

Digital Camera Buyer's Guide

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Buying a Digital Camera

Buying a digital camera can seem so difficult. There are so many different cameras, brands and features. It can be hard to narrow your search down to find the right camera for you.

The aim of this guide is to point you in the right direction so that you buy a digital camera that suits your own individual requirements and you enjoy using.

The big question is where to start. With this in mind I have broken down the many different types of digital cameras into nine categories.

1. Entry Level Digital Cameras

Ranging in price between £80 and £125 these cameras are straightforward and easy to use. They are suitable for anyone who is looking for a no fuss digital camera and does not want to spend a fortune on one.

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2. Super Zoom Digital Cameras

If the type of photos you take dictates you cannot get in too close then a super zoom model could be the answer. These are often snapped up by people interested in wildlife or sports photography. Although some cameras in this category are point and shoot type models the majority offer a wide range of controls and features. This includes fully manual exposure. These cameras will normally appeal to someone who sees photography as a bit of a hobby.

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3. Pocket Sized Digital Cameras

Digital cameras small enough to fit into even the tightest pocket are becoming more and more popular. They tend to have a good build quality with metal bodies. They are not cheap and cost between £150 and £250. In terms of features they tend to be fairly basic. This type of camera is likely to be attractive to someone who likes to take a camera everywhere they go and does not mind paying a little extra for one.

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4. Stylish Digital Cameras

Stylish digital cameras have a number of similarities with pocket sized digital cameras, but are a bit larger. It is hard to find one with less than five megapixels and they routinely have between six and eight. They have a good build quality and are also easy to use. Picture quality is normally among the best you can get from a point and shoot camera. They cost in the region of £200 - £300. This type of camera is attractive to people who like ease of use, extra quality and are not too concerned by the cost.

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5. High Specification Compact Digital Cameras

If you like the idea of being able to take control of shutter speeds and aperture sizes then these cameras allow you to do so. With a price tag between £160 and £325 they offer an opportunity to pick up a camera with controls similar to those you find on an SLR without paying out a fortune. To keep the cost of these cameras down they have plastic bodies and lack the build quality of Stylish digital cameras.

[Read more.....](#)

6. Water Resistant Digital Cameras

Water resistant digital cameras are very hard to come by. There are a few weatherproof models available, but I class water resistant as able to be immersed in water. The cameras that are available tend to be quite straight forward in terms of ease of use and have a good build quality. If you are looking for a digital camera to take diving then you should also be aware that there are a wide range of digital cameras that you can buy underwater housing for.

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7. Advanced Digital Cameras

These cameras usually combine a long zoom lens, wide range of features and a good build quality. They are a clear step up from the High Specification Compacts. They are also larger. In terms of features they compare quite closely with the more basic Digital SLRs. They cost from £325 upwards and are therefore a cheaper option than buying an SLR body and lenses. With their feature set and price tag they are most likely to appeal to someone who sees photography as a hobby.

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8. Digital SLRs

As technology advances and prices have fallen we have seen the introduction of Digital SLRs for under £400. With a full set of features these cameras appeal to enthusiasts who are serious about their photography. It is always worth taking into account that you will need to buy lenses separately to the body. With the quality of the lens being paramount to taking good quality photos you need to make sure you leave enough in your budget to buy lenses as well as the camera body itself.

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9. Professional Digital SLRs

One of the most noticeable differences between the Professional Digital SLRs and the cheaper models is their build quality. Many of these cameras are built to withstand the rigors of life out in the field. Price varies greatly from £1000 to £6000 as people look to buy the ultimate in digital camera technology. Strictly for the professional or the enthusiast with money to spend.

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Market Trends

Megapixels

The number of megapixels a typical digital camera has continues to increase. For example the majority of the latest batch of pocket sized digital cameras have seven megapixels, up from six in the spring of 2006. In fact there are models offering ten megapixels now. Even entry level cameras are likely to have six megapixels. In fact it is hard to find a three or four megapixel camera any more.

