

Buying a Digital Camera – What and How

Types of digital cameras



1. Compact point and shoot easily fits into a pocket. Usually have fewer features.
2. Larger point and shoot may fit into a larger jacket pocket. Have more features.
3. Enthusiast has many features; but is usually too large for a pocket. One lens, permanently attached to the camera, with an optical zoom as high as 12x.
4. Digital single lens reflex uses multiple lenses that are purchased separately. Large carrying case for camera and multiple lenses.

What features are important

1. Optical zoom; ignore specs for digital zoom.
2. Use a memory card; not just internal memory.
3. USB cable for transferring photos to a computer.
4. Long battery life.
5. Easy to use.
6. Good reliability.
7. Good reviews.
8. Good optical quality.
9. Good flash.
10. Camera must be made for sale and service in the USA, with a USA warranty. Grey-market cameras are less expensive, but are not made for sale and service in the USA. If you have a problem with a grey-market camera, you throw away the camera. Also, the camera may not have English menus.

What features are nice

1. Optical zoom greater than 5x.
2. Image stabilization for optical zoom greater than 5x.
3. Rechargeable batteries.
4. Batteries that are a common size, such as AA.
5. Can show photos on a TV.
6. Focus assist light, to help the camera focus in dark conditions.
7. Electronic viewfinder, for showing what the camera sees.
8. Can take movies, with sound.
9. Easy manual control of exposure, white balance, focus, and flash.

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How to select the camera (top-down; starting with a camera)

1. Pros and cons of using this method:
 - a. + Takes the least time to research because you are researching only one or two cameras.
 - b. + You have already found a store or web site that sells the selected camera.
 - c. - Probably results in a camera without all the features you want.
 - d. - Possibly you will pay more than you need to.
2. Select a camera is a current ad or on display in a store, based upon size, price, and features.
3. Research the camera reviews and prices using the web site links on page 2.

How to select the camera (bottoms-up, starting with reviews)

1. Pros and cons of using this method:
 - a. + Probably results in a camera with the best combination of features.
 - b. - Takes more time to research numerous cameras.
 - c. - Have to find a store or web site that sells the selected camera.
2. Look at reviews on <http://www.steves-digicams.com/> and <http://www.dpreview.com/> to find a camera with the features that you want, and having good reviews. Confirm the reviews by reading user reviews on <http://www.amazon.com/> and http://www.epinions.com/Digital_Cameras.
3. Find the camera using the information below (Where to buy the camera).

Where to buy the camera

1. Local stores. Remember the FHF web site at CompUSA. <http://www.compusabusiness.com/fhf>
2. Internet. Use www.google.com, http://www.foxhillfarm.org/Groups/Computer/CC_links.htm, and the following web sites to find the best pricing (including shipping) from a site you think you can trust.

Good web sites for reviews and prices

<http://www.steves-digicams.com/>

<http://www.dpreview.com/>

<http://www.amazon.com/>

http://www.epinions.com/Digital_Cameras

www.google.com

http://www.foxhillfarm.org/Groups/Computer/CC_links.htm (has links to numerous web sites)

Other web with information

<http://www.smartcomputing.com/editorial/HWCcategory.asp?catid=1200&guid=62144840C07146489E4E8EC5D805C791>

http://www.kuhnfamily.com/Kuhn_Consulting/Digital_photos/Digital-photos-FHF.htm

Software

Install and try the software that comes with the camera. This software varies widely in quality, but give it a try unless you have a favorite software program.

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