjustments possible. After the earcups are in place, you can now use the headset. The MIC can be attached or removed at any time depending on your particular gaming needs, it uses a standard 3.5mm connection to plug into the headset, and has a little guide pin to make sure it is in the right position. Of course you don't have to remove it when you don't want to use it, you can always swing it up out of the way leaving it attached.

### Plantronics RIG 500E Software and Customization

Depending on the version of RIG 500 you have purchased there might not be any need for any drivers. However, if you have the RIG 500HD or RIG 500E you can utilize Dolby 7.1 audio without the need for any additional drivers. However, Plantronics does provide a driver and software that allows you to customize the sound through an audio panel. Plantronics did not include the driver or software with the headset, rather they provide a link to download it here this ensures you have the latest version.

There isn't much to the software for the RIG 500 series, once it is installed you have an Audio Panel available to make some adjustments. Here you have an equalizer, where you can have eight pre-sets, three of which are pre-configured by Plantronics. In addition, you can adjust the MIC volume and the Sidetone volume. Finally there is a little radio button to activate/deactivate the Dolby 7.1 audio. One option that is not immediately shown within the audio panel is the ability to change the sound mode between Movie and Music, this is done by right clicking on the Plantronics headphone icon in the system tray.

### Extra Custom Components

On Plantronics RIG 500E website, they have a link to their [webstore](#) [8] where you can purchase select accessories to customize the RIG 500 series headphones. For example, you can purchase alternative headbands for \$14.95 [9] plus shipping. It would be really interesting if Plantronics was to release a 3D printing plan for the headband, allowing users to create their own, assuming they have a 3D printer anyways.

The only downside, is that Plantronics doesn't show any alternative support bands to match the headband. If you could purchase additional support bands, with the RIG 500E you could basically get a second pair of headphones simply by purchasing the headband and support band.



Also, should you purchase any of the lower models, you can upgrade them by purchasing the desired option from Plantronics. Such as the Ear Cups, they will cost \$49.99 for another pair, an additional/replacement MIC and various cables are also available to purchase from Plantronics.

### Subjective Listening: Music, Movies and Games

When taking a look at reviews on headphones, one thing you have to keep in mind is that everybody hears audio a little

differently. Not to mention our individual preferences determine whether we prefer heavy bass or light bass. In addition, if you are an audiophile who regularly listens to high-end headphones you could have a different opinion of the sound quality. For me, what's most important is that the headphone reproduces the sound without any pops or static and that they are comfortable to wear for an extended time frame.

## Music

The Plantronics RIG 500 series is targeted at gamers, but that's not the only possible use for them. Between gaming sessions you might want to utilize the headphones to relax a little with some music. Over the past twenty years, I have listened to many different headphones. Some of them excel at one feature while lacking in others. When playing music, the Plantronics 500E headphones, do a good job. Sound quality is great, everything is crisp and clear; you could hear every piece of the artist's performance. Nothing was lost due to the headphones.

Switching between the 3.5mm and the USB Dolby Digital 7.1 adapter, there was clearly a massive improvement in sound utilizing the 7.1 audio. The sound was clearly fuller and much more immersive. One thing I did notice was that even utilizing the Music mode, the bass reproduction wasn't as powerful as I would've thought. Some headphones I have tried in the past, the Bass reproduction can be adjusted so that it is too much for my tastes. The Plantronics RIG 500E the bass level was perfect for me; however I don't enjoy a head pounding level of bass.

## Movies

When watching movies, the direction of sound can be very important. Some movies, missing little details or audio cues can distract from the immersion. Obviously, when watching a movie that should take advantage of surround sound you will miss out on many things when using the 3.5mm audio connection as you are not taking advantage of the Dolby Digital 7.1 capabilities. When watching movies, the 7.1 audio comes alive and makes a huge difference. Switching between the open and isolating earcups, there is a stark difference in the sound. The isolating earcups provided a fuller sound, and helped block out background noise drawing you into the movie more.

## Games

Being an E-Sports edition, that should tell you the what the RIG 500E is designed for; gaming. The RIG 500E headphones sound incredible in games no matter which earcups you prefer. Of course with the isolating earcups you get a fuller sound, and little details are a bit easier to pickup.

In some games, the Dolby Digital 7.1 audio is quite evident. Star Wars Battlefront for example, you could tell which direction the sounds were coming from without any issues. Hearing the speeder come up from behind you, and zooming past you is an incredible effect, and the 7.1 audio really makes it stand out. In other games such as Battlefield 4, the directional audio wasn't as obvious. However, the explosions and gun shots sounded great.

## Microphone

The Plantronics RIG 500E has a removable microphone, that has built-in noise-cancelling capabilities. Swinging the microphone all the way up, will mute it, which is more natural than fumbling around for a button to press. The boom microphone itself bends a little horizontally, but not at all vertically. In addition, it is rather short at 5 inches, however that doesn't detract from the quality of the microphone, which is something that Plantronics knows a lot out.