The effect of increasing the number of megapixels means that you can make bigger prints. Don't be fooled though. A greater number of megapixels do not necessarily mean better picture quality. A camera with fewer megapixels, a high class lens and the ability to produce brilliant colours is a better bet than a camera with a larger number of megapixels, but offering out of focus photos and washed out colours.

Zoom

In a similar way to megapixels being on the increase you will also find the length of zoom lenses is increasing. At the moment this is not a dramatic increase, but cameras with three times zoom lenses are being upgraded in places to four megapixels. There is also greater choice if you are looking for a six times optical zoom. A standard super zoom digital camera has increased in capacity from ten times to twelve times zoom.

Size

When it comes to size the opposite is happening. Digital cameras are still getting smaller and smaller. More and more cameras are appearing in pocket sized form. Some of the pocket sized models are getting even slimmer too.

Price

Early indications from the latest releases are that prices are continuing to fall. It is now much easier to find digital cameras around the £100 mark than it ever was before. At the top end of the market prices has fallen and are likely to go further down. This has already made Digital SLRs much more affordable. This area is likely to show a healthy growth rate in sales.

LCD Screens

Larger LCD screens are catching on. This is a very useful innovation. A larger screen can make so much difference when composing or reviewing a photo. Pocket sized and stylish digital cameras are leading the way. More and more cameras are appearing with a 2.5" screen and some have hit the 3" mark. It is hard to see how screens could get any bigger than this. The downside of this trend is that viewfinders are disappearing fast. It is becoming harder and harder to find a consumer level digital camera with a viewfinder.

Image Stabilisation

This is a feature that is turning up on more and more digital cameras. It helps to create sharper photos by reducing blur caused by hand shake. Judging from the questions I receive a lot of people are interested in it. Last year it crept in on some Super Zoom digital cameras, but now we have started to see it on cameras with much shorter lenses. There are different types of Image Stabilisation. One method works through gyroscopes in the lens. The other works through software in the camera. Personally I would not worry too much if you buy a digital camera that does not have this feature. It can certainly make a difference with the Super Zoom models, but I would not see this as a must have feature on a more standard sized lens.

ISO

ISO ratings used to be used to measure how sensitive film was to light. The higher the ISO rating the easier it was for film to capture light. This means that if you are taking a picture in lowlight by using a high ISO rating the picture should come out brighter. Not so long ago it was hard to find a consumer level camera offering an ISO rating above ISO 400. Now there are consumer cameras offering ISO 1600, with ISO 3200 on its way. To be honest though in the tests I have carried out most cameras show a clear loss of picture quality at ISO 400. Therefore I would not get too excited by the changes in this area just yet.

AF Assist Illuminator

An AF (Auto Focus) Illuminator is a little known and underrated feature. It transmits a beam of light that helps a camera to focus in low light. It is quite a common feature, but the good news is that more and more cameras have one. Without one it is very difficult for the camera to focus indoors.

Shutter Lag

At the time of writing the latest batch of digital cameras are only just hitting the shelf. Therefore I have not been able to test them just yet. I hope that improvements have been made in this area. Shutter lag is the delay time between pressing the shutter button and the picture being recorded. It spoils many a good photo, especially at the cheaper end of the market.

Wi-Fi

Wi-Fi is the ability to transmit images directly to your PC from a camera without the need to attach the camera directly to the computer with a USB cable. Nikon are leading the way in this area and already offer a small number of cameras with this feature. Before you rush out and buy you need to make sure your computer has the necessary technology to receive the images you send it.

Types of Digital Cameras

Entry Level Digital Cameras

Entry level digital cameras tend to cost somewhere between £85 and £120. You can buy cheaper, but if you are looking for a current digital camera from a name brand then this is the sort of price that you will need to expect to pay.

At the time of writing this type of camera commonly has between four and six megapixels. Three megapixel models are now rare with most models having four, five or six megapixels.

Within this category cameras tend to have fewer features than more standard digital cameras. The upside of this is that they are easier to use. In fact one of the biggest advantages of this type of digital camera is ease of use. This is an area where manufacturers have put in a great deal of effort over the last couple of years and many cameras are now very straightforward.

Obviously you have to accept that these digital cameras will have some limitations when compared to more expensive models. The cameras are routinely made of plastic and there is often a noticeable difference in their build quality when compared to other types of digital camera.

You are also likely to find that the cameras struggle indoors and in lowlight in general. This problem leads to a degree of blurring in photos where the camera is unable to focus properly and also a darkening of each photo. There are exceptions to this rule if you look around.

Shutter lag is also an issue. This is the time between pressing the shutter button and the picture being taken. This can lead to photo opportunities being missed. There are a small number of cameras available that can overcome this problem, but there are a larger number where this is a major flaw.

Another area where cameras can suffer from limitations is with the movie mode. For TV quality movies I recommend a resolution of 640 x 480 and a recording speed of 30 frames per second. Many cameras in this category cannot meet these requirements. You may also find examples where no sound is recorded and the recording time for the movie is strictly limited.

In an effort to keep costs down many digital cameras no longer come with a viewfinder. Another reason for this trend is the increasing size of LCD screens. Even some entry level models now boast screen sizes of 2.5".

Pros:



- Price
- Ease of use

Cons:

Indoor photos
 Small LCD screens
 Shutter lag
 Limited movie mode
 Build quality

Latest Models

	Camera	MegaPixels	Zoom	Click for:
	Kodak EasyShare C433	4	3x	Specification Lowest Price
	Kodak EasyShare C743	7	3x	Specification Lowest Price
	Nikon Coolpix L5	7	5x	Specification Lowest Price
	Nikon Coolpix L6	6	3x	Specification Lowest Price
	Olympus FE-170	6	3x	Specification Lowest Price
	Olympus FE-180	6	3x	Specification Lowest Price
	Olympus FE-200	6	5x	Specification Lowest Price

	Pentax Optio M20	7	3x	Specification Lowest Price
	Sony DSC S500	6	3x	Specification Lowest Price

Super Zoom Digital Cameras

If you are looking for a digital camera suitable for sports or wildlife photography then a Super Zoom model could be the answer. These tend to vary in price between £150 and £320. This is certainly the cheapest option if you are looking for a powerful zoom lens.

At present the zoom capability tends to be either 10x or 12x. This equates to a focal length in 35mm format of around 36-432mm. Some of the cameras can also use tele converter lenses to further increase the telephoto capacity. To add one of these can add an extra £100 to the cost though. In most instances you will also need to purchase a lens adapter before you can fit the lens converter. If this appeals to you then you need to check before you buy to ensure your camera has this facility.

Almost all the super zoom cameras I have tested offer fully manual exposure controls. This includes aperture and shutter priority. The more expensive ones offer a very wide range of features. This makes them suitable for people who see photography as a hobby rather than someone who is looking for a digital camera to take a few snapshots with.

Most of the cameras are designed along the lines of a traditional SLR camera. This enables you to get a good grip on them when you take a shot. The downside of this is that they can be heavy and bulky. You need to take this into consideration when buying and I would suggest considering a camera bag to carry them around with.

When you use cameras with long lenses there is a tendency for camera shake to become an issue. This is accentuated in lowlight and any time when you are using a slow shutter speed. Manufacturers have attempted to combat this to some degree by introducing image stabilisation. This helps the camera to make minor adjustments to compensate for any movement of the camera when you are taking a shot. Although every little helps the best solution is often to use a tripod whenever you can. By using a tripod you can often see a clear difference in the sharpness of a shot.

On the whole picture quality is good. I have found it difficult to separate a number of super zoom cameras in my picture quality tests. It is worth pointing out that all the super zoom digital cameras I have tested suffer from purple fringing once the zoom lens gets close to its full extension. There seems to be no way from stopping this happening. Although it can be removed if you use a software package such as Photoshop this is certainly far from ideal.