When chatting over Skype and gaming sessions, everybody was able to hear me clearly without needing me to raise my voice. There was a difference in the sound between a headset with the microphone directly in front of my mouth vs the RIG 500E where the microphone ended about the middle of my cheek. That wasn't an issue with the quality however, it was only noticed as I was switching between different headsets. Without switching headsets, everybody commented that they were able to hear me clearly, without any distortion or background noise.

## Final Thoughts and Conclusion



Plantronics has a long history of making great sounding headsets and their knowledge of microphones make them a top choice to many professionals. Their experience and knowledge is obvious from the first time you put on the RIG 500E E-Sports headset. For comfort, they receive high marks, being lightweight and using

soft padding in the earcups, makes it so you can wear these for over eight hours without any headset fatigue. I personally wore them for around 12 hours without any discomfort, many times I forgot I was wearing them.

Comfort aside, how do they sound? Over the past month as we have been listening to hours of various music, movies and gaming, we can honestly say they sound incredible. Even when the volume was cranked all the way up, the sound was crisp and clear; without any distortion. However, depending on your taste you might find the RIG 500E lacking in bass reproduction. While it was enough to feel explosions in games like Battlefield 4, and BattleFront, it wasn't overpowering. Some other gaming headsets, I have personally had issues with the amount of bass they are capable of, and head to resort to adjusting the sound to reduce the bass; obviously I'm not a huge fan of extremely loud bass. If you are, then these might not be the best headphones for you.

Let's talk about the most unique feature of the RIG 500 series, the ability to customize and upgrade the headset. The headset itself comes disassembled, you have to put it together. That is an extremely simple process, Plantronics has done a good job at making it easy enough that anybody can do it. The advantage is the option to purchase custom parts or upgrade the headset. Custom parts right now are limited to four different headbands which can be purchased for \$14.95 plus shipping. The upgrade options of the RIG 500 series is the option to purchase the lower end models, and upgrade the individual components. For example, the RIG 500 includes the 3.5mm connection and isolating earcups, purchase the USB Dolby Digital 7.1 separately, or purchase the open earcups. The choice is up to you. The only part that Plantronics doesn't have available to customize is the headband support, this would be a nice feature to change and hopefully Plantronics will make other padded supports available. In addition, as 3D printers become more popular, perhaps Plantronics can release the 3D plans for the headband allowing people to fully customize their headset.

For a headset that you can purchase for \$109.99 shipped [7] with a 1 year warranty, you essentially get the option of both an open earcup design and an isolating earcup design in one headset; the choice is yours. However, if you only want the isolating earcups, you can purchase a lower end model and upgrade them as you feel the need. The USB Dolby Digital 7.1 DSP does a great job at enhancing the sound stream allowing you to hear the smallest of details in whatever you are listening to. There is a reason Plantronics is one of the top companies for professionals, and their attention to detail in the RIG 500E shows this.

**Legit Bottom Line:** The Plantronics RIG 500E sounds great, even though it doesn't have powerful bass reproduction. It is extremely lightweight and comfortable to wear all day. The modular capabilities of the RIG 500 system helps to ensure this headset can be customized and upgraded, provided Plantronics continues to develop components for it.

**Language:**  
English

---

**Source URL:** <https://newsroom.poly.com/news/gaming/plantronics-rig-500e-headphones-review>

**Links:**

- [1] <http://newsroom.poly.com/category/news-category/%5Bcatpath-raw%5D>
- [2] <http://newsroom.poly.com/category/universal-categories/%5Bcatpath-raw%5D-2>
- [3] <http://newsroom.poly.com/category/news-category/%5Bcatpath-raw%5D-3>
- [4] [http://www.legitreviews.com/plantronics-rig-500e-headphones-review\\_178276/5](http://www.legitreviews.com/plantronics-rig-500e-headphones-review_178276/5)
- [5] [http://www.legitreviews.com/plantronics-gamecom-780-gaming-headset-review\\_2022](http://www.legitreviews.com/plantronics-gamecom-780-gaming-headset-review_2022)
- [6] [http://www.legitreviews.com/plantronics-rig-gaming-headset-review\\_121579](http://www.legitreviews.com/plantronics-rig-gaming-headset-review_121579)
- [7] [http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B0123C74FQ/ref=as\\_li\\_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B0123C74FQ&linkCode=as2&tag=legirevi03-20&linkId=AY4LP36ZWYSEJZJ5](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B0123C74FQ/ref=as_li_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B0123C74FQ&linkCode=as2&tag=legirevi03-20&linkId=AY4LP36ZWYSEJZJ5)
- [8] <http://www.plantronics.com/us/product/rig-500e#fndtn-accessories>
- [9] <http://www.plantronics.com/us/product/rig-500-bands?skuld=sku7230026>