One big plus is the fact that the flash unit pops up on the majority of these cameras. This helps to take the flash away from the lens. This means that red eye is very rare in portraits where the flash is used.

If you are looking for a step up from a super zoom model then you can look at the diminishing range of Advanced Digital Cameras or consider a Digital SLR.

Pros:

Price

Suitable for sports and wildlife photography

No red eye

Cons:

Larger cameras

Purple fringing

Latest Models

	Camera	MegaPixels	Zoom	Click for:
	Canon Powershot A710 IS	7	12x	Specification Lowest Price
	Fuji Finepix S5600fd	6	10x	Specification Lowest Price
	Nikon Coolpix S10	6	12x	Specification Lowest Price
	Olympus SP-510	7	6x	Specification Lowest Price
	Panasonic DMC FZ50	10	12x	Specification Lowest Price

Pocket Sized Digital Cameras

As the title suggests this type of digital camera is small enough to fit into a pocket. Even a small pocket like you find on a pair of jeans will do. I consider any digital camera under 25mm wide to be ultra compact or pocket sized. As digital cameras continue to shrink you will find many under 20mm and some a fair bit slimmer than that.

In terms of build quality this type of camera is well made and will have a lightweight metal body. This is definitely an improvement on the plastic bodies often found in other types of camera.

Although the cameras tend to have a similar, rectangular shape there is a fair amount of choice in terms of design. You should be able to look at the different cameras available and find one that you like the look of.

Whilst the cameras are small, manufacturers are still able to find enough room to add a large LCD screen to the camera. The majority of recent introductions have 2.5" screens. There are also some models available offering 3" screens. There is a downside to this and that in the majority of cases there has not been room to fit in a viewfinder. This can be a drawback, especially in very bright weather.

In terms of picture quality I have found it does not quite match up to that found with most other types of digital camera. This could be because of the difficulty in fitting lenses of the highest quality into cameras of this size. Talking of lenses you will find some extrude from the body when the camera is switched on while other remain within the camera.

Pocket sized digital cameras tend to be easy to use. The majority have a straightforward set of features without any manual exposure controls. So in many ways these are high quality point and shoot cameras.

In terms of price they can range from £150 to £250. Occasionally you will find one or two cameras cheaper than this. The majority of models are priced around the £180 mark.

It pays to look around carefully before you buy as quality can vary from camera to camera. Some are not very good indoors. It should also be pointed out that owing to the small size of these cameras the lens and the flash unit tend to be close together. This means it is very difficult to avoid red eye in portrait shots when flash is used.

One final point is that the range of the flash unit tends to be limited with this type of camera. Therefore you need to be aware of this limitation when you are using the camera in lowlight situations.

Currently most cameras offer between five and seven megapixels. As with other types of digital camera there is a move towards more and more megapixels. Therefore you should be able to find seven, eight and even ten megapixel models if you are looking to make large prints.

Pros:

Size
Build quality
Design
Large LCD screen
Easy to use



Cons:

No viewfinder
No manual controls
Slight decrease in picture quality
Red eye
Limited flash range

Latest Models

	Camera	MegaPixels	Zoom	Click for:
	Canon IXUS i7	7	2.4x	Specification Lowest Price
	Casio Exilim EX-S770	7	3x	Specification Lowest Price
	Casio Exilim EX-Z700	7	3x	Specification Lowest Price
	Fuji Finepix Z3	5	3x	Specification Lowest Price
	Kodak Easyshare V705	7	5x	Specification Lowest Price
	Nikon Coolpix S7c	7	3x	Specification Lowest Price

	Nikon Coolpix S9	6	3x	Specification Lowest Price
	Olympus MJU 730	7	3x	Specification Lowest Price
	Olympus MJU 740	7	5x	Specification Lowest Price
	Olympus MJU 750	7	5x	Specification Lowest Price
	Olympus MJU 1000	10	3x	Specification Lowest Price
	Panasonic DMC FX07	7	3.6x	Specification Lowest Price
	Panasonic DMC FX3	6	3.6x	Specification Lowest Price
	Pentax Optio A20	10	3x	Specification Lowest Price
	Pentax Optio S7	7	3x	Specification Lowest Price
	Sony DSC N2	10	3x	Specification Lowest Price

	Sony DSC T10	7	3x	Specification Lowest Price
	Sony DSC T50	7	3x	Specification Lowest Price

Stylish Digital Cameras

While testing this type of digital camera I have generally found them to be reliable and to be of good quality. Compared with standard digital cameras there is a definite step up in terms of build quality as they have metal bodies.

In terms of megapixels they tend to range from five to eight. Zoom lenses tend to be a standard three times although there are signs that this is on the increase. Large LCD screens are also a common feature with 2.5" screens considered standard. As with many other types of digital camera viewfinders are becoming increasingly hard to find.

Although not as slim as the pocket sized cameras they are relatively compact and should fit into a conventional sized handbag. This means that they remain fairly easy to carry around and they are not overly cumbersome.

Almost all cameras come in a standard silver colour, but occasionally you will find a wider choice available. In terms of design and shape a lot of the cameras look very similar indeed and there is little to choose between them in terms of looks and style.

Picture quality is normally very good and cameras generally perform well in a variety of different situations. Features tend to be similar to those found on standard digital cameras. This is a bit limiting and I am sure that many people would appreciate a well made compact camera with manual exposure controls. The upside of this is without too many features to get to grips with the cameras remain fairly easy to use.

A wide selection of scene modes is normally available and almost all models offer TV quality movies. Models with image stabilisation have recently been launched. This feature helps to overcome hand shake and therefore produce sharper photos.

When compared with pocket sized cameras the build quality is similar. I have found the picture quality is typically better with this type of camera and the flash tends to have a longer reach.

In terms of price they are a fair bit more expensive than a standard digital camera and also the pocket sized models. Prices range from around £170 to £270. This type of camera is likely to appeal to anyone who wants a good quality camera that is easy to use and is prepared to pay more for it.





Pros:

- Build quality
- Picture quality
- Ease of use

Cons:

- Expensive
- No manual exposure controls

Latest Models

	Camera	MegaPixels	Zoom	Click for:
	Canon IXUS 850 IS	7	3.8x	Specification Lowest Price
	Canon IXUS 900 Ti	10	3x	Specification Lowest Price
	Fuji Finepix F20	6	3x	Specification Lowest Price
	Panasonic DMC FX50	7	3.6x	Specification Lowest Price

High Specification Compact Digital Cameras

These digital cameras are a clear step up on entry level models. The main difference is that they are likely to include full manual exposure controls including aperture and shutter priority. This type of camera is likely to appeal in the main to people who enjoy photography, would like to improve the photos they take, but do not want to spend a fortune on their camera. Cameras are typically found in the range £150 to £325.

Megapixels and length of zoom start to increase at this level. The minimum number of megapixels is likely to be five. This now stretches up to nine megapixels at the higher end. Four times zoom lenses are now becoming the norm rather than the exception as well. Although a four times optical zoom lens is shorter than you require for sports and wildlife photography it is still beneficial and adds flexibility to the camera.

You can enhance most of the cameras in this range by buying accessories such as lens converters and underwater cases. A lens converter will increase either the telephoto or wide angle capability of the lens. You may also find macro and fish eye lens converters available for a small number of cameras in this category. Canon also offer an add on flash pack to boost the power of the built in flash units for their cameras in this category.

It is very difficult to find digital cameras with a wide angle lens suitable for landscape, interior, architectural and group photography. There are a small number of cameras in this category with a wider than normal lens. Look out for cameras with a focal length equivalent to 28mm in 35mm format.

At this level you start to find very impressive picture quality. Focusing should be sharp up until the edge, colours should be good and you should also find an increasing level of detail being picked out in each shot.

The range of features continues to grow and you should expect to see features such as manual focusing, slower shutter times, control over flash levels and higher ISO ratings. On some cameras you will also find pop up flash units and also twisting LCD screens. The twisting screens help in bright lights and also when you are taking photos at difficult angles.

Most cameras in this section are made of plastic. Although they typically have a better quality feel than entry level digital cameras I would like to see the introduction of metal or alloy bodied cameras with advanced features.

In terms of movies I would expect cameras to offer 640 x 480 resolution and recording speed of 30 frames per second. This makes them suitable for TV playback. Movies will include sound and many cameras will allow you to zoom in when shooting a movie. Typically this uses a digital zoom feature rather than optical zoom.

You are also likely to find some cameras offering a range of aspect ratios. The aspect ratio determines the dimensions of a photo. An aspect ratio of 3:2 is perfect for 4 x 6" prints as the photos will not need to be cropped at all to fit on the paper. 16:9 is for

viewing images on a widescreen television and 4:3 is perfect for viewing on a computer monitor.

Pros:

Manual exposure mode
Wide range of general features
Accessories available
Plenty of megapixels

Cons:

Build quality

Latest Models

	Camera	MegaPixels	Zoom	Click for:
	Canon Powershot A630	8	4x	Specification Lowest Price
	Canon Powershot A640	10	4x	Specification Lowest Price
	Kodak Easyshare C875	8	5x	Specification Lowest Price
	Panasonic DMC LX2	10	4x	Specification Lowest Price

Water Resistant Digital Cameras

Waterproof digital cameras tend to be able to keep out water to only a limited depth. This is typically between 1m and 3m. Therefore if you are planning to take a camera diving then you are likely to be better off with a normal digital camera and a waterproof case or housing.

So where can you use them? These cameras are suitable for use around the pool or on the beach. Here you do not have to worry about the camera getting splashed or even a bit of a soaking in the water. With a normal digital camera a spell in the pool is the end of the camera. Some models also have shock protection to protect them if they are dropped.

In terms of features these cameras tend to be similar to a standard digital camera. You are unlikely to find manual exposure controls and the cameras are more of less point and shoot models.

The build quality can vary from camera to camera. Some of this is due to the materials used to ensure the camera is waterproof.

The alternative to a waterproof digital camera is underwater housing. Housing is not available for all cameras and can also prove to be expensive. It can easily add £100 to the cost of a camera and with larger models the price tag can be considerably higher. For diving you have little choice but to invest in housing and the other big advantage of this route is you will have a far greater choice in the camera you choose.

In many ways a waterproof digital camera is likely to appeal to someone who is looking for fun with their camera rather than someone who is either serious about general photography or underwater photography.

Pros:


Cheaper than underwater housing


Cons:

Waterproof depth not always very deep

Few models to choose from

Latest Models

	Camera	MegaPixels	Zoom	Click for:
	Olympus MJU 725SW	7	3x	Specification Lowest Price

	Pentax Optio W20	7	3x	Specification Lowest Price
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Advanced Digital Cameras

The type of digital camera I describe as advanced appears to be rapidly diminishing. The majority of digital cameras that fall into this category were introduced around two years ago. As they fall by the wayside they show little sign of being replaced. This is probably because of the way the price of Digital SLR cameras has crashed over the past two years. The only cameras I can think of that has been introduced in the past six months that fall into this category are the Fuji Finepix S9600 and the Canon Powershot G7.

These cameras are a kind of cross bread between High Specification, Super Zoom and Digital SLR cameras. Typically they have around eight megapixels, with zoom lenses between 4x and 10x.

As well as the long zoom lenses it is the wide range of features and controls that have made these cameras appeal to people you see photography as a hobby. The cameras usually have hot shoes that accept flash lights and conversion lenses and filters can be fitted to the lenses to further increase the capabilities of these cameras. On some models you will also find LCD screens whose position can be adjusted to help when taking photos at awkward angles.

Like SLR cameras you are likely to find control dials that allow you fast access to key controls rather than a plethora of buttons on the back of the camera. Many also offer custom modes where you can save your favourite settings.

Among the more advanced features you are likely to find are long exposures (including a bulb setting), custom white balance, matrix, spot and centre weighted metering, continuous shooting, best shot selectors and time lapse movies. Other features can include bracketing, noise reduction and options to adjust sharpness, contrast and saturation.

One of the biggest differences I find between this type of digital camera and the cheaper Super Zoom style models is the build quality. These cameras tend to be far sturdier and a better feel in the hand. They also manage to avoid the problems of purple fringing when the zoom is fully extended.

They are becoming increasingly hard to come by. Pricing has fallen since they were first introduced, but if you see photography as a hobby it would be sensible to check out the latest offerings from entry level Digital SLR cameras. It is difficult to say for certain if this type of digital camera has had its day, but they do appear to be being squeezed out of the market.

Pros:



- Picture quality
- Wide range of features
- Manual exposure controls
- Impressive build quality

Cons:

- Becoming hard to find

Technology is getting older

Latest Models

	Camera	MegaPixels	Zoom	Click for:
	Canon Powershot G7	10	6x	Specification Lowest Price
	Fuji Finepix S9600	9	10.7x	Specification Lowest Price

Digital SLRs

One of the most significant changes with digital cameras over the past 18 months is the decrease in price of Digital SLR cameras. This has made them far more affordable and they are now within reach of many people who see photography as a hobby.

Entry level Digital SLRs are now available for as little as £350. When you buy an SLR it is normally possible to buy at least one lens as part of the package. This is usually a good way to save a few pounds on a lens. In terms of megapixels they typically have between six and eight.

One of the most important points to keep in mind is just how important the lens is to the camera. It is easy to fall into the trap that having bought an expensive camera with a great set of features any old lens will do. The quality of the lens is all important if you want impressive, pin sharp images. Therefore you need to budget for good quality lenses on top of the cost of the camera body itself.

The big advantage of SLR cameras is flexibility. With a wide range of lenses to choose from it means you can select the right one for the photograph you are about to take. You also have a wide range of accessories to further enhance the capabilities of the camera. These include flashguns and filters.

You should also be able to use any lenses you have bought for 35mm photography with a Digital SLR. There can be restrictions, especially with older lenses. The other issue you need to be aware of is that the focal length of lenses made for 35mm cameras is likely to be increased when used with a Digital SLR. This is because the sensor in most digital cameras is smaller than the sensors found on the traditional models. The biggest problem this creates is it can drastically reduce the wide angle capability of a lens.

The choice of lenses you can buy is increasing. There are now a range of lenses made specifically to match the smaller sensors you find with Digital SLRs. If you are looking to take wide angle shots then a wide angle lens made for Digital SLRs is likely to prove a wise investment.

One of the biggest advantages of taking the Digital SLR route is it helps to protect your investment. If you buy a number of lenses and then decide to upgrade the camera itself then your lenses should still work with your next camera provided it is made by the same manufacturer.



Pros:

- Wide range of features
- Potential to build a complete camera system
- Plenty of accessories available

Cons:

- Expense of building system

Latest Models

	Camera	MegaPixels	Zoom	Click for:
	Canon EOS 400D	10	N/A	Specification Lowest Price
	Nikon D80	10	N/A	Specification Lowest Price

Professional Digital SLRs

It goes without saying that a lot of the benefits you find with Digital SLRs aimed at hobby and semi professional photographers are also available in the range of Digital SLR cameras aimed at professional photographers.

Prices for this group of digital cameras vary. You can find some of the lower priced models for around £1400. The top of the range models are nearer to the £5000 mark. This is before you have bought any lenses.

So what do you get for your extra money? The number of megapixels tends to be higher for a start. Although some of the lower end models have six megapixels you can also find 16 megapixels at the top end. Another big difference is the build quality of the cameras. Many are built to take the kind of knocks a camera takes out in the field. You may also find weatherproof bodies as well.

A small number of models offer full frame sensors. This is said to improve picture quality. On top of this it also means you can use lenses made for 35mm cameras without any conversion factor being applied to the focal length of the lens. This is particularly important for anyone who uses wide angle lenses on a regular basis.

Another useful feature is the introduction of Wi-Fi technology. This allows you to transmit images directly to a PC or laptop. There is no need to connect the camera to the computer first. This is very useful for a number of different types of photography including event and press photography. Anywhere where speed is essential this can save crucial time.

With many professional Digital SLRs you will find improved buffering. This leads to being able to capture shots more quickly and for faster continuous shooting modes. Memory cards with the largest capacities can be used. You also usually have a wider choice of the types of memory card the cameras can use.

Other advanced features include the ability to capture images simultaneously in RAW and Jpeg, fine tuning options for white balance, better noise control solutions and a wider range of ISO settings.



Pros:

- Build quality
- Number of megapixels
- Wi-Fi
- Advanced features

Cons:

- Cost

Latest Models

	Camera	MegaPixels	Zoom	Click for:
	Canon EOS 30D	8	N/A	Specification Lowest Price
	Nikon D200	10	N/A	Specification Lowest Price

Help Centre

[Digital Camera Features](#)

If you are not sure what all the features on a digital camera are then take a look here for a quick rundown.

[All About Memory Cards](#)

This article explains the different types of memory cards there are. It also includes a table showing the number of images you can store on different sized cards.

[Shutter Lag Comparison Table](#)

Shutter lag is the delay between pressing the shutter button and the picture being taken. This table compares the shutter lag times of the cameras I have reviewed.

[How Many Pixels Do You Need?](#)

Cameras are appearing with more and more megapixels. This table gives you an idea of the size of prints you can make depending on the number of megapixels your camera has.

[Make Your Batteries Last Longer](#)

Although not quite as important as it once was conserving your camera's batteries still makes sense. Check out what eats up battery life and find some tips to help you make your batteries last longer.

[Printing Photographs](#)

Printing photographs is often the next step after taking them. This article covers the different options you have such as home printing, printing in the High Street and the options for online printing.

[How Much Zoom Do You Need?](#)

The length of the zoom lens you need depends on the type of photography you are interested in. This article includes a series of sample photos to give you an idea of the impact different amounts of zoom have on a photograph.

[Where to Buy](#)

This gives you a short list of camera shops in the U.K. I am happy to buy from.

[Digital Camera Prices](#)

Find the latest and lowest price on over 100 digital cameras. These are all live prices showing you the actual price you can buy the camera for at a wide range of camera shops.

[Digital Camera Selector](#)

The Digital Camera Selector allows you to choose from a number of criteria before creating your own personal short list of digital cameras that suit you. You can specify up to 14 different features to pinpoint the right camera. The features include the number of megapixels, length of zoom, budget, screen size and type of memory card.

[Reviews](#)

Read my reviews. Each camera is rated for ten different qualities such as picture quality and build quality. You can sort the ratings to find the cameras that are strong in the areas that interest you. Each review also has a set of sample images and it is possible to compare images from different cameras.

[Digital Camera Ratings](#)

See how other people who own a digital camera rate it. This gives you a variety of opinions and will help you make the right decision.

What's Next?

I shall be reviewing as many cameras as I possibly can in the run up to Christmas. Digital cameras tend to be introduced in large batches so although it is impossible to review them all as soon as they hit the High Street I will endeavour to review as many as I can as quickly as I can.

If you already own a digital camera or after you have bought one it would be a big help both to me and to other people who are looking to buy if you could pop along to Cameras.co.uk and rate your camera. I have set this up so that you can rate a digital camera in less than one minute. To rate your camera please visit my [Digital Camera Ratings](#) page.

If you know of anyone else who may like to read this document then please feel free to email it to them.

This is only the second Digital Camera Buyer's Guide I have written. Any comments and feedback telling me how it could be improved would be a big help to me. To contact me please email me at andy@cameras.co.uk